Chapter 4
The American Community College

Carsten Schmidtke

4.1 Introduction

From a German standpoint, the American community college may appear as a somewhat peculiar, idiosyncratic institution. Students study for only two years to earn an associate degree and for even shorter time periods if they are interested in an occupational certificate. With the exception of certain occupational programs, almost anyone with a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) credential can be admitted to a public community college. Community colleges tend to be popular among students who have not yet decided on a major program of study, who can attend college only part time, who have had poor grades in high school, or who are looking for an occupational qualification rather than an academic one (Chen, 2008). The level of instruction is often below that of a German Gymnasium, and many students who attend would not consider or be considered for university study were they in Germany. How can this be considered true higher education? Would these students not be better served in vocational and other training programs? Possibly so, but during the technology boom of the 1990s, community colleges were able to prepare a large number of students quickly for the workforce while the German system struggled to do the same. Furthermore, community colleges remain an important access point to higher education and must be understood in the context of egalitarian social policies that produced the unified high school diploma for everyone instead of the three-tiered system in existence in Germany.

This chapter helps readers understand the community college through its historical roots and the services it can provide effectively and successfully for today's rapidly changing educational and economic demands. An examination of social roles, students, student services, programs, leadership, finances, and faculty members will explain why the community college developed, how it is different from

C. Schmidtke (✉)
Workforce Development Education, College of Education and Health Professions, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, USA
e-mail: cswded@uark.edu

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four-year institutions, and why it is an important institution whose purpose is to support economic development in particular as well as advance American society in general.

4.2 History and Background

American community colleges go back to the late nineteenth century. The reason for their existence and their enduring popularity according to Ratcliff (1994) is twofold. First, communities wanted them. Larger universities had turned more and more toward research whereas communities needed colleges that were responsive to local needs and helped train workers who could advance the industrialization of the local economy. In addition, it was a point of pride to be able to advertise one's town as having a college. Second, progressivist ideas of social equality through education had begun to take hold. This equality was to be achieved by promoting public rather than private education, making vocational education equal to academic education (to the point of suggesting that all students be given basic vocational training), and requiring teachers to have postsecondary training (teacher training colleges were called *normal schools*). These seemingly conflicting missions of supporting both industry and social change derive from the American thinking that educational institutions are best suited to respond to societal needs and should be charged with being the driving force behind preparing citizens and workers for change (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004).

Cohen and Brawer (2008) defined the community college as "any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree" (p. 5). This definition is important in that it distinguishes community colleges from other institutions of higher learning by their focus on the associate degree awarded in four semesters after approximately 60 credit hours. Beginning with Joliet Junior College in Illinois in 1901, the number of junior and community colleges rose rapidly from inception. Table 4.1 shows their growth over the past 100 years.

Many two-year colleges were originally known as *junior colleges* as a result of the tradition to refer to the first two years of university study as the *lower* or *junior*

Table 4.1 Number of junior and community colleges including branch campuses

Year	Number of colleges
1901	1
1920	200
1940	580
1960	600
1980	1220
2000	1600

Source: American Association of Community Colleges (2009)

division. Junior colleges at first tended to focus almost exclusively on academics instead of vocational training as had been hoped for (Ratcliff, 1994).

The community college as a specific type of two-year college emerged after World War II as an institution that was always public, offered a variety of programs, and was to be part of the community if not the center of many communities (hence *community college*) (Bogart, 1994). Colleges changed and increased in number because of shifts in demographics and attitudes toward postsecondary education. First, the postwar years saw a change in the diversity of students. Military veterans on the G.I. Bill, minority students as a result of the developing civil rights movement, the movement of colleges into urban areas, and the baby boomer generation swelled the ranks of college students (Gleazer, 1994b; Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck, & Suppiger, 1980). Second, the idea of community education and open access was revived. Adult and community education acted as a vehicle to improve the quality of life for everyone in the community, and the attractiveness of open access led to additional increases in enrolment (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Gleazer, 1994a; Ratcliff, 1994).

Community colleges made postsecondary education accessible to students to whom higher education had thus far been unavailable: those who could not afford tuition; those who had to work and could not attend college full time; those who had not had proper preparation for college from their high schools; those who needed job training; and those who were incarcerated, physically disabled, or otherwise prevented from going to class. As a result, the social purpose of community colleges is intertwined with their academic one, and several questions have been asked over and over again: What exactly is the function and role of these institutions? Is it predominantly social or academic? How well have community colleges achieved their mission and purpose? Will they assume more or less importance in the future? Are they well or ill suited to respond to changing workplaces and economic globalization? How will they have to change to prevail? Should they even prevail, or should academically inclined students attend four-year universities, vocationally inclined students attend career and technology schools, and community members attend programs offered by their municipalities?

This last question concerns the community college's raison d'être vis-à-vis other types of schools. Germany, after all, emphasized the dual system with occupational training on the job and in vocational schools (*Berufsschule*), while community education (languages, health, culture, environment, etc.,) chiefly took place at the local *Volkshochschule*. In the United States, however, progressivist egalitarian ideals required that all students be afforded the opportunity to explore their capabilities and not be constrained by their public school certificate in what they could accomplish in life.

4.3 Social Role

The social roles of community colleges often take precedence over other functions based on the American assumption, as discussed in the previous section, that schools are best able to move society as a whole forward. These social roles of community

colleges are affirmed by the American Association of Community Colleges (2009), whose mission statement for community colleges emphasizes the service to society and community and the equal and fair treatment of all students. Social roles are moving to the forefront again at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Community colleges were created when the rapid industrialization of the United States required a new approach to vocational and community education, and they are being called upon again as change agents at a time when globalization changes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to remain economically competitive.

Still, the question has been asked whether it is socially responsible and defensible to train workers for the nation's businesses at the taxpayer's expense. Should big corporations not fund such programs or administer them themselves? The answer is usually that not only industry but also the public benefits. One of vocational education's major purposes (among others) is to contribute to economic growth, which in turn benefits all of society. Having a degree or certificate leads to higher salaries and economic stability in the future, meaning that program completers will be more likely to become taxpayers and less likely to have to rely on public assistance. Accordingly, Cohen and Brawer (2008) argued that the strength of community colleges lies in their ability to offer people what they need to become productive members of society at large. Despite any obstacles, community colleges do offer opportunities for those who otherwise may not have had access to job training or college study at all and as a result improve life for everyone in the community. Although colleges with open admission policies cannot expect the same results as selective four-year programs elsewhere, community colleges still contribute to the overall well-being of community, state, and nation.

Much of the criticism directed at community colleges has been around for decades and has been tied to their social role. A common charge has been that instead of opening pathways to advanced degrees for highly qualified underrepresented groups, community colleges offer nothing but false hope, i.e., instead of promoting equal opportunity, they have been co-opted by the power elites to maintain the status quo. The argument has been that many nontraditional students will be swayed by the emphasis on job skills and employability, be satisfied with the associate degree, and forego further education for the immediate gratification of paid employment. They will not consider the bachelor's, which alone provides access to better-paying jobs, meaning that they will be unable to reach their full potential and realize their dreams (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Another criticism has been directed at the occupational and career programs offered at community colleges. The separation of vocational education from common education as a result of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 had the effect that vocational education turned community colleges essentially into an extension of business and industry and prevented students from achieving full personal development (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004).

A third criticism has been academic. The question has been raised if community colleges can really make up for the lack of basic reading, English, writing, and math skills that their students have while simultaneously preparing them for the rigor of four-year colleges. Can students who read below an eighth-grade level truly be

successful academically and economically? Are students being set up for failure? As far back as fifty years ago, Clark (1960) accused community colleges to be gatekeepers for larger universities, and his contention, supported by Astin (1977), was that the support for the community college coming from the ranks of the professoriate was at best disingenuous. By supporting these colleges, educators could claim a commitment to open access and equal opportunity while knowing full well that community colleges would divert the less-prepared students from their own classrooms. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) acknowledged this ongoing dispute by stating that giving students full access to "participation" was not equal to full access to "opportunity" (p. 641). They believed that increasing developmental course offerings and student support services would help close the gap and allow community colleges to offer a more rigorous curriculum that prepared students for the transfer to four-year colleges.

Recognizing the argument on both sides, Cohen and Brawer (2008) nonetheless concluded that despite any drawbacks community colleges may have, for many students the only alternative to them would be no college at all. This writer's personal experience of teaching at a two-year college for fourteen years corroborates the argument that community colleges do indeed have an important role to play and that their situation is not quite as dire or as conspiratorial as it may sound. The following discussion includes a response to the criticisms above. As students are at the heart of the debate, they are discussed next.

4.4 Students

The total student enrolment in community colleges was 11.7 million in 2009, of whom 6.7 million took courses for credit and 5 million took noncredit courses (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009). Table 4.2 shows enrolment growth for the past forty years.

According to Simmons (1994), the student population at a community college mirrors the ethnic, cultural, gender, age, and socioeconomic diversity of the district more so than a university does. The steady increase in enrolment over the decades can be attributed to various factors such as low tuition, easy accessibility, the availability of special programs, location in urban centers, the rising number

Table 4.2 Total for-credit enrolment at two-year colleges

Year	Enrolment in millions
1965	1.0
1970	2.2
1984	4.3
1999	5.3
2009	6.7

Sources: Kasper (2002, pp. 15–16) and American Association of Community Colleges (2009)

of older students, the increased availability of financial aid for low-income students, the attendance of previously underrepresented groups (women, minorities, disabled students), and the recruitment of underprepared students who in previous decades would never have considered going to college. Others may go because the college is nearby, and they want to remain close to friends and family. Finally, many students attend part-time because they already have families and jobs and need a college that allows them to complete a program of study at their own pace and understands the needs of working adults. Community colleges are also the first step for many international or immigrant students who lack sufficient English skills or the money to begin at a four-year institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Community colleges have been and continue to be very attractive to ethnic minorities who have not been served well by other institutions, and indeed, 52% of Native American, 43% of African American, and 52% of Latino/freshmen begin their college careers at a community college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009) (Table 4.3).

In academic ability, community college students tend to lag behind those students at other institutions because students of higher ability often go directly to four-year universities whereas the lower-ability students take advantage of the open-door policies at the community college. Many students are attracted by the community colleges' emphasis on vocational education and hope that training will lead to higher pay and better job security. Although they know that they are academically underprepared and need either developmental coursework or an atmosphere that is more focused on teaching than research, students often resist the academic aspect of their learning as irrelevant and reject everything that is not directly related to earning workplace credentials, an attitude that Grubb and Cox (2005) called "credentialist" and "utilitarian" (p. 96).

A major criticism of community colleges has been the comparatively high dropout rate. How well do students from community colleges perform when compared to their peers at four-year institutions? Of those students starting at a community college in 2003–2004, 55.4% had completed their degrees or were still enrolled as compared to 82.7% of students at four-year universities (Provasnik & Planty, 2008), and of those students who began studying at a community college in 1995–1996, only 34.7% of those who had later transferred to a four-year university had earned their bachelor's degree within six years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). In general, students transferring from a community college to a four-year school experience significant adjustment and noncompletion problems.

Table 4.3 Percentage of white vs. minority students at two-year colleges

Year	White	Minority
1976	80	20
1996	69	31
2009	64	36

Source: American Association of Community Colleges (2009)

Because of the level of preparedness when students first started college, they lag behind their peers even after four years. In addition, any transfer from one institution to another brings a certain amount of attrition with it regardless of how well programs are articulated, which made Astin (1977) question the wisdom of recruiting college-ready students to community colleges first. Those students who do adjust, however, tend to do well in the long run. According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), the students who benefit most are students from low-income families who attended a community college strictly for financial reasons but are intellectually capable of catching up with and matching their peers without much effort.

Of course, as Cohen and Brawer (2008) mentioned, a college with open access that enrolls underprepared students who often have work and family obligations, are single parents, come from low-income backgrounds, are the first in their families to attend college, suffer from multiple health problems, have transportation issues, and attend only part-time or intermittently as their situation allows cannot be compared to a selective residential college in matters of student retention. In addition, the open-access-open-return policies of many schools provide little incentive for students to not drop out when life interferes and return later. Another issue is that program completion should not be the only measure of success. Many students enroll only to learn additional skills, not earn a degree, and once they have acquired those skills, they have fulfilled their goal, which may be a new job or a promotion, and return to work. To determine if community colleges are successful in their efforts, a new definition may be needed that no longer makes the associate or bachelor's degree the ultimate measure of success.

Colleges have tried to counteract dropout rates with a variety of programs and initiatives. Academic tutoring and life skills counseling are frequently available, as is on-campus childcare. Some colleges provide on-campus jobs for their students; others make available short-term emergency loans if money is a problem. On the academic side, many colleges have tried to identify at-risk students early. The most common formalized approach is what has been called an *Early Alert* system, where faculty notify counselors or student advisors by way of a standard form if students do not attend class or perform poorly, and those advisors then contact the students and offer support.

4.5 Student Services

Student services are the result of the American assumption that a college's function is not only to educate students but also to guide them in their personal and social development for the benefit of society at large, reemphasizing the social role of the community college. Further, since colleges always depend at least in part on tuition income, they have an incentive to offer orientation sessions, counseling, tutoring, activities, and other services to keep students enrolled until they finish their programs. According to Matson (1994), the list of services differs from college to college, but it can generally be said that as student populations became more

diverse and their needs changed, the number of services increased. Student services listed by Cohen and Brawer (2008) include recruitment, admission, and orientation; advising and assessment; tutoring and developmental and supplemental instruction; student activities; financial aid; health services; personal guidance, mental health, and life skills counseling; career and transfer counseling and employment placement; child care; and special programs and services for underrepresented groups. This extensive list shows what is expected of community colleges and also hints at the characteristics and needs of the student population.

Recruitment means visits to area high schools and participation in recruitment fairs. Such visits inform students about how to get into college, what to expect from college, and why the particular college would be their best choice. For some students, so-called bridge programs are offered the summer before their first semester. These programs seek to help develop skills that will make the transition from high school to college easier. Sometimes such programs are designed for special populations and are available to students throughout their college careers. Many colleges also offer orientation or college-readiness courses, either at the beginning of the semester or weekly for the duration of the semester, where students are taught about study skills, administrative rules and procedures, advising, campus services, library research, health and well-being, and a host of other topics (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Counseling covers a broad array of services. One is the transition from the college to the workplace, and as a result, students can take advantage of career assessment and planning, employment counseling, training for interviews, resume writing, and other offers. Incoming students receive academic counseling that includes help with study skills, tutoring, and advice on transferring to other colleges. Academic advising tries to find the right program for students and then helps them select appropriate courses and make sure that all requirements are met. Transfer counseling provides information on the modalities of transferring to a four-year college. Psychological counseling includes everything from help with addiction, parenting, marital problems, mental health issues, eating disorders, and others (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Increased diversity also means that students have increasingly diverse needs, which require specially tailored programmes. Many campuses have an office for international students with employees trained in handling academic, personal, and legal issues that these students face such as language barriers, homesickness, and immigration matters. This office also handles all matters concerning student visas. Campuses often have counselors for specific groups such as veterans, minority students, or gay and lesbian students. Another area is services for students with disabilities. As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, such offices handle all accommodations students may need (equipment, extra time, alternative exams, note takers, or interpreters) and communicate these needs to faculty members. However, Simmons (1994) argued that services alone are not sufficient. To be truly responsive to students, teaching, advisement, curriculum, and the entire campus culture will eventually have to change, but special programs can help take steps in the right direction.

4.6 Programs

The first type of program that harks back to the very beginnings of the two-year college is vocational education, also known as technical, occupational, or career education. These are the types of programs in which German students would most likely train through an apprenticeship under the dual system, but in the United States, full-time schooling is usually required to obtain that initial occupational qualification. The first vocational schools date back to the beginning of the industrial revolution in the early 1800s. After the decline of the apprenticeship in the late 1700s and the switch to on-the-job training in factories in only one or two repetitive tasks, workers were often at the mercy of employers with few, if any, protections from layoffs or dangerous working conditions. Schools were designed to address this situation and provide a combination of academic and vocational training to workers to make them more mobile and better able to adjust to change. Other schools followed to introduce workers to the emerging technology of the day. Junior colleges were the postsecondary descendants of such schools (Gordon, 2003).

The goal of vocational programs is for students to earn terminal degrees that will give them access to employment, not transfer, upon graduation. Vocational education programs are often designed with the help of advisory committees comprised of business and industry representatives who have input into what exactly the curriculum will consist of and communicate changing needs to program administrators and faculty. Since these programs are considered to be terminal, they frequently do not articulate well with other postsecondary programs and may have requirements that differ from more academically oriented majors. Many programs conclude with a certificate instead of an associate degree. To help students find work upon graduation, there is a strong pregraduation emphasis on job-placement assistance and on helping the students establish contacts with potential employers (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Vocational education has been supported and funded by a number of legislative initiatives. The most influential law is likely the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, first passed in 1984 and reauthorized for the fourth time in 2006. Perkins legislation aims to strengthen sub-baccalaureate education through greater accountability for student attainment, expanded cooperation among different institutions, tighter integration of academic and technical learning to improve workplace skills, and intensified collaboration between colleges and industry, which all mean support for initiatives already common at community colleges. Another piece of legislation, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, provides funds for colleges to consolidate student and workforce services in one office for easier access to information and support (Scott & Sarkees-Wircenski, 2004).

A second type of program is developmental education, also known as remedial education. All American college aspirants must take standardized aptitude tests, most commonly the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) or the American College Testing (ACT) program. From the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, there was a steep decline in such test scores for basic skills like reading, English, math, and science. A correlation was found between family income and test scores, and as more and

more students from low-income families applied to community colleges, more and more students with scores below the minimum required for admission appeared on college campuses (Spann & McCrimmon, 1994).

This situation posed a conundrum for community colleges as their mission was to provide higher education access to previously underserved populations; at the same time, it made no sense to keep admitting students who did not have the requisite skills to be successful in college. Dropout rates among these students were extremely high, and instructors struggled with students unable to comprehend basic information or complete simple assignments. Traditional approaches such as tutoring helped marginal students but not those with significant deficiencies because faculty were not trained to help them. The answer to the problem was developmental education to help these students catch up, and the need was indeed stunning. In 2000, 42% of public community college students took at least one developmental course, 20% in reading, 23% in writing, and 35% in math (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

The exact nature of developmental programs varies. Some colleges offer separate courses in academic departments taught by regular college instructors; some create a separate department for developmental education; others operate centers, often with names such as *College Success Center*, where specialized faculty teach students in a more informal atmosphere and also work with them one-on-one (Spann & McCrimmon, 1994). Whether or not students may take regular academic courses while enrolled in developmental coursework depends on the state, the college, or the program.

According to Spann and McCrimmon (1994), students who need developmental courses have not only gaps in knowledge and skills but also a lack of understanding of the expectations of college in terms of work, commitment, and time management. Developmental courses therefore teach students how to become better and more efficient readers; how to master English grammar and write sentences, paragraphs, and essays; how to handle math from simple computations to basic algebra; and how to develop better study, time management, or stress reduction skills (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). To be truly developmental, courses must not only emphasize cognitive skills alone but also help students with the social and emotional aspects of going to college (Richardson, 1994). These courses are usually added on to a program of study; they do not count toward program requirements and may not be transferred for credit.

Complicating the mission of developmental education is student attitudes. Especially students in vocational programs often see little connection between developmental education and their future careers. In addition to their dislike for subjects they had already struggled with in high school, developmental coursework to them is not an opportunity to open up a world of learning but instead an onerous requirement on the way to better employment that needs to be discharged with the least amount of effort possible. To overcome this student resistance, Grubb and Cox (2005) suggested that developmental education always be integrated with other college programs, that the curriculum be articulated with college-level courses, that courses be properly sequenced, that instructors be given professional development, and that the administration genuinely support developmental education, both in word and deed.

Community education includes literacy training or English language courses, contract work for industry like technical training, employment skills training like resume writing, and enrichment activities like French cooking. Mezack (1994) affirmed that this function is what makes for a true *community* college. Courses may be offered for credit or no credit and last from one hour total to an entire semester or even longer depending on the content. The courses are usually paid for by participant fees; no financial aid or other public support is available, and most participants are interested only in the skills that the course provides, not the degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Community colleges may also lend their expertise and facilities to community organizations and agencies. In smaller communities, colleges and their leaders can function as change leaders in the community or as the one force that has the clout and the resources to bring divergent interests together. Another outside client is employers for whom community colleges provide professional development and training. The reason community colleges perform this training instead of the companies themselves is that the college is often cheaper, does not interfere with business operations as on-the-job training might, and gives students credentials beyond limited occupational training.

According to Grubb, Badway, Bell, Bragg, and Russman (1997), colleges seek the role of the "entrepreneurial college" (p. 1) because they can serve the community, establish connections with employers, remain competitive with private training providers, and receive infusions of cash or equipment paid for by industry partners. In addition, workforce training helps to position colleges strategically in the political struggle for funding. On the other hand, too much focus on industry training can lead to charges of being too closely aligned with business, and if the entrepreneurial units of the college enjoy greater financial liquidity, rancor in the faculty and staff ranks could develop. The upside, however, is that the entrepreneurial focus can remind the academic units that the community college is not just a temple of learnedness while the academic focus can remind the entrepreneurial units that there is a purpose beyond making money and training people for employment.

The collegiate function means providing transfer courses for students wishing to eventually graduate from a four-year university and making sure that all students receive the same quality and rigor of education they would at universities. Transfer courses are those that are taken at a community college but will be accepted by other universities as equivalent to their own courses. To ensure transferability, community colleges have traditionally signed articulation agreements with universities, specifying which courses would be accepted by the university. However, inconsistent adherence to such agreements and occasional heavy-handedness by universities moved the issue into the political arena. As community colleges enroll proportionately more minority students than universities, the number of minority students unable to transfer to universities is also high, leading to concerns about affirmative action and widening the gap between students of color and others (Wellman, 2002). Many states have stepped in to set up statewide transfer matrixes that specify and mandate for all public colleges and universities which courses can be transferred between which institutions. These systems try to ensure that the same courses have

the same title and course number at all public institutions across the state and that the associate degree will be accepted by universities as equivalent to the first two years of study (Bender, 1994).

Other transfer agreements may be program specific. For example, some community colleges may cooperate with universities on a culinary arts program where students spend the first two years at the community college learning about cooking skills and the second two years at the university with a focus on hotel and restaurant management. A program in information technology may be coupled with one in computer science. In cases like this, anyone completing the first two years can automatically be guaranteed admission into the second two years barring any academic problems.

Additional transfer setups may exist between colleges and high schools or career and technology centers. High school students in grades 11 and 12 may in many states take courses at the local community college and earn high school credit for those courses as well. Such agreements are known by names like *dual* or *concurrent* enrolment. Especially technical colleges have agreements under which students who enroll at area career and technology centers earn dual credit for the courses taken there. The impetus is that those students may be enticed to enroll in college after finishing their career education if they do not have to repeat content already learned (Cohen & Brawer, 1987, 2008). Prager (1994) strongly supported such extended agreements. She especially promoted ideas like Tech Prep, a 2+2 program designed to integrate grades 11–14. The idea of the program is that high schools, career and technology centers, and technical community colleges engage in joint curriculum development to assure students' smooth articulation between secondary and post-secondary education in occupational and technical programs. Further, Prager called for similar agreements with the military to find ways to translate military training into college credit and with proprietary schools, private career schools that offer mostly certificates.

However, challenges remain. For one, community colleges must ensure compatibility with courses at a university so that students who transfer are not disadvantaged; at the same time, all community college students, including those not academically ready for such work, will be enrolled in these courses. Community college instructors, therefore, are always stuck between maintaining rigor and helping their underprepared students (Cohen & Brawer, 1987, 2008). However, because of accessibility issues, Eaton (1994) was unequivocal that such challenges must be overcome for the benefit of students.

Finally, a recent development has been the community college baccalaureate. Especially in technical and occupational fields not commonly available at universities or in underserved areas, some community colleges have been given permission to offer bachelor's degrees to their students. A second motivation for such degrees has been the rate of students who never complete their transfer to a four-year university or struggle to adjust to the new environment; the hope is that students who want and need baccalaureate degrees will be more likely to persist if they can stay at the same institution. This argument once again ties in with the social role of the community college in providing access to education and personal growth, and it is

expressed in the statement of philosophy of the Community College Baccalaureate Association (2009): "The baccalaureate degree is an important entry requirement for the better jobs and a better lifestyle. Therefore, every person should have an opportunity to pursue the baccalaureate degree at a place that is convenient, accessible, and affordable" (para 3). The community college baccalaureate tends to be a highly applied degree with an emphasis on workplace skills rather than theory.

4.7 Organization and Leadership

Community colleges more so than other institutions of higher education tend to have top-down organizational structures with strong leaders, limited faculty governance, and little if any student involvement. As a result of faculty teaching loads, the short tenure of students in their programs, and the need to react quickly to changing economic and political realities, decisions are sometimes made with minimal input from stakeholders.

The most common organizational formats are one college forming its own district, districts with multiple colleges, colleges that are branches of larger universities and thus part of a state university system, and statewide college systems. The majority of colleges have their own districts. A board of trustees or regents provides regulatory oversight. Boards usually have a membership made up of business or civic leaders from the college's district. These boards hire and fire the college president, make sure that the college is managed in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, oversee facilities management and construction, set staff and faculty salaries, confirm new faculty contracts, and approve or terminate programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The president of a community college has multiple functions and sometimes has to try to be everything to everybody. Above all, the president is the one who sets the tone for the institutional culture, and his or her role in faculty and staff morale is often underestimated. Presidents help develop institutional missions and goals, make administrative decisions, chair campus committees, meet with the board, raise money, lobby the state legislature, coordinate programs with other colleges, work with community leaders, and provide leadership for all on-campus functions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Richardson, Blocker, & Bender, 1994). As a result of the structure of the community college, many presidents have traditionally been iron-fisted leaders who made important decisions on their own and micromanaged all campus affairs. However, the increasing diversity of the constituents community colleges are expected to serve and the complexity of college functions have led to calls for presidents to delegate more decision making and become facilitators who help create a unified purpose for all stakeholders by drawing on the expertise of faculty and staff members to move the college forward (Bryant, 1994; Myran, 1995; Richardson et al., 1994).

Deans or vice presidents oversee the day-to-day administration of the college in areas such as business and finance, academics and instructional services, student

affairs, administrative services, continuing education, or technology. Large colleges are likely to have assistant and associate deans or vice presidents as an additional level of administration as well as directors in charge of specific, limited areas of college management (Richardson et al., 1994). Division or department chairs report to the respective dean or vice president. Depending on each college, academic programs may be divided into divisions of program clusters or related fields or departments of specific academic disciplines. The exact configuration depends on the size of the institution and the number of faculty and students in each program. Technical colleges, for example, often have a general education department or division that comprises everything from physics to history to psychology to speech and writing.

Departments are responsible for setting course schedules, assigning instructors to classes, hiring adjunct instructors, revising program curricula and plans of study, and providing services to all classroom instructors. The department chair manages the departmental budget, evaluates faculty and staff, implements curriculum changes, evaluates student learning throughout the department, lobbies on behalf of the department with the administration, and participates in recruiting new students to the departmental programs. Department chairs are usually permanent appointments and are relieved of any instructional duties; to become chair, someone might rise from the faculty ranks, or a person from the outside may be hired. Faculty are below the department chair, but in large, diversified departments, the position of program coordinator may also exist (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Richardson et al., 1994).

Most states have asserted some level of state control over community colleges. In some states, special boards or commissions are appointed to oversee community colleges, but in others, they are members of the same higher education agencies that larger universities belong to. The purpose of this state level involvement is to establish consistent policy and programs across colleges and to be able to deal with funding issues in a more efficient manner. The downside is that community colleges are required to compete with research universities for state funding. Furthermore, once the college is more beholden to the state in general and state legislators in particular, it becomes harder to respond to changes at the local level. On the upside, the state is better able to fund programs for special groups of students and to offer insight into whether some programs remain viable (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

All community colleges are accredited. Accreditation is a review of institutional programs and policies to ascertain that these meet accepted academic standards; it is also required to be able to receive and disburse federal student aid. Accreditation is a peer-review process; institutions join one of several regional accreditation agencies and are then periodically visited by accreditation teams comprised of administrators from other member colleges who check for compliance with standards and federal laws. Many occupational programs (e.g., nursing) must also be licensed or accredited by state boards or professional entities.

4.8 Finances

According to Cohen and Brawer (2008) and Lombardi (1973), community colleges usually have six sources of revenue: tuition and fees paid by students, federal monies, state appropriations, local funds, income from sales and services provided, and other sources often referred to as *soft money* because of their limited and uncertain availability.

State money is generally negotiated each year with members of the state legislature or the state board depending on the funding mechanism in each state. Garms (1977) distinguished five models of state funding: (1) planned economy with centralized control, where the legislature appropriates a certain amount of money annually; (2) planned economy with some decentralization, where the legislature appropriates most of the money, but local sources or additional funding based on need are considered; (3) percentage matching, where the state pays a percentage of the college budget while the rest comes from other sources; (4) flat grant, where colleges receive a fixed amount per full-time enrolled student; and (5) foundation plan, where state and local sources share costs to boost those districts with limited community support. To this list Cohen and Brawer (2008) added one more model, (6) cost-based funding, where state money is provided based on the functions, objectives, and needs for certain programs. A technology-extensive program, for example, may receive extra funds under this system if it helps remedy a labor shortage in the state.

Tuition and fees are a persistent point of contention for every college student and administrator. Students want to be able to afford college, and administrators want to keep their colleges affordable. State legislators, on the other hand, want colleges to collect more tuition money so that state appropriations may be reduced. As a result, the cost of attending a two-year college has seen some steep increases over the years (Table 4.4).

However, as a result of the mission of the community colleges, rates are always below those of major universities to maintain the colleges as points of easy access to higher education. Tuition is closely related to federal aid. Without aid, many students would not be able to afford a college education. Of all 2007–2008 full-time community college students, 65.7% received some sort of financial aid; 55.7% received an average of $3700 in grants, and 22.5% received an average of $4900 in loans (Wei, Berkner, He, & Lew, 2009).

Table 4.4 Increase in annual cost of attending a two-year college

Year	Annual cost	Percentage increase
1976/77	$283	
1986/87	$660	133
1996/97	$1267	107
2006/07	$2017	62

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2009)

Local sources of funding are most frequently tied to the property tax. Generally, a percentage of the tax property owners in the district pay is set aside for the local community college. This money may be used for any expense. If more funds are needed, colleges may ask for a special purpose tax, which can fund only the one program it is intended for, or a capital outlay tax, which may fund buildings and equipment. Those last two taxes, however, are often subject to approval by the voters in the district.

To bring in extra revenue, colleges often lease facilities to outside businesses or agencies for event hosting. Another source of funding has been to provide paid services for hire to industry clients, usually in areas such as technology training or organizational development. Finally, support may come from industry partners (in the form of money or equipment), donations and gifts, one-time government grants, and income from investments (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Lombardi, 1973).

Attracting a wider variety of students has led to some funding issues over the years as a result of the law of unintended consequences: Lower tuition rates attract more students, which boosts enrolment, but many of the new students will be low-income and in turn require more financial aid that the college may have to provide; special accommodations must be made for disabled students; and many students who are ill-prepared or not fully committed need ongoing counseling and academic support to be successful in their studies. As a result, more students mean not only more revenue but also more cost, and depending on the programs offered and the location of the college, extra costs can be substantial. In addition, high enrolment numbers are needed to receive as much state money as possible under some funding models, so the reaction has at times been to apply subtle pressure to faculty to relax academic standards to keep everybody enrolled. Other common remedies to funding shortfalls are hiring freezes, replacing departing full-time faculty with adjunct instructors, offering only those courses required for graduation, allowing more students to enroll per course, and postponing equipment purchases and building renovations (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The recurring nature of such funding problems has compelled Breneman and Nelson (1981) to suggest that community college funding could be more equitably based on a college's ability and willingness to focus on employment and its impact on the local job market, echoing the statement made earlier that degree completion should not be the only measure of community college success.

4.9 Faculty

Community college faculty are said to struggle with defining their identity: They are technically members of the professoriate, yet they are not in many ways, and they feel stuck in an ambiguous environment that matches neither high school nor university yet contains aspects of both. Besides students referring to their instructors as *teachers* rather than *professors*, there are some significant differences between community college instructors and university professors. For one, most instructors

have few to no responsibilities in research and publication; they were hired to teach. Those who do write and publish have reported attitudes among colleagues and administrators ranging from admiration to bewilderment to hostility. At any rate, publishing efforts are rarely if ever rewarded, and the topic of publications is most often related to teaching rather than to discipline-specific issues (McGrath & Spear, 1994).

Teaching loads are also higher than at four-year universities. Whereas a common teaching load at a university may be two courses in the fall and three in the spring, community college instructors routinely teach five or more courses per semester. Department administrators determine course assignments and teaching schedules; instructors can easily teach five sections of the same introductory course semester after semester. Textbook choice tends to be by committee to ensure consistency across sections, and instructors are often expected to spend 35 or even 40 hours a week on campus to be available to their students. Instructors are defined by their teaching, not by discipline; conversations among colleagues are more likely to involve issues of classroom management and teaching methods rather than research controversies in a certain field. The repetitive teaching assignments in conjunction with the lack of student preparedness are said to lead to early burnout and to a decrease in the quality of instruction (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; McGrath & Spear, 1994).

Although there is some variation among states and colleges, few faculty members have doctorates in their disciplines. Most hold a master's degree, and in the case of some technical programs, even a bachelor's or associate degree might suffice if instructors with higher degrees are difficult to find (Fig. 4.1).

Colleges generally offer professional development in areas such as instructional design and methods or classroom management, either by holding workshops on campus or by letting faculty members attend conferences. McGrath and Spear (1994) considered such professional development, in conjunction with giving instructors the opportunity to return to school to earn their doctorates, as a major

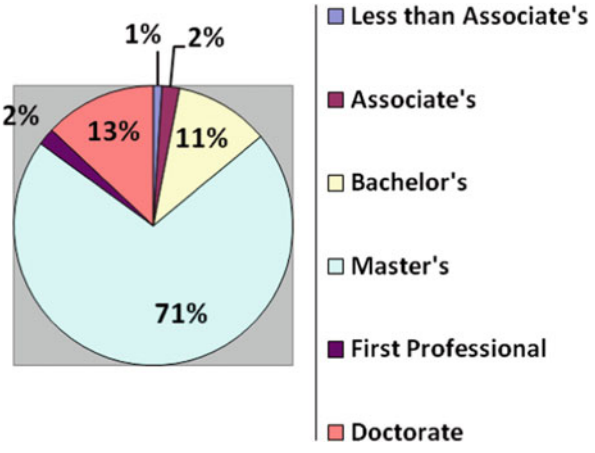

Fig. 4.1 Credentialing of two-year college faculty *Source*: National Center for Education Statistics (2009)

means of preventing burnout in the first place. Tenure often does not exist. A more common system is to have an instructor on probation for one or more years, and after completing this probationary period, the instructor essentially has continuous lifetime employment (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Despite the often difficult work environment, Cohen and Brawer (2008) claimed that faculty members tended to be satisfied with their jobs. They know that once their teaching day ends, they can go home to spend time with friends and family and do not have to worry about committee meetings, research articles due in two weeks, or lab experiments in progress. Salaries at community colleges vary considerably, but in the absence of tenure, longevity is usually rewarded, so salaries can be quite generous and can exceed those of an assistant or even associate professor at the nearby four-year university (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2000). If anything, faculty complain about the lack of preparedness of their students, requirements for on-campus face time, the monotony of course assignments, the grading load, the lack of input on campus issues, and the number of students in their classes.

4.10 Toward the Future

The future of community colleges can best be framed in the context of globalization, especially the development of a global economy through modern technology. In 1996 already, the American Council on International and Intercultural Education (ACIIE) sponsored a conference that linked continued economic development with a more globalized education (ACIIE, 1996). Ruiz (2002) took this argument one step further and asserted that the changes in the composition of and requirements for the workforce of the future make it imperative that community colleges become the force that unites a community view with a global view and teaches students and businesses that the two views are inextricably linked.

To effect all needed changes, strategic planning has to be instituted at the departmental and the institutional levels (Deegan, 1994). First of all, more emphasis must be placed on including an increasingly diverse faculty and staff into the planning process (Acebo, 1994). Next, the challenge is to match student desires with community needs, and if systems thinking and shared governance are implemented, the college will be well positioned to react to change (Myran & Howdyshell, 1994).

Clowes and Levin (1994) suggested that community colleges once again put career and technology education at the center of their efforts. Their reasoning was twofold: Career education will always be needed and can provide steady enrolment and funding, and too much focus on community education or industrial training will lead to more criticism that community colleges are not academic institutions after all. Dougherty (1994) took issue with this idea, claiming that it will be detrimental to those students needing a community college because they cannot afford a university or are not yet ready, and Eaton (1994) seconded, explaining that collegiate programs do not have to be dominant but have to be preserved to guarantee sustained access. Despite such criticism, community colleges remain best situated to

respond to what Gray and Herr (1998) called the "skills-employability paradigm" (p. 8), that is students' employment prospects and by extension the country's prosperity are correlated with how well the skills taught in college match those needed at work.

In this context, globalization and diversity play an important role. To meet the workforce demands of the future, community colleges will have to increase their recruitment of underrepresented groups, many of whom will be cultural and linguistic minorities. Colleges must transform themselves to offer these students a welcoming atmosphere; as these are the students on whom America's future depends, the entire campus has to adopt an attitude of cultural diversity (Forde, 2002). Rendón and Valadez (1994) already foresaw that community colleges will preserve their attraction as a major first step for many minorities, and they anticipated growing numbers of students of color and of immigrants, especially among those who speak Spanish.

In that same vein, the articulation between adult education, high schools, business and industry, and community colleges will have to be strengthened. Since the workforce requires more and more skills from employees, it will become the job of community colleges to elevate more and more adults to a higher level of performance than was needed in the past (Spann, 2000). As community colleges already deliver services to the groups mentioned above, they will be able to improve smooth articulation at a low cost in the era of shrinking higher education budgets (Boylan, Bonham, Clark-Keefe, Drewes, & Saxon, 2004). Many among this new student population will be underprepared, which means developmental education will remain an important area of activity as will literacy training for industry and English-language training for new immigrants (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Another development necessitated by globalization is increased emphasis on the community college baccalaureate, especially in rural areas or for programs that are not generally offered at universities. According to Walker (2006), more and more students will need a baccalaureate-level education for their planned careers but are denied access for financial and geographical reason. With increasing international competition, higher levels of required workplace skills, and America's struggle to not only maintain but also increase prosperity, all qualified and motivated students must be reached. Community colleges are best suited to fill this need. This development does not mean that community colleges will turn away from the associate degree, which for many students in technical and occupational programs is the key to career success, but that they need to expand their scope to provide needed services.

Community education likely faces the greatest threat. Industry contract training and adult basic education (ABE) have revenue streams coming from government and industry, but community education by its very nature will likely never become self-supporting, which may make it a target for those trying to contain costs. To make up for the possible loss of recreational community education if it cannot pay for itself, Phelan (1994) and Rendón and Valadez (1994) recommended a broader vision for community building. Economic development, special literacy training geared toward the workforce, and programs that teach workers how to learn in the first place were touted as being attractive to outside agencies and industry partners.

To accomplish this shift, Rendón and Valadez emphasized, changes from leadership to mission to goals down to curriculum and instruction would have to be made. To execute this new direction, community colleges would have to work on globalizing themselves. Levin (2001) in turn argued that global economic developments were shaping even the local workplace as was already evident through modern communication and increased immigration. Meeting the workplace demand by making institutional and curricular changes to prepare students for jobs where global skills are needed could be the future strength of the community college.

4.11 Conclusion

What is the final outcome of this discussion about the role of the community college? This writer believes that the answers to the questions asked at the beginning of this chapter should be an unqualified "Yes." Is community college education true higher education? Yes. Are students served well in community college programs? Yes. Are community colleges an important access point to higher education? Yes. Are they well positioned to respond to the demands of a changing economic and workplace environment? Yes again.

The community college will continue to be looked at as a change agent, and it will have to keep dealing with the fact that its academic mission cannot be separated from its social role, especially with the increasing numbers of new and diverse groups of learners. In the current global economic environment, access becomes more important than ever. Large numbers of people must be reskilled; others who never needed postsecondary education and never had to worry about global issues must be encouraged to consider college; and previously underserved groups must be empowered to seize opportunities. For many people, community colleges will be the convenient and affordable choice in their quest to remain competitive in the workforce. The community college's role in shaping communities and society as a whole has always been part of its mission, and the rapid economic changes the United States has been experiencing give this social role even more urgency.

Community colleges were never designed as institutions to create or preserve a status quo but to change with the needs of society, to respond to local conditions, and this heritage will become an asset. They are well suited to make the changes necessary for the new demands placed on them because of their ability to find creative solutions, adjust quickly to new situations, and work in close cooperation with industry. However, internal structures have to change.

Community colleges must become more unified and integrated in their various functions, particularly academic and entrepreneurial. These two parts of the college can no longer afford to be locked into an adversarial relationship but will have to find ways to cooperate and collaborate. The different units of a community college must learn that they depend on one another to move the institution forward and provide the best possible learning experience for students. For example, developmental education will take on additional importance as more and more workers

need academic skills they never needed before, and tackling this issue must be a concerted effort. This is where the changing role of the college president becomes pivotal. Without a more participatory leadership style, old chasms will remain and retard the community college's ability to respond to its students' needs.

On the college mission and purpose, we seem to have come full circle. Created to help move the United States into the industrial age, community colleges are now called upon to move the country into the global age, and they can and must seize their opportunity to shine in the new economy. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to the increasing need for further education and training beyond the high school level, and their industry connections will be a tremendous asset in designing quality programs. At the same time, they remain a ray of hope and opportunity for those who had always thought that postsecondary education was beyond their reach. These two roles, to be part of the needs and the dreams of people, will likely make the community college a fixture in the American educational landscape for years to come.

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