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ABSTRACT

Designed to encourage dialogue and inform decision making about the associate degree, this book presents perspectives on the role of the associate degree in the nation's two-year colleges. First, "Toward a Greater Degree: A Plan of Action," by Dale Parnell, suggests a plan for preserving and enhancing the value of the education being provided by U.S. community colleges and for increasing enrollments in associate degree programs. Next, "Current Perspectives," by James Gollattscheck, looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the associate degree within higher education, and considers ways of ensuring its transfer to four-year institutions. "A Path to Excellence: The Review and Revision of Degree Requirements at the College of DuPage," by Paul J. Eldersveld and Marlene Stubler, presents a background to the curriculum reform effort, a rationale for redefining degree requirements, the results of the curricular changes, and a list of 11 ingredients of a model program for the review and revision of degree requirements. Next, brief essays by Michael E. Crawford, Mary M. Norman, Donald G. Phelps, and Donald L. Newport, all community college executive officers, suggest ways to enhance the status of the associate degree. "Redefining the Associate Degree: A Special Report," by Leslie Koltai, offers a historical perspective on the degree, a review of relevant literature, survey findings regarding the status of the degree, and an agenda for the future. The publication concludes with a policy statement of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges entitled "Associate Degree Preferred." (HB)

# ASSOCIATE DEGREE PREFERRED

*Edited by Dale Parnell*





AACJC

# ASSOCIATE DEGREE PREFERRED

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# Preface

*by Judith Eaton*

Do we value the associate degree? In what ways? What role does it play in our thinking, planning, and hoping for our institutions? While many of our institutions serve more parttime than fulltime students, while we devote a good deal of institutional effort to community cooperation undertakings, it is still the case that the associate degree speaks to the vital foundation of the community college educational enterprise. The degree symbolizes our value to our community, to our students, and to ourselves.

This book is an effort to encourage dialogue and decision making about the associate degree at your institution. It is intended as a catalyst, as seminal thinking, and as an encouragement to seriously reflect on the importance of our degree efforts for the future of community college education. I hope it is helpful.

*Judith S. Eaton, Chair*
*AACJC Board of Directors*
*President,*
*Community College of*
*Philadelphia*

*Dale Parnell*

# Toward a Greater Degree: A Plan of Action

*by Dale Parnell*

The plain truth is, the associate degree is not sufficiently valued—by employers, by four-year colleges and universities, by high school students, their parents, or their guidance counselors. Yet the associate degree is a key offering of community, technical, and junior colleges. I would like first to examine the problems the associate degree may face and then suggest a plan of action for approaching those problems.

## Why a Re-examination Is Needed

The associate degree is such a familiar part of the community college mission that administrators, faculty, and staff may tend to become complacent about it. This is a luxury we cannot afford. AACJC seeks to open a national dialogue on the subject. For starters, consider the following questions:

1. *Have open door admissions policies devalued the associate degree?* Open door admissions are a central, prized, and cherished part of the community, technical, and junior college mission.

Yet the open door has had an unintended side effect: It has signalled some students that any preparation will do to succeed in a community college. Too often students don't prepare themselves well for community college work. They think, "I can do most anything I want in high school and the community college will take me."

As a result, the open door too often becomes a revolving door with students easily in and quickly out.

*Dale Parnell is president and chief executive officer of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.*

In addition, open door policies sometimes signal lower educational standards to academics. For community colleges, the emphasis should be on exit, rather than entrance, requirements. The associate degree is central to this emphasis.

2. *What about competency-based standards and the associate degree?* Requirements for attaining an associate degree vary widely from institution to institution, and indeed, from program to program, across the country. In some cases, students attaining the associate degree may not possess the competencies in basic skills that the degree ought to certify. In an era when higher educational standards have been a rallying point for educational reformers, the associate degree should certify and be honored as a degree of excellence.

3. *Does the associate degree have good visibility in high schools?* It is not that the degree has a bad image in high schools, but that it has little image at all. So students frequently overlook this option when seeking postsecondary training and education. Although community colleges are already doing much to get the word out about associate degrees and their benefits to prospective students, we must do more.

Getting the word out also means a few words about exit requirements. Prospective students and their parents, teachers, and counselors deserve to know up front about the rigors involved in completing any community college program. They need a realistic picture of community college exit standards, associate degree requirements, and study requirements.

The reluctance of some community, technical, and junior college leaders to be directive in their communications with their high school colleagues is entirely honorable. They have not wanted to be overbearing or to appear to be telling another segment of education how to run their business. But they should know that most high school administrators want clear communications about how to best prepare their students for the next step. When we place the student at the center of our concerns, "turf issues" lose importance.

4. *Are parttime community college students sufficiently aware of associate degree programs at their institutions?* Students who are taking individual courses frequently do not realize that they are accumulating credits toward an associate degree. Others simply aren't interested, since they don't realize the degree's benefits. More incentives must be found to encourage such students to enroll in and complete degree programs.

5. *Does the associate degree always guarantee acceptance with junior standing to four-year colleges and universities?* It usually does at the institutional level, but too often not at the departmental level.

State after state has worked out agreements for transferring credits from institution to institution.

But the agreements tend to break down at the departmental level. Some day I would like to write a book about the transfer of credits issue. The title will be *Yes, But You Didn't Take* My *Class!* Many individual colleges are now working out transfer agreements at the departmental level, but much remains to be done.

6. *Do enough employers value the associate degree?* An increasing number of employers are listing the associate degree as the degree of preference in job descriptions and in notices of job openings. They are discovering that hiring people with associate degrees can be cost-effective for their organizations. The box on page 10 shows some "Help Wanted" ads we will likely see in the future.

Partnerships between community colleges and businesses are good ways to see that this trend continues.

## A Plan of Action

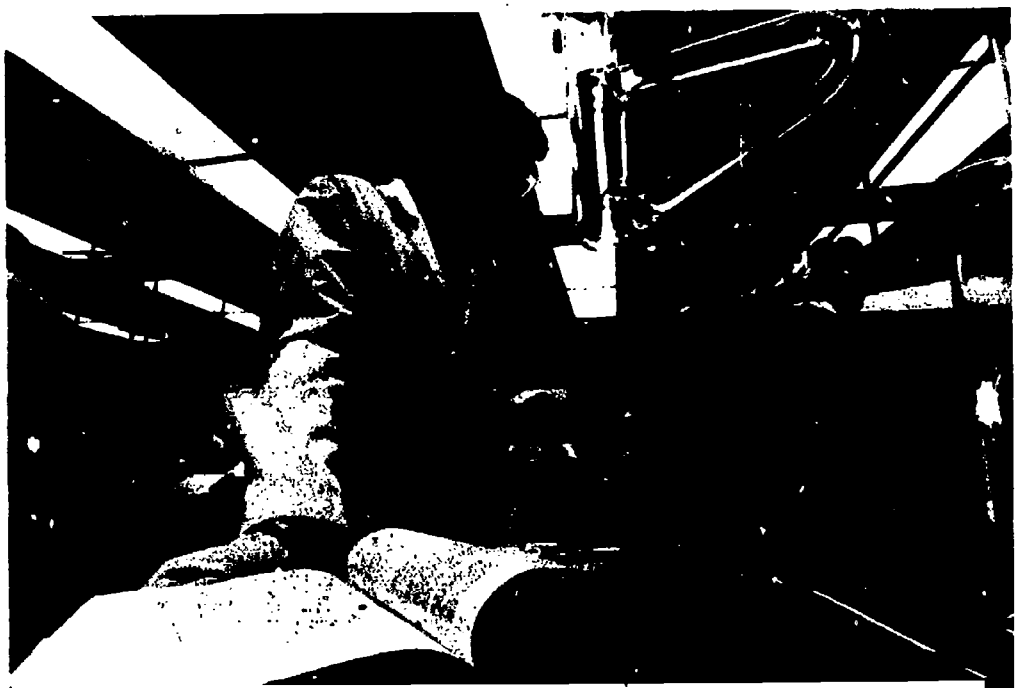
Can we work to preserve and enhance the value of education being provided by America's community, technical, and junior colleges? I think so.

Someone once said that Moses might have accomplished more if he had offered ten suggestions rather than ten commandments. Here are our ten "C"s, which together suggest a plan of action. Our goal is to double the number of students enrolled in associate degree programs—from an estimated 400,000 in 1985 to 800,000 in 1990.

1. *Communication.* Can we improve communications with high schools?

For example, are we reaching students in general education tracks who are not now college bound? Too often such students seem to have no goals, no idea of why they are taking the courses they are taking, or if the courses lead them to anything.

Perhaps we can convince high schools that entrance into an associate degree program is a desirable alternative for such students. An associate degree program can provide an excellent opportunity to gain technical education and training. We also need to help



*Jaime Benavides/College of DuPage*

# Help Wanted Ads of the Future

These ten mythical help wanted ads typify the shifts that futurists predict are coming in the nation's job market. These changes are bound to affect the education and training of the work force of the future.

**GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER:** Inner city private nursing home has immediate opening for capable, reliable person. Must have L.P.N. or equivalent. Salary $16,000 $20,000 depending on experience. References required. Associate degree with broad educational background a plus. EOE.

**LASER PROCESS TECHNICIAN:** High technology firm needs dependable, experienced laser technician. Should have two years related laser cutting machine experience. Flex time and day care available. Job sharing and shared dividends. Salary $16,000 $25,000 negotiable. EOE. Associate degree with solid math and science background preferred.

**GENETIC ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN:** Positions available for both process technicians and engineering technicians. Must have two years technical education and training; additional training will be paid by company. Relocation required; moving expenses will be paid by

firm. Company will buy your present home. Salary: $20,000–$30,000. Associate degree with broad science background preferred. EOE.

**BATTERY TECHNICIAN:** Large oil firm needs five technicians with previous experience in fuel cells or high-energy batteries. Shift work, O.T. available, dressing rooms and private lockers, discount on all corporate products. Education and managerial training available. Salary: $15,000–$20,000. EOE. Associate degree preferred.

**ELECTRONIC TECHNICIANS:** Small electronics company needs dependable and broadly educated technician. Must be knowledgeable about fluid power systems, mechanical systems as well as electrical systems. Flex-time, company stock plan available. Salary $18,000–$28,000 negotiable. EOE. Associate degree preferred.

**STAFF ASSISTANT:** County Tax Assessor needs dependable executive secretary skilled in use of word processor and microcomputer. Must have good interpersonal skills with ability to remain calm in conflict situations. Salary: $16,000–$24,000. EOE. Associate degree with broad educational background preferred.

**POLICE OFFICER:** City of Serenity needs police officer who has completed an associate degree law enforcement training program or graduated from a police academy. Excellent communication skills required; fluency in Spanish a plus. Salary: $18,000–$25,000; excellent fringes. EOE. Associate degree with broad educational background preferred.

**NURSE:** General hospital needs dependable registered nurse for alternating shift work. Must have good interpersonal skills as well as technical nursing competencies. Salary: $18,000–$25,000; excellent fringes. EOE; associate degree preferred.

**MARKETING REPRESENTATIVE:** Small computer-related firm needs dependable individual with sales education and training or equivalent experience. Must know computer systems and electronics. Some OJT and managerial education available. Salary: starts at $18,000 w/additional cmsn. based on sales volume. EOE; associate degree preferred.

**BOOKKEEPER:** Small business needs bookkeeper with experience in automated bookkeeping systems. Must have two years of technical education and training; associate degree preferred. Flex-time, day care available. Salary: $18,000- $25,000.

guida.. ce counselors and parents become aware of the community college option and of how students can prepare for it while in high school.

2. *Continuity.* We all know that loss of continuity in learning can really hurt students. Program coordination can help students prepare to enter community college. It will help high school faculty and counselors, students, and parents if we can give them clear messages about how to prepare for community college work. Information about why good preparation is in the student's best interest, and why the associate degree is a goal worthy of work and preparation will also be helpful.

3. *Commitment.* Can we encourage more parttime students to enroll in associate degree programs? I think so. A good associate degree program can serve as an integrating force for an institution. It can give students a clear signal that they are expected to make a commitment to complete a coherent and competency-based program. Furthermore, an increasing number of community colleges are recognizing the associate degree in their own hiring practices.

4. *Coherence.* Are we offering students a coherent, planned program of study rather than a buffet-style smorgasbord of courses? A re-examination of associate degree curricula and requirements can go far toward assuring coherence.

Ideally, a college's associate degree requirements will indicat. that administrators, faculty, and students have a clear vision of what it means to be an educated person. The requirements should also affirm the college's own commitment to provide a quality education.

5. *Competency.* Does the associate degree guarantee competency? Questions of competency-based standards require thoughtful discussion at all levels, especially when a community college is re-examining its associate degree curriculum and requirements.

6. *Confidence.* Are we building our students' confidence? Ideally, a well-planned associate degree program will help a student who has completed it feel qualified and prepared to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The successful completion of a vigorous program helps students build self-esteem.

7. *Completion.* Can we encourage more students who are enrolled in associate degree programs to complete them? The more we can do this, the better we can assure the quality of our graduates. Too often students come to the community college for a semester or a year, only to leave without completing a program. Then community

colleges are criticized when students are not well-prepared.

Of course, the many students who attend community colleges for reasons other than obtaining a degree are very important, too. Our emphasis upon the associate degree should in no way diminish noncredit adult and continuing education programs. These programs remain vital to the community college mission. (This is not an either/or proposition. Of course degree candidates and nondegree students can coexist on our campuses!)

8. *Carte blanche acceptance.* It will be worthwhile to continue to work for acceptance of the associate degree for transfer credit within university departments as well as at the institutional level. It may require state regulations in some states to assure this.

9. *Creation.* Can we work to increase demand for the associate degree among employers? Employers already are beginning to list the associate degree as the preferred degree for a great host of mid-level jobs. Special business/industry partnership programs at community colleges may carry the trend even further.

Companies will be hiring technicians to back up their highly skilled and salaried professionals more and more frequently in the future. For example, physicians' assistants can extend a physician's time, and engineers' assistants can help fill the demand for engineers.

Community colleges can work to encourage this. Employers increasingly want well-rounded employees—people who know how to learn, to analyze, to think—who have a good math and science base, but not necessarily a baccalaureate degree.

10. *Cooperation.* Increased emphasis upon the associate degree will require the united efforts of the many actors who strut and fret their hours upon the community college stage. It's important that the actors know the script and work to get the best performances from one another.

The community college is an in-between institution. It sits between high schools and universities, between employers and potential employees, between individuals and better job opportunities, between the community and an enriched community life.

The time is right to push for even more meaningful associate degrees because these degrees are highly useful in an information age. An associate degree can be the currency to move on to a baccalaureate degree, and it can also be the currency to move on to a good or even better job. It's time to move toward a greater degree.

*James F. Gollattscheck*

# Current Perspectives

*by James F. Gollattscheck*

The heart of any educational institution can be found in its courses, curriculum, and degree criteria. For the community college, all of these are embodied in the associate degree.

What are the unique strengths and weaknesses of the associate degree? What can be done to enhance its value both for students and for the national goals of excellence that undergird our system of higher education?

AACJC surveyed a sampling of members and asked them to comment on these and other topics about the associate degree. They shared their successes, their concerns, and their suggestions for change. Their comments provide a collective insight into the heart of the community college in the 1980s.

## *Why is the associate degree important in American higher education?*

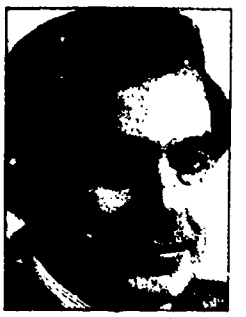
*Raul Cardenas*

"For many Americans, the associate degree represents the opportunity to participate in higher education regardless of educational or economic background. Accessibility, in my opinion, is the single most important aspect of the associate degree." — *Raul Cardenas, President, South Mountain Community College, Arizona*

"The associate degree provides a milestone in the life of individuals in pursuit of preparation for work or further education. In these times when short-range goals are often necessary to achieve longer-range goals, the associate degree truly is the mark of intermediate excellence." -- *Charles Green, President, Maricopa Technical Community College, Arizona*

***What is the greatest strength of the associate degree as it is currently offered at community, technical, and junior colleges?***

"The associate degree combines mastery of a job-related skill with a solid foundation in general education." — *Edward Liston, President, Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island*



*Edward Liston*

"The greatest strength of the associate degree lies in its responsiveness to changing circumstances and therefore its usefulness in helping students get jobs, prepare for certification, upgrade their skills, retrain for new occupations, and/or move higher in the education system." — *Kathleen F. Arns, Provost for Contractual Programs and Services, College of Lake County, Illinois*

*Kathleen Arns*

"The associate degree can be used as a ticket of admission to further study toward the baccalaureate, as evidence of having certain skills suitable for employment in health and technological fields, or as a symbol of a student's having completed a formal general education sequence. An associate degree today serves many of the same purposes that the high school diploma served in a previous era." — *Arthur Cohen, Director, ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, California*

"The associate degree certifies to transfer institutions or employers that the student is qualified to enter either the work force or collegiate upper divisions with an adequate academic background to give him/her a reasonable chance of success." — *Harold McAninch, President, College of DuPage, Illinois*

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*James F. Gollattscheck is vice president for communication services of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.*

## *What is the greatest weakness of the associate degree?*

*Raymond Stone*

"There are three major weaknesses in the associate degree. First, associate degree graduates frequently have been trained on obsolete equipment by instructors who lack up-to-date skills. Second, associate degree graduates frequently lack adequate skills in reading, writing, oral communication, and mathematics. Finally, associate degree graduates frequently lack an adequate liberal arts foundation." — *Raymond Stone President, Sandhills Community College, North Carolina*

*Rose Channing*

"Unfortunately a relatively low percentage of students who attend community, technical, and junior colleges actually receive their degrees. The worth of the associate degree has not been fully accepted." — *Rose Channing, President, Middlesex County College, New Jersey*

"In most institutions the associate degree is not evidence of completion of a sequenced curriculum. Associate degree requirements typically are such that two students may receive the same degree without ever having taken courses in common." — *Arthur Cohen*

"There is a lack of common agreement about what an associate degree represents, what constitutes credit for non-traditional learning such as experiential learning, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), early enrollment, etc." — *Michael Crawford, Chancellor, Eastern Iowa Community College District, Iowa*

"There is a glaring lack of common definition about the general education component of today's associate degrees." — *Harold McAninch*

### *What can be done by individual community colleges to strengthen the associate degree?*

"Regular program evaluations will help community colleges assure that all pieces of each associate degree program are working in harmony." — *Donald Newport, President, Oklahoma City Community College, Oklahoma*

"First, colleges should work to ensure that academic offerings and standards are high. Second, they should provide students with support to meet those standards. Third, colleges should involve the community in efforts to maintain educational excellence. Representatives of other educational institutions and agencies, businesses, civic organizations, the media, and other community groups should participate in setting goals and in assessing programs and services. The quality of the programs will thus be in part an achievement of the broad community. The programs' strengths will also become apparent to a wider segment of that community." — *Donald G. Phelps, Chancellor, Seattle Community College District, Washington*

*R. Stephen Nicholson*

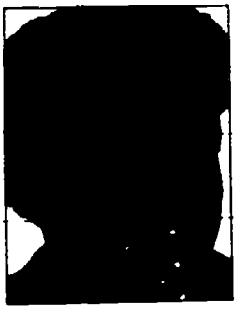
"The associate degree must have a careful balance. There must be serious review of the general education portions of the degree to assure that the community college provides a well balanced experience." — *R. Stephen Nicholson, President, Mt. Hood Community College, Oregon*

*James Wattenbarger*

"Individual colleges need to define and publicize the associate degree as a special achievement. They must help faculty develop a clear understanding of the requirements and competencies expected and seek an agreement on a common core of competencies which may be used as a basis for the AA degree." — *James Wattenbarger, Director, Institute of Higher Education, University of Florida, Florida*

***What can be done at the national, state, and local college levels to enhance the image of the associate degree?***

"Further image building can be accomplished through such activities as: (1) publicizing success stories of associate degree recipients and their employers; (2) working through national organizations such as AACJC to actively promote the value and dignity of the associate degree; (3) starting programs to help staff at local colleges achieve a broader understanding of the value and merit of the associate degree." — *Newport*



*Donald Phelps*

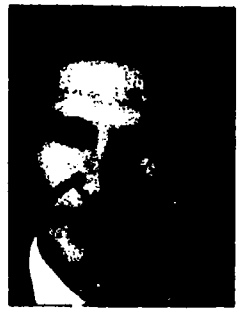
"College leaders at all levels must seek national and state recognition for the A.A. degree. Legislators and other opinion leaders must be told of the outstanding programs at community colleges. We must show the state and nation how well and how efficiently community colleges serve them. And even bringing such leaders to our campuses can open the eyes of those who are unfamiliar with our achievements. Trustees should also contact legislators to acquaint them with specific college programs.

At the local level, colleges must work with high schools to provide special bridging programs that will enable the spectrum of students, from gifted to developmental, to make an effective transition from high school to college. College faculty should contact high school faculty and students to tell the A.A. story." — *Donald Phelps*

*Charles Green*

"It is important that we provide more visible indications to all concerned of the success of those persons holding associate degrees." — *Charles Green*

## *What can be done to make the associate degree more important to prospective employers?*



*Harold McAninch*

"We need to work with trade or technical associations. We should educate them to value the experience of a student who achieves an associate degree. We have made great progress in the health area where the degree is tied to licensure. Perhaps we need to look at national or regional certification in other areas as well." — *Harold McAninch*

*Brian Donnelly*

"Prospective employers may be invited to participate in meaningful advisory committees aimed at reviewing the definition of the associate degree. Advisory committees on many campuses already are working with faculty groups on *ad hoc* efforts to define program goals and the meaning of the associate degree." — *Brian L. Donnelly, Dean of Academic Affairs, Central Ohio Technical College, Ohio*

"The development of strong cooperative education programs with employers will have the effect of building confidence in the associate degree as well as an employment preference for the degree. The employer will have some 'equity' in the production of the degree holder." — *Edward Liston*

"Employers need to be made aware of the usefulness of an associate degree as a predictor of job performance. We must convince them that it is a reliable credential that provides testimony to the holder's mastery of certain knowledge and skills. We'll will to use a wide variety of tools to communicate, communicate, and communicate." — *Kathleen Arns*

***What can be done to ensure that the associate degree is accepted at full transfer value by four-year colleges and universities?***

*Arthur Cohen*

"For the associate degree to be accepted at full value by senior institutions the community colleges will have to abandon any practice of credit toward the associate degree for less-than-college-level studies. Course examinations for potential associate degree recipients should also be considered. A student's performance on criterion-referenced tests could be used as evidence of attainment levels by the senior institutions." — *Arthur Cohen*

"'Full-faith-in-credit' agreements should be demanded of all public colleges and universities by state authorities. Guidelines for such agreements need to be developed by the AACJC or other appropriate bodies and disseminated through appropriate workshops on a state or regional (interstate) basis." — *Brian Donnelley*

"Communication is the key in trying to resolve this very important and serious concern. Community colleges and universities must join hands in developing articulation agreements that provide for full transfer of credits. Joint involvement in the development of transfer curriculum, course numbering, and even joint efforts in counseling and advising of students will ensure the smooth transition of our students to four-year institutions." — *Raul Cardenas*

*Donald Newport*

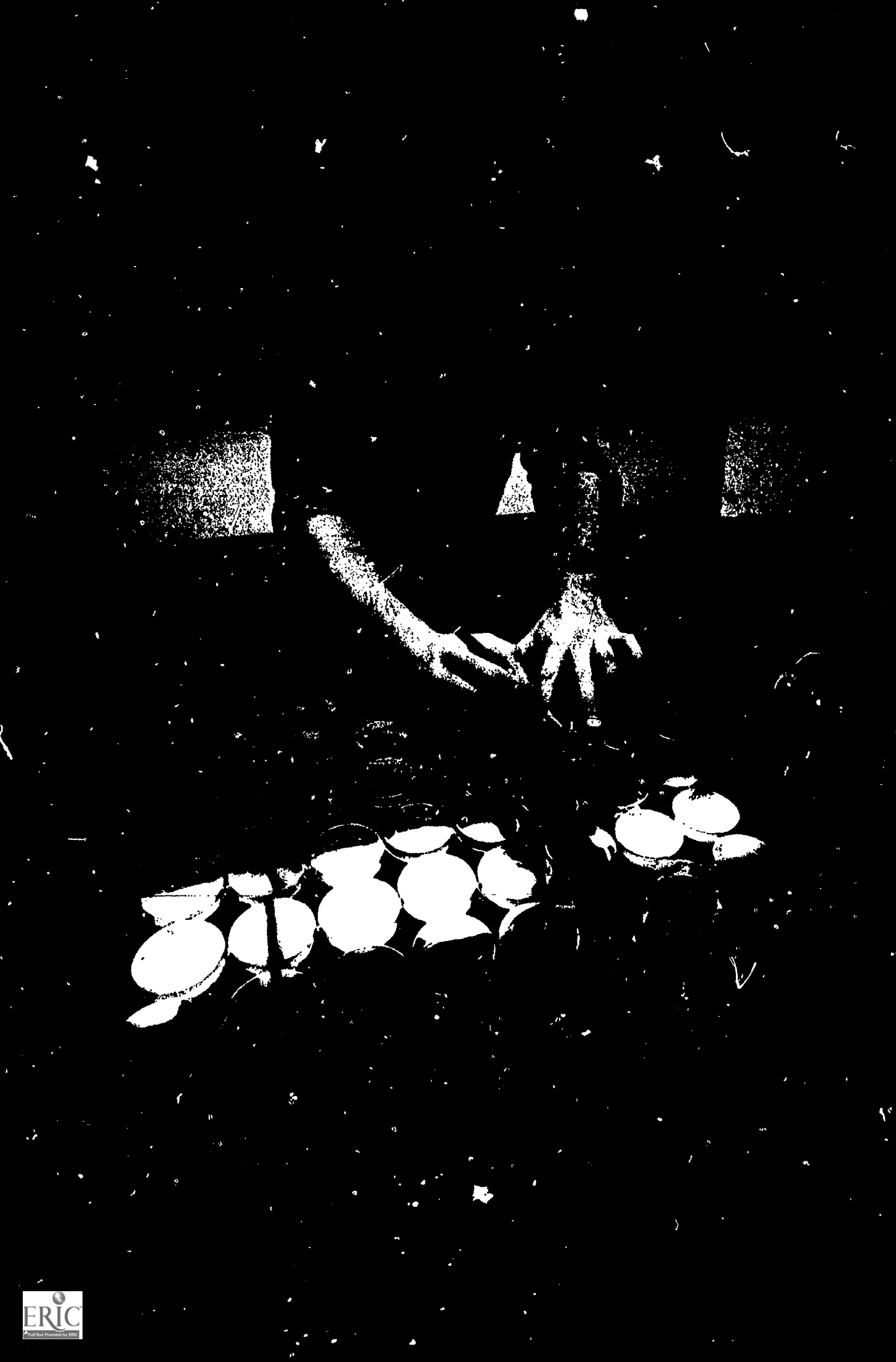
"Articulation between two- and four-year institutions seems to be a proverbial issue and one which needs to be put to rest, along with slide rules and quill pens. The keys to such articulation agreements continue to reside in a better statewide understanding of the unique mission of the community college, and the relation of the associate degree to this overall mission." — *Donald Newport*

"Washington State's colleges and universities have an Inter-College Relations Commission which has been working for several years to develop closer articulation among the various post-secondary levels. The commission has produced policy guidelines concerning transfer from community colleges to baccalaureate institutions that assure full acceptance of the A.A degree. It remains the responsibility of the community colleges to maintain high standards, and to make these known to the receiving institutions." — *Donald Phelps*

"To ensure that the associate degree is accepted at full value by four-year colleges and universities, the appropriate legislative body should establish a procedure similar to the one existing in the state of Florida where students who have been awarded the associate degree by a Florida community college are routinely accepted as juniors by the state universities. An articulation committee has also been established in Florida to monitor the transfer process. The result has been to reduce 'hassles' to students who are transferring as juniors and to give greater credibility to the associate degree." — *Michael Crawford*

*Michael Crawford*

"It is essential that statewide articulation compacts be established with the A.A degree as a basis for full and unquestioned admission to the junior level of the university." — *James Wattenbarger*



*Paul J. Eldersveld*

*Marlene Stubler*

# A Path to Excellence

*The Review and Revision of Degree Requirements at the College of DuPage*

*by Paul J. Eldersveld and Marlene Stubler*

In the spring of 1984, an *ad hoc* committee of the faculty senate of the College of DuPage proposed new degree requirements for the associate degree. Their recommendations were overwhelmingly approved by the DuPage faculty, administration, and board of trustees.

While the adoption of new degree requirements is an important event in the life of an educational institution, the changes at DuPage were especially significant. The new requirements were recommended and approved without creating an undue amount of turmoil, divisiveness, or enmity among faculty members or between the faculty and administration. The faculty, with the support of the administration, worked on a complex issue and reached a consensus. Moreover, the administration enthusiastically endorsed the proposed changes and recommended them for approval by the board of trustees.

Furthermore, in the review and revision of the associate degree requirements, the faculty, administration, and board of trustees demonstrated to the community their commitment to excellence. This is very important for a community-based institution that is continually striving to engender the respect and support of its constituents.

*Paul J. Eldersveld served as the chairman of the Degree Requirements Committee at the College of DuPage during the reassessment of the associate degree. He is a member of the mathematics faculty and supervises individualized courses in mathematics, science, business, and data processing. Marlene Stubler is director of public information at the College of DuPage.*

*Jaime Benavides/College of DuPage*

Finally, the study of degree requirements wasn't motivated by outside pressure. A complete self-study of the associate degree was a major priority of the faculty at the College of DuPage well before the publication of reports by national committees and commissions citing concerns about the quality of higher education in America.

DuPage's Degree Requirements Committee began its task in the fall of 1982. Its final report was accepted by the faculty senate in the spring of 1984. The new degree requirements will appear in the 1985 college catalog and thus will become a part of the academic policy of the college.

The DuPage story should be of interest to many other colleges studying their own degree requirements. It forms a case study in action.

## Understanding the Past

Before any college or university can seriously undertake a study of degree requirements, it must first have a clear understanding of its past, its present, and its projected direction for the future.

The College of DuPage was founded under the Illinois Public Community College Act in 1965. Its first students enrolled in 1967. In its infancy, the college staff consisted of 87 fulltime and 119 parttime faculty, administrators, and counselors. Since there was no campus, the initial 2,621 students attended classes at more than forty leased sites scattered throughout the district. The president and his assistants worked out of a rented office building located in the nearby community of Naperville. DuPage's first permanent structure, the Instructional Center with its classrooms and laboratories, was built in Glen Ellyn in 1973.

An important time in the history of the college occurred during this period when the organizational structure of the institution went from the cluster system to its present organization of a Main Campus and an Open College, each separately administered by a provost. The cluster system consists of comprehensive educational units or colleges that replace the traditional departmental structure.

Today DuPage enrolls nearly 30,000 students and is staffed by 272 fulltime faculty, administrators, and counselors, and 1,082 parttime faculty and counselors. The Main Campus and the Open College serve 760,000 residents of forty-one municipalities located within District 502. Main Campus, which is l cted in Glen Ellyn, offers credit and noncredit programs throug e academic divi-

sions and two service divisions. Open College offers both credit and noncredit programs at more than seventy satellite centers scattered throughout the district through Academic Alternatives, the Business and Professional Institute, and Continuing Education.

## The Whys and Wherefores of Redefining Degree Requirements

Historically, degree requirements have been a responsibility of our faculty. This responsibility was reaffirmed by the 1984 policy statement of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, which stressed the teaching faculty's responsibility for the design and evaluation of associate degree programs.

Even before this policy statement had been released, the faculty senate was keenly aware of the fact that degree requirements constitute the core of academic programs, and as such, fall under the realm of faculty responsibility.

The senate also recognized that successful community colleges are perceived as responsive by the communities they serve.

It is crucial for any institution of higher learning to know what mode of development it is in before embarking on a study of this magnitude. This is also crucial to the selection of the committee. Understandably, the traits and characteristics most desirable for committee members whose college is in a retrenchment period will vary greatly from those whose institution is in a period of growth.

It was a continuing strong commitment to the excellence that motivated the faculty senate to embark on a study of degree requirements. Great care was taken in the selection of faculty members to serve on the committee to ensure that each academic unit was represented and that those chosen were well respected by their peers.

The value of a balanced representation and of peer respect cannot be overstated, since much of the committee's work involved communication between groups with widely divergent interests. Committee members had to possess trust, respect, and integrity for one another.

Another important aspect of the committee selection process was the recruitment of faculty members who would be most willing and able to devote a considerable amount of time and effort to the task and who could sustain that commitment over a long period of time.

Even greater care went into selecting the chair of the committee. It was imperative that this individual possess the ability to communicate the interests of others, manage coalitions, and work well with all types of people with widely differing views.

The charge issued to and accepted by the degree requirements committee was as follows:

1. Review the requirements for the four associate degrees with respect to college philosophy and goals, present and future district needs, standards and concerns for excellence.
2. Review requirements with respect to optimal student growth. (At the College of DuPage, four degrees are granted: Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, and Associate in General Studies.)
3. Obtain input from the entire college community.
4. Prepare a written report.

The committee began its task by exploring the philosophy statements and mission of the college. It was necessary for the committee to subscribe to the mission before continuing with its task. This eliminated the possibility of the committee adopting a philosophy that was inconsistent with the needs of community college students and the purposes of the College of DuPage.

The committee also reviewed the most recent self study on the institution and the accreditation report from the regional accrediting agency. These documents proved to be invaluable in assessing what stage the college had reached in its development.

Throughout its tenure, the committee met once a week and engaged in a program of self education to increase the knowledge of its members in regard to degree requirements. The committee spent some time studying degree requirements at other institutions, both two-year and four-year colleges. Counterpart committees at Northern Illinois University and Southern Illinois University were interviewed and reference materials reviewed.

The committee members shared their findings with other faculty and administrative colleagues. This lead to an increased level of knowledge concerning degree requirements throughout the state system and helped win the acceptance of the recommendations in the final report. Another side benefit of the study was that it served as an invaluable staff development effort.

One of the first decisions reached by the committee was that the College of DuPage could not be all things to all people. The college exists to respond to the educational, vocational, and technological

needs of the residents of its district. In the committees' view, these needs fell into four basic categories: baccalaureate and pre-baccalaureate education, technical/occupational education, remedial/developmental education, and community services.

A major concern of the committee was that it develop degree requirements that would be equal or superior to the educational requirements a student must meet in the first two years of study at a four-year college or university. An early decision mandated that requirements for degrees should be established in line with the purpose of the degree. Transfer degrees should assure graduates that they had reached a level of attainment comparable to that of the first two years in a four-year college or university. Technical degrees should assure graduates that they had obtained knowledge and skills that were readily marketable in the work place.

Throughout the study, the committee made special efforts to keep the faculty and administration well informed. The committee took pains to communicate its decisions to all campus constituents as the decisions were reached. In this way, we identified and remedied problems before we wrote the final report. All those interested had the opportunity to provide input into the process.

From the beginning, the committee was determined that its final report be approved by a consensus of faculty. This was accomplished even though not all faculty viewed every part of the proposal as acceptable. Faculty members were able to set aside personal differences and support and defend the degree requirements as being generally representative of an acceptable totality.

While the faculty assumed full responsibility for the study, it depended on the administration for resources and professional support. There were times when the administration was not always in complete accord with proposed changes, but rather than veto any action, it always left the way for negotiations open.

It was this climate of mutual respect that contributed to the quality of the study. There was always an unspoken understanding that if the task was to be accomplished, the faculty and administration must work together.

**Results: Framing the Vision**

One of the questions the committee had to ask itself before it could develop new degree requirements was, "What vision does the College of DuPage have for its students?"

In seeking answers to this question, the committee sensed a

faculty concern that degree requirements be formulated specifically enough to require students to be proficient in a chosen area of study, yet broadly enough to allow flexibility.

Many positive changes in the curriculum have resulted from the adoption of the new requirements. One such change was the creation of an international studies program. The committee felt that it was essential for stude 's to have some understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. Courses in this category will place major emphasis on understanding other cultures and nations.

A contemporary life skills category was adopted to help students cope with an ever-changing world. These courses will help students to function more effectively in a complex, technological, and stressful society. The emphasis will be on teaching universally applicable skills and/or processes, as opposed to class content specifically tied to an academic program.

In addressing the concern that community college graduates be equal to or better than their counterparts at four-year colleges and universities, the committee gave a strong priority to strengthening general education requirements for all degrees.

The general education requirements are designed to help students understand and appreciate their culture and environment, to develop personal values based on accepted ethics leading to civic and social responsibility, and to attain the skills in analysis, communication, quantification, and synthesis necessary for further growth as lifetime learners and productive members of society.

The breadth and depth of all general education requirements will be increased. To accomplish this, students seeking each degree will be required to take courses in communications, science, mathematics, the humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and international studies or contemporary life skills. The number of hours will also be increased in several categories.

Of special concern to the committee was the need for emphasis on basic skills in science and mathematics. All candidates for associate degrees will be required to take courses in both science and mathematics. Under the former degree requirements, students had the option of choosing courses in one area or the other.

The committee also recognized a like need for students to possess good communication skills to live and function effectively. More specific requirements were designed in this area. As a result, students will be required to complete courses in written and oral communications.

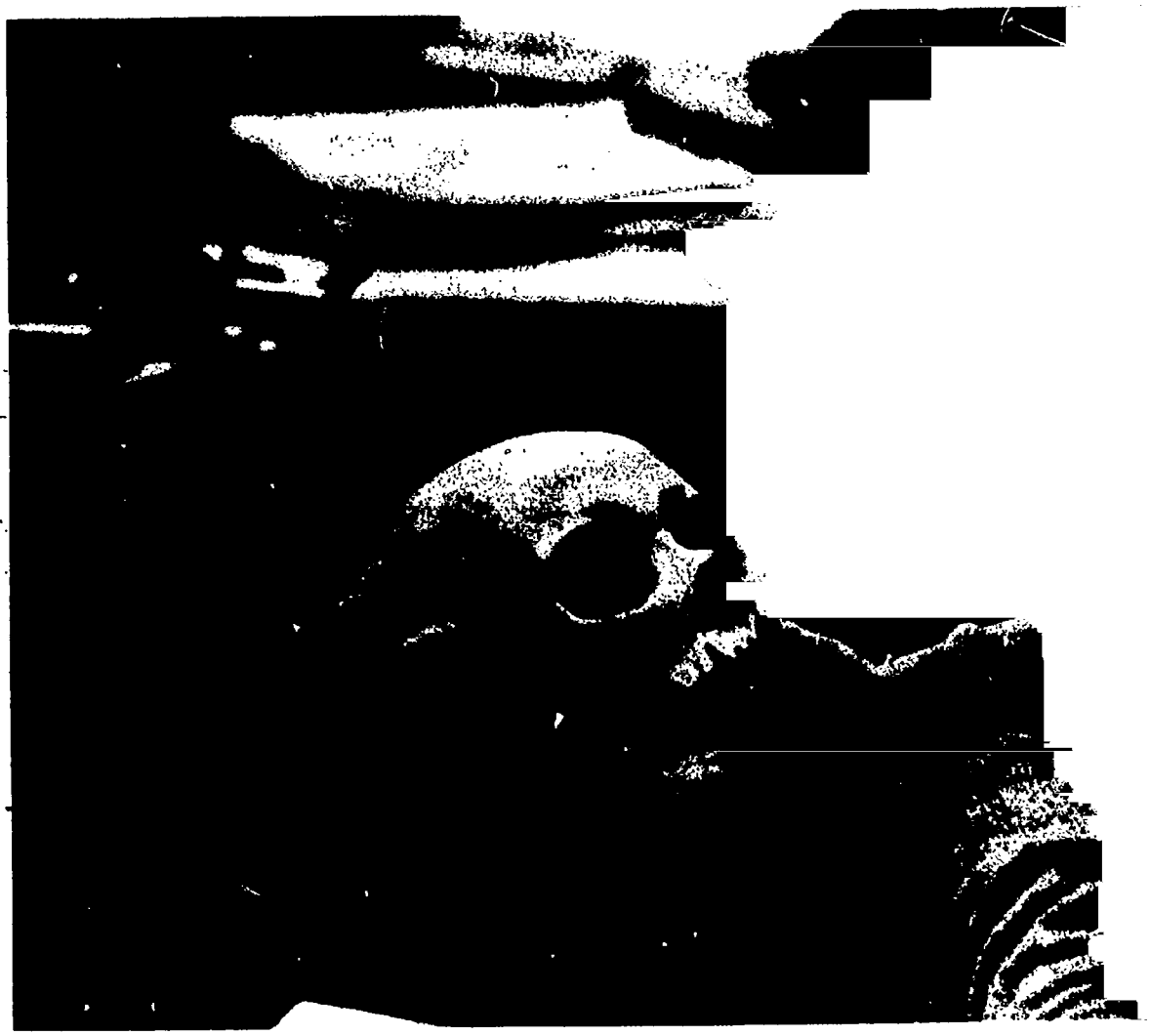
## Looking to the Future

As a result of the study, degree requirements will no longer be subject to sporadic review. A subcommittee of the Instruction Committee of the faculty senate has been established and given the sole charge of reviewing degree requirements on a continuing basis.

But in many ways the most significant result of the study has been a revitalized and renewed faculty. A higher level of interest and concern for academic issues now exists among faculty members. The entire proceeding demonstrated that the faculty, through its governance process, can deal with complex issues, reach consensus, and find meaningful solutions to difficult problems.

There is a new level of respect between faculty and administration. Both groups were reminded that they can work together harmoniously and effectively in reaching agreement on complex issues. Each group understood and played out its role. The faculty took full responsibility for the degree requirements and completed its task. The administration provided the necessary support and encouragement throughout the process.

It is hoped that the benefits of the new degree requirements will, in time, extend far beyond the campus of the College of DuPage, to other colleges and universities where DuPage students will transfer as qualified candidates for higher degrees, to business and industry where graduates will demonstrate their competencies, and to the community at large where district residents will become more aware that their community college truly represents excellence in education.

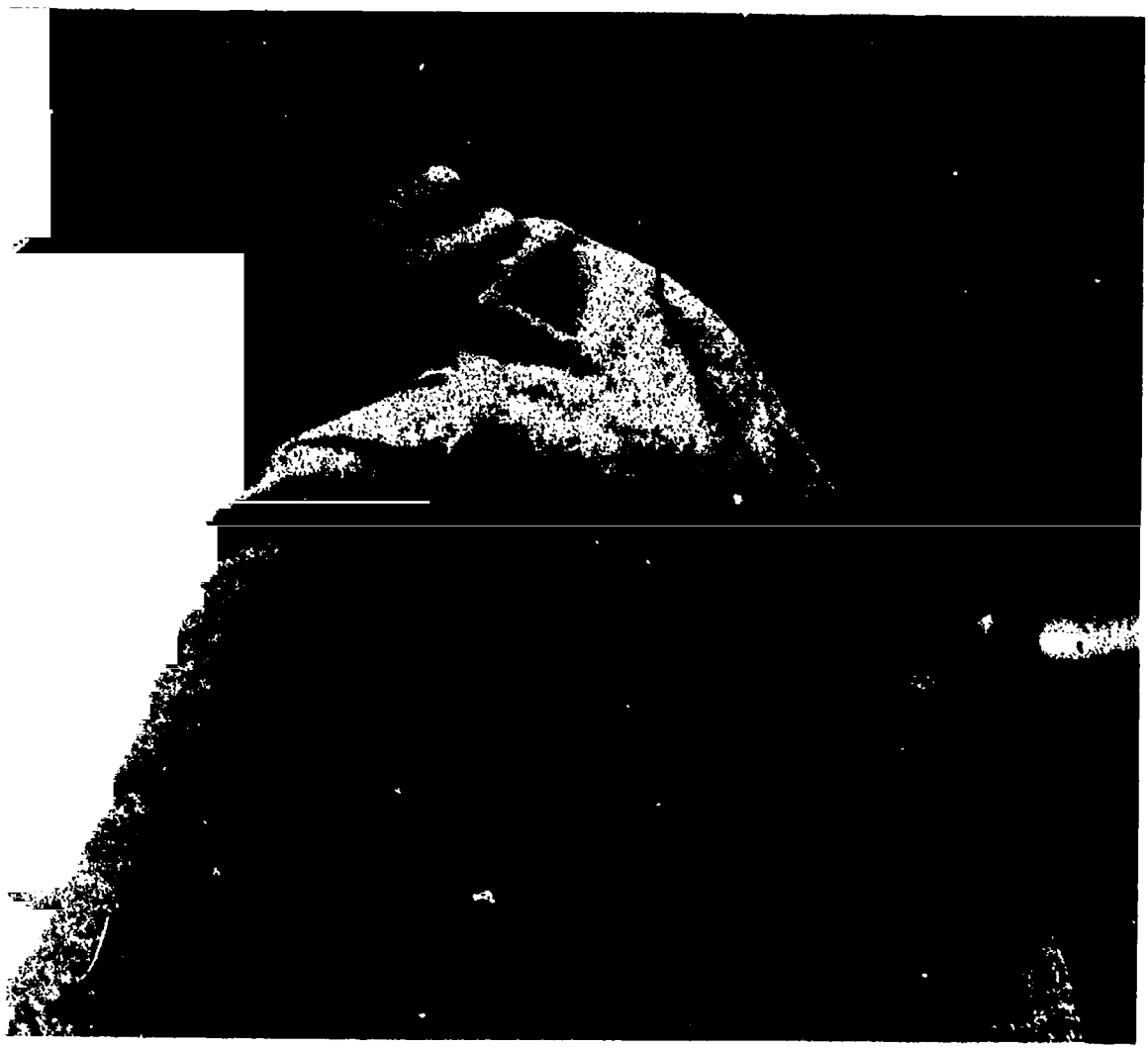


# Eleven Decisions

*A Proposed Model for the Review/Revision of Degree Requirements*

The following eleven ingredients are provided as a model program for the review and revision of degree requirements.

1. *Degree Requirements Are a Faculty Responsibility.* In its policy statement on the associate degree published in October 1984, AACJC clearly placed the responsibility for the design and evaluation of associate degree programs with the teaching faculty. Although



the faculty must have the complete cooperation of the administration to bring this task to fruition, the fundamental responsibility for degree requirements must rest with the teaching faculty.

2. *The Committee Must Be Appointed Through the Normal Governance Process.* The appointment of a degree requirements committee should be accomplished through the faculty governance process. Typically, the chairperson of the faculty governing body appoints the committee and the governing body, and the faculty senate gives its approval. The use of an administratively appointed task force or other institutional committee should be avoided. This tends to remove the responsibility for degree requirements from the faculty.

3. *The Committee Must Have Clear Charge and Full Responsibility.* The degree requirements committee should receive a clear charge and the full responsibility for its task. To function effectively, the committee must know what is expected of it. The charge should precisely set the parameters of the task. The charge should also require that the committee report regularly to the faculty. From beginning to end, the committee must accept full responsibility for its work. After the final report is written, the committee should carry and defend its recommendations through each step of the approval process. The responsibility for obtaining the approval of the faculty, administration, and board of trustees should remain with the committee.

4. *The Committee Should Be Composed of Faculty That Are Representative of Academic Units.* It is imperative to the success of the study that each academic unit of the college be represented on the committee. This assures the various academic units that they have a voice in the process. It also provides the committee with a direct channel of communication to each academic unit, and assures the committee that the interest level of the faculty will remain high throughout the study.

5. *The Committee Members Must Have the Respect of Their Peers.* Peer respect of committee members is essential to the credibility of the study. Without peer respect, it is doubtful that the recommendations of the committee will be taken seriously.

6. *The Committee Must Educate Itself and Its Colleagues.* A large part of the committee's work involves educating itself in regard to degree requirements. This may involve interviews with faculty and administration, comparative studies of degree requirements at other colleges and universities, and an analysis of degree requirements throughout the history of higher education.

7. *Communication Is an Essential Part of the Process.* Great effort should be made to communicate each stage of the process to constituents. Committee meetings must be held regularly and all who are interested should be invited to attend and share their perceptions with the committee. As decisions are made, they should be clearly communicated to all campus constituents, especially to faculty. Constituents should feel free to communicate their concerns to their representatives on the committee. In this way, problems can be identified and remedied before a final report is written. Prior to preparing a final report, a rough draft should be circulated.

This provides all interested parties with one last chance to give input into the process.

8. *The Committee Must Work Toward Consensus.* Although faculty members may hold widely divergent views, they must reach some degree of unity on degree requirements. By prudent use of communication and education, the committee must work to achieve a consensus of faculty on its final recommendations.

9. *The Committee Must Avoid Catering to Special Interests.* A college faculty is composed of many individuals and factions, each of which have valid and important needs. Those needs may manifest themselves as demands for specific courses or as recommendations that there be no required courses. Occasionally, the voice of one group or individual rises above the others and attracts more than its share of attention. A degree requirements committee must hear all voices, but must carefully weigh each concern and need against the overall goals of the college and the needs of its students.

10. *Degree Requirements Must Be Contextual.* Colleges exist within a complex and dynamic society. Faculty and administration must be aware of the societal factors that affect curricula and academic programs. This is especially true of community colleges that were founded to be responsive to the educational needs of residents of the communities they serve. Community colleges must be ever conscious that they serve distinct types of students: pre-baccalaureate degree students, two-year degree students, and non-degree students. Degree requirements of such institutions must fit in with the needs of society, students, and employers, and must be consistent with transfer institution requirements.

11. *The Final Report Must Be a Clear and Concise Statement of the Position of the Committee.* The final report is an essential part of the degree review process. It presents the work of the committee to others. As such, the report must be well written and presented in an attractive format. Throughout its tenure, the committee will have identified many issues and may have made several recommendations. Each recommendation must be supported by a concise, clearly written justification. Attention must also be given to the content, style, and format of the report, since colleagues will gain their first impressions of the committee by reading the report. A poorly written, unattractive report will not engender the respect that is necessary for serious consideration by faculty and administration.


TRACEY LARRISON
DMA:C DENTAL HYGIENE

# To Market, to Market

*Ways to Enhance the Status of the Associate Degree*

The associate degree, some would argue, is as strong as ever. They point to numbers as indicators of success. Associate degree holders make up at least 31 percent of higher education's graduates today. In 1969–70, when 206,753 community, technical, and junior college students graduated, the percentage was just 16. In 1980–81 they numbered 416,377. The difference in gains over the previous decade, however, will not likely be matched by 1990, not in these days of static enrollments. Rather indicators of success seem to be shifting toward a different set of numbers, in numbers of new programs for training and retraining the unemployed and underemployed, for example, and in numbers of proliferating articulation/transfer agreements, all of which serve to enhance the status of the associate degree. Improving this status is the subject of this month's essays by four chief executive officers of community colleges.

*Michael E. Crawford*

*by Michael E. Crawford*

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Public sentiment is everything.... [W]ith public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed." Unfortunately, the business of shaping public opinion is still often looked upon as a slightly shady occupation that educational institutions approach only through the back door. It is an unfortunate bias since it will be through the use of sound marketing practices that the status of the associate degree will be enhanced.

Those of us who work in a community college already understand the awesome responsibility we have to our students to create and maintain a sound academic environment. Now the task at hand is to shape the public's perception of the quality of education that is available on our campuses. The four P's of marketing—product, price, promotion, and position—give community, technical, and junior colleges an almost infallible blueprint to follow in order to accomplish that goal.

The first thing community colleges must do is to be certain they are producing a high-quality product. This requires not only some internal marketing, but also a reevaluation of existing programs and facilities. Do we have committed, qualified instructors in the classrooms? Are we providing adequate labs and equipment? Is the quality of work required to complete an associate degree meeting the standards of the four-year institutions to which our students are transferring, as well as the standards of potential employers? Until community colleges answer in a resounding yes to these questions, the quality of our product will remain open to challenge.

But even a talented teaching staff and modern equipment in the classrooms are only a part of assuring our varied publics of the worth of the associate degree. Administrators must also make college campuses pleasant places to work and attend classes. There is a need

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to sensitize the faculty and staff to the importance of creating a positive environment both inside and outside the classrooms. A faculty member airing grievances within the community, regardless of whether they are petty or valid, will do more to undermine programs than any bad press coverage. One student discouraged by a rude receptionist on the telephone does much more than lower the community college's enrollment by one. An institution perceived as a place where there is a continuing undercurrent of dissatisfaction is going to have trouble convincing anyone that it is capable of producing a quality product.

Averting this kind of spreading disquiet is everyone's job, but certainly the bulk of the responsibility falls with the college's leadership in organizing an internal marketing place. Every instructor, every secretary, every custodian, should be made to understand that students are not an inconvenience, they are the reason for our existence. The customer may not always be right, but the customer is always the customer, and the old adage about catching more flies with honey is still a valid one.

Of course, our end product is actually our graduates. The students who leave our institutions with an associate degree will be the greatest testimonial to the worth of our programs. Their performance in the marketplace or the extent of the knowledge they carry into a baccalaureate program will do much more to enhance the value of an associate degree than any amount of planned publicity. If community colleges expect to set the standard of training for technical jobs, if we want to claim preeminence in setting academic standards, we have to be ready to do more than give our students an education. We have to strive for excellence.

While community, technical, and junior colleges continue to assess their programs and push for high-quality academic environment for students, they should remain cognizant of the diminishing fiscal support for education that has become a national trend. It has already become difficult for educational institutions to offer competitive salaries to their instructional staffs. More and more qualified instructors are being lured into business and industry jobs leaving classrooms cramped as students are doubled up into fewer sections.

In Iowa last year state budgets were cut 3 percent after the school year had already started and money was already committed. With roughly 80 percent of a community college's budget being contractual in nature, what cuts were made had to be taken from the remaining 20 percent of the budget. That meant cutbacks in

building maintenance and repair, new equipment purchases, outdated textbook replacement—all areas directly related to the classroom experience.

Losing state and federal dollars means community colleges will be forced to examine the possibility of raising tuition and fees to hold their budgets together. That solution is in direct conflict with their stated mission of making education affordable for all students. Pricing a quality educational experience out of reach is a sad and very possible piece of irony.

Unfortunately, the only other alternative is just as repugnant. Eliminating programs, cutting back on the number of sections offered, or watering down curriculum to save the expense of buying the newest technological equipment will surely do more to devalue the associate degree than anything else.

It is everyone's job connected to a community college to lobby for the kind of public support community colleges need if we are going to be able to continue providing a high-quality education. Until national reforms are set in motion, community, technical, and junior colleges are in danger of being unable to maintain a product that is exemplary.

To institutions that are still approaching marketing from that back door, promotion means placing a newspaper ad in the local paper announcing registration dates. Enlightened community colleges know that a more important piece of promotion is to begin articulation with four-year institutions and high schools. These linkages establish partnerships that not only get our message to the community, but give important feedback to the community college to be used as a guide in future program planning.

Articulation means establishing close working relations and cooperation in the design of new academic programs and the modification of existing ones. Enlisting this kind of help from four-year colleges gives them part ownership; and when their administrators understand the high quality of work required to earn an associate degree, they will be more likely to treat students who have earned that degree with the same respect afforded students who have spent the first two years at their own institutions.

The community college open-door policy has been perceived by some as being such a lax policy that they confuse flexibility with poor academic standards. Four-year institutions may find themselves troubled over a community college's unorthodox methods for meeting students' demands, but dialogue between those institutions and com-

munity colleges can help clarify some of those methods, reassuring the universities that our own peculiar form of madness does not indicate a flawed system. Indeed, it is our flexibility that gives us our strength in the academic community. Once these unique characteristics have been explained, it is very likely that four-year colleges will encourage students with special needs to take advantage of a community college before transferring into one of their own programs.

While it is historically true that transfer students have done as well academically as students who have spent all four years at one institution, a small percentage of community college students actually transfer into a baccalaureate program. The fact that many students who enroll in community colleges with the intention of transferring to a four-year college do not reach that goal raises several additional issues. Are we helping students sufficiently in their quest for an upper-division degree? Are we serving as an advocate of the associate degree student to the four-year colleges, seeking more flexibility on their part in the time, location, and flexibility of degree offerings? Are we helping the transfer-oriented student set career goals that are appropriate for the associate degree?

Similar working relationships also need to be developed with other institutions, most notably the high schools. The "tech prep" curriculum being developed in some communities between high schools and community colleges illustrates how this can be done effectively. The program is solidly based in applied sciences, applied math, literacy courses, and technical programs. The high school vocational education part of the program covers career clusters and systems. Study in such clusters eases the transition to technical education programs in community colleges.

In addition, high school counselors will be more apt to steer students toward two-year programs. Soliciting input from high schools as to what programs students are asking for will also attract a larger share of students, help weed out unnecessary curricula, and strengthen existing courses by allowing instructors to focus on those in high demand.

Bringing these courses to the community is one of a community colleges' greatest strengths. Convenient locations—"positioning" in marketing terms—is an asset often stressed by recruiters talking to incoming students. However, convenience for our traditional students should be only one of our considerations in delivering our product to the community.

The business/industry community might best be served by classes conducted within their own facilities. With this type of inhouse training, businesses can evaluate the quality of instruction using their own standards as a yardstick. This kind of linkage is indispensable since it is the potential employers who will be touting the value of—or denying the lack of professionalism in—the students they hire from community college programs. Most of the time, the "appropriate" degree for the future job market will be the associate degree.

On-the-job education is not only practical for industrial/technical programs, but also in areas such as health occupations, food service, and office procedures. Evaluating and meeting employers' needs is important if we are to maintain a practical educational program of training and assistance for our students.

But positioning can also refer to offering courses through telecommunications, by correspondence, or in evening and weekend programs. Facilitating students in completing the work for an associate degree in a reasonable amount of time will do much to enhance the notion that community colleges provide a rigorous educational environment.

Once community, technical, and junior colleges look at the broad picture of marketing as an honorable and necessary part of education, the value of the associate degree will become apparent to our communities. It is all right to come into a marketing program through the back door as long as we don't linger too long in the kitchen.

*Mary M. Norman*

*by Mary M. Norman*

The "status" of the associate degree, that is, its position or rank, is recognized in the community of higher education along with the status of the bachelor's, master's, and doctorate. What our problem has been is that as community college educators we have not *elevated* the attainment of the associate degree as one of our primary missions and thus it has not attained the stature it deserves either within or without our colleges.

What we need to do is to mount a marketing campaign at the national, state and local level. There is no question that the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges has taken a giant step in this effort by mounting a task force that redefined the basic elements in the A.A., A.S., and A.A.S. degrees. This report has been adopted by the member colleges of the Association and should serve as a broad blueprint for excellence in the degrees offered by each community, technical, and junior college. In essence we have defined our "product" and now we must begin to market it vigorously.

As with any successful marketing strategy, internal marketing must be the first step. We must convince our present students, both full- and parttime, that the associate degree is important to them personally and professionally. We must demonstrate to our students that the associate degree will make transfer to a four-year college or university almost automatic. We must demonstrate to our students that once the degree is awarded, jobs will be available and employers will reward their efforts. Every community, technical, and junior college has these success statistics available, but rarely do they share them with entering students. The attainment of the associate degree should be held out to our students as the ultimate achievement to be attained at our colleges. The message must go

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out loudly and clearly from the board of trustees through the administration and the faculty.

The faculty are the key in this internal marketing process. They must be committed to the associate degree. They must see its worth and encourage students to complete all requirements for the degree no matter their future plans. This will not be an easy task. It has been my experience that many faculty themselves do not see the worth of the associate degree. This in part is due to the fact that few of them are community college graduates. Many consider the degree "less than" a bachelor's, or of no significant measure of achievement. There is a sad irony in all of this since these are the same individuals who plan and design the requirements for our degrees. Our faculty must be reminded that they need to "sell" the programs they fought so hard to establish through their curriculum committees.

Once we have achieved an agreement on the associate degree within our institutions, there is much to be done externally to market our product. We must begin with our local high schools. Superintendents, principals, and counselors should be sent AACJC's publication regarding the associate degree. This should be followed by meetings sponsored by the college to discuss the worth of the degree and to promote the various degree programs the college has to offer. There is a complete lack of knowledge regarding the associate degree on the part of the very institutions that supply us our students. They need to know what we know. If they need convincing, I would suggest you invite them to your graduation ceremonies. The graduates and their families will graphically demonstrate how important they consider the awarding of the associate degree.

Our next market must be the four-year colleges and universities who are the recipients of our graduates. In an ideal world, I would insist that these colleges *only* accept transfers who have attained the associate degree. However, that would place undue burdens on some of our students and could produce a negative reaction. However, I believe that these institutions could be asked to give special recognition to those transfer students who have attained the degree. Agreements could be reached so that *all* credits obtained by these students, whether 60 or 70, would automatically transfer. This type of arrangement has been reached in many states, but needs to be encouraged by every community college.

As four-year colleges and universities compete with our colleges for the same students, we must convince them to honor our degree

as they would have theirs honored. I do not know of any bachelor's degree program that would accept a master's degree program from another institution, pirating students away before they had attained the bachelor's degree. However, this is a common practice today between four-year colleges and community colleges. Only by working with four-year colleges and universities can our community colleges top this practice. We must insist on the importance of our degrees and set up strong and clear guidelines that give preferential treatment to our graduates.

As with high schools, colleges, and universities, we must sell the importance of the associate degree to business, industry, labor, and government. These employers of our students must first be given information about the associate degree and the programs offered at this degree level. This campaign must first be done on a local level with those employers each college serves. In addition, national and state campaigns will be necessary. We should strive, it seems to me, at both levels to have employers advertise their jobs in such a way that the associate degree is given prominence. We must encourage employers to request the associate degree as a minimum requirement for certain jobs. Can you imagine the impact it would have if IBM, for example, advertised a series of jobs in the *New York Times* and our own dailies with the associate degree in accounting, electronics, and engineering technology as a minimum job requirement. I believe we can achieve this status if we provide employers with the success stories of those already employed in their companies.

In this endeavor, as in those mentioned previously, it becomes apparent that our alumni, our graduates, are our key. It is our graduates who can convince our present students, staff, upper-division colleges, and employers of the importance of the associate degree. They have succeeded in large measure because they pursued the associate degree with its status, and thus have given it stature. Our campaigns to market the associate degree, both internally and externally, must be "sold" by our satisfied customers—our graduates. We must enlist their help if we are to succeed on a local, state, or national level.

*Donald G. Phelps*

*by Donald G. Phelps*

The associate degree has the potential to be a universally respected educational certificate, but to realize this potential, community colleges must achieve a major transformation. We must conceive a vision of the associate degree as the centerpiece, the crown jewel, of the community college experience, and through internal commitment and external communication, make that vision a reality.

If a degree that is attainable in two years is to achieve this status in today's world, it must certify acquisition not merely of a certain portion of knowledge but also of the ability to learn independently, beyond the limits of degree requirements and formal study. It must make the connection between the educated, humane person and the employable, productive person. It must instill appreciation for the events and values of our own past and of other cultures, and the ability to carry this appreciation actively into our lives. It must stimulate students to develop their own standards of excellence, which are in turn based on high individual expectations and self esteem. In short, the educational process must make significant contact with the whole person and, in many cases, engender significant change in a relatively short period of time.

Current visionaries in higher education offer a wealth of wisdom for colleges seeking to create their own special version of the ideal two-year degree education. The Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education calls for a focus on students, by involving them more integrally in the learning process, by fostering high expectations, and by providing regular assessment and feedback. William Bennett urges us to reassert the centrality of the humanities to the making of the educated person. Dale Parnell declares that effective preparation of technicians for the future requires that colleges develop articulated programs, which combine both general and vocational education, with the secondary schools.

*Donald G. Phelps is chancellor of the Seattle Community College District.*

These are stimulating and challenging views of what ought to be. But it is at the level of the individual college that the attainable vision will ultimately be created. The vision must be shared within the college and its community, because if achieving real stature for the associate degree is the goal, hard decisions must be made: decisions about changing course and program requirements and structure—requiring comprehensive core courses in humanities, technology, and self understanding for every degree program, for example; decisions about standards below which we cannot honorably certify that learning has occurred, and about levels of support that will enable every willing learner to achieve these standards.

In fact, what is called for is the identification of educational excellence, through the collaborative efforts of college administrators and faculty. For despite our sincerity and considerable success in serving our students and communities, for the most part we have yet to establish either a sense of unified purpose or a set of standards by which we and our graduates are known and judged. In seeking to do so, we must hold to the special strengths of the community college: its focus on teaching, on responsiveness to the community, and on providing opportunity for all students. Our aim should be to provide incentives for students to set higher goals for themselves, not to place obstacles in their way; to offer our knowledge and experience in the service of students, not to force students into a single educational mold.

Once we have agreed on a common vision, valid for our community and attainable with our resources, we must have the will to achieve it, to determine what changes are necessary and to see that they are carried out. For example, we should restructure the curriculum to emphasize the acquisition of learning tools—problem solving, communication, analysis—to give an ordered view of our history and culture as well as an understanding of the challenges of technology. This will mean accepting and making room for new courses and new patterns of presentation.

We should explore new ways and improve old ways of teaching so that all who want to learn are given adequate opportunity to do so. This will mean changes in accepted and traditional ways of working; it will mean learning from and with our students. We should set standards that are realistic and that relate to expectations in the world outside the college, but are finally based on our best professional judgment; and offer students assistance in identifying interests and skills, in setting realistic goals, in exploring new directions

and testing them before making firm commitments. We should treat students like valued customers; be frank when either we or they are in the wrong, but right or wrong, treat them with respect in every single transaction they have with the college.

In order to effect such changes, involving the most fundamental aspects of our work, faculty and administrators must be genuine partners in the task. Faculty must play an active role in determining the kinds of support that will be needed to enable them to make the changes in what and how they teach. At the same time, they must be willing to participate as professionals in analyzing the quality of program and instruction, and of taking action together to improve the quality, to meet the standards that have been set; and they must support and help effect change rather than obstruct it.

Now, as all of this is being accomplished—all based on internal commitment to the belief that the community college and the degrees it offers can and should be first-rate—the other part of the program must come into play: the external communication. Before we can market our product, we need to assure its quality; only then can we begin the second half of the task, but it will be an easier task because of the groundwork that has been laid. Once again, administrators and faculty must work together to demonstrate to the community—to other educational institutions, to business, industry, community groups, legislators—the caliber of education our graduates acquire. But if we succeed in the first part, in assuring that the caliber is high, the product will provide its own momentum. The number of associate degree holders will increase, and the performance of these graduates, on the job and in other colleges, will speak for itself.

*Donald L. Newport*

*by Donald L. Newport*

Why have we, as that unique contribution to the education scene of the American learning picture, chosen to become so conscious of awarding degrees? As the "people's college," shouldn't we be more concerned about learning and the process of thinking, which we develop within our students, rather than a piece of paper?

But the fact is that without a map that provides the periodic benchmarks around which we measure our progress toward achieving the goal of a broadly educated citizenry, we return to a smorgasbord era in American higher education that has seen both our philosophies and pipes spring leaks of monumental proportions. Perhaps at no time in our history as a community college movement is it more critical for us to define through our degrees and their associated curricular benchmarks those definitions of an educated citizen that we would hold up for all to examine.

Placing these tenets under the microscope for public examination will not be easy, nor should it be attempted by the faint-of-heart. But such will be one of the basic steps toward enhancing the stature of the associate degree because it will assure that we are developing our curriculum in light of today's world, rather than maintaining our degree requirements on historical precedents that may have faded.

To achieve our ultimate goal of a broad base of public support for the associate degree, a local college would be advised to consider implementing a regular, ongoing program evaluation process that requires an intensive evaluation of every degree program on at least a five-year cycle. The objective would be to assure that all the pieces of each associate degree program are working in harmony and meeting defined criteria for the program. Such an evaluation process

*Donald L. Newport is president of Oklahoma City Community College.*

should be dove-tailed with both the curriculum review and budgetary processes so that approved recommendations can be implemented in an orderly way and with appropriate financial support.

A college should also consider initiating a broad-based staff and student development program to achieve an understanding of exactly what an associate degree is and how it fits into the strategic plan of the college; and initiating a well-formulated strategic marketing program that communicates the quality and legitimacy of the degree programs through, for example, vignettes on teaching faculty as well as the accomplishments of degree recipients and major employers of associate degree graduates.

Another worthwhile endeavor would be the initiation of institutionwide quality-control projects that regularly and routinely seek to target the upgrading of specific aspects of the associate degree. For example, several community colleges in recent years have undertaken ambitious projects aimed at redefining and revitalizing the general education component of the degree. Other institutionwide projects have targeted such items as computer literacy, grade inflation and consistency, and basic skills.

Enhancement of the associate degree will ultimately occur through a conscious response to the major challenge that we face as a community college movement: that of trying too hard to be all things to all people. The degrees we offer should be evaluated through straightforward responses to the following questions: 1) If it is a preparatory degree for further study, is the recipient of our degree actually prepared for earning the appropriate advanced degree? and 2) If it is an immediate job entry degree, are there openings for trained personnel in that career and is our recipient adequately prepared to enter this job? In short, no degree can remain viable if recipients are either not adequately prepared to do what the degree implies or they are prepared for something that is no longer needed.

Through such action steps as I have suggested, the answers to these final questions will be resoundingly affirmative and establish those benchmarks that will keep us on the right road to enter the year 2000 with both pride and assurance.

# Redefining the Degree:

## A Special Report

*by Leslie Kollar*

*Leslie Koltai*

*In early 1984 AACJC published this work under the title* Redefining the Associate Degree. *It can help you to evaluate your college's associate degree program and to educate your external publics about the degree's value. Demand for the "Koltai Report" has been so high that AACJC is pleased to reprint it here.*

# Preface

The American community college is becoming one of the most successful educational institutions in the world. Many developing countries have already adopted models of community and/or technical colleges and have created hundreds of institutions to usher in a new age of civilization.

In the United States the community college is a growing educational enterprise. In the 1982–83 academic year close to five million students chose to attend 1,219 community, technical, and junior colleges to begin, to complete, or to continue their quest for learning. Community colleges thrive because they have a long-term commitment to open access for all citizens who can benefit from attending, coupled with dedication to sustaining and improving the quality of the educational experiences they provide. Community colleges are eager to respond to the needs of a growing student population, and as one of their missions, they award associate degrees at the completion of designated two-year curricula.

During the last decade the number of associate degrees awarded increased by approximately 60 percent, compared with an increase

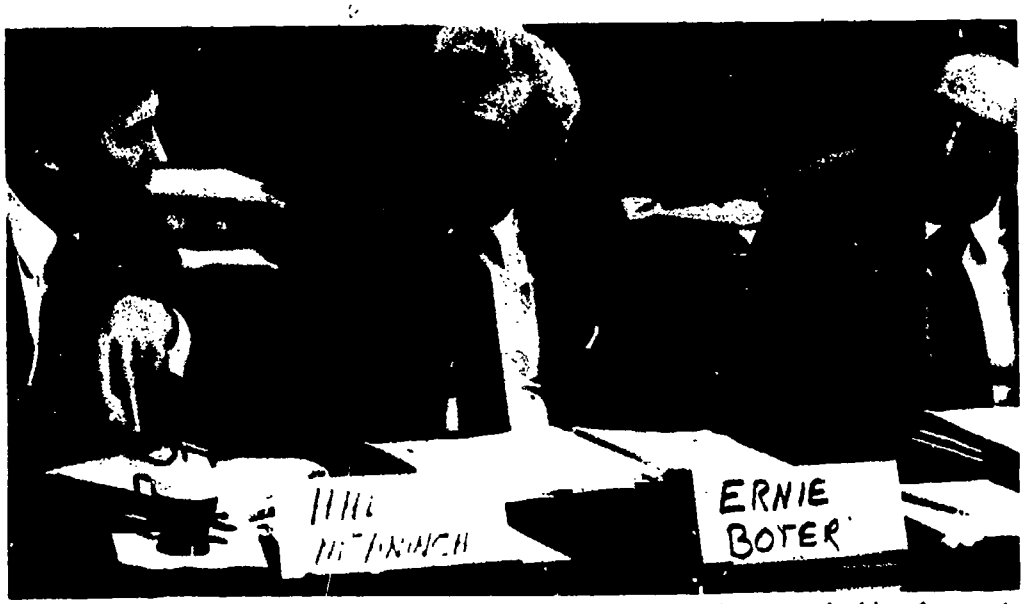
*Leslie Koltai is chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District.*

of 11 percent for the baccalaureate degree. In fact, associate degrees, which accounted for more than 18 percent of all degrees in 1970, grew to 23 percent at the end of the decade.[1] The community colleges are proud of this achievement. However, there is a growing desire to initiate a national dialogue on the goals, definitions, and quality of this degree.

Dale Parnell, president of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, appropriately recognized the need for determining the present status of the associate degree, and the National Endowment for the Humanities made it possible to plan for such discussion. In these days of austere budgets, collective bargaining, and retrenchment, a review of the associate degree requires exceptional perception, a deep commitment to quality, as well as an understanding of society's needs.

This presentation is the result of a fundamental process of inquiry that began with the review of literature pertaining to the history, trends, and meaning of the associate degree. As a second step, a survey instrument was sent to 100 community, technical, and junior college districts with a total enrollment of approximately two million students. A different questionnaire was sent to 100 high schools and 50 companies randomly selected from the Fortune 500 listings, including automobile manufacturers, oil companies, and other major industrial concerns. In addition to these surveys, 20 academic and professional associations and 10 university professors in the field of community college education were invited to comment on the subject. Also, a special effort was made to contact the state higher education officers across the country. The responses were compiled and analyzed; opinions and essays were placed into appropriate categories; and after further review, recommendations were presented for further discussion.

The most valuable aspect of this initial presentation is the formation of the National Task Force on the Redefinition of the Associate Degree. The Task Force is composed of some of the foremost education leaders and experts in the country, including a high-ranking official of the present administration, public and private university presidents, leaders of national accrediting and testing agencies, chief executive officers of community and technical colleges, a superintendent of a large, urban public school system, and professors of higher education.




*Bill Burke/AACJC*

*TALKING IT AROUND: In March 1984 AACJC convened a roundtable of experts to discuss definition of the associate degree. From left, Harold D. McAninch, president of the College of DuPage in Illinois, who presented a draft of the policy statement shown on pages 84–88; Roundtable Chair Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; and Co-chair Leslie Koltai, chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District.*

# Up to Now: A Historical Perspective

Any understanding of the associate degree as it now exists must be grounded in an awareness of its evolution throughout this century.

The birth of the associate degree and, indirectly, the two-year college can be traced to the University of Chicago, which in 1900 began awarding associate degrees in arts, literature, and science at the end of the sophomore year. The university's president, William Rainey Harper, fostered the foundation of Joliet Junior College in Illinois to serve as a feeder institution to the University of Chicago. Joliet Junior College was characterized as an institution ideal for technical and paraprofessional training and as a "junior college" with the added advantage of easy proximity and lower cost to the student.[2]

By 1918 there were 17 junior colleges in the country granting the associate degree. The junior college was "an institution offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade," declared the newly founded American Association of Junior Colleges.[3]

A review of literature suggests that at nearly every organizational meeting held by the American Association of Junior Colleges during the 1920s and 1930s, the subject of occupational education was discussed, with the Association "aware that it had to take a leadership role in directing the movement for terminal education," as it was then called.[4]

In 1939 the Association created a commission on junior college terminal education to study the role of nonacademic or vocational programs, which at that time accounted for about one third of the courses offered at the approximately 200 junior colleges then in existence. In 1944 the National Education Association's Commission on Educational Policies stressed the need for a one- or two-year program of occupational education.[5]

The end of World War II brought a shift in focus as young men rushed back to the campuses eager to prepare for participation in the good life. The GI Bill was instrumental in opening a new era of two-year college education.

And in 1947 the President's Commission on Higher Education "recommended an increase in the number of community colleges so that students who might not benefit from a full four-year course of studies could attain an education enabling them to take their place in the American workforce."[6] The Commission spoke specifically of programs enabling graduates to enter skilled, semiprofessional, and technical jobs.

As John Lombardi pointed out, it all began with the post-World War II era, which "marked the beginning of the second major growth period for the junior colleges. And along with other aspects the associate degree became one of its important characteristics."[7] By the late 1950s the degree was accepted and authorized as verification of genuine academic achievement in nearly every state. Proliferation of various types of degrees followed, with associate in arts, associate in science, and associate in applied science tallying the largest total of awardees.

Since the 1950s each decade has found two-year colleges responding to different societal needs. First, there was the call to help this country respond to the Sputnik challenge, with math and science being stressed in the curriculum. The 1960s saw emphasis on expanded educational opportunities to serve those who had previously been neglected by higher education, while the 1970s brought compensatory and vocational education into the forefront as the colleges responded to greater disparity in students' ability and their

increased preoccupation with preparing for a career. During those years the colleges underwent rapid expansion with enrollment increases of up to 15 percent a year.

This phenomenal growth was largely due to the fact that "of all higher education institutions, the community colleges contributed most to opening the system" and "were available to all comers, attracting the 'new students,' the minorities, the women, the people who had done poorly in high school, those who would otherwise never have considered further education."[8] And the influx of these "new students" affected the colleges in terms of curriculum and delivery systems. Since many were academically underprepared, compensatory education came into the spotlight, with nearly 60 percent of all public two-year colleges found to have compensatory programs in a 1973 study and one third of the community college mathematics courses taught at a level lower than beginning algebra by the mid-1970s.[9]

There was also an impact on how, when, and where education was offered, with courses available in the evening, at outreach centers, and even on television. For example, part-time students went from 53 percent of total enrollment in 1963 to 62 percent in 1980. Another dramatic shift was found in the ratio of freshmen to sophomore enrollment. While a fairly consistent ratio of 2.4 freshmen to one sophomore was evident from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s, the proportion of students completing two years was less than one in five by the end of the 1970s.[10] Financial aid programs expanded rapidly as well, with student assistance programs found in 12 states in 1964, 22 in 1970, and in all but a few states by the beginning of this decade.[11]

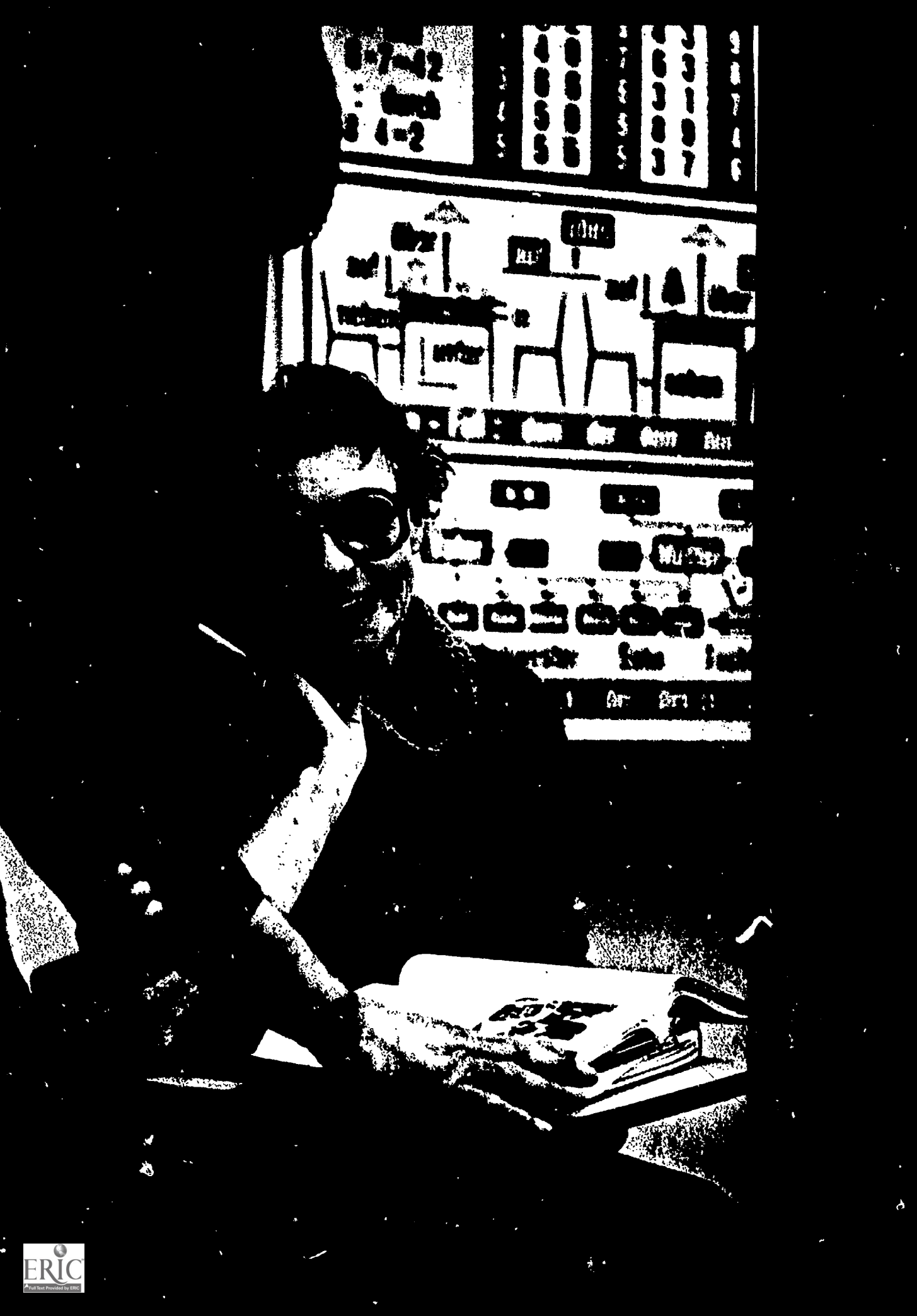
Focusing in on trends in associate degree awards during the 1970s, data from the National Center for Education Statistics reflect a changing society and a changing community college. Numbers of degrees awarded in vocational areas showed substantial increases with nearly a 78 percent increase among mechanical/engineering technologies and an 184 percent jump for health services and paramedical technologies. Degrees in science and engineering-related programs increased 23 to 32 percent. Arts, sciences, and general education programs did not fare as well, however. While these categories accounted for about 57 percent of the total number of associate degrees awarded in 1970–71, they had dropped to just 37.5 percent by 1979–80.[12]

Demographic changes were evident as well. Since 1976–77 women have been receiving more associate degrees than have men, even though men still outnumber women in every other degree category. Women scored an increase of 102 percent during the 1970s in the number of associate degrees earned, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Reflecting the increased interest among all segments for vocational training, the percentage of associate degrees awarded to women in career areas went from about 43 percent to 55 percent. For example, women earned about 40 percent of science and engineering-related associate degrees in 1970–71 and 52.4 percent by 1979–80.[13]

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicate trends by ethnic group. For example, the 1970s also saw as many as 16 percent of associate degrees bein varded to minorities, compared with about 12 percent of bacca.. reate degrees. Associate degrees in business and commerce technologies were the most common. In 1979–80 nonwhites accounted for 18.5 percent of degrees in business and commerce technologies and 20 percent of those received in data processing and public service-related technologies.[14] And now, for many community colleges in the 1980s, career education continues to be their major function.[15]

The 97th Congress in 1982 approved Public Law 97-300, the Job Training Partnership Act, which again put the emphasis on community colleges in joint federal-business-educational programs. This legislation "signals a new era for vocational education and the private sector to collaborate in providing job training and related services. Its focus is on enabling economically disadvantaged individuals and others in special need of training to begin employment," according to *VocEd*.[16]

This legislation reflects a new federal policy that to community and technical colleges is reminiscent of the era of the 1958 National Defense Education Act and its impact on strengthening humanities and sciences in higher education. At that time it was a reaction to the potential of Russian advancement in science. This time it is a reaction to, among other things, the Japanese factor in the traditional American marketplace, suggesting that this country cannot survive without a cohesive national plan including new emphasis on teaching of high technology in colleges. In this light the associate degree continues to be a significant contribution to the nation's economy and security.



# Strength Through Diversity: A Review of Literature

Community colleges, as local institutions, have always highlighted diversity in programs, facilities, students, and objectives. An examination of the literature concerning the diversity of the associate degree, its components, and the ways in which it is perceived and evaluated, is essential to an understanding of the degree as it now exists, as well as to the formulation of recommendations for its redefinition.

According to a report conducted by the American Council on Education on the study of credentialing educational accomplishment, never has the certification function of institutions of higher education been more important than it is today: "A mobile, complex society supported by a technological economy is, by its nature, dependent on formal certification to identify the qualified, to protect against the incompetent and the fraudulent, and to encourage learning and competence."[17] The report points out that in an increasing number of career specialties it is difficult to measure quickly and confidently the difference between the competent and incompetent when evaluating job applicants. Degrees, in this situation, serve as proxies for human merit or as presorters of attainment.[18]

At the heart of discussion of any degree is an analysis of the curricula upon which attainment of that degree is based, and central to the debate about redefinition of the associate degree is the issue of general and liberal education, especially in terms of their role in the instruction of career-minded students.

Joseph Duffey, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, also addressed this issue, particularly in terms of two-year college programs, saying, "The humanities are not the sacred province of a select few. They are, instead, the intellectual and spiritual resources by which a society as a whole perceives and gives shape to its cultural life and legacy. No set of institutions is better placed, literally, than our community colleges, to ensure public access to these resources—resources that are the rightful heritage of all our citizens."[19]

It was William J. Bennett,, now Secretary of Education, who in November 1982 sounded a warning when he told the National Council of Teachers of English that humanities courses in colleges and schools had degenerated into a "jumble of indiscriminate offerings" with "no rationale and no guidance or coherence for the mind or imagination." He said that "the activities undertaken in the

name of the humanities don't seem to add up to anything; they don't define anything. The studies we associate with the humanities today no longer stand for a unified set of principles or a coherent body of knowledge." Instead, they have become "frighteningly fragmented, even shattered."[20]

Speaking to the issue of the humanities in occupational curricula was Arthur Cohen, professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles, and president of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, who wrote, "The humanities should be available to students in occupational programs through other than traditional course formats. It is not productive for humanities instructors to attempt to make their courses required for students in occupational programs. There is too much resistance on the part of the faculty of the occupational programs, their students, and community advisory boards. The humanities faculty must create modules, short segments that can be inserted into the occupational programs themselves. These segments can deal with aspects of the humanities that have meaning for students in those programs. . . . More needs to be done with literature, history and other disciplines in developing short segments of interest to students in automotive, electronic and engineering technology programs."[21]

There are many, however, who are not optimistic about reform and change, including Professor James O. Hammons of the University of Arkansas, who noted, "General education, like progress, is generally viewed with favor, but its predecessor, change, is viewed with fear and suspicion. In order for change to occur, the dead weight of inertia must be overcome. . . . General education will need to be defined and sold, its content and goals determined. . . . In addition, faculty will have to be trained; student support enlisted; curriculum changes approved; materials of instruction developed or purchased; organizational structures reexamined; compromises worked out on numbers of hours to be devoted; articulation agreements with four-year colleges developed; and so forth." While the task is not easy, he said, "It must be undertaken if the community college is to prepare its students with the education they need for survival today. Earlier in its history, the community college had an opportunity and missed it. . . . For the community college 'next time' has arrived."[22]

Even though employees are dealing with more and more sophisticated technology in the workplace, the literature suggests that the generic vocational abilities of reading, writing, computing, and communicating are prized by business and industry above the

more specific job-related skills. Charles Bowen, IBM's program director for educational development, was clear about what his company was looking for in prospective employees. "The main thing we want is the ability to understand and solve problems," he said. "And I suspect that involves a broader interdisciplinary education of the people we hire."[23]

This response is by no means unique. In a study quoted in *VocEd* it was emphasized that the business community needed, "above all, workers who can read, write, compute, and think. . . that they can get the job done only with employees who get to work on time, cooperate with others, take responsibility, and can adapt to change."[24] Lusterman's 1977 study of large firms indicated that employers wanted entry-level workers who are trainable and literate.[25]

The opinions expressed in this chapter stress the need for general education as an important part of the associate degree requirement. In that context, the humanities require more attention and structure. Just what direction American community colleges should take is still subject to debate. The very existence of the degree is a result of the early twentieth-century educational reform that allowed students to move at the end of a two-year curriculum in a variety of directions.

# A Degree of Success: A Survey of the Associate Degree

Presently, there is growing public interest in the quality and the variety of academic and professional degrees awarded in higher education. Individuals, associations, government agencies, foundations, as well as business and labor groups are studying the substance and relevance of "higher learning in the nation's service." Ernest Boyer and Fred Hechinger point out that "America's colleges and universities seem today to be waiting for new cues from offstage prompters rather than setting their own objectives."[26]

The responses in this study are helpful as a self-analysis regarding the status of the associate degree as visualized by community colleges, high schools, universities, professional associations, and by the business community. Out of 100 college districts in 26 states, 72 responded to the inquiry form. These districts represent a student population of 1,561,497 and a mean enrollment of 7,769 in 201 colleges. Twenty-nine high schools in 26 states with a total enrollment of 38,557 and a mean enrollment of 1,430 participated in this sample survey. A relatively small percentage of polled companies responded to the inquiry—12 large corporations with a total number of 670,175 employees and a mean employment figure of 55,847.

In the analysis of the responses three statistical measures were used—frequency distribution, percentage, and mean. In the application of frequency distribution the number of responses under each single category is represented in a variety of tables. Percentage was utilized for the interpretation of different statistical computations and for the analysis of various tables. Mean, the most widely used measure of control tendency, was computed by adding up the total number of responses and dividing it by the number of respondents.

Of the sampled community colleges 74 percent operate in the traditional semester mode; 23 percent use the quarter system; 2 percent use a modified semester; and 1 percent is on a trimester calendar.

The percentages of responding colleges awarding various degrees were as follows: associate in arts, 97 percent; associate in science, 74 percent; associate in applied science, 45 percent; associate in general studies, 17 percent; associate in liberal arts, associate in arts and science, and associate in applied arts and science, all 4 percent. Offered by 2 percent of the colleges were associate degrees in occupational studies, engineering, computer science, secretarial admin-

**Table 1**
**Number of Degrees Granted from 1978–79 to 1980–81**

| Academic Year | Associate in Arts | Associate in Science | Associate in Applied Science | Associate in General Studies | Associate in Liberal Arts | Other* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978–79 | 38,822 | 16,448 | 34,540 | 1,213 | 482 | 2,982 |
| 1980–81 | 35,891 | 17,556 | 37,557 | 1,590 | 530 | 3,052 |
| Variance | −7.5 | +7 | +8 | +24 | +9 | +2 |

*Other: Includes associate in business administration, associate in applied science, associate in applied business, and associate of occupational studies.

istration, engineering technology, business administration, fine arts, applied arts, and applied business.

Table 1 shows a 7 percent drop in the number of associate in arts degrees awarded by the responding colleges between 1978 and 1980, and it is suspected that the progressive decline will continue. All other degrees show an increase in student demand.

Some of the reasons for the change in students' demand for the various associate degrees in Table 1 are found in responses received from Fortune 500 corporations. They report that the associate degree holders they hire are in technical fields.

There is a substantially higher percentage of four-year college and university graduates, as opposed to community college graduates, employed by these companies. Seventeen percent of the employers indicated they hire between 10 and 30 percent of the graduates; 25 percent hire between 20 and 30 percent; 8 percent hire between 40 and 50 percent; and 8 percent hire between 90 and 100 percent.

The supervisor of college recruitment of an automotive manufacturing company indicates that a bachelor's or master's degree is preferred for the professional positions in his company. Charles Adair, managing director of American Can Company, relates his firm's promotion percentage among employees without a degree, with an associate degree, and with a bachelor's degree. The promotion rate is 8.7 percent for those without degrees; 8 percent for those with associate degrees; and 14 percent for employees with bachelor's

**Table 2**
**Comparison of Mean Units Required for the Associate Degree**

| Area | Arts | Science | Applied Science | Arts/ Science | General Studies | Business Administration | Fine Arts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Major** | 21 | 24 | 32 | 27 | 33 | 18 | 24 |
| **Electives** | 19 | 18 | 10 | 6 | 13 | 9 | 2–14 |
| **Behavioral Science** | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 6 | — | — |
| **Communication** | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| **Humanities** | 7 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| **Natural Science** | 8 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| **Physical Science** | 5 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 5 | 3 | |
| **Social Science** | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 6 |
| **P.E./Health** | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | — | — |
| **Total** | 79 | 72 | 76 | 74 | 78 | 63 | 61 |

degrees. Promotion rates are highest for those with a bachelor's degree, and the lowest rate belongs to those with an associate degree.

The change in student demand requires a careful review of the various unit components of the associate degree. Of the total number of districts surveyed, 77 percent were in agreement with the present requirements, but 23 percent were not in agreement with the distribution of units and proposed changes that will be discussed under the pertinent section.

Table 2 represents the mean unit requirement in each area of seven different associate degrees among the respondent colleges.

It was one of the objectives of this study to look at the role of

assessment in the associate degree program. Seventy-two percent of the responding districts have stipulated that their colleges provide entry-level assessment for the associate degree candidates, and 28 percent of the respondents report no entry assessment. A majority (60 percent) of the districts that provide student assessment indicate that the purpose of testing is to measure the need for remedial courses before the student begins the actual degree preparation. Seventy-one percent use the results to determine course eligibility, and 7 percent to determine personal and career counseling, advisement, and student placement purposes. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents indicate that they provide testing in basic skills and in the major study areas, and 61 percent offer no testing at all.

Thirteen percent of the respondents provide testing prior to basic skills courses; 14 percent during entry/orientation; and 8 percent at the end of the program. The question, "What type of special assistance does your institution provide for those seeking an associate degree?" resulted in the following responses: 91 percent of the respondents offer counseling to prospective associate degree candidates; 74 percent offer orientation; 36 percent offer academic advisement, developmental education, learning centers, special education, EOP&S, upward bound, tutoring, pregraduation check, transcript evaluation, faculty advisement, remediation; 23 percent offer individual tracking; and 6 percent do not offer special assistance to those seeking an associate degree. From the high schools responses indicate that they offer the following type of guidance concerning two-year colleges and associate degrees: 93 percent offer information regarding location of community or junior colleges; 79 percent furnish information regarding different programs; 76 percent offer information on the size of community or junior colleges; 66 percent provide information regarding type of instruction; 66 percent advise on degrees offered; 62 percent offer information regarding transfer of units; 62 percent communicate advantages over other institutions; and 21 percent provide information regarding cost and other general aspects of two-year colleges.

Another measure of quality in the associate degree program is the availability of honors courses in community colleges. Twenty-eight percent of the sampled college districts report offering honors courses, but the vast majority (72 percent) do not. Fifteen percent of the respondents consider that the basic difference between honors courses and standard courses is the degree of depth; 4 percent offer scholarship assistance; 1 percent, small classes; 6 percent, honors

seminars; 4 percent, enriched courses; 7 percent, individualized options; and 9 percent, special assignments. More depth and special assignments are the most significant differences between honors courses and standard courses.

There are two questions related to high technology in the survey that require special attention. One relates to the possible impact of high-technology development on student demand for more programs, and the other is an attempt to find out what curriculum changes would satisfy this new demand.

To begin with, 71 percent of the institutions indicated that high technology had influenced their programs; 29 percent suggested no impact. In a growing number of four-year colleges and universities there is a requirement for degree candidates to interpret computer data and have experience in data processing. Yet, only 6 percent of the community college respondents indicated a course in data processing as a requirement of the associate degree.

Computer science is the area of the college curriculum most heavily impacted by high technology, followed by engineering technology, electronics, mathematics and physics, and finally, communications, word processing, and drafting.

According to the responding colleges, high technology has brought about a need for general curriculum review and consideration of collegewide planning changes. Among the changes already seen are the introduction of additional mathematics, physics, and computer science courses; establishment of campus computer centers; more frequent choice of computer science courses as electives; and consideration of computer literacy requirements. Colleges indicated a need for more computer science courses as well as additional data processing and high-technology equipment.

The most important question of the survey relates to measuring the need for change. Sixty-three percent of respondents said there should be changes in areas such as structure; coursework; general education; specific competencies; computer courses; improving articulation of degrees with similar bachelor degree programs; overspecialization in occupational degrees; and better qualified high-technology teachers. One percent of the respondents expressed the concept that radical changes during the '60s and '70s have not served the community well. Also expressed by this group was the view that associate degree programs were still the most effective way to offer skill training and upgrading. Thirty six percent replied that there was no need for change.

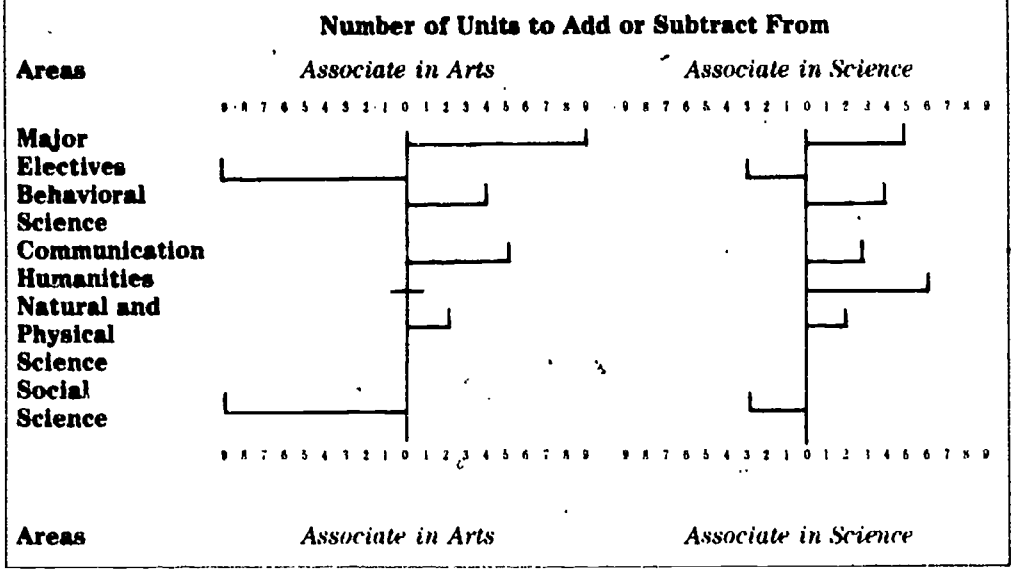
**Table 3**
**Priorities of Competencies Perceived by Colleges and Businesses as Significant in the Development of an Associate Degree***

| Competencies | Colleges' Current Priority Rank | Colleges' Suggested Priority Rank | Businesses' Suggested Priority Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| To instill the ability to acquire and actualize knowledge. | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| To facilitate the mastery of communication skills. | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| To promote the appreciation of one's own cultural heritage and that of others. | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| To infuse the ability to collectively, as opposed to individually, pursue the analysis and solution of problems. | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| To stimulate the awareness and to develop the concern for contemporary events, issues, and problems. | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| To encourage the use of personal knowledge and experience to develop individually as a responsible member of society. | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| To develop career-related skills. | 1 | 4 | 2 |

*A lower rank indicates higher priority.

If there is a need for reform, what are the priorities that community colleges are interested in considering? Both the high schools and the business corporations sampled in the survey suggested that to rely on the prestige of the past accomplishments was just not practical. Only 8 percent of the business respondents recognized the prestige of the associate degree; 91 percent indicated that the most important significance of the degree was its impact on preparation for a career and its help in personal development. Sixteen percent identified the degree as an opportunity for intellectual development; the same percentage of respondents suggested that the degree was

**Table 4**
**Respondent Colleges' Recommended Changes for the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science Degrees**




helpful in maintaining job security. Eight percent emphasized the degree's monetary value; and finally, 8 percent did not recognize any significance of the associate degree in the corporate world. On the other hand, 21 percent of the high school respondents recognized prestige in the associate degree; 41 percent, the intellectual development it entails; 62 percent, the personal development it offers; 55 percent, the monetary potential it suggests; 86 percent, the career preparation it represents; 41 percent, the job security it provides; and 10 percent, the good bargain it is.

Table 3 compares the actual degree competencies, as seen by community college respondents, with the "ideal" competencies, suggesting areas of possible change. It also includes a ranking of competencies as suggested by the respondent businesses.

An analysis of Table 4 indicates that there should be a greater increase of units under the major and communication in the associate in arts degree than in the associate in science degree; a greater reduction of units under electives and social science; and an equal amount of units under behavioral science. In the area of humanities there is no increment or reduction suggested for the associate in arts degree. However, an addition of six units is recommended for the associate in science degree.

Reviewing the same question in the high school survey, we find the following recommendations: in terms of general education requirements, 47 percent of the responding high schools' spokespersons recommended an increase; 11 percent suggested a decrease; and 42 percent said there should be no change in the unit requirements. Eighty-one percent indicated a need for more units in the number of units required under a major, and 19 percent indicated there should be no change. Twenty-five percent suggested an increase in elective units, 6 percent recommended a decrease, and 69 percent indicated there should be no change.

Therefore, there is consistent agreement among colleges and high schools about the need for an increase in unit requirements under the major, but disagreement regarding changes in elective units, with high schools suggesting an increase and colleges recommending a reduction.

Suggestions received from businesses to improve the associate degree are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**
**Businesses' Recommendations for Change**

| Areas of Improvement | Mean Rank | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| More emphasis on the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and oral and written communications. | 1.7 | 1 |
| More emphasis on data processing and/or interpretation (computer technology). | 2.8 | 3 |
| More emphasis on training in the emerging fields of high technology. | 2.3 | 2 |
| More emphasis on special job-related skills. | 2.3 | |
| More emphasis on solving the major problems in society. | 5.0 | 5 |
| More knowledge of environmental issues. | 4.8 | 4 |

# Opinions Please: A Forum of Viewpoints

In light of the high degree of interest in issues such as general education, academic standards, and competencies among survey respondents, it is of benefit to review a forum of viewpoints from others knowledgeable about these and other aspects of the associate degree. Presented here are the opinions of state higher education officers, representatives of educational associations, professors of higher education, high school principals and counselors, and community college faculty and administrators who responded to the survey. Their comments indicate the diversity of opinion concerning the associate degree as it is and as it should be.

State higher education officers, association directors, and university professors noted that the associate degree indicated solid academic accomplishment and the acquisition of practical vocational skills. For example, David M. Otis, executive director of the Higher Education Planning Commission of the state of Vermont, said that the associate degree was "one of the great educational bargains of our time, particularly since a number of young people who earn the degree obtain good jobs with better pay and prospects in only two years than many graduates of four-year programs."

The degree provides a sense of immediate accomplishment for "many students who are not initially sure about their total educational goals and have, perhaps, a low academic self-image," said John B. Duff, chancellor of the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education. Duff noted that for many students their low self-image was improved by their success in the community colleges, adding that 40 percent of Massachusetts' associate degree holders immediately continued into baccalaureate programs.

For other students the degree offers "a legitimate point to 'get off the train,' " according to James L. Wattenbarger, director of the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Florida, who added that it was "viewed as a milestone in an individual's progress toward becoming an educated person." In agreement was R. Wayne Richey, executive secretary of the Iowa State Board of Regents, who noted that the recognition of the degree was "extremely important and beneficial to students," especially for those who found it accepted as completion of lower division work by four-year institutions. "An increasing number of successful applicants to professional schools begin their academic careers in [Kentucky's] community college and then complete their preparation at a four-year institu-

tion," said Harry Snyder, executive director of the Kentucky Council on Higher Education. Two-year technical programs were also growing "and have been successful in meeting our manpower needs for trained technicians and semiprofessionals. Kentucky needs to intensify its efforts at this level."

According to Donald J. Nolan, deputy commissioner for higher and professional education of the New York State Education Department, trends are consistent with the rest of the country, with "an increasing proportion being granted in the technological areas rather than in the prebaccalaureate liberal arts and sciences."

James Wattenbarger pointed out that Florida's general education articulation agreement between two- and four-year institutions "constitutes a major building block in the systems' intrarelationships." Another state offering well-established articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions is Iowa, in which the regent universities—the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa—have established a transfer agreement with the area schools, which provides full recognition for the associate degree.

Gladys Meier, registrar of the University of Wisconsin's Center System, reported that six universities within the state's system and two private colleges in Wisconsin accepted the associate degree as meeting their basic studies, or liberal education, requirements. "This is a distinct advantage to students transferring to those schools for the bachelor's degree," she said. Edward Moulton, Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, noted that the associate degree occupied a vital place among the various recognitions conferred by Ohio's colleges and universities, and the associate in arts "signals a student's preparedness to enter a baccalaureate program at the junior level."

Roy Carroll, vice president of planning for the University of North Carolina, wrote that in his state "the nature of the associate degree has been widely accepted and generally understood." The university places particular attention on transfer and articulation in regard to the degree, with a "Joint Committee on College Transfer Students, which is made up of representatives from the public senior institutions, from the public community colleges and technical institutes, and from the private junior and senior institutions, [which] issued guidelines for transfer and for interpretation and implementation of credit offered by transfer."

Voicing interest in the issue of degree standards was Jack Tebo, supervisor of the Florida Postsecondary Education Policy Unit.

While the associate in science and associate in arts degrees were practical and useful, he said, the work done "should be of sufficient rigor to allow subsequent continuation of the pursuit of a higher level degree, should that be the choice of the recipient." Norma Foreman Glasgow, commissioner of the Connecticut Board of Higher Education, replied that "infusion of a liberal arts or general education component for the degree is of particular importance, to assure achievement of competencies in reading, writing (communication skills), mathematical concepts, and analytical skills."

Howard Boozer, executive director of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, wrote, "I hope that as your task force reevaluates and redefines the associate degree, it will make every effort to see that standards of quality are set that are meaningful." Richey also expressed support for the task force's plan to provide recommendations concerning competencies to be achieved as part of the degree program.

The importance of academic standards was stressed by Moulton, who wrote, "My concerns with the associate degree are the same concerns I have expressed regarding all other aspects of the academic enterprise. I believe the integrity of all our degrees and credits is under threat from a variety of sources. Cheap credits awarded for undocumented 'educational experiences' cheapen the degrees to which they are applied. Courses offered at locations remote from college facilities, by adjunct faculty having little or no contact with the full-time faculty of the sponsoring institution, raise serious questions as to the comparability of credits earned at such sites."

Richard L. Davison, associate commissioner for curriculum and research of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education, questioned the "precise objectives" of the degree, noting that "it is poorly defined in our state and has little or no consistency from one institution to another." He said, "It is even difficult within an institution" to arrive at consensus. Citing lack of uniform standards was Snyder, who pointed out that "some institutions confer an associate degree whenever an individual has accumulated 60 to 65 hours of college work" whether or not a formal program was adhered to. "And, in the same vein," he said, "some institutions confer associate degrees in technical areas when no advanced work has been completed at the college level."

John Roueche, director of the Program in Community College Education at the University of Texas at Austin, said that there was great cause for concern over quality and excellence in community

college degree programs. Basing his remarks on the results of two national studies the center had just completed, Roueche said that community colleges "have lost the qualitative aspects of our offerings—and especially so in the associate degree/humanities area." Citing results that indicated a lack of reading and writing assignments in degree programs, he said, "Students do more reading and writing—and at higher quality levels—in technical programs than can be found anyplace in the humanities division." Also sounding a warning was Mark Curtis, president of the Association of American Colleges, who mentioned the danger of "allowing various outside pressures, and perhaps personal predilections, to divert . . . attention from [the] basic responsibility" of making "equal educational opportunities meaningful."

William Blow, of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, said he was "somewhat concerned that the associate degree titles will proliferate to the same extent that baccalaureate and graduate degrees have," and he suggested it might be worthwhile to designate all vocational/career—that is, nontransferring—programs by a single degree title, such as associate in applied science. Concurring was Howard Boozer, who wrote, "We are concerned over the proliferation of degree titles—e.g., associate in agriculture, associate in health science, associate in industrial technology, associate in occupational technology—which have replaced the associate in applied science as the degree title most commonly used for programs of a technical or vocational nature."

Blow also remarked that there was "a great deal of concern as to what type of institution should offer the associate degree," explaining that "in Alabama, junior/ community colleges, postsecondary technical institutes, and some universities offer such degrees." In Kansas there are "a limited number of two-year associate degree programs at the state universities," according to Stanley Z. Koplik, executive director of the state's Board of Regents. "That Board has adopted the policy of approving two-year programs at our four-year institutions only when our institutions have a unique strength in areas not otherwise available through established two-year programs."

The tendency to relate the associate degree to second-class status must be due to the fact that the degree is awarded primarily by community colleges, said Alexander Astin of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. He suggests that having four-year institutions award the same degree

to their undergraduates after they complete an appropriate array of undergraduate courses "would help immensely to relieve this problem."

Also advocating the awarding of associate degrees by four-year institutions was Allan Ostar, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, who said that such a practice would be "highly desirable and educationally sound." This practice, he said, would encourage greater flexibility, facilitate transfer from one institution to another, permit exit and reentry without loss of credit, focus attention to the career ladder concept in curriculum development, and give greater legitimacy to the associate degree in postsecondary education.

There are three main values for those who earn the associate degree, according to responses from high school counselors and principals: job training and certification, preparation for transfer to a four-year institution, and personal satisfaction.

The counselor from Bennett High School in Buffalo, New York, said recommendations to students concerning the degree focused on "university parallel programs and [preparation for] careers." Community college associate degree programs were "highly desirable in some career fields," said the spokesperson for Madison High School in Madison, Wisconsin. Also stressing the job preparation aspect was the counselor from Bowling Green High School in Bowling Green, Kentucky, who said the degree "is designed to allow the student entry in the job market with a concentrated area of study in a specific job area."

The principal of Washington High School in Kansas City, Kansas, said, "The associate degree curriculum has been expanded and is being expanded each year to fit the needs of the community and its vast diversification. As the community changes, so does the community college. Emphasis is placed on job opportunities. Keeping up with new training and technology and development of new skills for job changes are stressed."

Students who transfer to the University of Hawaii from local community colleges usually spent three—instead of two—years earning the associate degree, said the counselor from Kalaheo High School in Kaulua, Hawaii. "We assure students that his is not necessarily a handicap, since the transfer students from the local community college have a better record in grade point average for the last two years than does the entire school upperclassmen population."

In summary, high school principals and counselors see value in

the associate degree in terms of job training and academic preparation for transfer to a four-year institution. On the other hand, community college administrators and faculty commented on a large variety of issues relating to the associate degree.

Gwendolyn W. Stephenson, vice chancellor for planning and academic affairs at St. Louis Community College, Missouri, said, "The associate degree, as it exists today, is probably one of the most effective ways of addressing the needs of U.S. citizens for skills training and upgrading, especially in high technology, and it also provides a low-cost way for students to acquire the first two years of a baccalaureate degree."

Donna D. Briggs, of Massasoit Community College, Massachusetts, said, "The associate degree answers the need in society for two-year level degree options as well as for the corresponding content areas and levels of learning. Associate degree holders in Washington found the degree "a very good basis" for general education and "meeting the first two-year requirements of most four-year institutions. It allows students to transfer at junior standing," said Jefferson E. Overholser of Spokane Community College.

Elmo Roesler, director of planning and evaluation of instructional programs and student services for the Virginia Community College System, said, "The occupational/technical emphasis at the associate degree level assures students that skills learned in these programs are job relevant and marketable." But R. Brightman, of Coast Community College District, California, replied that the degree, as it now stands, was "often too narrowly occupational.

Winston H. Lavallee, assistant dean of Holyoke Community College, Massachusetts, said the degree "often is as valuable in the occupational arena as a bachelor's degree. We note a number of bachelor's degree holders coming to us for training," he said, adding that, "unfortunately, both upper-level academia and some industries still subscribe to the belief that *any* bachelor's degree is superior to the associate degree."

Citing the need for competencies and standards for the associate degree was Ben W. Carr, Jr., vice chancellor of the University of Kentucky Community College System, who said, "Much review is occurring concerning competencies of graduates, general studies versus technical courses, articulation from below and upward, etc. The associate degree is here to stay, but many changes may occur over the next few years in how the degree is defined and earned." Another proponent of competencies was Anthony D. Calabro, presi-

dent of Western Nevada Community College, who wrote that "the associate degree...should reflect specific competencies," which would "help give the degree a renewed credibility."

Citing the time limitations of the degree was Floyd Elkins of Cedar Valley College in Texas, who said that "students can only master so much in two years." Lack of definition between various associate degrees was cited as a disadvantage by H. Victor Baldi, vice president of instructional administrative affairs at Indiana Vocational Technical College. He prefers the title of associate in occupational studies "for most occupational programs in two-year colleges and would like to see greater acceptance for its use."

Citing the need for more general education was John F. Bancroft of San Bernardino Valley College in California, and Barry L. Mellinger of Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College, who said he was "concerned that the integrity of the associate degree is threatened. For example, there appears to be little concern generally for retraining sufficient general education requirements for graduation and for awarding the degree for 'noncollegiate' vocational programs."

John Gazda, of Metropolitan Community Colleges in Missouri, said, "Radical changes in degree requirements instituted during the '60s and '70s to reflect the social change of the period have not served the community college well." Alfred M. Philips, president of Tulsa Junior College in Oklahoma, said the traditional associate degree requirements "should be updated in area specifications and course content to comply with the current demands."

What a rainbow of viewpoints! But they reflect a consensus that the ideal associate degree is based upon a curriculum combining the student's interests and abilities with a continuous choice of career goals and experiences—programs through which those career goals can be pursued.

# Advancing the Associate Degree: An Agenda for the Future

"When allowances are made for the large number of part-time students, the higher risks involved in the Open Door admission policy, and the large number of students enrolled in less than two-year programs, the statistical data on degrees are encouraging to those *who favor their award*" (emphasis added).[27] John Lombardi made this observation in 1980 at the conclusion of his excellent study "What's Happened to the Associate Degree?"

Interestingly enough, a growing number of universities and liberal arts colleges offer an associate degree certifying the successful completion of various programs obtained in the first two years. In the United States more than 50,000 associate degrees are awarded annually in institutions other than community, technical, and junior colleges.

There are suggestions from the American higher education community that "it would be desirable to require the associate's degree be granted everyone pursuing a bachelor's degree.... If such a recommendation were accepted, institutions might make the first two years of college radically different from the second two years; the danger could be minimized through institutional action."[28]

The proliferation of the associate degree in other than two-year colleges is of serious concern to all "who favor their award." This is a "happy problem" because it underlines the relative success of the associate degree in the American community, technical, and junior colleges.

On the other side of the issue is the birth of new associate degree programs of a four-year nature. For example, Kern Community College District in California, in cooperation with the Kern High School District, is proposing a four-year degree program. It would begin with the eleventh grade and conclude after two years of study in the community college. James C. Young, chancellor of Kern Community College District, commented, "By working closely with the high schools, the magic line would not be drawn between grade 12 and grade 13!"

State higher education officers in particular are concerned about the proper interpretation of the associate degree, which reflects a significant shift in policymaking from local colleges to state agencies. Gerald Hayward, chancellor of the California Community Colleges, recently appointed a statewide Task Force on Academic

Quality. This group will study and make recommendations on a number of issues vital to the community colleges, including criteria appropriate for the associate degree as well as the need for student assessment and advisement. The faculty and administration of the Los Angeles Community College District just developed a new associate degree program with a strong competency base requiring testing in reading, written expression, and mathematics.

This report by the Task Force for the Redefinition of the Associate Degree examined the heart of the community college mission and found that the associate degree was alive and well. The survey itself and comments from professionals from the field raise a number of issues relevant to the present status of the degree with potential consequences for the future.

## In Summary. . .

**First** of all, while the associate degree is enjoying popularity, it is in need of further review and experimentation, particularly in areas such as high technology, data processing and interpretation, and applied mathematics.

**Second**, the traditional prestige of the associate degree is not among its strongest advantages. The degree is more appreciated in career preparation and personal development, especially by those students who need a sense of immediate accomplishment.

**Third**, the survey indicated that the degree's monetary potential and job insurance were not witnessed by the participating companies.

**Fourth**, there is such a variation in subject area and unit requirements that universities and colleges prefer their own transfer requirements rather than accept the associate degree as qualifying students for transfer.

**Fifth**, high technology is not only affecting the curriculum but is precipitating an institutional metamorphosis. In many instances the colleges' refusal to acknowledge this phenomenon could result in deterioration of preparation for careers in technical areas.

**Sixth**, colleges and businesses agreed that acquisition and actualization of knowledge and the mastering of communication skills were

The greatest need identified in the survey is the development of a larger variety of high-technology programs as a response to society's needs. Seventy-one percent of the respondents indicated that high technology had already influenced their curriculum and that new programs should be developed.

The synthesis of findings indicates that the associate degree would be more highly valued with certain modifications in the way it is defined and conferred. The first recommendations are directed toward strengthening the quality of the associate degree in order to improve its relevance and value to the student, the employer, and the four-year institution to which the degree holder may wish to transfer. It is clear that associate degree coursework can be neither relevant nor valuable to the student if it is outside the realm

of very high priority. Special attention was given to the need for more emphasis on basic skills, data processing and interpretation, special job-related skills, and high-technology training.

**Seventh**, all sectors surveyed favored more attention to competency. It was suggested that colleges should work with business and industry to identify needed competencies. The competency-based associate degree, with testing throughout the program from entry to graduation, would enhance the graduate's success in careers in which standards are recognized as predetermining factors in the preparation itself.

**Eighth**, honors programs are offered in only 28 percent of the polled colleges, and the differences between standard and honors courses suggest quality variation.

**Ninth**, the associate degree definition is fragmented or nonexistent in most of the surveyed colleges.

**Tenth**, in terms of required change, more than half of the respondent colleges said that they would like to see more vigor in educational offerings, particularly in terms of general education, as well as more structure in curriculum with more coursework and more specificity in degree designation. The colleges also indicated the need for much better articulation with four-year institutions.

of his or her abilities. The development of mandatory testing, along with guidance to developmental courses for those demonstrating a need for such assistance, is therefore recommended as a basis upon which all other improvements can be built.

Next, it is recommended that competency standards be developed for all students seeking the associate degree. They should reflect consistently high standards, with progress from one level of the program to another monitored in terms of carefully evaluated performance. Testing throughout the degree program would ensure that high standards are reached and maintained.

The quality of the degree depends, more than anything else, upon the excellence of the faculty. It is recommended that a new liaison be established with the universities to improve the quality of our existing teaching corps and to develop a preteaching program to suitably equip those instructors who will be coming to community colleges in the future. In vocational education programs maintenance of faculty quality should also involve development of opportunities for faculty to return to business and industry on a predetermined time schedule to sharpen and update their skills and expertise. Professional development for faculty in their own subject area is also recommended, along with fostering appropriate methodology to equip faculty to teach effectively in a highly heterogeneous classroom environment.

Improvement of the associate degree as an educational credential will also require recognition by vocational program instructors of the importance of liberal learning, as well as require the participation by all faculty in establishing and maintaining consistently higher standards.

Colleges must also move from a climate of student self-advisement to a carefully planned and executed counseling process, with the emphasis placed on successful transition to the workplace or a four-year institution. It is also recommended that counseling and advisement be enhanced with the appropriate technology, including use of computer programs providing information on opportunities and requirements within specific employment categories.

Recommended, too, is the establishment of associate degree committees at each college to work with faculty, students, four-year institutions, as well as business, industry, and labor groups. Activities could focus on such issues as counseling, orientation, matriculation, and collaborative efforts.

Improved relationships with business, industry, and labor could

produce a wide range of benefits to all those involved, including regular review of coursework to ensure relevancy, development of opportunities for student work-study programs, and the previously mentioned opportunities for vocational faculty to return periodically to a business setting. In addition, business and industry should recommend competency standards for prospective employees. They should also be encouraged to recognize the associate degree as an indicator of successful achievement and demonstrable skills.

Business and industry involvement would also be most beneficial in the development of a new type of associate degree to meet the needs of a technologically oriented society, which is also strongly indicated by the results of this study. An appropriate designation for such a degree would be *associate in high technology*, and its specifications should be designed after careful consultation with business and industry to ensure recognition of, and appreciation for, the skills and competencies of its bearer. This degree could incorporate elements of both liberal and technical education, recognizing society's need for individuals with background in both areas.

Recommended as well are efforts to attract the support of national and local foundations for studies and projects in two specific areas: first, in the use of community, technical, and junior colleges as a national resource in advancing the world of work and the world of ongoing education; and second, in the development of cooperative efforts between universities, community colleges, and high schools to serve a given geographical area. (The Kern Community College District project referred to earlier in this chapter is an example of this kind of cooperation.)

Also recommended is further study of the associate degree, with primary emphasis on development of specific competencies in the award of the associate degree as well as appropriate secondary school preparation for those who intend to pursue it. Continued attention and emphasis are crucial because the revitalization of the associate degree will only be accomplished if bold steps are taken to achieve necessary change.

America's community, technical, and junior colleges are dedicated to helping all the members of our communities reach their personal and professional potential. And society is now calling upon us to continue in this path with even greater effectiveness. It is a challenge we cannot ignore.

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# Associate Degree Preferred

*Policy Statement of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges*

The associate degree program is hereby reaffirmed as central to the mission of the community, technical, and junior college. The associate degree reflects the larger goals of educational attainment the institution holds for its students. It is a means through which the institution develops and maintains integrity in its educational programs. When appropriately defined, the associate degree becomes an integrating force for the institution, serves as an important student guide, and requires commitment on the part of the student for program completion.

Emphasis on the associate degree program indicates to faculty, administrators, students, and society that the community, technical, and junior college has a vision of what it means to be an educated person and affirms the college's commitment to program continuity, coherence, and completion. The associate degree must indicate that the holder has developed proficiencies sufficient to prepare for upper-division collegiate work, or to enter directly into a specific occupation with confidence. The degree should be awarded only for completion of a coherent program of study designed for a specific purpose.

## The Responsibility for Quality

The institution offering an associate degree assumes a responsibility to students and the public to establish and maintain excellence in all educational programs. In offering such a degree program, the individual institution recognizes the obligation to certify that the

*Adopted by the AACJC Board of Directors July 3, 1984.*

student receiving the degree has indeed attained associate degree levels of achievement. When an institution awards the associate degree it is providing the individual with the currency to negotiate the next step, whether that step be into fulltime employment or into a baccalaureate degree program. The associate degree should be recognized by employers and baccalaureate degree granting institutions as the best indication that a student has attained the knowledge and skills necessary to enter a field of work or an upper division college program.

Quality community, technical, and junior colleges demand substantial investments, and the investments return great dividends to individuals and to our nation. Because of the investment required to build and maintain a quality program, the institution has a professional obligation to develop programs where resources are sufficient to ensure quality. In addition, the institution, in partnership with the communities it serves must provide straightforward information to appropriate decision makers about the resources required to maintain a quality program.

## Organization of the Curriculum

Working under the direction of the appropriate administrative leaders, it is the responsibility of the teaching faculty and academic staff to design, monitor, and evaluate the specific associate degree programs offered by the institution. This process should involve consultation with others, both inside and outside the institution. The associate degree program links learning that has gone before with learning that will come after. Therefore, those concerned with framing the associate degree requirements must not approach the task in isolation. Full attention must be given to continuity in learning , as well as to the proficiencies required for an individual to achieve career satisfaction. Community college leaders are encouraged to maintain a continuing dialogue with high school administrators and faculty, as well as with college and university decision makers, with regard to program scope and sequence. The student should experience little or no loss of continuity, or loss of credits, when moving from one level of education to another.

The resulting associate degree program should consist of a coherent and tightly knit sequence of courses capped by an evaluation process that measures the outcomes of the learning process, either at the course level, comprehensively, or both. All degree programs must include the opportunity for the student to

demonstrate proficiency in the use of language and computation, for whatever their career goals, students will be called upon to exercise competence in these areas.

In addition, all associate degree programs should reflect those characteristics that help define what constitutes an educated person. Such characteristics include a level of general education that enables the individual to understand and appreciate his/her culture and environment; the development of a system of personal values based on accepted ethics that lead to civic and social responsibility; and the attainment of skills in analysis, communication, quantification, and synthesis necessary for further growth as a lifespan learner and a productive member of society. It is understood that not all of these elements are attained fully through organized courses, but that the intellectual and social climate of the institution and the variety of other educational activities engaged in by students may play an important part. It is incumbent upon the institution to develop appropriate procedures to assess required learning gained outside the formal course structure.

### The Associate in Arts and Associate in Science Degrees

These degrees primarily prepare the student to transfer to an upper-division baccalaureate degree program. Programs leading to these degrees are similar in nature. The general trend has been to offer the associate in science degree to students who wish to major in engineering, agriculture, or the sciences with heavy undergraduate requirements in mathematics and science. The associate in arts degree gives emphasis to those majoring in the social sciences, humanities, arts, and similar subjects. However, it should be noted that the distinction between the two degrees and the eventual baccalaureate major has become somewhat blurred in recent years. Students awarded associate in arts or associate in science degrees should be accepted as junior level transfers in baccalaureate degree granting institutions.

### Associate in Applied Science Degree

The second type of degree program is designed to lead the individual directly to employment in a specific career. While the titles given these degrees vary considerably among community, technical, and junior colleges, the most common title is associate in applied science. Other titles used are associate in business, associate in data processing, or other specific occupations, and associate in

applied arts and sciences. It should be noted that the number of degrees awarded in these occupational areas has been increasing in the last two decades. In some instances, particularly in the health-related fields, the degree is a prerequisite for taking a licensing examination. Some institutions belong to voluntary specialized accrediting agencies that set qualitative and quantitative degree standards for their programs. Although the objective of the associate in applied science degree is to enhance employment opportunities, some baccalaureate degree granting institutions have developed upper division programs to recognize this degree for transfer of credits. This trend is applauded and encouraged.

## Associate Degree Titles

In recent years there has been a proliferation of titles of associate degrees. This has been true especially in occupational areas where some institutions offer many different degrees in specific technologies. In an attempt to reduce the number of these degrees and to avoid confusion as to the level of academic achievement attained, it is highly recommended that:

(a) The titles associate in arts and associate in science degrees be used without designation.

(b) The associate in applied science degree may have additional designations to denote special fields of study such as nursing, computer technology, or law enforcement.

(c) For all associate degrees the transcript of a student should reveal the exact nature of the program completed and whether courses are recommended for transfer to baccalaureate degree programs.

(d) The names or designations used for associate degrees be limited to the above three titles.

## Guidelines for the Evaluation of Programs

Many factors may enter into the evaluation of associate degree programs. The most basic and important elements relate to the objectives the institution itself has set for the degree program. Does the program, for example, provide the foundation in general education the institution has set as a goal? Does the program provide students with the competencies required to compete successfully in a career role? The evaluation of degree programs should create a continuing dialogue within the institution concerning associate degree quality and the relative success of the college's graduates.

Creative faculties will find many effective ways of assessing their degree programs. The systematic follow-up of the college's graduates must not be overlooked as a necessary evaluation tool.

Ideally, the evaluation of associate degree programs in community, technical, and junior colleges should be accomplished by the institutions themselves and not by state or federal agencies. Regional accrediting associations serve as self-regulatory bodies to help institutions monitor and evaluate the quality of their associate degree programs. In order that accountability for such evaluations may be clearly understood, institutions should designate institution-wide oversight bodies to evaluate the continuing balance and quality of associate degree programs.

## Looking Ahead

This policy statement is limited to the associate degree, thus leaving unexamined a host of other important elements of the community, technical, and junior college mission. These institutions are attended by many individuals for valid reasons other than obtaining a degree. Continuing education and noncredit courses are also reaffirmed as important to the mission of community, technical, and junior colleges. Nothing in this policy statement should be interpreted as discouraging colleges from admitting students who do not have degree objectives to all courses for which they are qualified and from which they will benefit.

While this policy statement is limited to a definition of the associate degree, it is recognized that further work should be pursued to define other community college outcome measures. Such study is important to the future of the community, technical, and junior colleges, particularly as they attempt to influence funding agencies and legislators, and to meet a great diversity of individual human need.

## References

Task Force on Educational Credits and Credentials, American Council on Education, *Recommendations on Credentialing Educational Accomplishment* (1978). Out of print.

Leslie Koltai, "Redefining the Associate Degree." See pp. 49–83 of this book.

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