

EDITORS' NOTES

Nearly all youths in the United States desire a college education, yet for many, the gap between high school and college remains disturbingly wide. Past policies and practices have not gone far enough to create academic pathways that lead from high school to college or enable transfer from two- to four-year colleges and universities. In particular, minority, low-income, first-generation, and other K–12 students labeled the *forgotten half* or the *neglected majority* are less likely than their white and more affluent peers to realize their dream of going to college. As a result, educational and economic outcomes associated with academic achievement and college attendance are distributed inequitably among youth in the United States. Without interventions that dramatically change curricula, instruction, assessment, and infrastructure, this situation will not change. In fact, we argue it will likely worsen.

For several decades, community colleges have played a leading role in facilitating students' transitions from secondary to postsecondary education, and through completion of the baccalaureate degree. Yet better policies, models, and programs are needed if all students are to successfully complete their educational goals. Through state and federal policy, emerging local structures, and collaborative partnerships at all levels, academic pathway models are connecting high schools to community colleges and community colleges to universities in order to meet the needs of students who have not traditionally participated in higher education.

This volume of *New Directions for Community Colleges* looks at developments in local, state, and federal policies and programs designed to enhance opportunities for more students—especially those traditionally underserved in higher education—to access and succeed in college, paying particular attention to the role of community colleges in this process. We look at secondary curricular and organizational restructuring that is occurring in collaboration with postsecondary institutions, particularly curricular reforms designed to help students perform at higher academic levels and prepare them to transition to college ready to learn. Chapter authors discuss dual credit, dual enrollment, and early and middle college high schools, as well as initiatives that aim to enhance college access by integrating academic and career or technical subjects. To varying degrees, each of these models has played a role in reaching out to underserved student populations.

Chapter One, by Debra Bragg, Eunyong Kim, and Elisabeth Barnett, reports the results of a fifty-state research and development project funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education called Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success (APASS). The chapter also presents information

about new and emerging academic pathways that systematically link high schools to two- and four-year colleges and enhance access for students traditionally underserved in higher education. By articulating the issues that undergird the APASS project, as well as the goals and outcomes of many other initiatives described in this volume, we strive to deepen understanding of models and approaches that link high school to college and address the needs of underserved students.

Subsequent chapters offer insight into various dimensions of the pathways linking high school to college. In Chapter Two, Denise Green describes what we know about traditionally underserved students, including students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students. She discusses how they fare in college transitions and what educators still need to know to effectively serve them. Chapter Three, written by Andrea Bueschel and Andrea Venezia, describes examples of local pathways and statewide policies that align community college standards and curricula with those at high schools and four-year colleges and universities.

In Chapter Four, Erika Hunt and Charles Carroll present a case study of one of the nation's oldest dual enrollment programs: Florida's Accelerated Mechanism Program. Through a discussion of the development of the state's policies governing dual enrollment and an intensive look at one Florida community college, this chapter identifies successful strategies, challenges, and barriers in implementing a P-16 academic pathway. Chapter Five spotlights early and middle college high schools, and explains how students can graduate with a high school diploma and an associate degree after five years. In this chapter, Terry Born describes the development of two such schools, with particular emphasis on how they support students taking college-level courses while still in high school. Chapter Six shifts the discussion of academic pathways to the intersection of community colleges and four-year institutions. In this chapter, Deborah Floyd identifies the different ways in which community colleges participate in baccalaureate education and debunks myths surrounding the controversial community college baccalaureate degree.

The following three chapters provide insight into how traditional career and workforce curricula are being aligned with rigorous academic instruction to enhance access to college for students who have traditionally forgone college to enter the workforce. In Chapter Seven, Donna Dare discusses recent attempts to promote students' transitions into postsecondary education through reforms associated with career and technical education. In Chapter Eight, Margaret Ann Draeger highlights a high-tech partnership led by a Tech Prep consortium that involves high schools, a community college, and neighboring universities in Ohio. Chapter Nine, written by Cheri St. Arnauld, describes the way community college, business, and government partners have created an accessible teacher education pathway for students in Arizona. Finally, Chapter Ten, written by Elisabeth Barnett and Debra Bragg, synthesizes the previous chapters and discusses lessons

learned and promising policies and practices in creating and sustaining academic pathways to and from the community college.

Debra D. Bragg
Elisabeth A. Barnett
Editors

DEBRA D. BRAGG is professor of higher education and community college leadership, and director of the APASS initiative at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

ELISABETH A. BARNETT is senior research associate with the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York, and a former APASS team member.