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ABSTRACT

Accessibility is widely implemented in community colleges through curriculum comprehensiveness and services designed to meet the needs of students with special or non-traditional needs. The current threat to open access in community colleges arises from general funding restraints, forcing colleges to slash programs that are not economically viable, and from increasing pressure from the private and public sectors to conform to training requirements specified by industry. Currently, one third of the population continues to decline higher education participation and economic capability. Meanwhile, the existing student population is older, more female, more part-time, and with lower measured academic ability. The U.S. Department of Labor anticipates that by the year 2000, there will be more jobs than qualified people in highly skilled occupations; and that 90% of new jobs will be in the service sector, requiring higher levels of literacy and technical expertise. The following six strategies can help colleges extend the opportunity of "access to quality" and "access to success": (1) develop linkages and partnerships with public and private agencies; (2) shift the burden of vocational training to the private sector; (3) focus on a general academic core; (4) eliminate community service programs; (5) combine open access with selective programs; and (6) direct resources to improve remedial programs. Contains 50 references. (KP)

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ACCESS TO SUCCESS FOR ALL:
OPEN DOORS IN TODAY'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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The Problem

The "open door" has long been a central tenet in the mandate of community colleges, a mandate which is being threatened. As we approach the last decade of the twentieth century, colleges along with institutions everywhere are facing the crisis of what Parkes (1987) has termed "a total simultaneity of issues and problems". Mounting public pressures for accountability coupled with reduced funding and increased program complexity, created by rapid technological and environmental changes, are forcing colleges to re-define their fundamental mission. The result, besides the inevitable contraction of programs and resources, sadly appears to be a critical scrutiny of the "open door" policy.

The proliferation of studies and articles attempting to justify the open access mission of the community college (Roueche, 1985; Thompson, 1985; Nigliazzo, 1986; Demaree, 1986; Wilson, 1986; Mellander, 1986), are symptomatic of two trends: (1) Community colleges today must struggle to keep the "open door" open and to find new ways of doing so; and (2) the more fundamental demands of institutional survival are creating a growing doubt that access, as it was defined during the early development of community colleges, should even be a priority in future college goals . There seems to be a growing sense that the principle of accessibility has proven to be unmanageably costly, while it has seriously undermined both quality of instruction and relative value of degrees and diplomas in post-secondary education.

The Argument

This paper will present an opposing argument: that access is not only justifiable, but vital to the philosophy of community colleges as they prepare to move into the twenty-first century. Accessibility for all citizens to post-secondary training, especially the population sectors which continue to be under-represented in higher education, will become increasingly important in the future. The central theme here is that "access" need not be

mutually exclusive of excellence. All students can be extended the opportunity of "access to quality", and programs can and should be redesigned to enable many more learners to achieve success than are currently doing so. Furthermore, the growing problems of unemployment or underemployment faced by community college graduates, causing much of the public questioning of the utility of post-secondary training, can actually be resolved effectively by institutions of higher learning.

Colleges can achieve all of these positive improvements without running massive deficits. Yes, a substantial shift in philosophy is necessary, but not by narrowing *accessibility*. Instead, colleges must re-examine their philosophy of *programming*. Educational success in the future will be more likely guaranteed through a general liberal arts education than vocational training or specialized technical courses. A reconceptualization of post-secondary education as basically academic in orientation, with career training provided through alternate means, will allow the necessary reallocation of funding to ensure greater accessibility to quality for a larger number of students. The community college can, through such repositioning using "access to excellence for all" as its fundamental philosophy, do more than simply respond adequately to the rapidly developing crises posed by the impending paradigmatic societal shifts: the college can take an active part in shaping the course of the future.

This paper will demonstrate first the reasons why the original mission of open access and comprehensive programming, as conceived and adopted generally by community colleges from their inception in the 1960's until now, is no longer effective as colleges prepare for the twenty-first century. Secondly, a projected description of the future will be outlined: the skill and knowledge requirements of the job market, the demographics of the labor force, and a profile of the population, examining special needs and desires, seeking post-secondary education in community colleges. Finally, the proposed concept "access to success for all" will be described in detail as the most appropriate institutional

mission for resolving present-day problems and meeting future issues and individual needs.

The Original Conception Of Accessibility

It is useful to first re-examine the principles underpinning the "open access" mission which were so integral to the development of community colleges, before proposing basic changes in mission. Many of these principles actually hold the key to success for both the colleges and the college graduates of the future.

The community college was originally conceived as "the salvation, or at least the avenue of opportunity, to citizens who aspired to other forms of post-secondary education" besides the university (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986). The ideals of democracy coupled with an institutional philosophy of "progressivism", or "student-centredness", rationalized the policy of open admission. Vaughan states that in the U.S.A.,

> American democracy is founded on the belief that all people have the right and deserve the opportunity to achieve to the limits of their ability. Providing all people with open access to higher education, it is believed, will result in an educated citizenry that will work to obtain and maintain fair laws, honest government, and an economic and social system that is compatible with and supports the nation's democratic way of life. (Vaughan, 1983, p.7)

Accessibility was widely implemented through two basic means:

1. curriculum comprehensiveness to meet all community and student needs; and
2. services designed to meet the needs of students with 'special' or non-traditional circumstantial requirements.

In an effort to overcome the rather elitist traditional concentration of white middle-class citizens in post-secondary education, community colleges made extraordinary efforts to reach a wider population in the early stages of their development. Curriculum in the late

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1960's and throughout the 1970's enveloped wide offerings in specialized training programs to meet the shifting demands of the economy, as well as more traditional general academic programs and university- transfer courses. Additionally, non-credit 'continuing education' programs proliferated in response to a wide variety of community needs, often articulated by small interest groups or individual instructors and self-styled needs assessors. Many 'experimental' offerings in both course content and delivery methods tried to devise effective learning experiences to create educational opportunity for everybody. Adult basic education including high school upgrading as remedial preparation for entrance to the college-level courses was considered endemic to the accessibility ethic.

Along with expansion of programming, colleges attempted to accommodate the non-traditional student through a variety of services. The "open door" mandate was more than an open admissions policy. To increase access for disadvantaged students, including re-entry women and minorities, fee structures were radically altered. Often fees were dropped, and aids such as living subsidies or financial incentives connected with specific training programs were offered. Special programs, from day care to the provision for remediation mentioned above, were implemented to ease the way into post-secondary education for "special" students. Highly flexible programs were designed to accommodate part-time students and to increase appeal to students who had previously experienced little success in traditionally academic programs. Outreach programs of various descriptions were intended to reach geographically isolated sectors of the population, thus bringing education, at the cost of the taxpayer, to the students who could not afford to get themselves to the institution.

Thus the community college originally adopted the objective of accessibility to provide post-secondary education to as many sectors as possible of a highly heterogeneous and pluralistic society. A secondary attitude was related to the benefits of the heterogeneous college population resulting from open access: "It is through this dynamic mix of people, a microcosm of society created by open admission . . . that the community

college has earned its reputation for support of our egalitarian and democratic principles" (Barringer, 1983, p. 56).

Today's Problems with Accessibility

The current threat to open access in community colleges arises essentially from the impact of the economy, and is two-pronged:

1. General funding restraint is forcing colleges, as survival strategies, to slash programs and services that are not economically viable (including the remedial programs and "special needs" services which together ensure accessibility) and in some cases to centralize (reducing regional campuses and outreach services).
2. Both private and public sectors are increasing the pressure on colleges to design programs conforming to training requirements as specified by industry, rather than to meet individual student needs.

The bulk of college programming has gradually shifted towards career education, to the point that now fully two thirds of college courses are directly oriented to vocational training (Wilson, 1986). Under the perhaps mutually exclusive principles of open accessibility and effective responsiveness to the standards of "excellence" established by industrial need, institutions are attempting to fulfill both student and industrial needs without clarifying which need takes precedence.

The result is a lack of clear mission, what Townsend (1986) called a "fuzzy identity" problem shared by community colleges. But despite allegations of vague objectives, the outcomes are the important indicators of the success of the accessibility principle. Are colleges doing what they set out to do?

Sadly, it appears that access for the non-traditional students often extends no farther than admission. Roueche et al (1985) found that the highly heterogeneous student body entering the college and requiring remediation at widely differentiated levels is virtually unmanageable for many institutions. In a series of studies examining remedial programs

across the U.S.A., Roueche et al discovered a general lack of success in helping students achieve true access to regular college-level courses. Several factors appeared to be common problems :

- Remedial programs bore little relation to the regular college courses for which they were preparing students.
- Individual assessment and placement procedures were inadequate.
- Highly heterogeneous classes were taught in a traditional lecture-type manner by often frustrated instructors with negative perceptions of potential student success.

Karabel (1986) alleges that open-access community colleges don't provide a ladder of upward mobility for working class and minority students, and concludes that colleges actually accentuate class differences. Wilson (1986) supports this judgment, and provided further reasons for the failure of community colleges to truly provide access to opportunity and excellence for non-traditional students:

- Minorities tend to receive inadequate secondary-school preparation.
- Minorities have less access to government funding.
- Minorities are subject to discouragement by counsellors and subtler pressures to acquiesce to the majority definitions of their status.

Nigliazzo (1986) draws attention to the open door becoming a 'revolving' door in community colleges: many students may be admitted, but few successfully graduate. Heelan (1987) also refers to this problem, asking whether colleges have simply become "used pythons" passing large groups through their systems.

Whether as a result of these factors or others, the principle of open access seems to have lost general public support. Several writers point out the growing public dissatisfaction with community college performance, producing increased demands for accountability and emphasis on excellence, demands which are complicated by reduced funding and decline in state legislators' support (Mellander, 1986; Nigliazzo, 1986; Alfred, 1984). Graduates are demonstrating unsatisfactory achievement levels in basic skills. The

public's concern with this apparent evidence of deteriorating instructional quality is coupled with growing reluctance to support remedial education at the college level: the taxpayer is in effect being hit twice for basic educational expenses of these students.

It appears that internal support for the open door mission has also declined. Townsend (1986), in her study of internally preferred directions for the college, drew two significant conclusions:

1. The support of the faculty for an organizational mission was vital to the college's success;

2. A general doubt exists amongst many community college faculties regarding the 'open access' ideal.

Obviously, if Townsend's first finding is valid, and results of a similar study conducted by Parker (1986) seem to indicate that it is, the traditionally conceived democratic philosophy of accessibility is doomed until staff enthusiasm can be generated for this ideal.

Unfortunately, there is also growing evidence that even those students who successfully complete a program of vocational training at community colleges are not finding employment (in their area of training.) Pincus (1986), after reviewing three longitudinal studies of community college graduates (Wilms, 1980; Breneman and Nelson, 1981; Maryland Community College Graduates, 1980) concludes that vocational training does not assist students in obtaining employment: "All in all, the empirical studies of former vocational education students do not provide much support to the argument that terminal programs in community colleges provide avenues to decent jobs and upward mobility" (Pincus, 1986, p.43).

All of these factors-- the economic downturn forcing colleges to restrict access, continuation of barriers to upward mobility for the disadvantaged, continued unsuccessful admission to and completion of programs, lack of graduate success in acquiring basic

skills, reduced public and faculty support for open access--have resulted in an evident narrowing of accessibility (Dennison and Gallagher, 1986). This trend might reasonably be expected to continue as colleges formulate goals which are more responsive to the perceived pressures for excellence.

Such a direction is alarming in view of future demands on community colleges, which will be explained below. The central problem appears to originate not in the principle of "open access" itself, but in the actual methods chosen by colleges to operationalize this principle. Broadly comprehensive programming, poorly designed remediation, and emphasis on entrance rather than graduation -- these are the real problems which colleges must address. Ideals of accessibility must be separated from past examples of their implementation, for open access must be preserved if colleges are to effectively meet society's future needs.

The Future

In order to realistically project society's needs for post-secondary education in the future, it is necessary to examine the demographics of the predicted future student body, the projected occupational needs of the future labour market, and the skill and knowledge needs of our future society based on realistic extrapolation of current trends.

The Future Student Body

Currently, one third of the population continues to decline in higher education participation and economic capability, a condition which "can only lead to social and economic apartheid" (Wilson,1986, p.69). Meanwhile, the existing student population of community colleges has grown by more than 215% since 1970: it is older, more female, more part-time, and with lower measured academic ability (Wilson, 1986).

Heelan (1987) suggests visualizing the college student body in the year 2000 by examining the four year olds of today:

- one of every four children is poor, a significant statistic in light of the fact that today children from poor families are three to four times more likely to drop out of school (Feistritzer, 1985)
- 45 percent will be raised by a single parent before they reach 18 years of age one third of four year-olds belong to visible minority groups
- 18 percent were born out of wedlock
- two thirds will have mothers working outside the home by the time they start school
- increasing numbers have physical and emotional problems
- 20 percent of the girls will become pregnant in their teen years (Hodgkinson,1986)

Clearly community colleges must prepare to serve increasing numbers of disadvantaged students, many of whom will be minority, school drop-outs, and/or coping with circumstantial difficulties which may considerably reduce their ability to enroll in restricted access institutions.

The workers themselves in the year 2000 will be poorer, older, more female, and more representative of minority groups. The U.S.A. Dept. of Labor predicts that in the U.S.A:

- 29 percent of the net growth in the work force during the next 15 years will be in minority groups
- Immigrants will represent the largest share of the work force increase
- 63 percent of the new entrants into the labor force between 1985 and 2000 will be women.

Worldwide, 60 percent of women will be in the work force by 1995; today, although 55 percent of women work, these women receive only one-tenth of the income and own one-hundredth of the property, even though 44 percent of all women head households. Only 13 percent of full-time working women earn more than $25,000.00 compared to 46 percent of working men. These statistics are shocking reminders that the

status of working women is still far from equitable, an issue which community colleges must consider as they examine the democratic ethic propelling the open access principle.

Future college students are not just the traditionally perceived high school "reject": the 'disadvantaged' student who has for one reason or another been unsuccessful in the academic mainstream of secondary education. In fact, a high percentage of the population seeking to gain access to post-secondary education (and in many cases, able to do so only through special institutional provision) are non-traditional students which Demaree (1986) terms "deserving": well-educated immigrants, retirees, unemployed persons seeking retraining, re-entry women, and part-time mature students. Campbell (1986) shows that currently more than half the students in post-secondary institutions are part-time mature learners. A report by the Alberta government (1985) shows an increasing demand for access to educational services on a decentralized basis by adult part-time learners, and a definite long-term trend for these adult students to be recycling in and out of formal programs as the phenomenon of lifelong learning becomes firmly established in our society (Alberta Advanced Education, 1985).

The need for recurrent training is an especially pressing and complex probiem which will continue to demand attention in the future by the community college. An Alberta editorial once asked, "When entire industries die, what happens to the worker?", and points out that although retraining may seem to be an easy solution, it is often not practical for those who have been in the workforce for many years or are approaching retirement (Edmonton Journal, 1987). A study of American unemployed workers (Parks, 1986) found that the majority felt additional training would improve their chances for employment, but only half planned to seek that training due to barriers of time, cost, and lack of prerequisite education. Certainly in Canada federal programs such as the Canadian Jobs Strategy attest to the Canadian government's recognition of and commitment to worker retraining as a serious national problem.

Therefore, community colleges in the future face a student body comprising an increased number of disadvantaged students with special needs, "non-traditional" students with unique requirements for instructional delivery and content, part-time, and recurrent learners. And as universities attempt to trim their enrollments by restricting admission (Sherlock, 1987), an even larger percentage of the population desiring post-secondary education will come to the doors of the community colleges. Institutions must how to extend access to these varied needs.

The Labour Market's Future Occupational Needs

Because colleges are now expending most of their efforts attempting to provide students access to employment, it is important to examine the projected occupational needs of society in order to fully determine the ramifications of the future on the concept of open access.

Silvestri et al (1983) predicts that in 1995 high technology industries will only employ a small minority of the labor force, and that those workers will be only the most skilled workers such as those produced by universities. Refined technology, such as refined software, will have eliminated the need for such community college trained workers as data-entry personnel.

The U.S.A. Department of Labor anticipates, in the year 2000, that there will be more jobs than qualified people in highly skilled occupations--executive, professional, and technical. This source also states that 90% of the new jobs will be in the service producing sector, most of these requiring higher levels of literacy and technical expertise than the existing average demand.

The 1984 Annual Review of the Economic Council of Canada demonstrates the observable effects of our industrial society's transition to an information society, in the reduction of traditional occupations in the manufacturing sector and the intensification of jobs in the service sector. As well, the marriage of information processing and

telecommunications technology is perceived to eventually produce prominent labor displacement.

Society's Future Skill and Knowledge Needs

Several writers declare competence in the fundamental skills of communication, interpersonal relations, integrative thinking, and problem-solving to be the best preparation of graduates for our future society (Robertson, 1978; Naisbitt, 1983; Hook and Kahn, 1986; Eurich, 1981). Orris (1986) states that a general education will provide individuals with the necessary skills for future survival: flexibility, responsiveness, literacy, depth of character, and a world view. Eurich (1981, p.13) believes that highly developed, post-industrialized countries dominated by technological economies have emphasized specialization and narrow training to their detriment, and that now and increasingly in the future these same economies will require more general education, interdisciplinary studies, and a broader focus on complex issues.

A 1985 report of the Association of American Colleges states that the "ability to make consequential judgment on issues involving the contextual understanding and assessment of multi-faceted problems" is key to the development of individuals who can effectively shape our future.

Bok (1986) outlines the job skills which he predicts will be critical in the twenty-first century:

- Analytical abilities
- Capacity to think critically
- Communication skills in many modes
- Synthesis
- Interpersonal skills
- Competence in quantitative skills

Others add such skills as decision-making with limited information, creativity, intuitive abilities, global awareness, ability to integrate across disciplines, and an entrepreneurial spirit (Forbes, 1982; Newman, 1986; Berghofer, 1986).

The demands of the future work force, taken in total, reflect general reduced employment opportunities with a major shift in demand away from specialized areas of technical training for jobs required by the manufacturing model available at community colleges today. A growing need for highly skilled technicians and service sector workers will still only employ a small percentage of the available labor force, which will include rapidly growing numbers of reentry women and minorities attempting to raise their skill levels to standards required by the information economy.

Our future society needs graduates with integrative skills, a global perspective and multi-disciplinary knowledge, who can participate and innovate, communicate and relate, solve problems and make decisions.

Strategies for Improving Access to Meet the Future

It seems clear that simply securing admission to its programs for the maximum number of students is no longer an appropriate strategy for community colleges. Students must be provided an assurance of success in achieving adequate levels of skills in the areas required by the future society. Institutions must strive to more effectively meet the needs of a highly heterogeneous student body, needs which will proliferate to an even greater extent in the future. They must fulfill this mandate with drastically cut budgets, fewer resources, less external and internal support, rapidly shifting economic demands, increased competition from other institutions, and higher social standards for quality. The task seems impossible.

The commitment to accessibility is, however, far more manageable when it is uncomplicated with the goal of comprehensive programming. The community college can

reach far more students *and* guarantee their success when it *focuses its program thrusts* and *forms carefully defined linkages* with other institutions and sectors to provide the peripheral programs and services deemed necessary by its constituent community.

Access to Excellence for All

Heelan (1987) echoes Floyd's demand (1987) that access be redefined according to the number of students who successfully achieve their goals, rather than simply the number who successfully gained admission to the institution. Otherwise, the egalitarian principle of opportunity of successful achievement for all, the foundation of the access mandate, is negated.

The seven strategies outlined below are based on the concept of a streamlined college with high standards and a wide network of partnerships, which concentrates its efforts and resources on flexible delivery of an essentially academic curriculum in order to maximize accessibility for all students to standards of excellence.

1. Develop Linkages and Partnerships with Public and Private Agencies

Vocational education is still the primary felt need of most college entrants. In Canada occupational training is the priority of the federal and provincial governments, and receives the bulk of funding incentives. But as Wagner (1983) has stated, "today's scramble to have colleges and universities train highly skilled professionals seems both a short-term necessity and a long-term disaster" (p.54). Although many of the jobs for which college entrants seek preparation will be eliminated before long, the majority of individuals entering post-secondary education still desire technical or other career-oriented specialized training, as opposed to general academic training. So colleges must somehow offer or appear to offer vocational training in order to attract the necessary quotas of enrollment to assure their funding.

One way of achieving this is through partnerships. Pincus (1985) reports that two-thirds of American colleges are already involved in at least one industrial contract to offer a training course in specific skills required by the paying corporation. The median number of such contracts is eight, and this number is expected to increase. Such linkages have been proven to increase college enrollments and cut costs for both the college and the business. Lorenz (1987) lists a large number of possible partnerships between a college and a variety of other agencies. He reports that Normandale Community College in Minnesota has delivered programs cooperatively with non-profit organizations, government agencies, other institutions, international organizations and government bodies, as well as the private sector.

2. Shift the Burden of Vocational Training onto the Private Sector

To reduce costly duplication of programs, colleges of the future should transfer purely technical vocational training to technical institutes. Another alternative is to gradually shift the bulk of this training to corporate shoulders. Corporations have already demonstrated their willingness to train their own employees, spending approximately $40 billion per year across the U.S.A. (Heelan, 1987) or $1,000 annually per employee in Canada (Srinivas, 1984) on staff development. Some firms such as IBM, Kodak, McDonald's and many others, have already established degree-granting institutions.

Private training agencies designing specialized programs directed towards immediate industrial needs are proliferating. These are highly particularized; programs are tailor-made to meet the specific training needs of a certain group of employees in a certain firm requiring workers to be skilled in operating a particular piece of equipment. Thus these agencies can be more immediately responsive to technological change and industrial demand than public institutions. Don Manuel (1987), president of The Training Group based in Edmonton, reports a "program response time" (length of time required to design and create materials for a course from the initial request of a specific company to

implementation) of just one month. From a corporate perspective, these programs are also desirable because they usually provide individualized training which is compressed in length, therefore more cost-effective, and often carrying a guarantee of results.

There are, of course, many ethical issues entangled in extensive corporate-financed training (non-portable skills, indoctrination of employees into a particular corporate culture, reduced control of program quality and standards by government and professional educators). These issues must be systematically addressed in a purposive problem-solving manner. Parkes (1987) suggests the cultivation of a highly flexible, coherent, comprehensive framework of post-secondary education comprising many private and public organizations. This framework would be managed by "boundary spanners", persons trained and skilled in liaising amongst various sectors and institutions, negotiating temporary solutions and intermediate outcomes. Certainly this and other alternatives could be explored in a proactive attempt to meet the problem. The reality is that if colleges do not act, corporations will continue to extend their involvement in employee training.

Meanwhile the high-tech equipment required to run vocational programs in colleges is extremely expensive and rapidly obsolete. Large funds would also be required to begin offering individualized computer-based instruction in colleges, both in equipment purchase and in re-structuring the organization into small teams as suggested by Szabo (1987) (each comprising an instructional designer, a computer programmer, a graphics specialist, and other specialized personnel). Even if colleges could find the necessary resources to invest in programs imitating those offered privately, they cannot hope to compete with highly streamlined, mobile private trainers or well-financed corporate-based programs, which are not handicapped by dependence on public funding and approval and a mandate to serve heterogeneous needs and pluralistic constituencies.

3. Focus on a General Academic Core rather than Specialized Vocational Training

We have seen that future societal needs demand the kind of 'generic' skills and knowledge which are obtained through a post-secondary education in general or liberal arts. Even today, although colleges are struggling to respond to perceived industrial demand for highly specialized technical skills, the truth appears to be that employers seek graduates with a broad general or liberal arts education.

Wilms (1984) found that more than two-thirds of employers looking for entry-level workers in the professional, technical, managerial, and sales sectors preferred graduates with liberal arts backgrounds over those with vocational education. Technical skills were not considered primary criteria for hiring, whereas good work habits and positive attitudes were.

Alexander (1986) states that businesses seek executives who are versatile leaders with good interpersonal and motivational skills, who have the capacity to learn and to tolerate ambiguity. Graduates of a general academic program demonstrate more upward and lateral mobility, with greater likelihood of entering managerial positions. Butler (1986) agrees, and stresses the importance of language skills in a general arts education and the business world: "the primary mode of decision-making in organizations is the word" (p.18).

Roark (1984) outlines four philosophical approaches arguing the necessity for a general education, and cites studies in each case supporting his claims:

1. Humanistic: a liberal education broadens the student's *personal and intellectual horizons* (italics are mine)
2. Basic Life Competencies: a liberal education improves *communication and critical thinking skills*, creating a confident, informed citizen who is capable of *meaningful participation* in civic affairs
3. Pragmatic: a liberal education secures the student's faster and higher *occupational advancement*

4. Theoretical: a liberal education ensures *adaptability* by teaching the student a theoretical base underpinning many practical skills and providing the student with the resources and knowhow to teach himself

It seems clear that community colleges should concentrate on building an excellent general academic program and motivating vocationally-oriented students to enter it. Hook and Kahn (1986, p.47) declare that a liberal arts program taken in a community college or other institution is "still the best guarantor of a career", denouncing vocationalism as narrowing and self-regarding. McCabe and Lukenbill (1978) also maintain that a strong base of academic excellence should be the first priority of community colleges, providing the essential skills required now of employees: to read, write, and process information.

The major problem will be making a general education relevant to our industrial world in the eyes of potential college entrants. Roark (1984) outlines strategies which might help in motivating vocationally-oriented students:

- provide immediate ~~applications~~ opportunities
- focus on creativity
- respond to contemporary social concerns through a problem-centred approach
- develop theory through personal concerns
- analyse problems, issues, and activities of concern to most citizens

Miami-Dade Community College (see McCabe and Lukenbill, 1982; McCabe and Skidmore, 1983) as well as Tidewater and Pima Community Colleges in Virginia and Arizona respectively, or Passaic College in New Jersey, all provide good examples of institutions which have adopted a central core curriculum of general academic skills. Perhaps these and other success stories of implementation of a liberal arts emphasis in a community college can be studied to identify ways in which a particular college might gradually introduce such a mission, and means of effectively marketing the program to its unique constituencies.

5. Eliminate Community Service Programs

Writers such as Nigliazzo (1986) and Alfred (1984) recommend allocation of funds to areas most justifiable to the public, including cutting out community service programs. Although non-credit and continuing education courses increased educational opportunity during the heyday of college expansion when funds were readily available, such programs are difficult to justify when so little must be directed to provide so much for so many. In other words, the great needs of a highly heterogeneous population for basic academic skills surely preempt more peripheral or frivolous educational needs.

In addition, adult education services employed throughout many non-profit organizations and public and private agencies already provide a plethora of outlets for programs of such recreational and/or social orientation. Alfred (1984) recommends that colleges rely on these community organizations to provide alternate educational services. Perhaps colleges are already considering this directional shift: Saskatchewan, for instance, has recently announced a major reorganization of its college system which eliminates the offerings of non-credit "hobby" or "community-centred" courses, delegating responsibility for these to alternate agencies.

6. Combine Open Access with Selective Progress

Students should be monitored very carefully once admitted to the college. Student "sampling" of programs, a problem identified by Mellander (1986) as weakening the effectiveness of the "access to quality" objective, should not be allowed. Students are admitted to a structured program of their choice, and once in they must perform or lose the opportunity. Nigliazzo (1986) recommends that student flow through the programs should be controlled through close monitoring to prevent the revolving door syndrome. Mellander (1986) found at Passaic Community College in New Jersey that implementation of strict grading, attendance and tardiness policies, and general behavioral expectations, although

reducing enrollment initially, in the long run boosted both access and student excellence. McCabe and Lukenbill (1982) report similar results at Miami-Dade Community College in Florida.

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7. *Direct Resources to Improve Remedial Programs*

The foundation of true institutional access is the reassurance extended to all students that, no matter what stage of learning they have achieved on completion of their prerequisite secondary education, they will be accepted as they are and assisted to prepare themselves for the program of their choice. But if remedial programs designed to increase college accessibility for certain students are in fact operating as barriers to post-secondary education (Roueche et al, 1985; Nigliazzo , 1986; Karabel, 1986; Wilson, 1986), then appropriate modifications should be made to these programs.

Roueche et al (1985) offer several suggestions for improvement based on observation of successful remedial programs:

- mandatory assessment and careful placement of students according to their level of achievement
- peer tutoring programs to increase individuation of instruction
- strong administrative support
- careful selection of instructors: only "volunteer" teachers should be assigned to remedial programs
- flexible completion strategies
- effective monitoring strategies
- interfacing of remedial course content with regular course content.

The heterogeneity of the student population seeking access will increase in the future; colleges must accept this fact. Rather than raising the entrance standards in an attempt to homogenize the academic levels of entering students (eliminating the unmanageable difficulty of highly variegated achievement levels), colleges should design individualized remedial programs. Students should be able to work at their own pace, beginning at their own level. Modularized instruction can be implemented to achieve complete individualization, perhaps using the increasingly cost-effective educational

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technologies which are rapidly improving in quality: computer-based learning, laser-disc instruction, interactive computer/video/telephone delivery, and so on.

Certainly such programs are initially a time-consuming and expensive investment for colleges. But unlike investment in vocational programs, the capital costs for individualized remedial programs would only be initially heavy . Equipment obsolescence, though always a problem as rapid advances in technology are made, would not be subject to the pressing needs of a highly volatile industrial economy. The content of such courses would also be relatively stable, and not influenced by fluctuations in the environment.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that community colleges must prepare for the twenty-first century by reformulating their essential institutional goals. Specifically, it is recommended here that colleges must not abandon the principle and policy of open access, as is apparently the tendency in an effort to cut costs. Instead, colleges should adopt a mission of "access to success for all", which stresses open access with selective progress. Standards of excellence are high, but all students are granted opportunity and individual assistance in reaching those goals. The college would allocate resources appropriately to provide the necessary quality of instruction to meet highly heterogeneous needs in regular and remedial programs. In order to do this, colleges would gradually eliminate their technical or specialized vocational programs by developing partnerships, relying on technical institutes, and working closely with corporations. To replace the vocational emphasis, colleges would install a carefully planned academic program of general arts. This general program will be designed to equip graduates with the "generic" skills which appear to be in demand in the labour market today, and which will certainly become critical in the information age of the twenty-first century.

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