

EDITORS' NOTES

The community college's societal and functional missions have been contested throughout the institution's history. Community college societal missions are the "overarching institutional purposes" serving to "justify the institution to external constituencies" (Doucette, Richardson, and Fenske, 1985, p. 193). These missions involve sometimes contradictory ideas, such as democratizing higher education by providing open access for disadvantaged students and demonstrating institutional accountability for students' academic success, or ensuring social mobility through education and serving the needs of local communities, especially their businesses and industries. Functional missions, defined as the "specific activities in which institutions actually engage" to pursue a particular societal mission (Doucette, Richardson, and Fenske, 1985, p. 193), typically include transfer education, vocational or technical education, continuing education, developmental education, and community service. These functional missions, as well as the societal missions they embody, are under debate. For example, some say the societal mission of providing access to higher education through community colleges is best achieved by a rigorous academic transfer curriculum that will help students attain a baccalaureate. Others insist that students are best served through workforce development programs that target local and statewide businesses and offer graduates more immediate economic benefits.

Changing demographic, economic, and social pressures repeatedly splinter and reform individual community colleges' emphases on different institutional missions and their expression in college functions. And different college constituencies support different missions, depending on their idea of what higher education should be and what role community colleges should play in the educational system. What makes decisions about community college missions so intriguing is that every position taken has merit, depending on one's perspective on the role of community colleges in the higher education system and in society.

Given that implicit societal missions underlie functional missions such as enrollment management, honors programs, and continuing education, institutional leaders and policymakers need to be more conscious of the interplay between the two concepts of mission. They would also benefit from insight into the tensions between the two-year college's functional and societal missions, as well as the internal and external forces that affect them. This volume incorporates both perspectives on institutional missions.

Along the way this volume also addresses the impact on community college missions of changing student demographics, such as the projected increase in high school graduates by 2012 and the rising, but ever more restricted, state budget allocations. The increasing proportion of minority, immigrant, and younger community college students has major implications for which functions community colleges wish to emphasize. At the same time, those wishes operate in an environment where state and local governments—although in better fiscal shape than they were a few years ago—are still reluctant to sharply increase their spending on higher education and greatly expand community college functions.

We begin the volume with an introductory chapter that sets the stage for subsequent discussions about specific societal and functional missions. In Chapter One, Kevin Dougherty and Barbara Townsend describe the various approaches to defining and classifying community college missions, examine how those missions have varied over time and across states and regions, analyze how and why missions may conflict, and speculate on the future of community college missions.

Following this introduction, the volume moves to commentary about two of the community college's primary societal missions. Chapter Two presents a case for what has long been the community college's dominant societal mission: open access for educational attainment. Its authors, Henry Shannon and Ronald Smith, assert that open access should continue to be the community college's dominant societal mission. The authors also note various threats to this mission and suggest ways to strengthen it in response to these challenges. In Chapter Three, George Higginbottom and Richard Romano argue that another one of the community college's societal missions is educating people for what the authors call "civic competence." They maintain that general education, although an important curricular function of transfer education, is also vital in preparing a democratic citizenry. After reviewing the goals of general education and describing a typical general-civic education program, the authors discuss various obstacles to implementing such a program, as well as opportunities for expanding general education for civic competence.

In Chapter Four, Barbara Townsend and Kristin Wilson discuss one of the original curricular missions of the two-year college. After reviewing studies about transfer rates and the performance of community college students after transfer, the authors focus on current developments influencing transfer rates and the transfer function in general and speculate about its future as a dominant curricular mission.

The development of community college honors programs can be seen as part of the functional transfer mission, but also as an extension of the societal mission of expanding access to higher education. In Chapter Five, Deborah Floyd and Alexandria Holloway describe the development and current status of honors programs in community colleges, highlighting in particular the Honors College at Miami Dade College in Florida. Although

some argue that honors programs are elitist and therefore do not belong in a community college, these authors contend that the programs represent an important effort to meet student needs, including access to the kind of special programs found at many four-year institutions.

In Chapter Six, James Jacobs and Kevin Dougherty analyze the functional mission of workforce development, focusing on current and possible future trajectories for this mission. In particular, they discuss how workforce development is suffering from a sharp decline in corporate demand and state support, as well as the emergence of new competitors. The chapter then describes two likely, but potentially contradictory, paths that lie before community college workforce development: a focus on occupational programs that may eventually lead to a baccalaureate degree (the so-called new vocationalism) and a focus on providing skills and credentials to low-income adults.

Developmental education is a necessary, well-known, but not always well-regarded functional mission of the community college. In Chapter Seven, Carol Kozeracki and Bryan Brooks discuss factors affecting attitudes toward this community college mission and present a case study describing how Davidson County Community College (North Carolina) has reenvisioned its developmental education program so that faculty view this mission more positively.

Chapter Eight, by John Downey, Brian Pusser, and Kirsten Turner, examines another curricular function of community colleges—continuing education. Their chapter presents data from a national survey of continuing education programs in community colleges in order to describe continuing education offerings and the institutional purposes behind them. The authors then analyze future possibilities for continuing education, given dwindling state support and greater competition from for-profit institutions.

Curricular missions are not the only functional missions community colleges pursue. In Chapter Nine, Nancy Ritze examines the functional mission of enrollment management in the community college and how this function can affect a college's ability to carry out other functional and societal missions. Ritze analyzes how Bronx Community College (BCC) and other two-year institutions have implemented knowledge management and business intelligence tools and describes the important role institutional research plays in BCC's enrollment management efforts.

Finally, given the plethora of possible community college missions—both societal and functional—it behooves college leaders to prioritize missions in order to focus institutional resources on those deemed most vital to their institution's goals and values. Thus, the concluding chapter in this volume outlines a step-by-step process for setting mission priorities. In Chapter Ten, Christine and Irving McPhail provide a framework that allows college leaders to take the uniqueness of their institution into account when determining which missions to emphasize.

Collectively, these chapters aim to stimulate community college leaders to reexamine their institution's functional missions in the context of the

community college's societal missions. Some chapters provide case studies illustrating how various functional missions such as enrollment management, honors programs, and developmental education can be addressed in specific institutional settings. Chapters providing a broader, more national perspective on such curricular functions as transfer education, workforce development, and continuing education are designed to stimulate institutional leaders, policymakers, and scholars of the community college to reflect more deeply about these functions and gauge their relative importance in the community college and in the greater system of higher education. Such reflection is also helpful in identifying—and mitigating—ways in which the unreflective pursuit of one mission may undercut the effectiveness of other missions. Finally, a framework for prioritizing missions at an institutional level is of benefit to all who must make decisions about whose needs must be met and with what resources—vital concerns for everyone in higher education today.

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Reference

Doucette, D. S., Richardson, R. C., and Fenske, R. H. "Defining Institutional Mission: Application of a Research Model." *Journal of Higher Education*, 1985, 56(2), 189–205.

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