

## EDITOR'S NOTES

In response to myriad pressures to be more accountable and demonstrate educational outcomes, community colleges, public schools, and other institutions of higher education are searching for new ways to address student needs while responding to the demands of external entities. Community colleges in particular are challenged by accountability legislation, unstable state budgets, increased need and decreased funding for developmental education, rhetoric about seamless learning from kindergarten through college, high expectations from accrediting associations and grant makers, and the pressure resulting from operating in an ever-more-global society. Demands are high for innovative and alternative strategies that can meet educational standards and state needs while maintaining quality and access. It is not clear that our system—in which high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and virtual universities operate in relative isolation from one another—will be able to effectively prepare students for jobs and careers in a knowledge economy.

To meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse citizenry, and to face the economic, political, and accountability challenges just mentioned, education policy and decision makers are increasingly turning to partnerships. Across the nation, community colleges, K–12 school districts, and universities are collaborating with one another in creative ways that pool resources, increase access, and achieve numerous educational goals. Although not all partnerships include two-year colleges, these institutions serve as a bridge between public schools and four-year colleges, and between schools and the workforce. Community colleges naturally function as an intermediary among educational partners and are in a position to collaborate with an array of other institutions, among them for-profit educational service providers (for example, Sylvan Learning Centers), virtual universities, community organizations, and environmental agencies.

Advocates of collaboration between community colleges and other organizations—most often public schools and universities—argue that partnership results in a win-win situation that allows participants to obtain more results while using fewer resources. Traditional articulation and dual-enrollment agreements, for example, permit greater access to community colleges for many high school students and are considered to be beneficial to both community colleges and public schools. Despite the benefits in collaboration, many partnerships fail to obtain desired results, cannot be sustained, or cease to benefit both parties. In an era of increasing accountability, it is critical to understand why so many partnerships fall short of their goals,

and to identify the factors that contribute to the success or failure of a collaboration. Highlighting important elements of educational collaboration, chapters in this volume offer a means to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of partnerships. They also look past the “value-added” rhetoric that accompanies most calls for educational alliances and more closely examine for whom a partnership is of value, at what cost, for what benefit, and the extent to which it is sustainable.

This volume of *New Directions for Community Colleges* should be helpful to those working with a community college partnership, especially college presidents, administrators, policy makers, faculty, public school and university leaders, and administrators with other educational provider organizations. State policy and decision makers involved with issues of educational access and accountability will also benefit from this volume, as will institutional researchers, who can gain from enhanced understanding of factors affecting the success and sustainability of community college partnerships, as well as those that contribute to perceived failure and termination. In addition, educators across institutional sectors who are interested in increasing access and addressing students’ learning needs in a knowledge economy will learn strategies and shortcomings from the case examples given in this volume. Finally, university educators and researchers with an interest in community colleges will benefit from this important addition to the community college research base.

Chapter One, by Marilyn J. Amey, Pamela L. Eddy, and Casey Ozaki, describes a development model that can serve as a lens for examining partnerships. In Part One of the volume, chapter authors then present case studies of successful partnership and identify the keys to successful and sustainable collaboration. Gail Hoffman-Johnson presents the first of these case studies in Chapter Two, looking at development and implementation of a strategic partnership between a community college and a premier engineering university to improve students’ transition from the two-year to the four-year institution. In Chapter Three, Carrie B. Kisker and Patrick Hauser discuss an innovative partnership between a college academic program and a local fire department. They analyze the factors that helped the collaboration succeed, including assessment practices, use of an advisory board, and the ability to leverage funding. Susan J. Bracken’s Chapter Four examines the influence of language, context, and communication in successful partnership, presenting a case featuring a community college, a university, a government agency, and the community. Jesse S. Watson illustrates in Chapter Five the importance of champions and their ability to cultivate resources in a partnership among a community college, K–12 school district, and a university.

Part Two of the volume describes three less-successful or unsustainable partnerships, examines implications for college leaders, and suggests best practices for other strategic alliances. In Chapter Six, Pamela L. Eddy describes an alliance among five two-year colleges of technology in which

partners were initially motivated to collaborate yet failed in the absence of factors that would contribute critically to sustainability. Patricia L. Farrell and Kim Allan Seifert's case looks at the challenges involved in creating a successful dual-enrollment program, even when state policy provides the structure to do so, in Chapter Seven. In the last chapter of Part Two, Gay Garland Reed, Joanne E. Cooper, and Llewellyn Young share their experience with a community college–university program partnership that began with great enthusiasm but, over a ten-year lifespan, became institutionally marginalized and eventually dissolved.

In Part Three, chapter authors examine educational partnership through other perspectives. Debra D. Bragg and Maxine L. Russman, in Chapter Nine, discuss collaboration associated with four public policies at the federal and state levels to show how partnerships are encouraged and how they struggle. The final chapter revisits the partnership model, drawing out themes and factors affecting successful collaborations that emerged in the preceding chapters. Recommendations for research and practice are also offered.

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