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RECOGNIZING PROMISE

The Role of Community Colleges in a Post Pandemic World

EDITED BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is dedicated to all impacted by the global pandemic;
those who work to dismantle the systems that perpetuate
systematic racism, and those who believe in strengthening our
nation's community colleges.*



*To Dr Edmund W. Gordon, a national treasure, on the
occasion of his 101 birth year.*

M.A.B., B.L.B., & M.N.

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CONTENTS

<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xxx</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xxxv</i>
1. Inclusive Excellence as a Post-Pandemic Imperative <i>Michael A. Baston</i>	1
2. Moving Toward Equity in Higher Education Institutions <i>Yolanda Watson Spiva</i>	11
3. Stop Stifling Entering Students' Talent and Drive and Help Them Build Momentum on a Path to College and Career Success <i>Davis Jenkins and Hana Lahr</i>	25
4. Fostering Equity-Focused Career and College Advising at Lorain County Community College <i>Marcia Ballinger and Marisa Vernon White</i>	41
5. Strategies for Meeting Students' Basic Needs <i>Sara Goldrick-Rab</i>	57
6. You Want to Close Equity Gaps? Embrace 100% Co-Requisite Approach to Developmental Education <i>Frank Sobey and Russell Lowery-Hart</i>	69

7. Aligning Vision, Values, and Vitality <i>Christopher M. Mullin</i>	81
8. Maintaining Relevance and Responsiveness in a Post-COVID-19 World <i>Bill Pink</i>	93
9. Anticipating the Future of Work <i>Randall J. VanWagoner, Franca Armstrong and Timothy Thomas</i>	101
10. Designing the Next-Generation Community College Model to Focus on Economic Mobility <i>Kevin Stump and Michael A. Baston</i>	115
<i>Afterword</i> <i>Edmund W. Gordon and Beatrice L. Bridglall</i>	135
<i>Bibliography</i>	139
<i>Index</i>	159

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Michael A. Baston is the fifth president of Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, and has recently served as the seventh president of SUNY Rockland Community College from 2017 to 2022. He is on the board of Teacher's College, Columbia University, and was selected to join the Education Design Lab's Designers in Residence program. Under his leadership, RCC launched a Hospitality and Culinary Arts Center, a new Guided Pathways influenced academic school model, Career and English Skills Academies to address middle-skills workforce needs and secured over \$30 million in grants including back-to-back Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institution awards, the largest in RCC's history. Dr Baston's groundbreaking "Steps Beyond Statements" Initiative has helped to signal specific steps that educational institutions can take to foster inclusive excellence.

Dr Baston was named one of the country's most Notable Education Leaders of 2017 by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* and is a national thought leader amplifying the role community colleges play in redefining educational success, leading diversity, equity, and inclusion campus-wide reform efforts, and developing executive leadership teams.

Dr Baston began his career as a public interest lawyer representing various educational institutions and social justice

organizations. His work with academic clients led him to pursue a second career in academia as both a professor of legal studies and business, and as a student affairs administrator. He was previously Vice President for Student Affairs and Associate Provost at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, NY.

Dr Baston holds a BA from Iona College, a JD from Brooklyn Law School, and an EdD from St. John Fisher College. He received the National Council on Student Development's Terry O'Banion Gold Prize in 2015 and the NAACP Community Leadership Award in 2010.

Beatrice L. Bridglall is the Inaugural Dean, School of Education & Social Sciences, SUNY Rockland Community College (RCC), where she works with colleagues to align learning and career development, and prepare and empower students, vis-à-vis a liberal arts curriculum that informs students' transition to careers and further education.

She was formerly a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Humanities in Education at Kiel University in Germany, and Dean of Humanities at Bergen Community College in Bergen County, New Jersey. Additionally, her research, which focuses on student and faculty development, teacher education, and international, comparative, urban and higher education; and her substantive international expertise, including her work as a Fulbright Specialist in higher education, informs RCC's increasing focus on providing global opportunities for students.

As a scholar, Dr Bridglall has published 5 books and over 80 research, journal, and literary articles in the past decade. Her most recent book *On Exploring Craft: Writers as Architects* (2015) takes an interdisciplinary approach to examining the art and technique of writing vis-à-vis the parallel concepts

found in the architecture of antiquity and the crafting of literature that endure. Other books include: *Promoting Global Competence and Social Justice in Teacher Education: Successes and challenges within local and international contexts* (co-edited; 2015); *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Studies of Three Student Development Programs* (2013), which explores the teaching and learning processes that enable high academic achievement in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, the premedical program at Xavier University in New Orleans, and the Opportunity Programs at Skidmore College in New York; *Supplementary Education: The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement* (2005), which argues that high academic achievement is associated with exposure to family and community-based activities and learning experiences that occur outside of school in support of academic learning; and *Affirmative Development: Cultivating Academic Ability* (2008), which posits that academic abilities are not simply inherited aptitudes but rather can be developed through pedagogical and social interventions.

Dr Bridglall has a Doctorate in Education and Health Psychology from Columbia University; a Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) in creative writing and World/French Literature from Fairleigh Dickinson University; and a Masters in Public Affairs (Health Policy and Management) from the Wagner Graduate School at New York University.

Her research draws on multiple disciplines (including educational, social, and developmental psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and sociology) to understand the phenomenon of student academic development/socialization; curriculum, assessment and instruction; educational/organizational systems and conditions that impact successful learning (including

parental involvement); learning and cognition; faculty expertise; and student motivation and cognition.

Dr Bridglall, who is bilingual (English and French), and becoming trilingual (Italian) has published French to English translations of three of Guy de Maupassant's short stories. Her translation of *Le Bûcher* was a Finalist for The Gabo Prize for Literature in Translation & Multi-Lingual Texts in honor of Gabriel García Márquez, who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982.

Michael Nettles is the Senior Vice President and the Edmund W. Gordon Chair of Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS, Princeton, New Jersey. Dr Nettles has an international reputation as a policy researcher on educational assessment, student performance and achievement and educational equity. His publications reflect his broad interest in public policy, student and faculty access, opportunity, achievement, and assessment at both the K–12 and postsecondary levels.

In August 2014, President Barack Obama appointed Dr Nettles to the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans. He was appointed by two US Secretaries of Education to serve on the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which oversees and develops policies for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). He also served for eight years on both the College Board of Trustees and the GRE Board. He now serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Education Foundation (SEF), member of the Board of Trustees of the Peddie School, member of the Board of Directors of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), and member of the Board of Directors of the Urban League of Middle Tennessee. A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Dr Nettles earned his bachelor's degree in Political

Science at the University of Tennessee. He earned master's degrees in Political Science and Higher Education, and a PhD in Education at Iowa State University.

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Franca Armstrong is the Associate Vice President for Workforce Development and Dean of the Rome Campus for Mohawk Valley Community College. She has facilitated multiple innovative partnerships; serves on the boards of several local and state organizations focused on workforce development; and is a member of the statewide leadership team coordinating more than \$11 million supporting SUNY apprenticeships. Her experience with developing creative partnerships and grant opportunities along with her connection to the dynamics of workforce development have led to countless presentations at the local, regional, and state levels.

Thomas R. Bailey is the 11th President of Teachers College, Columbia University. He has served on the College's faculty for the past 31 years and is the George & Abby O'Neill Professor of Economics & Education. An economist with specialties in education, labor economics, and econometrics, Dr Bailey is widely regarded as one of the nation's leading authorities on community colleges. In 1996, he established the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Since 1992 he also has been Director of the Institute on Education and the Economy (IEE) at the College. Dr Bailey also has directed three National Centers funded by grants

from the Institute of Education Sciences: the Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment (CAPSEE), established in 2011, and Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (CAPR), established in 2014. From 2006 to 2012, Dr Bailey directed another IES-funded center, the National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR).

Dr Bailey and the CCRC won the Terry O'Banion Prize for Teaching and Learning at the annual conference for the League for Innovation in the Community College in 2013, and he was inducted as an AERA Fellow in the same year. He has been a member of the National Academy of Education since 2012. In June 2010, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan appointed him chair of the Committee on Measures of Student Success, which developed recommendations for community colleges to comply with completion rate disclosure requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Dr Bailey has also served as a consultant to many public agencies and foundations as well as several state and local economic development and educational agencies.

Dr Bailey earned his undergraduate degree in Economics from Harvard University and his PhD in Labor Economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His papers have appeared in a wide variety of education, policy-oriented, and academic journals, and he has authored or coauthored several books on the employment and training of immigrants and the extent and effects of on-the-job training. Along with Shanna Smith Jaggars and Davis Jenkins, Dr Bailey wrote *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success*, which was published by Harvard University Press in 2015. Other books include *Defending the Community College Equity Agenda* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), coedited with Vanessa Morest; *Working Knowledge: Work-Based Learning and Education Reform* (Routledge,

2004), coauthored with Katherine Hughes and David Moore; *Manufacturing Advantage* (Cornell University Press, 2000), written with Eileen Appelbaum, Peter Berg, and Arne Kalleberg; and *The Double Helix of Education and the Economy* (IEE, 1992), coauthored with Sue Berryman.

Marcia J. Ballinger has over 30 years in community college leadership roles advancing student success, workforce and economic development, strategic planning, and institutional advancement. She serves as Lorain County Community College's (LCCC) fifth president and previously held positions as Provost, Vice President for Strategic Development, and Vice President LCCC's Foundation.

Dr Ballinger's fundamental belief that "Every Student's Dream Matters" is at the core of LCCC's Culture of Care. Her unwavering commitment to equity and student success has led to significant reductions in educational achievement gaps – especially for underserved students. She is an inaugural member of the Aspen Institute's Presidential Fellowship. Further advancing workforce development and student success nationally, statewide and regionally, Dr Ballinger currently serves as Co-Chair for Jobs for the Future (JFF) Community College Workforce Consortium, JFF Policy Leadership Trust for Student Success Career Connections Work Group, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Expanding Community College Apprenticeship Taskforce, and TeamNEO Talent Development Council. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the JFF National Student Trust for Student Success Committee, AACC Commission on Student Success, the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM), Strategic Horizons Network (SHN) Design Team, and the National Advisory Board of the Center for Community College Student Engagement.

Under her leadership LCCC garnered the top two national honors for excellence in student success awarded by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) as “First in the Nation for Excellence in Student Success” in 2018 and by Achieving the Dream, Inc. (ATD) as the Leah Meyer Austin Award recipient in 2020. Her other notable accolades include recognition as a 2020 Crain’s Cleveland Business Power 150 Leaders in Northeast Ohio and the 2020 Pacesetter Award by the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations (NCMPR). Dr Ballinger holds a PhD in Community College Leadership from Walden University, an MBA from Kent State University, and a BA in Journalism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Sara Goldrick-Rab is Professor of Sociology and Medicine at Temple University and President and Founder of the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice in Philadelphia. She’s also the chief strategy officer for emergency aid at Edquity, a student financial success and emergency aid company, and founded Believe in Students, a nonprofit distributing emergency aid.

Sara’s innovative research on college students’ basic needs sparked the national #RealCollege movement and legislation to address food and housing insecurity. Ranked in the Top 10 among education scholars according to Education Week, she is also a Carnegie Fellow. In 2016, *POLITICO* magazine named her one of the top 50 people shaping American politics. Sara’s book, *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*, was featured on *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah and awarded the \$100,000 Grawemeyer prize, which she donated to student emergency aid.

Edmund W. Gordon is the John M. Musser Professor of Psychology, Emeritus at Yale University, Richard March Hoe Professor, Emeritus of Psychology and Education, and Founding and Emeritus Director of the Institute of Urban and Minority Education (IUME) at Teachers College, Columbia University. Professor Gordon's distinguished career spans professional practice, scholarly life as a minister, clinical and counseling psychologist, research scientist, author, editor, and professor. Gordon also served (from 2012) as chairman of the Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education.

Dr Gordon's research and writings on educational policy and practice include such topics as: defining and mitigating the Academic Achievement Gap, Affirmative Development of Academic Ability, better defining, and fostering students' Intellectual Competence, and the valuable contributions of the notions Compensatory, Supplementary and Comprehensive Education, which became the principal features of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Gordon has written and edited more than 15 books, 8 annual volumes of two scholarly journals, and over 200 book chapters and scholarly articles. He developed the concept of the Pedagogical Troika, targeting the tricomponential features of a pedagogy that includes the dialectical relationships between assessment, teaching, and learning. As both a clinician, teacher, and research scientist, Gordon has explored divergent learning styles, defiance of negative prediction of achievement, and is well known for his introductory advocacy for supplemental education. Early in his career, Gordon served as the chief of the Head Start Research Division, and he is recognized as one of the primary architects of the nation's Head Start program. Throughout his life's work, Gordon has focused on

the issues and challenges of underprivileged, diverse, and minority students in North America.

Gordon has held appointments at several of the nation's leading universities including Howard, Yeshiva, Columbia, City University of New York, Yale, and the Educational Testing Service. He has also served as Visiting Professor at City College of New York and Harvard University. In the 1990s, Professor Gordon served as advisor to the President of the College Entrance Examination Board, where he initiated and chaired the Taskforce on the Academic Achievement Gap. From 2011 to 2013, Gordon served as the organizer and chair of the Gordon Commission on the Future of Assessment in Education at ETS.

Gordon has long been recognized as one of America's most prolific and thoughtful scholars and a preeminent member of his discipline. He is an elected Fellow of many associations including the American Psychological Association, American Society of Psychological Science, the American Association for Orthopsychiatry, and Fellow and Life Member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1968 he was elected as a member of the National Academy of Education and in 2017, was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Among his most recent honors is the Edmund W. Gordon Chair for Policy Evaluation and Research created by the Educational Testing Service to recognize his lasting contributions to developments in education including Head Start, compensatory education, school desegregation, and supplementary education. In celebration of his centennial birthday in 2021, Gordon was appointed the honorary President of the American Educational Research Association.

Davis Jenkins is a Senior Research Scholar at the Community College Research Center and Research Professor in Education and Social Policy Analysis at Columbia University's Teachers College. He works with colleges, schools, community groups, and employers in communities and states across the country to find ways to improve educational and employment outcomes for students from groups that have been poorly served by the US educational system. Together with Thomas Bailey and Shanna Jaggars, he coauthored *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Harvard University Press, 2015), which has helped to catalyze the national "guided pathways" whole-college reform movement. His current research is focused on the implementation, costs, and effects of guided pathways reforms, strengthening transfer pathways, and rethinking high school dual enrollment to increase college-going and success among students who have been poorly served by our education system.

Hana Lahr is a Senior Research Associate and Director of Applied Learning at the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. She studies the adoption, implementation, and effects of whole-college reforms at more than 100 community colleges across the country. Prior to joining CCRC in 2011, Lahr worked in student affairs at HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College and at the Metropolitan College of New York. Lahr earned a PhD in Education Policy from Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a BA in Music Performance from the University of Florida, an MS in Counseling from Shippensburg University (PA), and an EdM in Higher and Postsecondary Education from Teachers College.

Russell Lowery-Hart is President for Amarillo College since 2014. Amarillo College was named a 2021 Top Five Institution and Rising Star for the Aspen Prize for Community

College Excellence. Russell's leadership is focused on improving student success through systemic and cultural change centered on one word: LOVE. Under Russell's leadership, Amarillo College developed the systemic Culture of Caring targeting removal of poverty barriers that was featured in *The Atlantic* (June 2018) by Marcella Bombardieri and in the documentary on Amazon Prime, *The Antidote*, from Oscar Nominated and Emmy Award winning directors Kahane Cooperman and John Hoffman.

Dr Lowery-Hart previously served as Vice President of Academic Affairs for Amarillo College and named the National Council of Instructional Administrators Academic Leader of the Year for 2014. He received his PhD from Ohio University; MA from Texas Tech University; and BS from West Texas State University.

Christopher (Chris) Mullin is Strategy Director of Data and Measurement for Lumina Foundation, an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. Previously, he served as director of Strong Start to Finish at Education Commission of the States, executive vice chancellor of the Florida College System, the assistant vice chancellor for policy and research at the State University System of Florida, Board of Governors, the program director for policy analysis of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), and a postdoctoral fellow at the Illinois Education Research Council.

Dr Mullin's research interests include the influence of state P-20 education structures on the educational decisions of both institutions and individuals. He is a prolific writer having coauthored books, including *Community College Finance: A Guide for Institutional Leaders*, journal articles, policy briefs,

and various other publications resulting in over 200 presentations at the international, national, state, and local level. His work has been reported on in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, and *EdWeek* among others. His distinctions include the Barbara K. Townsend Emerging Scholar Award (2012), his selection as a National Education Finance Conference Distinguished Research & Practice Fellow (2014), as well as being recognized as a University of Florida Outstanding Young Alumnus (2018).

Dr Mullin serves the postsecondary community in many ways, which include but are not limited to serving on the Editorial Advisory Boards of four academic journals, an Associate Editor of the *Community College Review*, and previously serving as the Coordinating Editor of the peer-reviewed *AIR Professional Files*. Further, he was selected to serve on numerous advisory and workgroups, such as The Interagency Working Group on Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (*GEMEnA*), The National Post-College Outcomes Initiative, and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

He earned his bachelor's and doctoral degree from the University of Florida and a master of education degree from Teachers College of Columbia University.

Bill Pink is now the 19th president of Ferris State University, and was most recently the 10th president of Grand Rapids Community College, from 2017 to 2022, and the first African-American appointed to the post in the institution's 100-plus years. With more than 30 years as an educator and leader at the national and local level, Dr Pink spearheaded GRCC's strong history of service to all students, and guided the college to be relevant and responsive to its community.

Prior to coming to GRCC, Dr Pink served as vice president for academic affairs at Oklahoma State University. The Abilene, Texas, native has taught and coached in Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Oregon. He was inducted into the York College Athletic Hall of Fame in 2016 for his performance as a student-athlete. Dr Pink is also involved in governance and policy development at regional and national levels. He was elected to the board of trustees for the Higher Learning Commission, the accreditor for colleges and universities across 19 states and the American Council on Education board, working with leaders from across the nation to shape public policy and help more students gain a quality education. He also serves on the Community College Advisory Panel for The College Board and was appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation executive committee. He was most recently elected to the American Association of Community Colleges board. In West Michigan, he serves on the boards of Spectrum Health West Michigan as Governance Committee chair; the Heart of West Michigan United Way as board chair, West Michigan Works!; The Right Place board as treasurer; and the Grand Rapids Economic Club.

Frank Sobey joined Amarillo College as a full-time instructor in the English Department in 2005. Since then, he has served as the chair of the English Department and dean of arts and sciences. Currently, he is the associate vice president of academic affairs. Frank loves Amarillo College and is immensely proud to work for a college so completely devoted to serving students and the Amarillo community.

Kevin Stump is the first Vice President of Economic Mobility and Workforce Innovation, and was most recently the Senior Director for Impact, Evaluation, and Thought Leadership at the Education Design Lab where he oversaw the Community

College Growth Engine Fund, a national initiative to design and implement a new class of credentials called Micro-pathways. In addition to driving a robust thought leadership and impact strategy, he was also responsible for oversight of the Lab's Designers in Residence program working with a diverse set of higher education leaders to imagine a new paradigm for the role colleges can play as regional ecosystem catalysts.

Kevin served as the Senior Vice President for JobsFirstNYC where he led the organization's strategic inquiry and rebranding process. During his time at JobsFirstNYC, Kevin coled the launch of the Invest In Skills NY campaign, which was successful at securing an unprecedented \$175 million investment dedicated to workforce development. Kevin was also charged with launching JobsFirstNYC's Transfer 2 Career Collaborative, an innovative pilot aiming to build partnerships between 12 transfer high schools and a set of workforce development training providers and community colleges to improve career readiness and increase post-secondary and employment outcomes.

Kevin served as the founding northeast director for Young Invincibles (YI), where he launched their New York office and ran a successful campaign to establish the Empire State Apprenticeship Program, an effort sparked by a report he authored on New York's statewide youth unemployment crisis. At YI, he also colaunched DegreesNYC, a collective action project to achieve equity in postsecondary access and completion. Kevin has policy, research, and advocacy experience from his tenure at both the Roosevelt Institute as well as at the New York Public Interest Research Group where he launched and chaired the Coalition to Reform New York's Tuition Assistance Program. He has appeared in a variety of media outlets and has authored, commissioned, and overseen

a number of research projects. In 2017, Kevin was honored as one of New York's 40 Under 40 Rising Stars in *City & State* magazine. He holds a bachelor's degree in Community Organization and Advocacy from SUNY Plattsburgh and master's degree in Public Administration from Marist College.

Tim Thomas is the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at Mohawk Valley Community College. As a former Chemistry faculty member at both the K-12 and community college level, as well as experience as academic administrator over STEM programs, he has a deep proficiency in STEM education and workforce development. He has served on several local boards, including public boards in the K-12 sector. Also, he has a strong record of developing unique and creative partnerships to cultivate educational and workforce pipelines with partners in education, private, and public nonprofit sectors.

Marisa Vernon White is the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Services at Lorain County Community College (LCCC), and has over 15 years of experience working in student affairs and enrollment management in community college settings in Ohio, including Cuyahoga Community College, Columbus State Community College, and the largest, open-access regional campus of Kent State University.

She is a graduate of Kent State University (BA, 2004; MEd in Higher Education Administration and Student Personnel, 2006) and Colorado State University (PhD in Higher Education Leadership, 2021). Dr Vernon White is passionate about community colleges' role in providing equitable access to higher education, and the upward social mobility that comes with college completion. As a chief student affairs officer and with a background in academic advising, system design,

first-year experience programs, and student affairs administration, she approaches community college leadership with a holistic lens, and designs college environments in ways that honor the individual needs of students and families.

Dr Vernon White is also an avid writer and creative mother to a little boy with a big personality and emerging “leadership skills,” a former ultramarathon runner, and enjoys qualitative and action research related to higher education and student affairs.

Randall Van Wagoner has been president of Mohawk Valley Community College since 2007. He is also cofacilitator of the Strategic Horizon Network and a member of the Jobs For the Future Leadership Policy Trust. He is past chair of the New York Community College Association of Presidents and serves as a board member for several local organizations. He has published several articles and made numerous presentations on topics related to leadership, organizational change, organizational culture, planning, and effectiveness. His book, *Competing on Culture: Driving Change in Community Colleges*, was published as part of the Community College Future Series from the Association of Community College Trustees.

Yolanda Watson Spiva is President of Complete College America, and her over 25-year career in postsecondary education spans a range of executive leadership, general management, federal government, public affairs, operations, and academic officer positions. Dr Spiva serves as the President of Complete College America (CCA). Headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, CCA is a bold national advocate for dramatically increasing college completion rates and closing equity gaps by working with states, systems, institutions, and partners to scale highly effective structural reforms and promote policies that improve student success.

Dr Spiva is the former President and CEO of College Success Foundation (CSF), a national nonprofit college readiness, access, success, and scholarship organization headquartered in Bellevue, Washington. Dr Watson Spiva has also held various positions with the US Department of Education in Washington, DC, and Atlanta, GA. She has been awarded the prestigious Turknett Leadership Character Award for outstanding leadership in the nonprofit sector. Dr Watson Spiva earned her undergraduate degree in Economics from Spelman College, her master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Chicago, and her PhD in Higher Education from Georgia State University.

FOREWORD

Community colleges hold the promise of truly embodying diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education, by providing vital points of postsecondary access and opportunity for students from historically marginalized groups. However, despite the best intentions of these deeply democratic institutions, they often fall short of their ideal. The extraordinary historical moment we are in, which combines the devastating impact of a global pandemic and a national rallying cry to do more to end structural and systemic racism, has created an unprecedented imperative for community colleges to undertake institutional reform on a scale that can meet the demand for change.

Students of color, whether from low-income backgrounds and/or the first in their families to attend college, have always faced significant barriers in higher education. These challenges have become more formidable in the wake of the pandemic. Meanwhile, community colleges are handicapped: Even as they serve students with the greatest challenges, they also have the fewest resources. With significant enrollment declines during the pandemic, community colleges are facing even greater threats to their financial viability and contending with a vicious cycle: Students face challenges that prevent them from enrolling, which weakens community colleges' financial strength and ability to serve students well. Colleges' weakened

performance due to decreased resources, in turn, leads to lower enrollments.

While these conditions pose serious challenges, they also provide an important opportunity. Today, by necessity, community colleges must be innovative to grow enrollments. The good news is that in the past decade a number of reform strategies have been identified that can meaningfully increase both enrollment and retention, and the chapters in this book provide an important roadmap of strategies that colleges can employ to rebuild enrollment and fiscal health while better serving students and communities.

As laid out by Jenkins and Lahr in Chapter 3, for example, an intensive focus on building connection and momentum early in students' college experience is key. Research shows that connection in the first semester is crucial for students' subsequent success, suggesting that colleges must proactively reach out to incoming students. Jenkins and Lahr outline an Ask, Connect, Inspire, and Plan framework that colleges can use to evaluate and make changes to their approach to newly enrolled students. Ballinger and White (Chapter 4) describe the heartening progress that Lorain County Community College has made by adopting a data-driven, student-centered pathways model with strong high school and four-year partnerships that continuously seeks to close equity gaps.

Such structural reforms to the college must also be accompanied by more purposeful strategies to meet the basic needs of students, as detailed by Raab (Chapter 5), in order to remove the many obstacles to completing degrees that community college students face. In particular, ensuring that students know about and can easily access services and programs that address housing, food, and childcare needs is essential, and Raab lays out concrete strategies for making these services more intrusive in the student experience.

Finally, colleges must ensure that their programs are tightly aligned and relevant to local employment opportunities. Specifically, VanWagoner and colleagues emphasize the need for colleges to be nimble and innovative to stay responsive to changes in the workplace and labor market and to be alert to the reality that many individuals will need to upskill at some point during their careers. Colleges must invest in ongoing discussions with employers in order to make real-time changes that maintain program relevance for students and the labor market. The authors also stress that the dichotomy drawn between CTE and academic workforce preparation and academic pathways to four-year colleges is a false one. All programs are ultimately preparing students for the workforce, and certificate programs should be designed such that credits can build to longer-term degrees if and when students choose to return to college to pursue further education.

Across these efforts, colleges must center equity and inclusion, as described in the first section of this volume. Centering equity and inclusion requires a mindset shift: As Watson Spiva suggests (Chapter 2), colleges must change their attitude from expecting students to be “college ready” to ensuring that their institution is “student ready.” With this shift, colleges become ready to, as Baston says, take “steps beyond statements.” When students do not persist past their first semester, when they don’t access advising and other services, when they accumulate excessive credits in their path to degrees, the microscope must be turned inward. Identifying gaps in access and success should be the first step in planning and prioritizing reforms and continual and careful evaluation of new programs and strategies via measures that identify who is accessing and benefiting from them is absolutely essential to continual improvement. As Ballinger and White describe in their chapter, even when reforms lead to laudable

improvements, ongoing data-based analyses will uncover equity gaps that colleges must continue to work to close.

Across this volume, a key theme emerges: Institution-wide, continuous change. This is a tall order, but essential both for the health of society as well as the health of community colleges. Our public two-year colleges are facing competition and pressures like they never have before, and avoiding significant reform is no longer an option. As the authors in this volume make clear, there are incredible pockets of success at colleges across the nation. To meet the challenges of the current moment and live up to their extraordinary promise as engines of opportunity and equity, community colleges must energetically pursue proven strategies that will attract and retain students of all backgrounds and ensure that they are empowered with the skills and knowledge to succeed and thrive.

Thomas Bailey

PREFACE

CURRENT EDUCATION CONTEXT

In March 2020, a global pandemic disrupted education for more than 1.6 billion students, as schools in 185 countries closed their doors (World Bank, 2022). This disruption, which prevented 9 out of 10 students worldwide from attending school for a period of a few months to two years, is unparalleled in scope and magnitude. While we have yet to quantify the impact of the resulting global learning loss, the data show that, prepandemic, we were experiencing a global learning crisis, as learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy were considered well below what they should be in developed and developing countries.

Current levels of learning loss are further compounded by the loss/disruption of overall support and services that educational institutions provide to students, particularly those who are disadvantaged and marginalized. Already vulnerable before the pandemic, this population continues to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic, resulting in growing inequities and disparities in opportunities and resources to learn. These dynamics suggest that (1) student learning will continue to suffer, with vulnerable and marginalized students impacted the most; (2) public school enrollment will continue to decline; (3) the high school dropout rate will increase, which, in turn, fuels declining enrollment in higher education;

and (4) student stress and anxiety are now considered at crisis proportions.

Declines in Public School Enrollment

In 2019–2020, enrollment in US public schools declined by three (3) percent nationwide, which effectively erased a decade of incremental gains. In some of the nation’s largest school systems, such as New York, school enrollment declined by approximately 38,000 students in 2020, and 13,000 in 2021, while in Los Angeles, the student population declined by 17,000 students in 2020, and 9,000 in 2021. In the Chicago Public Schools, enrollment decreased by 14,000 students in 2020, and 10,000 in 2021.

This shift away from public schools has financial implications, as their funding is based on headcount, and while federal relief funding is a temporary measure during these enrollment declines, this type of funding will phase out in several years. On a macro level, declining enrollment affects the social and economic health of communities, especially as strong public schools attract homebuyers and businesses.

Increase in Dropouts From High School and Decreasing Enrollment in Higher Education

Other equally pressing concerns for the United States include (1) the growing number of high school students dropping out to work and (2) falling college enrollment rates. In 2021, data show falling high school graduation rates, while from 2019 to 2021, college enrollment has declined by more than 1 million students (National Student Clearing House Center (December 2021)). The impact of this phenomenon is global, according to

the UN, which estimates that earnings around the world could decrease by \$17 trillion if these trends are not addressed (World Bank, 2022).

Increase in Student Stress and Anxiety

Prepandemic, the role of education institutions in the United States and around the world expanded into more than places of teaching and learning, to offer proper nutrition, a safe place, stability, and support for students. Globally, school closures affected more than 370 million students who no longer had access to school meals, which, for some, meant effectively losing the only reliable source of daily nutrition to which they had access. Sara Goldrick-Rab's chapter considers students' basic needs in the wake of declining student health, safety, and gender equality.

In the United States, at least 175,000 students were orphaned or bereaved, while closures of schools and childcare centers forced many mothers/parents from the workforce, which further exacerbated financial and housing insecurities for students and families. Faculty recently polled confirm that their student's mental health is a big concern, while 80% of parents are worried about their children's well-being. This trend is also recognized by the US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who refers to the marked decline in youth mental health as an "emergency" and a "crisis." An awareness of these trends is prompting 97% of education institutions to identify and implement measures to increase student well-being.

This focus, on the part of US schools, appears to be a shift from "reform" to "recovery," in efforts to stem declining enrollment. Some schools and districts, such as in Rochester,

New York, are encouraging high school students who are working, to participate in virtual classes scheduled in the afternoon or evening, while others are creating/offering more relevant and popular curricular offerings. Still others in Jackson, Mississippi, and Dallas, Texas, are creating fully virtual options for working students, in recognition that schooling no longer needs to take place during a set time and place and that students can access their courses in the afternoon, evening, and weekends. Many school leaders and educators are also acknowledging that working students should not be compelled to choose between work and school, especially when this population of students is working to keep themselves and their families out of poverty. This mindset has important implications for diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns, which Marcia Ballinger and Marisa Vernon White's chapter addresses. Similarly, Bill Pink's chapter reinforces this argument by recognizing that school leaders and educators need to acknowledge that the pandemic has opened the door for many families to reorient their thinking about what their child needs to learn and the optimal ways for procuring what they need. This trend in the desire for more control over their children's learning is altering the education landscape as families are deciding whether and how to pursue learning options that fit their children's and families' needs.

CHANGES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

The pandemic has exacerbated unprecedented shifts in the labor and housing market, volatility in retirement portfolios, job losses, and uneven gains in some industries. These economic shifts have brought into high relief an over \$1.5 trillion education debt with which many students struggle. The resulting attention on inflated tuition costs – a more than 400% increase since the early 1980s, without a perceived

increase in the quality of education received, poor leadership, and the difficulty of graduates in finding jobs, has spurred falling confidence in higher education institutions.

In this context, the chapters in this collection argue that community colleges have a role in reminding students and parents of their value, which they can further improve by strengthening their connection to industry, assisting students in obtaining employment that integrates work and learning during and after college, and making student-centered decisions from an equity perspective, as noted in Yolanda Watson Spiva's chapter.

A New Role for Community Colleges

Studies show that across all majors, recent college graduates who participated in relevant employment or internship opportunities as undergraduates, were not only twice as likely to secure decent jobs at graduation, but were also significantly more likely to garner employment that were related to their studies (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2022). These findings suggest that students with work-related opportunities integrated in their learning during college are more likely to value their degree after college.

Thus, increasing students' exposure to work-related opportunities in their learning throughout college can inform their selection of potential majors and ability to make more informed work-related decisions. Community colleges and other higher education institutions that integrate work experiences in their students' learning trajectories (such as learning a craft, summer job programs, apprenticeships, and cooperative learning opportunities) can empower students to make informed decisions about their professional lives, based

on real-world experiences. Davis Jenkins and Hana Lahr's chapter make a compelling case for helping students to build such a momentum in their academic trajectories.

Community colleges can also place themselves in better positions with employers when they refute the negative connotations regarding job prospects for students in liberal arts majors, by emphasizing that a liberal arts education facilitates the learning of critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, and teamwork, which are of great value in today's evolving workplace.

Justifying the Investment in Higher Education

The tremendous student debt postsecondary students carry has increased calls from many students and parents, for evidence showing a return on their investment. Prospective and current students are now more concerned with an institution's record of placing their graduating students in certain kinds of jobs, where they transfer to (for baccalaureate and graduate degrees), and their future earning potential; not only with an institution's prestige, when considering the cumulative cost of attending.

Other stakeholders are also concerned with the affordability of higher education, increasing student (and campus) debt, and declining federal and state funding. Thorny questions have emerged in the wake of these concerns regarding the sustainability of the current higher education business model. This is a challenge for higher education institutions as Chris Mullins' chapter details, which is also exacerbated by the digital trends in education and the labor market. As a result, some institutions have adapted by utilizing and/or considering new class formats and technologies that are intended to cut costs while meeting evolving student needs.

We are beginning to see the sequence and duration of courses redesigned for affordability and reduced time in developmental classes, for example, as noted in Russell Lowery Hart and Frank Sobey's chapter. Similarly, many institutions have created suites of online courses and are utilizing technology in instruction and learning.

Community Colleges and Other Higher Education Institutions Reconfigured

Courses in diverse programs of study are now in very different formats; i.e., hybrid classes, which are a blend of online and in-class instruction; or completely online. Institutions are using technology to reduce their costs while increasing access to students. Some institutions are consolidating their physical infrastructure and considering the potential of leasing space, rather than the rising cost of owning their campuses. Others are exploring flexible hiring processes, with a focus on certain skill sets even as they refocus on more effective teaching and learning, as others are restructuring administrative and student services.

Randy VanWagoner, Franca Armstrong, and Timothy Thomas' chapter remind us that these changes are now the norm as we see more blurring of physical and perceived boundaries between institutions. This has resulted in more direct competition between institutions and a notable shift to a focus on providing more flexibility to students via an online infrastructure as a defining feature.

As noted above, there are other shifts occurring, including (1) students and parents questioning the return on investing in college; (2) falling enrollments and revenue; and (3) a growing

tenuousness that now characterize institutions as they seek to rebalance.

The focus on the return on investment relative to the cost of college demonstrates a shift in student expectations, needs, and preferences, regardless of whether they are traditional, adult, student-veteran, or first-generation learners, as noted by Kevin Stump and Michael Baston's chapter. An awareness of these expectations can inform tailored approaches to empowering students to succeed, while simultaneously growing enrollment growth and may mean asking certain questions (which Michael Baston's chapter encourages), including:

- What is our institution's message?
- What are the best tools to communicate our message?
- What is the state of our technology, and how does it meet students' needs?
- What are the resources and programs students need to succeed?
- What is the state of our recruitment, enrollment, and retention processes?

Trends suggest that the college baccalaureate degree may be losing its appeal, in that it is perceived as a minimum requirement for obtaining low-level position. Students are now seeking alternative credentials either to replace or to complement the typical associate's and/or bachelor's degree.

There are considerable occupational shifts occurring in technology, healthcare, and other industries, which are influencing the rise of new occupational categories even as existing ones undergo changes. These labor market dynamics have significant implications for higher education and are challenging the relevance of the 2-year and 4-year degree model and may, in time, compel many 2- and 4-year institutions to

consider alternative educational models. Some institutions may not adapt quickly enough, given the decrease in college enrollment and a rise in alternative credentialing (including certificates, badges, microcredentials, licenses, etc.), which are perceived as an effective approach to learning a skills and certain competencies.

These challenges also underscore the parallel shifts in cognitive and noncognitive skills expected of college graduates given new educational and occupational demands and a redefining of what constitutes a good education. There is new scrutiny as well, on what students are actually learning in college, which is placing pressure on faculty to think differently about the skills students need to effectively enter the workforce.

Identifying Skills That Graduates Need to Meet Workforce Demands

These findings, in line with those from the labor market, suggest that many college graduates are not equipped with the necessary skills and abilities to thrive in their jobs. This has led to some collaborations with employers, who encourage faculty to help students cultivate creative thinking, decision-making, team work/collaboration, and problem-solving skills, in addition to personal qualities, such as responsibility, self-esteem, professionalism/work ethic, and integrity. These competencies are considered salient given the elevated use of technology and the parallel increase in complexity and diversity of work tasks which demand a more diversely skilled workforce.

However, given the significant overlap in the skills emphasized by employers and student learning outcomes at institutions, why do employers perceive such a large skills

gap? One possible explanation is that a college degree does not sufficiently articulate the skills acquired by college graduates. Traditionally, the attainment of a college degree meant a certain level of learning, perseverance, effort, and a host of other skills and behaviors (Burning Glass Technologies, 2014). However, as bachelor's degrees have become more common among job applicants and increasingly required for jobs, the degree has become less effective in providing unique information that articulates the acquisition of particular skills (Burning Glass Technologies, 2014).

The Implications for Higher Education Institutions

There are ways institutions can address employer's concerns. These include making student learning more visible, even as students are afforded more active learning opportunities, such as collaborative group projects and hands-on experience in research, experimentation, or problem-based learning. Lorain County Community College, for example, is operationalizing a successful cooperative learning model, which emphasizes teamwork and collaboration in employment opportunities for students (see the chapter by Marcia Ballinger and Marisa Vernon White). These skills, as noted, are highly desirable and relevant for success in the labor market and diverse fields of study in higher education.

Specifically, Peterson and Miller (2004) found that cooperative learning opportunities encouraged deeper engagement and work at higher levels of skill and challenge for undergraduate educational psychology students. Similarly, Johnson and colleagues (2000) indicated an increase in the learning of course content when collaborative/team activities were included in the classroom. Collaborative activities also

included access to online learning through multimedia and other platforms, such as discussion boards that emphasized virtual group work (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). These studies highlight the benefits derived from opportunities to practice skills that can apply to any discipline or line of work. This focus on expanding the skill sets of current and future students also apply to curricular revisions. For example, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology adapted the requirements of the engineering certification council curriculum in 2015, to include a focus on the ability to interact with diverse communities and to communicate with different stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY

There are various ways, on the policy level, that federal and state governments can assist educational systems to enable the teaching, learning, and assessment of a more relevant skill set in higher education. These include actively supporting opportunities for students to acquire, integrate, and apply such skills in targeted learning activities not only in the classroom but also in apprenticeships and work–study programs. Standardizing the training students receive through apprenticeships, and acknowledging student efforts through nationally recognized certificates and credentials are also important policy levers.

Finally, the unprecedented economic, social, and political shifts occurring on a global scale demand that higher education meet the needs of students and employers. This includes providing opportunities for students to learn and apply increasingly complex and integrative skills. While the work of identifying these skills continues, it is crucial that findings from this research are integrated in curriculum, instruction,

and assessment that demonstrates student success in skill acquisition, integration, and application.

It is reputed that while higher education is a space in which students can learn and grow their intellectual and emotional capital, it is simultaneously and notoriously slow to change. However, an awareness of the challenges noted above can spur our institutions to not only meet the demands of a new environment but also position our students for lifelong learning and success.

Beatrice L. Bridglall & Michael Nettles