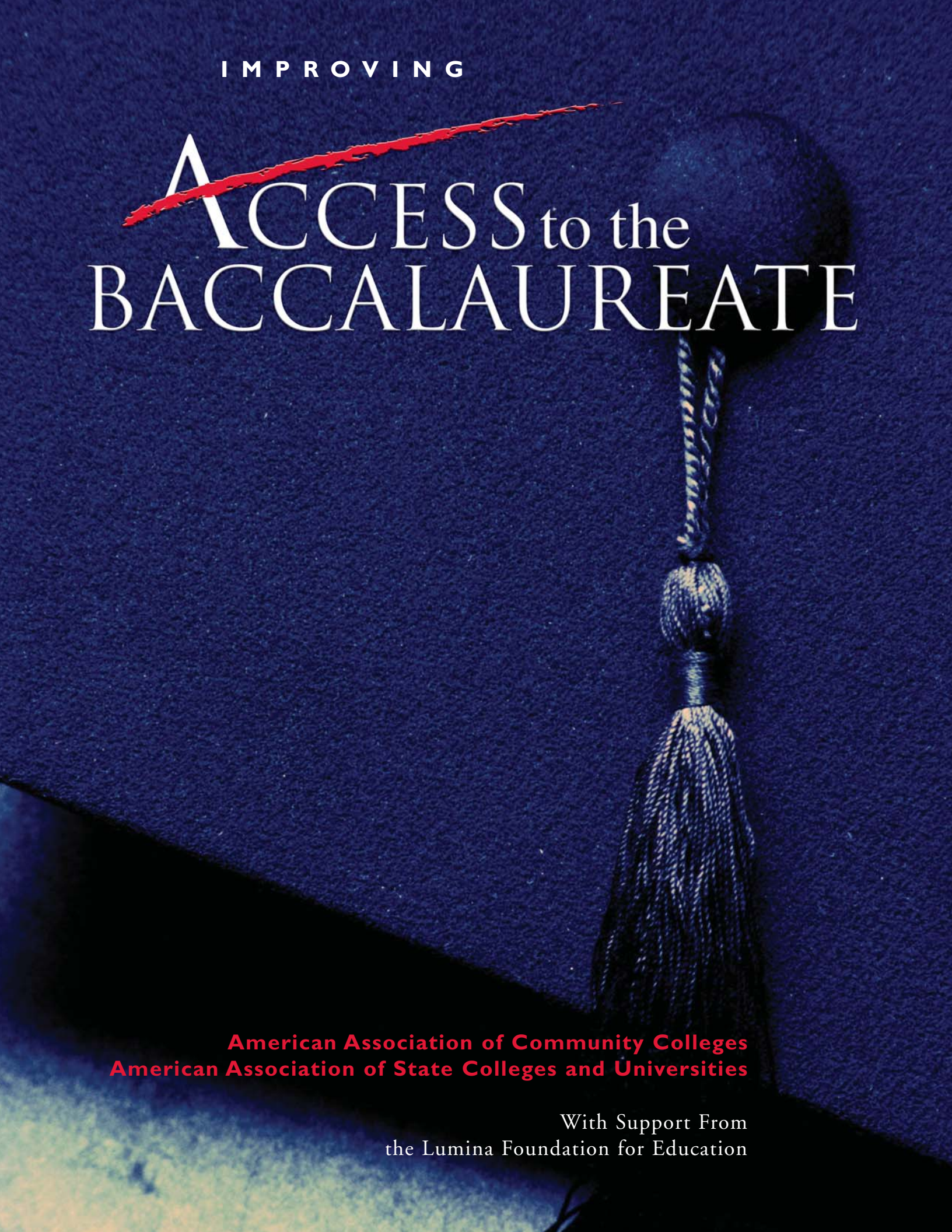

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Washington, D.C.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges. The association represents 1,100 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 10 million credit and non-credit students. AACC promotes community colleges through six strategic action areas: national and international recognition and advocacy, learning and accountability, leadership development, economic and workforce development, connectedness across AACC membership, and international and intercultural education. Information about AACC and community colleges may be found at www.aacc.nche.edu.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) represents more than 430 public colleges, universities, and systems of higher education throughout the United States and its territories. AASCU analyzes public policy and advocates for member institutions and the students they serve; promotes appreciation and support for public higher education and the distinctive contributions of its members; and provides policy leadership and program support to strengthen academic quality, promote access and inclusion, and facilitate educational innovation. Information about AASCU is available at www.aascu.org.

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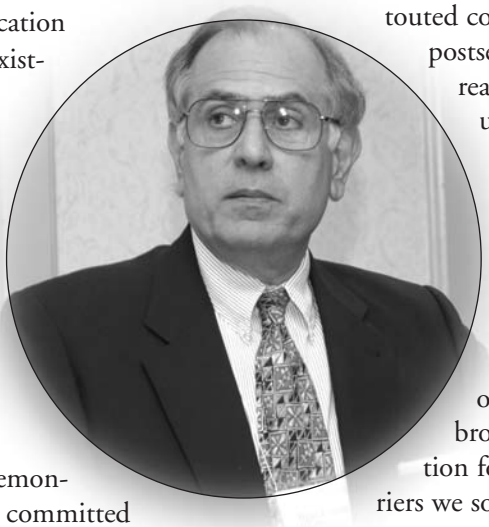
Foreword

The collaboration of the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the two national associations representing the majority of public U.S. colleges and universities, is an effort both pragmatic and symbolic. Pragmatic, in the sense that we cannot hope to realize universal access to postsecondary learning without the purposeful engagement of educators at all levels. Symbolic, in the belief that now is the time for institution leaders and others charged with ensuring access to education to act to acknowledge and remove existing barriers.

Confronting these barriers and formulating new models may take many of us out of our organizational comfort zones. The work of the associations in implementing the Access to the Baccalaureate project revealed long-standing perceptions—as well as practices and policies with unintended consequences—that will be difficult to address. But what the project also demonstrated was that given the challenge, committed educators rise to serve the common good—for students and our nation. It is that central and hopeful message that we believe is a principal outcome of our 18-month collaboration.



Unrestricted access to learning—not once but over a lifetime—is fundamental to today's academic enterprise and to the continued health of our democracy. It is our hope that the Access to the Baccalaureate partnership is but the start of an ongoing dialogue on access that will pervade institutions, systems, and state policy. More important, we hope our work will move the much touted concept of seamless and continuous postsecondary learning from rhetoric to reality. We invite our colleagues to join us in achieving that goal, and we further commit our associations to that end.

We are enormously grateful to the Lumina Foundation for Education for funding the Access to the Baccalaureate initiative and for the foundation's focused and ongoing commitment to promoting broader access to postsecondary education for those most vulnerable to the barriers we soon hope to eradicate. ❖

Sincerely

George R. Boggs
President and CEO
American Association of
Community Colleges

Sincerely

Constantine W. Curris
President
American Association of
State Colleges and Universities

Executive Summary

In an economy that is increasingly complex, fast-changing, and global, education has become the new currency, securing better futures for individuals and continued progress for our nation. Ironically, at the same time the need for higher learning has grown, barriers to accessing that learning have proliferated. Disproportionately affected are the most vulnerable members of our society who already face significant financial and social challenges—low income, limited expectations, and uneven preparation.

Although impediments to learning exist at many levels in the U.S. education system, they are of increasing concern in the transition from two-year to four-year institutions. Almost half of all undergraduates who attend college—including the majority of first-generation and minority students—attend one of the nation's community colleges. Of that number, close to half declare attaining a bachelor's degree as their goal, yet only an estimated quarter of those students manage to achieve transfer to bachelor's-level programs. In bottom-line terms, lack of transfer can mean a significant difference in individual earning power over a lifetime. Beyond economic returns, higher levels of education can translate to important personal and societal benefits, including greater job security and flexibility, better health, increased tax revenues, and higher levels of civic participation. Clearly, it is in the best interest of individuals and our society to minimize existing barriers and maximize postsecondary access.

The two national associations representing the majority of public postsecondary institutions and more than 10 million students, recently formed a partnership to bring greater focus to the problem of access and to encourage both expanded dialogue and informed action. With funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education, the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities launched an 18-month initiative called "Access to the Baccalaureate."

The Access project set three major goals: to identify nonfinancial barriers to baccalaureate access, to make recommendations for removing such barriers, and to work at appropriate levels to implement solutions. To achieve these goals, the partnership developed and implemented a number of key components: a research study to assess attitudes and perceived barriers; a national conference engaging experts from two- and four-year institutions, state systems, and states to analyze the survey's findings and contribute their own insights; and a strategic information dissemination program via a summative publication, an interactive Web site, and a "meeting in a box" model that can be replicated at multiple levels of the higher education spectrum.

What was learned from the Access project is both challenging and hopeful. Participants identified five broad categories to define barriers: the nontraditional profile of community college students, differing academic missions and institutional capacity between two-year and four-year institutions, faculty attitudes at sending and receiving institutions, inadequate advising and student support services, and current state and system policy decisions. Central to a formidable list of barriers are lack of understanding and open communication between sectors. Many university faculty assume a lack of rigor in community college instruction and a lack of equivalency in course offerings. For their part, many community college faculty maintain a defensiveness and decry the ivory tower attitude of their four-year counterparts. Endemic in these so-called turf battles is a lack of ongoing dialogue and clear communication of curricular changes

and prerequisites that negatively affect the articulation process and, ultimately, students.

Additional barriers to transfer success revolve around institutions' culture and capacity, particularly during a period of deep and persistent state budget cuts. Although both two-year and four-year institutions share many common characteristics and goals, educators noted discernable differences in cultures. Community colleges are geared more toward students who are older, from lower-income groups, the first of their generation to attend college, employed, and attend college part time. Universities are geared more to traditional high school graduates who are younger and attend full time. Before and after arriving at the university, transfer students often face inadequate advising and other support services that might smooth the acculturation process and help with early intervention should they falter. At the university level, reduced capacity can lead to a limited number of slots for transfer students or preferences given to "native" students in high-demand programs. For both community colleges and four-year institutions, decreased state funding translates to limited capacity, often impeding persistence and lengthening a student's time to completion.

Policy decisions add yet another dimension to the access issue. The Access project highlighted a lack of understanding among state and federal policymakers of who is attending today's two- and four-year colleges and how policy action or inaction makes access to the baccalaureate difficult or protracted. Problems such as weak or nonexistent coordination between public and postsecondary institutions, too few incentives to encourage cooperation between sectors, a lack of communication and alignment between high school standards and college entrance requirements, and cumbersome or deleterious financial aid policies significantly limit both access and success for students.

And yet a cautious optimism persists. Amid a litany of complex, multi-layered barriers, the Access project identified a growing number of models, programs, and policy innovations that may provide a blueprint for improving access and the transfer process. Many states are effecting a better alignment between K–12 and postsecondary sectors and between two-year and four-year institutions, including common course numbering and common core curricula to streamline articulation. Twenty-one states have turned to postsecondary options such as comprehensive dual-enrollment programs or middle colleges to reduce overall per-student cost and encourage increased postsecondary enrollment. Other states are expanding focus on better student assessment, both at public and postsecondary levels.

This report, *Improving Access to the Baccalaureate*, offers what is intended to be a realistic and candid assessment of both problems and possible solutions. The overriding objective of the partnership is to encourage new ways of thinking about old problems and significantly increase proactive collaboration. Specific recommendations based on the best thinking of nationally representative experts conclude the findings. A list of the experts who participated in the various phases of the Access project is included. These experts can provide insights to support local and regional efforts. Meeting planning models and information resources to jumpstart such efforts are available through the partnership Web site at www.pathtocollege.org.

The credibility and effectiveness of the American higher education system—long the strength of our democracy and a model for the world—are on the line. Unique to the nature of that system is the implicit promise that educational opportunity and the better quality of life it brings are open to all. Universal access, then, becomes both our standard and our pledge. We must work together to keep our promise to today's and future students. ❖

Overview

The Baccalaureate Mandate

Structural shifts in the U.S. economy make education in general and postsecondary education in particular necessary for anyone who wants to command more than the minimum wage. The concentration of jobs and the education required for the best-paying occupations are radically different today from what they were less than two decades ago (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). High-paying blue-collar jobs available to workers who have only a high school diploma are rapidly disappearing, whereas the availability of knowledge jobs that require at least some college and technical skills has increased dramatically. In today's global economy, industrial jobs are moving overseas at an ever-increasing pace.

For most Americans, the route to the middle class is through postsecondary education and training. On average, a worker with an associate degree will earn 20% to 30% more than a high school graduate, and a worker with a baccalaureate will earn 40% more than a high school graduate (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). Increased economic returns in the form of wages and benefits lead to greater job flexibility, improved working conditions, lower rates of unemployment, and increased tax revenues, which in turn lead to greater productivity, lower crime rates, and decreased reliance on government support. Higher levels of education also correlate with improved health and life expectancy, increased civic participation rates, improved social status, and greater levels of charitable giving (Hungar & Lieberman, 2001).

Young people are getting the message. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1977 only 50% of high school students went on to college. By 1997, 99% of high-income high school students and 94% of low-income high school students planned to attend postsecondary institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).

It is now widely acknowledged that postsecondary education has become essential to achieve economic success in America (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). Paradoxically, however, high school graduates are facing significantly more barriers to acquiring a baccalaureate. Addressing this paradox is the goal of a new partnership between the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). With funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education, these two national associations, which represent the majority of U.S. public colleges and some 10 million students, launched the "Access to the Baccalaureate" project. Its purposes are to

- identify nonfinancial barriers to the baccalaureate at the state, system, and institution levels,
- make recommendations for removing such barriers, and
- work with institutions and policymakers to implement solutions.

Access to the Baccalaureate Project

The two national associations began their collaboration on this issue in December 2001, when AACC

and AASCU leaders committed their organizations to finding institutional solutions to the challenges related to successful transfer of community college students to four-year colleges and universities. Approximately 25 AACC and AASCU institutional representatives convened in Memphis to examine areas of common concern as well as sector-specific situations. The following sections describe the three major activities that define AACC's and AASCU's access to the baccalaureate work, with Lumina support, since 2002.

Research

To identify the obstacles to the associate degree's universal acceptance as the equivalent of the first two years of university study, and to suggest specific steps at the state, system, and institution levels that might address these barriers, AACC and AASCU collaborated on a survey of their respective memberships, comprising presidents and other administrators, faculty, and others at two- and four-year colleges. The survey demonstrated a high degree of consensus that significant barriers persist that create unintended obstacles to student success at the state, system, and institution levels. Although some variations of priority between four- and two-year institutions were indicated, there was broad agreement as to the obstacles themselves (see Table 1). The quantitative part of the study revealed consensus on the following unintended barriers:

- Reluctance of four-year institutions to accept coursework associated with associate in applied science (AAS) degree programs
- Lack of child care at four-year institutions
- Unavailability of course offerings at times convenient to transfer and nontraditional students
- Lack of financial aid packages structured specifically for adult or independent students
- Admission requirements within programs at four-year institutions that exceed general education requirements for those institutions.

There were, of course, differences of opinion about the source and extent of barriers between the two sectors. Extensive correlation testing of the survey data across many external variables led to the conclusion that the differences of opinion are "principally attributable to" respondents being from one or the other type of school. In other words, faculty and staff attitudes and understandings about the other sector, at both kinds of institutions, are part of the problem in limiting students' access to the baccalaureate. (A complete description of the survey and a summary of results can be found at www.pathtocollege.org.)

Table 1. Ranking of Obstacles by Four- and Two-Year Institutions

Obstacles	Rank Four-Year Institutions	Rank Two-Year Institutions
Articulation	1	2
Reliable Information/Advising	2	1
Program-Specific Transfer	**3**	**3**
General Education	**4**	**4**
AAS/Technical Education Transfer	**5**	**5**
Access/Distance Education	6	7
Cost/Financial Aid	7	6

Note. Data are from a research survey conducted by AACC and AASCU (2002). Available at http://www.pathtocollege.org/pdf/RESEAR.pdf

Outreach Activities

Another major activity of the project has been outreach to promote the use of one-day workshops, also called meetings-in-a-box or workshops-in-a-box, by other education organizations. State education officials, coordinating board professionals, college registrars, prior-learning-assessment officers, deans, department heads, and academic senate officers all have professional organizations. These organizations hold regular meetings, usually for professional development purposes, to help keep their members current in their respective fields. Preplanned meetings developed during the project can help such organizations design, develop, and implement dialogues that address the access to the baccalaureate issue within the appropriate context. Colleges and other interested organizations can more easily mount local or regional conferences to discuss the relevant issues and develop implementation ideas adapted from presentations given at AACC and AASCU meetings. (See www.pathtocollege.org/workshop.html for more information.)

National Conference

To further explore the findings of the survey, AACC and AASCU held an invitational conference May 14–16, 2003, in Washington, DC. Campus, state, and national experts were identified who could articulate good problem analysis and possible solutions. The 86 participants who attended included professionals from four- and two-year colleges and universities, from state systems, and from national policy organizations (see Appendix C for a list of participants).

Participants self-selected task group assignments to explore in depth five individual yet interrelated issues:

- Transferability
- Advising for transfer
- Access
- Student support services
- Public policy

Each group was asked to perform the following tasks:

1. Define the issue orally in no more than two paragraphs.
2. Discuss perceived barriers to the issue, which in turn present barriers to access to the baccalaureate
3. Identify innovative ideas and possible solutions for overcoming the barriers, including existing practices.
4. Identify other considerations or linkages: Who or what sources could be consulted in developing the solution to the barriers?
5. Identify cautions and concerns about proposed solutions.
6. Propose policy and practice recommendations for state, system, and institution leaders.
7. Articulate the five major, or key, points for the issue under consideration.

Following in-group analysis and discussion, task groups drafted individual reports, and all participants convened to present their findings. Summaries of task group discussions are provided in Appendix A. A synthesis of conference conclusions and recommendations is presented in the next two sections of this report. ❖

Conference Report

Barriers to the Baccalaureate

Despite the growth and expansion of articulation and transfer policies and practices, many barriers persist that discourage the smooth movement of students from the two-year to the four-year sector. Conference participants identified five categories of barriers that serve as roadblocks to the successful attainment of the baccalaureate for too many community college students:

- The nontraditional profile of community college students
- Differing academic missions and institution capacity issues
- Faculty attitudes and perceptions at sending and receiving institutions
- Inadequate advising and student support services
- Existing state and system policy barriers.

The Nontraditional Profile of Community College Students

Whereas the public perception of a college student is of an 18-year-old single student living in a dormitory while attending college full time, the national profile for a community college student is quite different (see Table 2 for a comparison of two-year and four-year student profiles). In 1998, 50.5% of all students attending community colleges were students whose parents' highest level of education was a high school diploma or less. These first-generation college students were more likely to be older, have lower incomes, be married and have dependents than were their non-first-generation peers (NCES, 1998). First-generation college students also often face the challenge of having a limited number of positive role models.

Exacerbating students' struggles are the fiscal realities: The majority of community college students are drawn from families in lower-income quartiles who are particularly sensitive to increases in college tuition. Lack of financial aid set aside for transfer students makes these challenges acute. Both four- and two-year institutions should make information about financial aid opportunities readily available to students. First-generation college students are often dissuaded from transferring to a university to finish the baccalaureate because of widespread misperceptions about the costs of attending a university. Some effective strategies for working with first-generation college students include enhanced counseling, targeted advising services, use of faculty advisors, and coordinated studies programs.

Advisors need to be aware of and sensitive to the specific needs of older students. Because community colleges work with older students more frequently than do four-year colleges, community colleges can also share information on specific student services that are important to the adult learner. Four-year institutions can become more aware of multicultural students and ensure that adequate student services exist to deal with their specific needs. Advisors can develop a multicultural perspective, perhaps through in-service training.

Differing Academic Missions and Institution Capacity Issues

Although the open-door mission of the community college is one of its strengths, its supportive second-chance institutional culture can be markedly different

Table 2. A Demographic Comparison of Students in Two- and Four-Year Institutions

Profile of Two-Year Student

- The average community college student is 29 years old, attends college part time (fewer than 12 credit hours a semester), and holds down a full-time job.
- Sixty-three percent of the 11.3 million students who attend community colleges annually are enrolled part time, whereas only 37% attend full time (12+ credit hours a semester).
- Of those who do attend college full time, 30% also hold a full-time job.
- Fifty-eight percent of community college students are women; many have significant family responsibilities that are exacerbated by the difficulties of finding child care.
- Fifty-five percent of Latino and Native American undergraduates and 46% of all Black undergraduates attend a community college.

Profile of Four-Year Student

- The average public four-year student begins postsecondary studies at age 21.
- Full-time students represent 79% of undergraduate enrollment at public four-year institutions.
- More than half of public four-year undergraduate students (55.9%) enroll full time and work part time.
- Students who work full time and enroll part time account for approximately 20% of public four-year undergraduates.
- Women account for 55% of public four-year undergraduate enrollments; many have significant family responsibilities that are exacerbated by the difficulties of finding child care.
- Public four-year institutions enroll 31.4% of all Black undergraduates; 35.1% of Latino undergraduates; 34.3% of Native American undergraduates; and 36.9% of Asian/Pacific Islander undergraduates.

Note. Data on two-year students are from AACC (2000); data on four-year students are from IPEDS (2002) and NPSAS (2000).

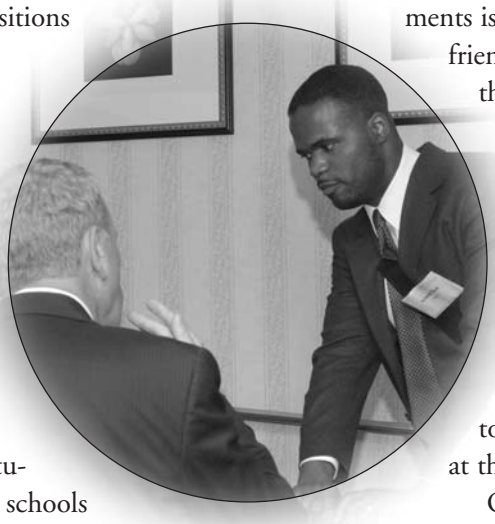
from that of most four-year institutions. This difference can serve as a real barrier to students seeking to transfer. For students who earn the more traditional associate in arts and associate in science academic transfer degrees, in many states there are increasingly limited slots available for transfer students at four-year colleges and universities because of state budget cuts and unfunded enrollment growth. This is particularly true for selective universities or high-demand programs that might already have long waiting lists of native students who enrolled as freshmen, resulting in limited slots for students who arrive as upper-division transfer students. Additionally, those community college courses that tend to focus on applied practical learning and skills building are fundamentally different from the research-oriented curricula at a traditional university. Occupational courses and applied degrees such as the associate in applied science and other similar applied technical programs are often difficult to articulate with related programs at the university.

Even when lower-division course credits transfer and are accepted in fulfillment of general education requirements, university departments often do not count such community college credits toward the academic major. The result is that transfer students are often required to repeat or take additional classes or prerequisites, resulting in unnecessary financial burdens to the state, as well as to students and their families. Clear and timely communication of changes in requirements is also an issue. Changes in faculty or program requirements might result in curricular changes and prerequisites at the university and might require significant renegotiation of voluntary articulation agreements with a host of feeder community colleges. Strong and clear articulation agreements between institutions are helpful. Additional strategies might include dual admission, common course numbering, optimizing the amount of credit accepted in transfer, and keeping community college students from transferring prior to obtaining an associate degree. Recent research suggests that community college students who earn more than 10 credits from the community college are far more likely to persist at the four-year institution (Adelman, 2004).

Faculty Attitudes and Perceptions at Sending and Receiving Institutions

Parochial views of the value of a specific institution's courses and credentials rooted in the tradition of academic freedom are all too common with faculty at two- and four-year colleges, making collaboration problematic. An uninformed prejudice and lack of respect for community college faculty credentials persists among too many university faculties. Some universities give preference to their own native students for admission into high-demand majors or automatically discount transfer credits earned at a community college, reflecting university faculty assumptions about a lack of rigor in community college instruction. A lack of internal communication among departments within institutions and inadequate partnering to leverage resources among departments and between institutions and the communities they serve create additional barriers that make student transitions difficult.

Community college faculty and staff respond to the perceived stigma with their own disdain for the ivory tower and a defensiveness that interferes with honest communication and cooperation among institutions and faculty groups. Ironically, many community college faculty members are equally disdainful of the academic rigor of academic credits earned by students at technical or adult vocational schools that are often operated under the aegis of public education systems. Such political turf arguments result in the divisive and false dichotomy of access versus quality battles that are waged in legislative appropriations hearings in state capitols across the nation. Another issue related to faculty support for college transfer students is the increasing reliance at two- and four-year colleges and universities on hiring adjuncts as instructors, leaving fewer full-time faculty members to participate on articulation committees or to serve as mentors or advisors to students.



Inadequate Advising and Student Support Services

Beyond academic turf issues, serious barriers exist that result from inadequate student advising and support at two- and four-year institutions. There is a lack of awareness at four-year colleges of the barriers that transfer students face and of misperceptions that these students do not need as much help as do freshmen because they have already "succeeded" in college. These attitudes are exacerbated by rigid university bureaucracies that are confusing and intimidating to new transfer students and do not take into account the challenges and insecurities experienced by students operating in a new environment.

Inconsistent information provided by faculty and staff at the sending and receiving institutions makes it difficult for transfer students to make informed decisions. Both types of institutions could make more meaningful, comprehensive, and accessible information about the transfer process available to students. Accurate information on transfer requirements is often inaccessible or is not user-friendly. Confusion abounds over who is the academic advisor—students seek and receive advice from numerous people on and off campus. Advisors themselves often have too little or incorrect information, or are simply unavailable to students seeking assistance with transfer questions. Even with well-trained advisors, transfer issues can be highly specific to institutions and difficult to address at the system level.

Once a student makes the transition to a four-year setting, early intervention may be lacking for students struggling with academic performance or adjustment to the new college environment. Too often, student support services and academics lack integration at community colleges and universities, creating artificial barriers that are not in the best interests of students.

State and System Policy Barriers

Weak or nonexistent state-level coordination of public postsecondary institutions often results in inconsistent statewide higher education policies and institution practices that create significant barriers to student movement between systems and colleges. In too many states, funding and accountability policies

provide few incentives to encourage cooperation and student movement between education sectors or institutions.

A lack of communication and alignment between high school graduation standards and college entrance requirements can result in poor performance by recent high school graduates on college placement tests. Consequences of this misalignment are that many students spend limited postsecondary financial aid on developmental or remedial courses at the community college that do not transfer to a four-year institution. The use of different placement tests at each institution, complicated by inconsistent cut-off scores and placement standards is at best confusing for students who require remediation; at worst, these practices result in widely differing student outcomes, even among like institutions across a state.

Inadequate or nonexistent student unit data systems to track students across K–16 education sectors make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide the sending institution with timely feedback, whether it is a high school or community college. The same is true regarding data on the subsequent performance of the sending institution's graduates. When student-tracking data do exist, they are rarely disaggregated, making it impossible for policymakers and educators to determine whether significant student performance and retention problems exist among high-risk student populations.

Cumbersome financial aid rules and requirements tend to impede rather than encourage students from transferring and completing a degree. Increasingly worrisome is the significant shift from need-based to merit-based financial aid in many states, making it more difficult for low-income students to qualify for the financial assistance they need in order to cover the spiraling costs of student tuition and fees. The shift to greater dependence on loans than on grants is also troublesome for many students. In addition to the burden of assuming debt, many first-generation students come from families that frown on borrowing money at all. Finally, the difficulty of interpreting accreditation requirements, especially those developed by specialized agencies, can sometimes discourage university departments from framing articulation agreements that ensure the acceptance of community college credits toward the academic major.

Promising Policy and Practice Initiatives

Although barriers to student movement and success loom large and might on occasion seem insurmountable, policymakers and institution leaders from two- and four-year colleges in many parts of the country have bridged such obstacles. Conference participants identified four types of state policy initiatives that seem to be particularly important in supporting the development of seamless two- to four-year student transitions:

- Easing the transition from K–12 into higher education
- An increased focus on student learning and outcomes assessment
- State policies that foster better two- to four-year alignment
- Institutional initiatives that promote greater alignment and retention and improve access

A network of promising new policies and practices is emerging that might provide a roadmap for other states and institutions interested in promoting access to the baccalaureate. Specific examples of some of these policies and practices are provided throughout this section.

Easing the Transition From K–12 Into Higher Education

Long before students set their sights on earning a baccalaureate, they first have to aspire to graduate from high school and believe that postsecondary education is attainable and available to them. They also need to have the reading, writing, and math skills they will need to be successful when they enter college. Unfortunately, too many recent high school graduates are coming into postsecondary education, diploma in hand, without mastery of these basic skills. Many states, however, have taken on the challenge of better alignment between K–12 and postsecondary expectations, and promising models are beginning to be implemented.

According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS; 2002), 27 states have defined course requirements for high school graduation and college admission; 18 states have begun defining an optional

Example 1

Concerned about low college-going rates in the state, the Arkansas legislature has instituted a series of directives supporting increased education attainment and alignment. Colleges and universities are directed to work with the public schools to organize information sessions about postsecondary options for seventh graders and their parents. Conferences are scheduled with students and parents to define the student's education objectives and to develop a course of study for the student in grades 8 through 12.

Example 2

The Nebraska commissioner of education and the president of the University of Nebraska system send out an annual letter to all eighth graders listing requirements for college readiness.

curriculum or advanced diploma plan that aligns the number of courses required for high school graduation with those required for college admission and specifies the courses necessary to be well prepared. Two states, Oklahoma and Tennessee, have fully aligned graduation requirements with college admissions requirements, increasing the chance that high school graduates will be prepared for college-level work.

States across the nation are turning to postsecondary enrollment options—often known as dual-enrollment or concurrent enrollment—to ease the transition from high school into college. Such options allow high school students to earn college credit either by enrolling in college-endorsed classes taught at the high school or by taking classes on local two- or four-year college campuses or via distance learning. Policymakers are increasingly interested in such programs because of the following perceived benefits:

- Reducing college tuition costs for students and their families
- Accelerating student progress toward a degree in order to free up space in colleges
- Providing greater academic challenge to high school seniors who have lost their motivation
- Encouraging greater collaboration between high school and college faculty members
- Increasing students' aspirations to go to college
- Providing greater academic opportunities for students at small rural schools
- Building closer ties between colleges and their communities

Twenty-one states across the country have created comprehensive dual- or concurrent enrollment programs in which high school students can take college courses while earning credit toward high school graduation. An additional 25 states have more limited programs that allow high school students to enroll but enforce academic credit or eligibility restriction (ECS, 2001a).

Example 3

In 1990, the state of Washington established the statewide Running Start program, one of the most extensive dual-enrollment programs in the nation. Running Start permits high school juniors and seniors to enroll in challenging college-level courses at community college campuses at minimal cost. Because K–12 basic education funds are used, students who participated in 1998–1999 are estimated to have saved $12.5 million in college tuition costs. Taxpayers also benefit significantly by paying only once to support Running Start students in high school and college. It is estimated that this two-for-one aspect of Running Start saved taxpayers $24.6 million in 1998–1999 (Crossland, 1999).

Example 4

Utah's New Century scholarship program pays 75% of a high school student's college tuition for two years of upper-division work at any public college or university in the state, if the student earns the equivalent of an associate degree through dual- or concurrent enrollment credits by September 1 of the year of high school graduation.

The middle college movement is a program in which secondary students attend two years of high school on a college campus. Middle colleges aim not only at high-achieving students, but also at middle- and low-performing students. According to a recent report, 95% of students who enter New York City's LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School Program in the ninth grade graduate; 90% go on to college (Kleinman, 2001).

Example 5

In Ohio, Sinclair Community College and the University of Dayton have generous dual-enrollment programs. When community college manufacturing technology students are accepted into the dual-enrollment program, they receive University of Dayton identification cards that give them access to the university's library and athletic facilities. When they transfer as juniors, not only are their Sinclair credits accepted, but they also receive a 33% discount on tuition.

An Increased Focus on Student Learning and Outcomes Assessment

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education's National Commission on the High School Senior Year reported that fewer seniors are graduating from high school with a traditional academic diploma and that about half of those graduates who go on to postsecondary education need remediation. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has spurred far greater attention to assessment in the K–12 system and has stimulated the adoption in 27 states of mandated high-stakes tests that must be passed by high school students before graduation (ECS, 2002). As state policymakers become more involved in pushing improved student outcomes in the K–12 system, they are increasingly concerned about whether their efforts will reduce the need for remediation and improve student performance in postsecondary education.

Example 6

The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 1988 that required the Maryland Higher Education Commission to improve information to local school systems concerning the performance of their graduates at the college level. In 1990 the commission established the Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR) to track student outcomes at the state level and to help local educators with the evaluation of high school preparatory programs and curriculum development. SOAR data is reported annually to county superintendents and principals on how well students from their particular schools performed at the college level.

At least seven states (Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and West Virginia) have policies that mandate college placement tests for all freshmen in public postsecondary institutions and establish how well students must do on those assessments in order to take college-level courses (State Higher Education Executive Officers, 1997). Maryland designated one placement test and set a benchmark cut-off score to be used at all community colleges. Other states have set minimum scores on the SAT or ACT, and students who do not meet the minimum requirements are assessed further to determine whether they need remedial placement in math, English, or writing.

A Southern Regional Education Board report on College Readiness (Southern Regional Education Board, 2000) indicates that some states allow multiple tests with different scores on these tests to determine academic placement. Others, such as Georgia and Oklahoma, use statewide standards as a broad measure—a first cut—in determining remedial need, then allow colleges and universities to administer additional assessments to gauge students' skills and place them in the proper courses more accurately. Increasing numbers of states are putting policies in place to discourage four-year colleges and universities from offering remedial classes, by mandating that such classes receive no state support and that students pay the full cost of instruction. Students who need remediation are directed to community colleges. Colorado, Florida, and South Carolina offer remedial classes only at the community college level. At least three states (Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana) have state laws that include financial incentives for colleges and universities to reduce the number of students needing remedial education (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2001).

Six states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas) have established statewide tests to measure postsecondary student learning. Sometimes called "rising junior tests," these exams typically require a student to demonstrate mastery of college-level skills in reading, writing, and mathematics before beginning upper-division coursework.

Although the K–12 system has taken the brunt of policymakers' criticism on issues related to student preparation, higher education is not immune from criticism about poor student outcomes at colleges and universities. Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, once made the observation that colleges and universities are far better at measuring what students

know when they enter our institutions than when they leave. All 50 states received a grade of incomplete in the category of assessing student learning in the Measuring Up 2000 and Measuring Up 2002—higher education report cards issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

State Policies That Foster Better Two- to Four-Year Alignment

With nearly half of all students now starting their postsecondary experience at a community college, creating seamless pathways that will allow these students to easily transition into a four-year college will be critical if states are to achieve their goals of increased baccalaureate attainment. Increasing numbers of states have policy initiatives that mandate that associate and baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities work together as equal partners in providing the first two years of bachelor's programs.

Example 7

In Wisconsin, faculty from K–12 schools, the vocational-technical colleges, and the university system have come together to examine the three different sets of standards used by the different sectors and to identify gaps and inconsistencies that serve as barriers to transitions between education sectors.

Example 8

Metropolitan State University, in Minnesota, has been charged with supporting and assessing the formal education experience of Minnesota students, as represented in transcripts, experiential learning, and so on. Metropolitan State aggregates those credits, advises students about their options for attaining a baccalaureate, develops degree plans, offers and prescribes courses (online and otherwise), facilitates support services, and awards baccalaureates in general studies and a limited number of other fields.

Creating a single set of expectations for postsecondary general education courses across all public two- and four-year colleges and universities is the goal of states that adopt a common core curriculum. Twenty-three states have adopted a common general education core of classes with consistent rigor that significantly streamlines the transfer and articulation process between institutions by eliminating confusion caused by differing requirements at institutions. Eight states have created common course numbering systems that typically define core competencies and curricular content for the most common general education classes statewide, further ensuring that courses taken by community college students in preparation for transfer are more likely to be aligned and accepted at a receiving university (ECS, 2001b). The eight states are as follows: Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, and Wyoming.

Example 9

In the early 1970s, the Florida legislature passed into law a common course numbering system for all public institutions of higher education. This means that any student who takes an "English 101" class, for example, at any state college can transfer credit for that class to any other state college. That, in turn, means that all of Florida's public colleges are involved in a two-plus-two partnership. To ensure that students are on even ground, the state requires that all college juniors pass the College Level Academic Skills Test. The state also offers university centers on community college campuses that allow students to complete a four-year degree on the two-year college campus. The centers offer a limited number of degrees and serve a segment of the population that cannot or will not travel to a four-year campus.

Example 10

In Virginia, Lord Fairfax Community College, Northern Virginia Community College, Rappahannock Community College, and Mary Washington College have new direct transfer agreements that explicitly guarantee admission for qualified community college graduates into the bachelor's of professional studies program at Mary Washington College.

Twenty-six states have established statewide articulation guides, often available on the Internet, that clearly define requirements that prospective transfer students need to fulfill before transfering (ECS, 2001b). Maryland's ARTSYS serves as an online computerized data information system informing students about the transferability of each course offered at every public two- and four-year college and university

in the state. The Transfer Information Program at the City University of New York is an automated system for analyzing a student's credits and their transferability to potential four-year destinations.

Example 11

In the early 1990s Illinois established the Illinois Articulation Initiative to identify common curriculum requirements across associate and baccalaureate programs and across institutions in order to facilitate student transfer. Today all 60 public postsecondary institutions (12 universities and 48 community colleges) and 47 private institutions participate. In 1998, a general education core curriculum made up of five fields became effective statewide with the assurance that successful completion of these core courses at any participating college or university in the state of Illinois will facilitate transfer to another participating associate or baccalaureate program. Community colleges incorporate the core curriculum into their requirements for AA and AS degrees, whereas baccalaureate institutions build on the transferable core by identifying major and prerequisite courses that students need to complete to transfer as a junior into the specific major.

Example 12

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) and the University of Baltimore (UB) have signed an articulation agreement that will offer students greater access to baccalaureate opportunities at UB. The new agreement ensures a simplified credit-transfer process from CCBC to UB and will facilitate matriculated students' completion of baccalaureate programs.

Thirty-three states require public higher education institutions to report on transfer rates between two- and four-year colleges and universities, and, in some cases, they require universities to report to community colleges on the performance of their graduates (ECS, 2001b). Recognizing the important stake held by faculty at two-and four-year institutions in ensuring the academic quality of the curriculum, many states have established statewide articulation committees, usually organized by academic discipline, that meet to establish common expectations for curricula across institutions and to negotiate statewide articulation agreements that ease the transition of students through the system.

Institutional Initiatives That Promote Greater Alignment and Retention and Improve Access

Despite the stated intentions of 42% of community college students to earn a baccalaureate, the average percentage of students who actually transfer to a four-year institution has hovered at about 26% for years. U.S. Department of Education research indicates that once these students transfer, they graduate at the same rate as do students who start their baccalaureate education at a four-year college. The troubling aspect for many education leaders, however, is finding ways to bridge the gap between the community college and university. Colleges and universities across the country have undertaken a range of initiatives to accomplish that goal.

Example 13

Prospective community college students in New Jersey who indicate a desire to transfer ultimately to Rutgers University, the state's flagship public university, are able to apply for joint admissions, where they are given a provisional admittance to Rutgers at the same time they are accepted at the community college. They are assigned a university advisor who works with their community college advisor to help the student design a course of study that will transfer seamlessly from the community college into the desired major at the university, assuming the student maintains an agreed-upon GPA. Subsequent transfer and retention rates are significantly better than those at other universities that do not have joint admissions programs.

Place-bound students who are interested in attaining a baccalaureate or graduate degree but who are unable or uninterested in relocating to a traditional university campus are benefiting from the growth of university centers based on community college campuses. Under the university center model, university faculty members teach upper-division courses in person or via distance education leading to a baccalaureate or graduate degree. The degree is awarded by the sponsoring four-year institution, in facilities operated by the local community college. A similar approach is to locate two- and four-year institutions on the same campus. Each has separate control of curriculum and staffing, but they collaborate to make better use of student services, advisement, and facilities.

Example 14

Macomb Community College in Michigan offers 26 baccalaureates and 17 master's degrees from 10 universities ranging from the University of Michigan to Wayne State. Lorain County Community College in Ohio has entered into partnerships with the University of Toledo and Bowling Green State University to offer a computer science and engineering degree and a biology degree, respectively, entirely on the Lorain campus. Greenville Technical College, South Carolina, operates a university center offering more than 500 courses during evenings and weekends year-round, in more than 46 undergraduate and graduate degree programs from seven different South Carolina four-year colleges and universities.

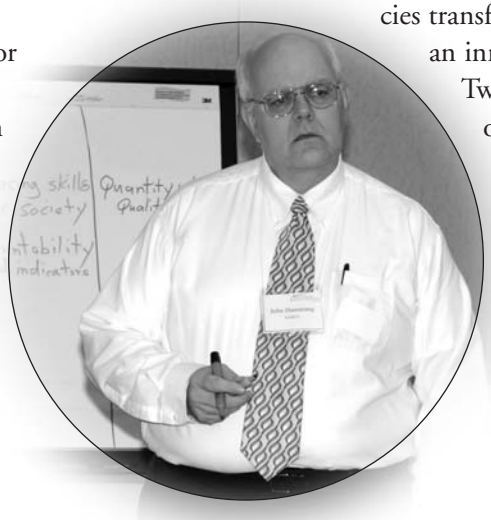
Example 15

Western Arizona Community College in Yuma, Arizona, has entered into a K–16 education partnership with Northern Arizona University and the local K–12 public education districts to create a shared education facility where students can move seamlessly between institutions. Community college and university faculty from various academic disciplines are housed together, and a one-stop student services center provides seamless support for the two institutions.

Example 16

College students in Denver, Colorado, benefit from the education offerings of three separate higher education institutions sharing one metropolitan campus at the Auraria Higher Education Center in downtown Denver. The Community College of Denver, Metropolitan State College, and the University of Colorado at Denver share the 126-acre campus that provides separate classroom facilities for the three institutions, with shared library and student union space.

Demand in some communities for access to baccalaureate education in high-demand fields such as education and nursing is so acute that legislatures in a few states have authorized local community colleges to develop and offer selected baccalaureates. Great Basin Community College, in Nevada, offers a baccalaureate in teacher education and is developing a nursing baccalaureate. St. Petersburg College, Chipola College, and Miami Dade College, in Florida, have been authorized by the Florida legislature to develop selected high-demand baccalaureates.



In Maryland, two- and four-year institutions collaborated in the development of an associate of arts in teaching. Rather than attempting course-to-course articulations, they developed a list of competencies necessary for students to be accepted into junior-level status at four-year teacher preparation programs. Students from any community college who have completed a program covering the designated competencies transfer with no loss of credits. In Arizona an innovative partnership has emerged: Two- and four-year institutions collaborate to align general education requirements, grant full status at the four-year institution to students, and offer integrated registration and payment systems and student services. ❖

Policy and Practice Recommendations

Recommendations for College and University Leaders

- Given the data that show more successful baccalaureate retention and completion for students who transfer after achieving the associate degree, create financial incentives by guaranteeing admission at the four-year institution and by discounting tuition for community college students who complete the associate degree before transferring.
- Encourage joint admissions (at two- and four-year colleges) and dual financial aid programs to increase the number of students completing the baccalaureate.
- Increase the number of scholarships set aside for transfer students.
- Provide students with easy access to accurate, timely, and consistent advising information that persists throughout their education experience and that is available face-to-face and over multiple media delivery systems and sources. Employ technology efficiently to maximize human and information resources.
- Place a higher priority on assessing and meeting students' prescriptive and developmental needs while reflecting and affirming the diversity of students, their backgrounds, and experiences. Mandate student assessment and placement of students needing remediation, and establish consistent cut-off scores among like institutions across a state.
- Put structures in place to facilitate ongoing communication among all stakeholders and across and within institutions and systems regarding advising and transfer issues. Increase opportunities for advisors to participate in developing transfer policies and procedures and increase training for staff and faculty, especially in developmental advising.
- Encourage accrediting bodies to promote transfer and access to the baccalaureate as a standard of excellence.
- Track retention, transfer, and successful completion rates as an essential part of institutional accountability systems. Facilitate the evaluation and disaggregation of student outcome data by ethnic group, age, and other student characteristics. Base all institutional accountability measures on current research and exemplary practices and monitor on an ongoing basis.

Recommendations for State and System Policy Leaders

- Allocate sufficient fiscal and human resources to adequately address the growing population of transfer students. State funding for higher education must support anticipated undergraduate enrollment access and growth.
- Develop K–16 strategies that focus on college readiness, success with students in at-risk situations, and the alignment of high school graduation standards with college admissions expectations. All high school curricula should be college preparatory, regardless of whether it is for a technical career or has a traditional emphasis.
- Provide incentives to high schools and colleges

to encourage collaboration across sectors in providing additional postsecondary enrollment options to high school students, including advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual- or concurrent enrollment, and middle college programs.
- Fund the establishment of statewide student unit record data systems that will allow students to be tracked between sectors and institutions and into the workplace, but while also protecting students' privacy.
- Establish a systemwide common general education core curriculum and, where feasible, common course numbering systems for general education. Transferability of general education requirements should be based on satisfactory completion of required outcomes (knowledge, skills, values, and competencies) rather than course-by-course evaluations, and the associate degree should be recognized as having fulfilled lower-division general education requirements.
- Set up faculty curriculum committees by academic discipline to negotiate statewide two-plus-two articulation agreements between academic majors, encouraging the faculty interaction and collaboration at sending and receiving institutions that is critical to building trust among faculty groups.
- Create an online clearinghouse among state four-year institutions advertising placements available to transfer students so that students unable to enter their college of first choice would be immediately aware of alternative baccalaureate enrollment options.
- Expand alternative methods for assessing and awarding academic credit for student learning, no matter how that learning is achieved, and create specialized transfer institutions and/or establish a credit aggregator—an accredited institution at a central place in the state that can take student credits and match to a degree.
- Significantly increase the attainment of associate degrees and baccalaureates for adults who begin their education in adult basic education, general education degree, English-as-a-second-language, and remedial programs.
- Look at new and existing approaches to the baccalaureate to serve the needs of students, especially those with associate degrees. These include the possibility of upside-down degrees (such as associate degrees earned by bachelor's degree holders) and the bachelor's of applied science.
- Ensure that community colleges and senior institutions provide clearly defined and readily accessible pathways for students in occupational and technical programs to pursue baccalaureate-level education.
- Consider reverse transfer of credits—by which community colleges award the associate degree when degree requirements are met—even if completed at the four-year institution.
- Increase baccalaureate programs available at community college locations and regional centers, and reengineer systems at the policy level to promote baccalaureate completion.
- Encourage accrediting bodies to promote transfer and access to the baccalaureate as a standard of excellence.
- Encourage regional and specialized accreditors to review their standards to better support the principles of access, equity, and quality related to increasing opportunity for the attainment of baccalaureates for all students enrolled in postsecondary education.
- Open transferability discussions that extend beyond state or system boundaries, to compensate for the mobility of today's population.

Recommendations for Collaboration

Lasting solutions to the pressing challenges to baccalaureate access cannot be found by issuing policy fiats from the state capitol, nor will they be found in perpetuating institutional prerogatives or system policies that do not serve students well. Students, faculty, academic advisors, department chairs, deans, presidents, chancellors, trustees, regents, legislators and governors all must work together to ensure the creation of a seamless higher education system that will promote access to the postsecondary education and training needed by every citizen to be successful in today's global economy. Although progress is slow,

many states and institutions are making progress, and much can be learned from their experience:

- Faculty, institution leaders, and state policymakers must view education as a continuum and work toward removing barriers to student movement between sectors.
- Policymakers should be more consistent and integrated in their own oversight of public and postsecondary education in legislative bodies and other policy forums, and they should place a high priority on funding access to postsecondary education.
- The challenge for institution leaders and policymakers who seek to create seamless systems is twofold: to identify the long- and short-term opportunities and consequences of academic and institutional intervention, and to achieve an appropriate balance between incentives and regulation.
- The entire education and state policy community must consider supporting higher academic standards for all high school students, not just those in a college-preparatory track.
- Higher education system leaders need to create incentives that encourage cooperation rather than competition among two- and four-year college sectors and provide funding that crosses institution lines.

Ultimately, the goals of AACC and AASCU are the same: to ensure the adoption of those practices and policies that will promote and advance higher education for all qualified students in the United States. It is the hope of AACC and AASCU that the work of the Access to the Baccalaureate project—the invitational conference, the outreach to encourage further dialogue and action at all education levels, and this report—instigates continued collaboration as well as understanding between institutions and state policymakers, despite the significant complexities of these issues. ❖

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Appendix A: Summaries of Task Group Discussions

Transferability Issues	
Definition of the Issue	If higher education is dedicated to the cumulative development of cognitive acquisition, it must also be dedicated to identifying and removing all attitudinal and structural impediments to seamless transfer.
Barriers	• Poor communication • Barriers from within • Changing demographics
Innovative Ideas	• Integration • Technology
Other Considerations or Linkages	• Accreditation teams with two- and four-year representatives • Transfer not compulsory: associate degree • Consultation with K–12 administration to facilitate increased requirements • Different populations' differing understanding of transfer issues • Differentiation between courses and competencies • Possible models
Cautions and Concerns	• Dual enrollment administered under same rigor as campus-based course work • Consider significance of baccalaureate and associate degrees
Policy and Practice Recommendations	• Key issue • Preservation and promotion of communications • Continued innovation • Problems of logistics (i.e., population mobility)
Five Major Points	1. Collaboration between sending and receiving institutions is critical. 2. General education transferability must be outcome-based. 3. Transferability issues cross state and system boundaries, so solutions must also cross those boundaries. 4. We need to continue to innovate and think beyond conventional approaches. 5. We must allocate human and physical resources to the issue of transferability.
How This Issue Relates to Access	Transferability is the central issue to resolving barriers to access to the baccalaureate. All aspects of identifying, defining, and resolving this issue must take center stage for all affected parties—state, system, and institutions.

Advising for Transfer Issues	
Definition of the Issue	Developmental and prescriptive student-centered advising must be improved in terms of availability, quality, timeliness, and reliability in order for efficient, successful transfers to take place, thus providing access to the baccalaureate for potential transfer students.
Barriers	• Poor communication • Systemic failings
Innovative Ideas	• Technology • Commonality • Improved communication
Other Considerations or Linkages	• Facilitated communication • Consultation with federal government regarding financial aid policy • Information about transfer available and consistent
Cautions and Concerns	• Inadequate resources • Advising not a priority • Unclear start age or grade for advising
Policy and Practice Recommendations	• Increased participation opportunities • Increased training • One advisor for each student for academic career • Information systems developed and maintained
Five Major Points	1. Students need good advising, provided in multiple formats. 2. Students must have accurate, timely, and consistent information that persists through their academic careers. 3. Institutions need to consider and meet students' prescriptive and developmental needs. 4. Institutions must use technology effectively to maximize limited human and information resources. 5. Stakeholders in students' transfer must participate in planned opportunities to communicate regarding advising and transfer issues.
How This Issue Relates to Access	Students who are poorly informed or misinformed might miss opportunities that are available to them. Their role in establishing access to the baccalaureate is vital.

Access Issues	
Definition of the Issue	The issue of access to and delivery of programs and courses for baccalaureate completion needs to be seen from societal, student, policy, external, and institutional perspectives in order for stakeholders to design and implement a K–16 pathway.
Barriers	• Systemic barriers • Institutional barriers • Student issues • Public perceptions
Innovative Ideas	• Dual enrollment or admission • Centralizing innovations • Systemic innovations • Faculty innovations • Institutional innovations • Innovations at the state level
Other Considerations or Linkages	• Other players, stakeholders, and partners can push agenda • Access: no longer a local issue • Technology suitable to students' expectations
Cautions and Concerns	• Capacity affects access. • Faculty needs are on the increase. • Technology might be a necessary but not sufficient condition. • Federal testing and accountability might be limiting. • Accrediting issues are an issue. • Current fiscal and political climate can have unexpected impact. • Articulation agreement construct might no longer be applicable.
Policy and Practice Recommendations	• Establishment of a credit aggregator • Four-year college clearinghouse to notify of space availability • More opportunities for baccalaureate completion on community college campuses • Dual admissions and dual financial aid programs • Encouragement of AA degree completion before transfer for BA degree • Encouragement of baccalaureate completion
Five Major Points	1. Establish a seamless K–16 pathway. 2. Focus on student learning and outcomes assessments. 3. Innovative means are needed to eliminate placebound, timebound, and traditional delivery means. 4. Asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid course delivery options and consideration of credit for experiential learning should be made available. 5. Society should end its exclusive, segregating views of whether or not a person has a baccalaureate, and instead facilitate access to such a degree.
How This Issue Relates to Access	Access is a multifaceted issue that needs to be addressed in an integrated way by many stakeholders and actors.

Student Support Services Issues	
Definition of the Issue	Student support services encompass the holistic approach to guiding the whole student from a community college to an institution granting a baccalaureate.
Barriers	• Personal • Institutional • Governmental (state and federal) • Systemic
Innovative Ideas	• Holistic solution • Innovative programs • Consistent communication • Innovative personnel hiring • Financial programs
Other Considerations or Linkages	• Data and definition issues • Effective model for data driven by decision making and feedback • More study needed on financial aid issues and processes • Student issues such as married student housing • Affirmation of socioeconomic cultures and differences
Cautions and Concerns	• Long-standing philosophical perspectives on higher education
Policy and Practice Recommendations	• Establishment of one-time admission fees when applying for transfer • Early financial aid notification • Tracking transfer rate and successful completion • Creation of transfer agreements • Language changed to reflect realities • Overt high-level recognition of importance of issues • Transfer scholarships • Guaranteed admissions • Discounts for transfer students
Five Major Points	1. Structures are needed to facilitate ongoing communication between and among stakeholders. 2. We must implement holistic, integrated solutions that have commitment from decision makers at all levels. 3. We need to plan and implement solutions that reflect and affirm students' diversity. 4. Solutions should be based on current research and exemplary practices; implemented solutions should be monitored. 5. All solutions must be accountable to stakeholders.
How This Issue Relates to Access	For students to be aware of their options and to be able to access the various opportunities, they must be guided holistically. By developing, organizing, and implementing an integrated approach and clear communication channels, we can ensure access to the baccalaureate to all students.

Public Policy Issues	
Definition of the Issue	Policies at the state and institution levels should promote access, equity, and success through an effective system of incentives, standards, outcomes, and accountability. These policies should result in students' full participation in the economy and in the life of the nation.
Barriers	• Communication • Systemic problems • Changing demographics • School dropout rates too high
Innovative Ideas	• Funding policies constructed by state and federal governments • Middle college programs for at-risk students • Program that pays high schools to experiment with and invest in distance education programs • Joint faculty appointments at community colleges and bachelor's-degree programs • Joint admission programs to coordinate academic advisement and financial aid administration
Other Considerations or Linkages	• Assessment tools available to help determine appropriate student placements • Numerous Web sites and online resources • Building on the success of data integration and decision-making models
Cautions and Concerns	• Need for a comprehensive P–20 performance data system
Policy and Practice Recommendations	• Double the number of transfers over next 10 years. • Increase the number of associate degrees and baccalaureates for nontraditional adults. • Develop high school curricula with college preparatory or technical/career emphasis. • Clearly define and make readily accessible pathways for students in occupational and technical programs. • Encourage state systems and institutions to increase available bachelor's programs. • Expand alternative methods for assessing and awarding academic credit. • Encourage regional and specialized accreditors to review their standards. • Implement common course numbering. • Promote funding for higher education that supports foreseeable undergraduate enrollment growth. • Promote public policies that increase the number of students that achieve or expand education goals.
Five Major Points	1. Public policy matters. Funding matters. 2. We need to develop a K–12 strategy that focuses on college readiness and success with students in at-risk situations and in alignment with college admission requirements. 3. Double the number of transfers in the next 10 years. 4. Simplify the transfer process. 5. Close the gap for students in at-risk situations.
How This Issue Relates to Access	Policies at the state and institution levels should promote access, equity, and success in order to ensure access to the baccalaureate for all students.

Appendix B: Additional Resources

Note: Visit the Access to the Baccalaureate Web site, http://www.pathtocollege.org/links_reports_print.html, *for more resources and direct links to resources available online.*

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