

## EDITORS' NOTES

A common assessment of a community college lies in how easily its students obtain good jobs that are related to their course of study. Yet in a world buffeted by the forces of changing technology and globalism, surprisingly little has been written about the outlook for graduates of the occupational and technical programs that are so much a part of the community college mission.

This volume focuses on the trends in the labor markets most common to community college programming and thereby will assist community college leaders in thinking about the future. Edited by two economists, it brings that perspective to bear on the forces shaping those markets.

The volume is divided into two major parts. Chapters One through Three, in the first part, deal with the broader forces in the economy that have an impact on labor markets: the supply and demand for labor, technological change and globalism, the impact of increased credentialing, and the changing skill requirements of the domestic labor market. The chapters in the second part take these broad themes into more specific occupational clusters such as business and the health sciences. Included is a case study of how well the California community colleges have responded to the changing demands for workers in their local labor markets. A chapter on the changing nature of transfer programs completes the volume.

Since this volume has an economic focus, the first chapter, by Hirschel Kasper, provides a review of the basic forces at work in the labor market with particular reference to the community college. A number of the ideas introduced in this chapter are picked up in subsequent ones. In the second chapter, Richard M. Romano and Donald A. Dellow discuss the role that technological change and globalization have on job markets. Historically these forces have both destroyed jobs and created new ones.

In Chapter Three, Anthony P. Carnevale, Jeff Strohl, and Nicole Smith examine the impact of increased credentialing on the workforce and the connection between education and earnings. They argue that postsecondary education has become the arbiter of economic opportunity in the United States and raise concerns that if community colleges become strapped for revenue, they may be forced to abandon the nontraditional students they were created to serve.

Chapter Four begins the second part of the volume. In it, Dixie Sommers of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) explains how labor market projections are made and the risks involved in making them. From the myriad data collected by the BLS, she breaks out those jobs that require as their most important pathway either an associate degree or at least some postsecondary training. Labor market projections for these jobs are then provided through the year 2016. These projections and other BLS information were

provided to the authors of the next four chapters and served as a basis of their discussions of specific occupational clusters.

In Chapter Five Janell Lang discusses the outlook in the fastest-growing sector, the health sciences. In Chapter Six Robert Walker looks at business and related fields, in Chapter Seven Peggie Weeks discusses the outlook in engineering technology occupations, and in Chapter Eight Gregory Talley and Susan Korsgren review the employment projections in the protective services field. Finally, in Chapter Nine, Michelle Van Noy and James Jacobs round out the picture by looking at noncredit workforce development programs.

Community colleges pride themselves on the flexibility and speed with which they respond to the needs of local employers. In Chapter Ten, Duane E. Leigh and Andrew M. Gill present a new approach for evaluating just how well they do this. Applying their method to the California community college system, they find uneven but generally positive results.

Although this volume covers major clusters of the vocational and technical programs that are typically offered by community colleges, it does not attempt to cover all such programs or explore the jobs that transfer students will hold once they obtain a two-year or a four-year degree. However, since transfer programs enroll such a large number of students and often have an occupational orientation, we touch on that mission in the last chapter, by Barbara K. Townsend. In it, she explores the newest mission of the community college, the granting of the bachelor's degree. As the previous chapters have pointed out, many of the high-wage jobs of the future will require a bachelor's degree or higher. In a number of states, the pressure for producing more bachelor's degree graduates for certain occupations is so great that states have granted some community colleges the right to do so. Whether this new mission will change the character and direction of the community college remains an open question.

Since this volume was written, the unemployment rate in the U.S. has almost doubled and the world economy has gone into a sharp cyclical decline. None of these short-run problems would cause us to change the long-run projections presented here. Once labor markets stabilize, we will return to the underlying long-run trends depicted in the chapters that follow. In the meantime though, community college enrollments, both full- and part-time, will accelerate in transfer as well as the vocational programs.

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