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The introduction to the special issue discusses the current challenges facing community colleges and describes why reform must be comprehensive if challenges are to be solved.

2. Using Research and Evaluation to Support Comprehensive Reform
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Two comprehensive community college reform initiatives—Achieving the Dream and Completion by Design—encouraged colleges to use research and data to guide improvements that would lead to better student outcomes. The initiatives shed light on the opportunities and challenges of data-driven reform and underscore how evaluation methods may be used to support comprehensive reform efforts.

3. The Redesign of Developmental Education in Virginia
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Developmental education reforms must, by definition, focus on students’ early college careers. Perhaps as a result, past efforts have not generated large and enduring positive effects. This chapter provides an overview of a comprehensive developmental education redesign in Virginia. It describes its planning and early implementation, presents preliminary descriptive findings on its outcomes, and highlights considerations for systems pursuing comprehensive efforts to more effectively assess and remediate academic underpreparedness.

4. Addressing College Readiness Gaps at the College Door
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California’s Early Assessment Program provides high school students with early signals about their college readiness in order to improve their skills in the 12th grade year and reduce the need for developmental course taking in college. The program affords an opportunity to describe how comprehensive efforts to adopt this program may have improved alignment between K–12 and community colleges, reduced developmental course taking across California’s community colleges, and facilitated tracking students from K–12 into college.
5. Transforming the Community College Student Experience Through Comprehensive, Technology-Mediated Advising
Shanna Smith Jaggars, Melinda Mechur Karp
Seeking radically improved completion rates, colleges are increasingly turning to technology as a reform tool. Many, however, struggle to leverage technology in ways that lead to large-scale comprehensive change. Case study data on the use of “e-advising” systems in several community colleges help build an understanding of what happens when colleges implement technology to help transform academic advising.

6. Using Career Pathways to Guide Students Through Programs of Study
Debra D. Bragg, Marianne Krismer
Pathways and programs of study provide an increasingly important perspective on college credentialing, completion, and employment. This chapter discusses their nature, structure, and centrality in a competency-based core curriculum developed under the Health Professions Pathways (H2P) consortium funded by Round 1 of the U.S. Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grants.

7. Leveraging Technology to Create a Student Focused Environment
Linda M. Thor, Joseph Moreau
Community college educators recognize the need to improve online learner retention and success, which is significantly lower than in traditional face-to-face courses. Yet colleges continue to fail to coordinate with other institutions or to leverage shareable resources. The Online Education Initiative in the California Community Colleges, drawing on experiences of online pioneer Rio Salado College, illustrates how to enhance system efficiency and student success in online learning through coordination and collaboration.

8. Competency-Based Programs as a Lever for Reforming Core Areas Jointly
Ann E. Person, Nancy Thibeault
Sinclair Community College's efforts to adapt and adopt competency-based models in information technology programs provides an example of how colleges might improve student success in college and careers and transform the way the college creates and maintains career-relevant curricula.

9. Using Data for Continuous Program Improvement
Nan L. Maxwell, Ann E. Person
Although community colleges operate in a constantly changing environment that requires up-to-date program learning goals that meet stakeholder needs, they often do not have the capacity to assess their programs within a continuous improvement framework. This chapter discusses challenges to using data in a continuous improvement framework and describes the approaches some community colleges have used to overcome those challenges.
Community colleges face challenges and practical impediments when implementing comprehensive reform. To drive reform, Montgomery County Community College developed a blended framework from Achieving the Dream and the American Association of Community Colleges. Although the result was unscaled improvements in the short term, the experience increased understanding of why comprehensive reform remains a challenge and how committed leadership is imperative for its success.