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ABSTRACT

This document traces the influence of governmental policies on American community colleges, focusing on how different levels of government have affected the colleges at various stages of their development with respect to college organization and governance, finance, enrollment, and curriculum. The community college's main contribution has been to expand access to postsecondary studies for the millions of students who would otherwise not have an opportunity to participate. The question of why states did not simply expand their universities to accommodate the rising tide of student demands is posed; several interpretations are discussed that attribute the organization and growth of community colleges to broad social forces. The paper tracks the emergence of two-year colleges in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, describes early state legislation, and highlights community college policies that contribute to their similarity to the K-12 system from which they grew, including: admission of all students who apply, funding on the basis of student status, the qualifications and working life of the faculty, and the generality of the curriculum. A review of developments in several states reveals patterns of conversion to state-funded operation, including Maryland, Oregon, North Carolina, New Jersey, Washington, Michigan, Pennsylvania, California, Illinois, Kansas, Virginia, Georgia, and Mississippi. Also covered are state plans regarding responsibilities, funding, and management issues shared by state and local authorities. Contains 14 references. (AS)

Governmental Policies Affecting Community Colleges

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Governmental Policies Affecting Community Colleges

Arthur M. Cohen

Government affects every enterprise. In the private sector it provides subsidies, levies taxes, mandates rules governing employment, wages, hours, and workplace safety, and through numerous other measures advances or retards the course of all types of industry. Government influence is even more pronounced in the public sector where various organizations are developed and supported under governmental ægis. Federal, state, and local governments create, build, merge, and collapse agencies and institutions dedicated to myriad endeavors.

This chapter traces the influence of governmental forces on several aspects of the public community colleges of the nation. It considers college organization and governance, finance, staffing, enrollments, and curriculum, pointing up how different levels of government, especially the states, have affected the colleges at different stages of their development.

College Organization and Governance

The American community colleges started as neighborhood schools. Subsequently state plans guided their development. The federal government had little to do with them. In fact, excepting special circumstances such as a college for the deaf, a college for negroes, and the military academies, the federal government was not involved in the establishment of colleges at any level. Its only direct connection with junior colleges was during the Great Depression of the 1930s when it organized a few colleges as part of its workforce development effort. But in the main, it was left to local, then state governments to build the institutions.

A community college is defined as any institution accredited to award the associate degree as its highest degree. Although the private junior colleges and the two-year proprietary schools are included in that definition, the 1,050 or so publicly-supported comprehensive institutions are the dominant form; hence this discussion concentrates on them. Located in every state, these colleges provide occupational programs, the first two years of baccalaureate studies, basic skills development, and a variety of special interest courses to nearly half the students beginning postsecondary education.

The community colleges' main contribution has been to expand access to postsecondary studies for the millions of students who would otherwise not have an opportunity to participate. The first question then becomes, why did the states not expand their universities sufficiently to accommodate the rising tide of demand that has been apparent since early in the twentieth century? Why form an entirely new type of institution? Many interpretations have been brought forward attributing the organization and growth of the community colleges to broad social forces. One contention is that the colleges were sponsored by upper classes wishing to maintain their social position by restricting access to the universities that their offspring attended. Accordingly they supported institutions that would deflect the aspirations of lower-class youths. This argument is bolstered by quotations from university presidents who sought to convert their institutions into research and graduate schools exclusively. And its proponents use as evidence the differential progress into society made by young people from high SES and low SES families. The thesis is especially appealing to people seeking reasons to account for a class-based society and for the inequitable distribution of social goods.

A reciprocal thesis resting on social forces contends that the community colleges arose out of an alliance between working class groups and middle-class reformers seeking to counter the upper class effort to stratify and limit educational opportunity. This position holds that the working class has always supported publicly-funded education that allows its youth to progress to higher levels of schooling through access to education that has a common or general curriculum, not just a vocational orientation. Thus the community colleges, emphasizing both occupational studies and collegiate curriculum, provided an avenue of opportunity that young people from the lower classes could travel. Accordingly the working class groups welcomed them and lobbied for their establishment.

A tangential argument holds that the colleges were built because of the desires of professional educators. Here the proponents point to the support for community colleges exhibited by university presidents in the early years. Since the universities wished to distance themselves from the students they did not care to serve, they sponsored community colleges in their own interest. Complementarily, public school officials advocated community colleges for the prestige and higher-status professional positions they yielded as teachers became professors and superintendents became presidents. This position that the education community itself created the colleges has been supported especially by those who contend that the colleges were transformed from prebaccalaureate to vocational institutions in the 1970s because their leaders were seeking a secure niche in the structure of higher education.

At one level it is engaging to consider broad social forces, especially when a writer can postulate a conspiracy of the elite, a populist alliance, or a clique of professional educators. But great and complex developments typically have great and complex causes and no one set of arguments seems more plausible than any other. It is perhaps more informative to cast the discussion in the context of specific legislative acts and institutional development that can be supported by the evidence of history.

The Colleges Emerge

Educational institutions in the United States grew from the bottom and the top with a gap in the middle that was not filled until more than a century had passed after the formation of the nation. In the colonial era and until well in the nineteenth century public schooling for the vast majority of youth stopped at the sixth or eighth grade. For a few it picked up again at the college level. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the center was filled in as public high schools were built in every state and education was made mandatory through age 16 in most. Meantime the universities were expanding upward. Enamoured of the German research and freedom-of-inquiry model, the universities added master and doctoral programs featuring selective admissions and an independently functioning faculty. This was as true of the vocationally-oriented universities that had been formed under the Morrill Act of 1862 as of the older institutions. Rather than reach out to the rapidly growing numbers of high school graduates, many universities attempted to excise the freshman and sophomore classes. And where they opened to most high school graduates, as in the Midwest, they endeavored to maintain collegiate standards by dismissing a sizeable proportion of the matriculants before the end of their freshman year.

These moves toward upper division and graduate study left the lower school districts to engage in their own form of upward mobility by adding grades 13 and 14 to the high schools. Rationalized as completing the students' general education, that is, helping them become good citizens, homemakers, or workers, the schools were actually filling in the gap. As state after state passed child labor legislation the number of students staying in school and graduating high school grew rapidly. And since a primary benefit of a year of schooling is to provide a ticket enabling a person to attend the next year of schooling the pressure for postsecondary education became evident. Accordingly in many states the community colleges were organized and funded by local school districts following the model that they had in place for their elementary and secondary schools. They rose into a vacuum, as it were, well ahead of state authorization or planning.

Although over the past forty years responsibility for funding and governance has moved in the main to the state level, community colleges still reflect their lower-school roots. The policies of admitting all students who apply, the patterns of funding on the basis of student attendance, the qualifications and working life of the faculty, and the generality of the curriculum all betray their origins. Even where the colleges were organized originally under state legislation, the authorizing acts usually directed the local district to petition for the establishment of a college and state support typically was provided on an average-daily-attendance or full-time-student-equivalent basis.

The other major form of development, although a distant second in terms of number of institutions, was the two-year college built by the universities. Some were formed as branch campuses, others as colleges within colleges, responsible to the parent university but with their own staff and admissions policies, the latter always more liberal.

Early State Legislation

Prior to mid-century, statewide plans for organizing community colleges were hardly seen and national influence was even less apparent. Even though President Truman's Commission on Higher Education (1947) concluded that half of the nation's young could benefit from extending their formal education through grade 14, tangible federal support was slow to develop. Most of the states, however, were considering ways of coordinating college organization. And although the head of the American Association of Junior Colleges (formed in 1920) could still say that the colleges "had been growing without plan, general support, or supervision" (Bogue, 1950, p. 137), change was imminent.

By the 1960s state plans were mushrooming across the nation, leading to a period of tremendous expansion when some 50 new colleges opened each year. Half the states in the nation were commissioning studies, writing master plans, passing legislation, and building toward statewide systems of community colleges. The early leaders in statewide planning and development included California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, and North Carolina, and indeed these became the states with the most comprehensive sets of colleges.

A review of developments in a few states reveals the patterns. Maryland had had public junior colleges since 1927, but in the 1960s moved toward a state system by authorizing local boards of education to establish colleges that would be partially funded by the state and by authorizing the issuance of bonds. Furthermore, state funds for campus construction would be provided to the local districts on a matching basis.

Oregon's first community college opened in 1949 under a law stating that a public school district could be reimbursed for providing grades 13 and 14 classes. With a new law passed in 1961, the state provided funds for FTE operations plus 75 percent of building costs. Supervision was manifested in a community colleges section of the State Department of Education.

North Carolina's Community College Act was passed in 1957, providing construction funds on a matching basis and other small grants to the four municipally supported community colleges then functioning. The public community colleges emphasized pre-baccalaureate programs while a separate system of industrial education centers offered vocational training. In 1963 a law stated that a department of community colleges, operating within the State Board of Education, would combine the two systems. The state would match local funds for capital construction and would pay up to 65 percent of the operating costs.

New Jersey had been the recipient of six colleges funded by the federal government under the Emergency Relief Administration beginning in 1933. But federal support was withdrawn toward the end of the 1930s, and four of the six closed. Not until 1962 did New Jersey pass legislation establishing county colleges. The costs for capital would be shared equally by state and county, and the state would provide a maximum of $200 per FTE student toward operation. The colleges were directed to provide both pre-baccalaureate and technical studies. By the end of the 1960s, twelve colleges had been established.

In Washington some of the high schools had tried extending secondary programs as early as 1915, but these proved unsuccessful. Beginning in 1925 independent junior colleges were established but not funded by the state. In 1945 the legislature enabled the junior colleges to again become part of school districts. And in 1961 a law was passed designating community colleges with strict control from the legislature. The state was to provide around 80 percent of the operating budgets, with the remainder coming from tuition. The colleges were formed from the local school districts but, because prior to 1961 the districts were not allowed to organize colleges in counties that had state colleges or universities already there, the institutions were slow in developing. By 1967 the legislature divided the state into community college districts, each with a board of trustees. A separate coordinating council for occupational education was also established.

Michigan's first junior college opened in 1914 with a traditional liberal arts curriculum. The colleges that opened over the years were locally controlled and funded. By 1961 an amendment to the state constitution was passed providing for the establishment and financial support of community colleges that would be supervised by locally elected boards. The amendment further stated that a state board for community colleges should advise the state board of education on the general planning for such colleges and their requests for annual appropriations. Thus Michigan became unusual among American states by naming the community colleges in its constitution. In subsequent years the state provided somewhat less than half the cost of capital outlay and operating expenses, but in 1964 a legislative act was passed authorizing the local boards to offer both collegiate and non-collegiate programs, award associate degrees, and, in general, maintain flexibility in the types of students that they might matriculate and for whom state support would be provided. The law also allowed the local boards to levy property taxes and issue bonds for the support of the colleges. In the latter 1960s most of the community colleges broke away from the lower school districts and established their own districts.

Several junior colleges in Texas were originally two-year church colleges dating from 1898. Others grew out of the public secondary schools. And well into the 1960s, the colleges were making moves toward becoming baccalaureate-granting institutions. Prior to the 1940s, the 22 public junior colleges in operation were still financed entirely from local funds. Subsequently the legislature agreed to pay a portion of the operating costs on a per-student basis. Still the majority of the funds for capital construction were local and most of the operating costs were carried by the sponsoring districts and the students. Not until the mid-1960s were appropriations nearly approximating the operating costs for the colleges. By the end of the 1960s the state was, for the first time, paying the full instructional costs in the colleges.

Pennsylvania's Community College Act was passed in 1963. Prior to that time, the state's higher education included an abundance of 164 institutions, public and private, many with branches or extension centers. When the community colleges were formed under the new act, local boards of trustees were elected, and operating expenses were shared on a one-third ratio by the local districts, the state, and the students. This expectation made Pennsylvania among the states with highest tuition right from the start. The Community College Act also divided governance powers among the State Board of Education and other state agencies, and the local school districts. A subsequent amendment directed that capital expenses were to be shared equally by the state and local district. The law noted that the community college instructional program should include "preprofessional liberal arts and sciences, semiprofessional business studies and technology, trade and industrial education, developmental training and adult education." (Yarrington, 1969, p. 154).

California's two-year colleges date from 1907, when a legislative act authorized high schools to offer postgraduate courses, and were given impetus in 1921, when an act authorized establishment of separate junior college districts. Subsequent acts dealt with state support and included the junior colleges within the state's constitutional definition of free public education. In 1961 state funds were authorized to be used for capital construction. However, the California Master Plan, enacted into law early in the 1960s, added a provision to the education code stating that "the public junior colleges are secondary schools and shall continue to be a part of the public school system of this State." Another part of the same act said that public higher education included each campus of the University of California, all state colleges, and "all public junior colleges heretofore and hereafter established pursuant to law." (Yarrington, 1969, p. 159) The state provided around one-third of the funding for operations through the middle 1970s, with the balance made up by the local districts. At the end of the 1970s a proposition effectually eliminated the colleges from the likelihood of finding funds from their local tax base, and funding subsequently reverted almost entirely to the state.

The succession of legislative acts authorizing junior colleges in California led to some institutions being formed by high school districts, some by unified districts, and some by separate junior college districts, the latter split between those having an administration shared with the public school districts, and those having a separate board of trustees. In the 1960s this duality was overturned when the local districts were directed to separate from the unified schools and to form independent community college districts. The State Board of Education set rules for forming a district that mandated a certain minimum student potential and a certain local assessed valuation. In the late 1960s a state level board of governors was created with members appointed by the governor to assume all of the responsibilities previously vested in the State Board of Education and most of its staff and most of its rules were transferred over directly from the State Department of Education. The dual status of community colleges as part of lower schools and higher education has continued as subsequent acts guaranteed funding for the community colleges, just as for the lower schools, while others gave much more latitude to the colleges in terms of staffing. The state continued to mandate admissions expectations and to set payment of student fees, which have remained the lowest in the nation.

Illinois claims the first public community college in the nation, dating from 1902. Over the next 30 years the colleges grew despite the absence of specific legal sanction. State aid for operating costs was provided in 1955 and, ten years later, for capital construction. In 1965 the Illinois Junior College Board was formed and took over the functions formerly carried out by the state superintendent of public instruction. It designated the junior colleges as part of higher education, in contrast to their former status as an element in the lower school system.

Minnesota's local school districts had started junior colleges as early as 1915,with financial support entirely the responsibility of the local school district. In 1957 the legislature authorized state aid for operating costs, and in 1963 the legislature created a State Junior College Board to manage the system: determine the location of new colleges; prescribe tuition rates; provide for uniform faculty salaries; find funds for construction. Thus Minnesota established the most restrictive state system, one that endured into the 1990s when the community colleges were merged with the technical institutes and the state colleges into an even more comprehensive statewide system.

The Kansas legislature passed the first enabling act for junior college in 1917, a permissive law authorizing boards of education in local school districts to add grades 13 and 14 to their schools. In 1965 the state passed a Community Junior College Act providing for the superintendent of public instruction to be the state authority, naming various state agencies as oversight groups, enabling the junior colleges to have their own separate boards with taxing powers, and authorizing state aid, including tuition, to be paid by counties that did not have community colleges for their residents who attended classes outside the district. By 1968 the state was providing operating funds on a per-credit-hour basis, but 40 percent of the operating costs were being borne by the local districts, and 10 percent by the students.

The community colleges in Virginia were funded entirely by the state, including operating costs and capital outlay. No local funds were needed, although student tuition carried some of the burden. The colleges themselves were either two-year branches of state universities or vocational schools operated as extensions of the public schools. In 1966 a State Board for Community Colleges was established, and the Virginia Community College System began operations. The board, appointed by the governor, was responsible for creating local community college boards for each institution. The state provided operating funds and capital construction, but the local units were responsible for site development. According to the state rules the community colleges were to include occupational education, pre-baccalaureate education, general education, adult education, remedial programs, special training for new industries, and non-credit community service, in short the entire range of community college activities.

When the public colleges of Georgia were organized into a system under the control of the board of regents in the 1930s, eight junior colleges were in existence. Four of those were converted to senior colleges during the ensuing 25 years, and no new junior colleges were established. Subsequent to 1958, seven new junior colleges were opened and two community operated colleges were taken into the system. By 1968 four more junior colleges were converted to senior colleges. The Junior College Act of 1958 authorized local communities to develop and operate colleges with the assistance of state funds for operating expenses. No provision was made for site development or for construction.

The public junior colleges of Mississippi were established with local districts and the state sharing responsibility. Most of them were an outgrowth of county agricultural high schools, dating from 1908. Legislation enacted in 1922 provided that any such high school located not less than 20 miles from a state college could add freshman and sophomore courses. The law also set standards for instructors and library holdings but made no state appropriation to support college work. A 1928 law established a Junior College Commission as a regulatory agency for the colleges and provided some state funds for support. The local counties were placed into junior college districts in 1964 and allowed to levy local taxes. The state provided funds on a matching basis for constructing vocational-technical facilities.

State Plans

In the late 1960s additional legislation was passed in several states, much under the impetus of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 that directed the states to create higher education coordinating commissions if they wished to qualify for various federal aid programs. State master plans for community college development continued evolving. By the end of the 1960s comprehensive plans specifically detailing college development and support were in place or imminent in nineteen states, while legislation providing generalized guidelines had been passed in several others (Hurlburt, 1969). The state plans typically described organized systems including the ways that the colleges would be funded, and pointed out what separate communities had to do in order to develop their own institutions. One of the main arguments in favor of state planning was recognition of the states' responsibility for equalizing the financing of community colleges so that students from low-income districts would be less disadvantaged. Another was the realization that for the community college to be a player within a higher education system some guidelines for curriculum, student access, and professional standards had to be established. The imminence of federal funding and regulation was also recognized and contentions raised that only through statewide coordination could the requirements and opportunities set down by the federal government be realized.

The plans were always rationalized with the idea of providing equal opportunity for all of the state's residents and the importance of preparing them to take their place within the state's workforce. Access for the widest number of the state's population was usually mentioned along with the characteristics of the community colleges that would serve both pre-baccalaureate and occupational aspirants. Typically, although the plans might have referred to remedial and general education, those terms were not well defined. In some instances the state plans stated specifically that the community colleges were to serve commuters, with the institutions cautioned not to build residence halls. However this expectation was not universal and residence halls were developed in many states where students were attracted from distant locations.

Equity throughout a state was also furthered by plans showing districts or regions where community colleges would be developed. Especially noted were areas where opportunities for postsecondary education were limited. Here the plans pointed toward the special necessity of developing colleges so that all of the state's residents would have an opportunity to attend. The goal in all cases was that 95 percent of the population would be within reasonable commuting distance of a junior college.

By way of ensuring that communities build colleges only where there were sufficient numbers of potential students, many state plans specified minimum enrollment expectations: 300 in Massachusetts; 400 in Virginia; 500 in New Hampshire and Texas; 600 in Colorado; 1000 in Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio. Maximum enrollments were rarely specified. Admission was often noted as being open for everyone including high school dropouts. Some of the plans noted faculty qualifications: Kansas and Oregon endorsed the Master's degree or equivalent for instructors in pre-baccalaureate areas. Other plans noted minimum years of experience in the vocational areas in which instructors were teaching. Some plans recommended funding for prospective faculty members who could obtain additional graduate school credits.

Many of the plans indicated the percentage of operating costs that the state would pay, usually around half the total cost, ranging from 30 percent in California to 65 percent in North Carolina. Several states adopted minimum foundation plans in which each district would contribute in accordance with its ability to pay.

State contributions to capital outlay were quite varied. Michigan called for funding up to 100 percent of the initial building program; Illinois 75 percent; New Hampshire and Colorado 100 percent of building construction, provided that the local community purchase and prepare the site. Virginia and Oregon also did not permit the use of state funds for site acquisition. In Kansas state funds could not be used for constructing residence halls. The plans typically commented also on tuition. At one extreme was California with tuition-free higher education while at the other was New

Hampshire which took a stand against low tuition as being a subsidy to students regardless of family income. Most states allowed tuition to vary from around 10 to 50 percent of operating costs.

As for organization, state departments and state boards were often recommended with local boards filling in with additional responsibilities. It is possible to see the trend developing toward separate boards for community colleges even as the statewide authority was vested in a state board of education or a state board of higher education. In some cases the state boards for junior colleges had representatives on a coordinating council for all of higher education: California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania exemplify that type of coordination. Overall the state plans had to create systems of community colleges out of uncoordinated groups of institutions.

Inserted in most of the plans was the expectation that the state supervisory agency would conduct continuing study of student access and college operations. This put a research responsibility into the state departments but one that depended on local cooperation, that is, the individual colleges were going to have to supply the data that the state agency needed to summarize trends and events in the colleges. This expectation proved difficult to bring about because it demanded a uniform set of reporting, which was in effect a violation of the idea that each college would be able to determine its own categories and criteria. At the same time few state agencies developed a capacity for collecting data according to consistent criteria. Every time they tried to define a category, a number of local college leaders typically responded that the criteria did not recognize the unique circumstances within their own institutions.

Research at the local level was rarely mentioned. The understanding was that the junior college staff should not have research as part of their responsibilities but would only provide data to the state agencies. Over the years this proved to be a weakness as the collection of data depended on local staff understanding the importance of the data and the ways of collecting them. Other weaknesses in the plans were that they rarely specified how staff were to be recruited, leaving that to the local institutions. Nor did they suggest specifics regarding transfer procedures and requirements, leaving that to be worked out between the local institutions and the universities to which their students aspired.

The state plans purported to reduce the further development of underfunded, marginally viable colleges but they confronted some widely held views that the growth of junior colleges depended less on state-level decrees than on the healthy formation of institutions in response to local needs and conditions. The concept of locally-controlled community colleges was still firmly in place and many commentators viewed with suspicion the development of institutions controlled from distant state capitals. As Hurlburt noted, "Without the aspirations, pride, and initiative of local communities, many community colleges would never have come into existence." (1969, p. 5) He recognized the delicacy of balancing state and local control and proposed master plans that would coordinate systems even while allowing for a significant portion of grass-roots management and goal setting. Lombardi (1968) also commented on how the legislation establishing California's board of governors was careful to mention that local boards of trustees would maintain a sizable proportion of responsibility. And even as control and funding moved steadily toward state capitals over the next thirty years, the belief in the value and importance of local control would not die. It became rather like the nostalgia for the ivy-covered autonomous four-year college free of external interference that persisted long into an era when every aspect of institutional management and support was influenced by court rulings and civil legislation.

Later State Legislation

Reviews of state legislation passed in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrate the evolution of state policy. In 1976, the first of Martorana's many reports on legislation affecting community colleges, breaks out the legislative actions under headings of finance, state level concerns, institutional concerns, personnel, students, and academic concerns. Predictably, most of the legislation dealt with finance: appropriations for operations; capital funds; and financial procedures. State level administration and statewide coordination also came in for a share of concern along with institutional administration and tuition. There were a total of 334 legislative enactments among the thirty states reviewed.

Increases in appropriations were seen in most of the states at a time of enrollment growth. The states authorized bond issues to fund capital improvement in many cases. Legislation affecting financial procedures tended toward yielding greater financial flexibility on the one hand and legislative control of expenditures on the other. Some states were going one way and some the other. Several bills related to coordination with two (California and Florida) proposing the establishment of regional coordinating councils. A few states passed laws establishing a legal basis for community colleges so that the local districts would have taxing and bonding authority: Texas, Connecticut, and Arkansas, among them.

Under institutional concerns the legislation dealt with issues of liability and either permissive or mandatory actions related to what local boards and administrators might do. Among the latter, five states dealt with provisions for electing trustees. Laws were also passed in Oklahoma and Mississippi authorizing or providing for the establishment of new colleges. Name changes during this era were also being authorized, moving the institutions from the category of "junior" to "community."

Several states authorized collective bargaining for faculty during the mid-1970s: Connecticut, Michigan, Washington, and Florida among them. Other states expanded protection for faculty members extending due process procedures for those terminated. Nevada in effect granted tenure to the faculty.

Among laws affecting students included those providing for tuition waivers for veterans, disadvantaged students, and senior citizens. The continuing tendency toward access is revealed in these types of bills. Scholarship funds were increased in Michigan, Hawaii, and Arizona, and Iowa and Illinois opened up their student aid programs to part-time students.

Several enactments related to curriculum tended to be proscriptive. Tennessee required all students to complete a minimum number of credits in U.S. or state history: Hawaii resolved that environmental education should be required; Texas required nursing programs to grant credit for experience. Other laws dealt with establishing economic education or law enforcement centers.

The states reacted to the federal Higher Education Acts of 1965 and 1972, which directed them to establish procedures for coordinating public higher education within their boundaries. Community colleges were typically represented on the so-called 1202 commissions established during this era. But there was much foot-dragging as questions of state and local responsibility and of public versus independent higher education were considered. Still, several states created governing or coordinating boards covering all of public higher education. The states also reacted to federal influence on student financial aid as when they provided for veterans' benefits and for administering federal aid to students.

The legislative activity of the late 1970s continued to focus especially on finance and administration, with more than half the legislation falling into those two areas. General appropriations for community colleges were increasing, with operational costs and capital funding bills being enacted across the board. Much of the legislation related to procedural matters and taxing structures but the trend toward state control of finances was definitely in place.

The legislation affecting governing local and state governing bodies "focused on board composition and procedural execution of policy rather than substantive issues of authority." (Martorana and Broomall, 1981, p. 27) Massachusetts established a state board, New Jersey and Arizona passed legislation affecting the composition of local boards. The legislatures were also enacting bills providing for various types of studies and surveys including general studies of the role of the community college and specific surveys of subcategories of students such as the learning disabled (Virginia) and foreign and out-of-state students (Tennessee). However in general there was "a continued trend among state legislators to view the community college more as an element within postsecondary education or state government and less as a unique educational entity." (p.60)

Other trends were that legislative attention to academic affairs was focusing ever more on occupational education and legislation directed toward students came in the form of bills providing for tuition waivers for special groups: senior citizens, the academically gifted, people unemployed due to the closure of major industries, those for whom English was a second language. Notable for its absence was legislation directed toward enhancing community or adult education or toward strengthening the articulation between community colleges and secondary schools.

The level of legislative activity increased through the 1980s, with an average of 18 pieces of legislation affecting community colleges passed in each state. Finance and administration accounted for five out of every eight laws; the others dealt with personnel, students, and academic programs while physical facilities and institutional growth seemed lowest in levels of activity. A growing concern for quality was apparent as legislators passed more bills concerned with academic programs.

Although several studies examining community college mission were being conducted, few changes were occurring. These commissions were recommending increases in vocational education and economic development but the provision of funds or directives to establish particular types of programs was slow in coming. Most of the commissions stated the major functions of the community colleges but left to the institutions the magnitude of emphasis that they would place on one or another function. Nonetheless some states recommended strongly that the community colleges be involved with economic development. As example, in its 1982 Master Plan for Higher Education in Ohio, the State Board of Regents suggested that the two-year colleges become partners in local efforts at economic revitalization, establish adult learning programs related to employment, and contract for training the employees of local businesses. The question of when the states became concerned particularly with access and progress of ethnic minorities can be raised in association with these reports of legislation. Apparently the federal government was much more concerned about such matters at this time. Another question is when the states became interested in distance education; nothing in the reports from the mid-eighties and earlier suggests that they were.

By 1990 the tempo had picked up with almost twice as many pieces of legislation being passed as in prior years, an average of 32 per state. The topical areas were similar across state lines as though imitation was guiding the policy makers. Governance issues remained prominent with seven states enacting legislation to change or substantially modify governance structures. Academic issues were gaining in attention, running a close third now to administration and finance. Laws concerned with students were now fourth.

The trends toward access remained intact. Several states considered legislation that would establish funds for pre-paid tuition or tax credits. Michigan was the first to create a guaranteed tuition savings plan, followed by similar legislation in Alabama, Louisiana, and Massachusetts. Texas created a college savings bond program.

The requests for data continued taking specific turns. Pennsylvania was first to require that colleges report the level of crime on their campus. Coordinating bodies continued to evolve. The boards for state technical colleges and community colleges in Connecticut were merged into a single board. However some states acted to ease bureaucratic controls on specific institutional functions: Arkansas, New Jersey, and New York among them.

In academic affairs, top concern was given to occupational training but there seemed a growing interest in program articulation with high schools and with universities. Much attention was being given to the ability of community college students to transfer to senior public universities while other policies were being enacted to allow high school students to matriculate in community colleges. At the same time that articulation between community colleges and universities was being laboriously streamlined in some states, the two-year upper division universities that had been built in Texas, Florida, and Illinois were being expanded so that they could include freshman and sophomore students. However institutional competition in general was not a public policy issue. Interest in tracking students on a statewide basis was growing along with issues related to the use of part-time faculty.

The number of states seeking institutional accountability grew gradually during the 1990s. In 1997 the Kentucky Postsecondary Improvement Act included provisos for educational quality as revealed by data on student outcomes including pass rates on licensure examinations, student progress with data on time to degree, the effectiveness of remedial programs, and persistence and graduation rates. (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 1997) South Carolina was attempting to base its appropriations to higher education on performance indicators that included 37 criteria for judging institutional performance (Schmidt, 1997).

Moves toward uniformity in curriculum and graduation requirements were revealed in a 1992 law passed in Indiana that required colleges and universities to jointly identify at least 30 credit hours of comparable general education courses fulfilling graduation requirements (Indiana State Commission for Higher Education, 1996).

Florida also attempted to standardize requirements for baccalaureate programs and general education by mandating that common degree program prerequisites be established and that general education requirements be stabilized at 36 hours at all colleges and universities (LeMon and Pitter, 1996).

Issues of personnel qualifications, employment, and dismissal continued being codified. A bill enacted into law in California in 1990 removed the requirement that instructors possess a state teaching credential and allowed local districts to set standards for instructors and policies for employing and evaluating them. It put forth the concept of shared governance, stating that groups representative of faculty, administrators, students, and classified staff (business officers, custodians) be consulted on all policy decisions. Faculty were to be involved in evaluating administrators.

The California pattern of responsibility shared by a state board and local trustees points up how the evolution of community colleges from local institutions to state control has proceeded fitfully. A merit system administered by a state personnel commission has authority over the local trustees in matters involving the classified staff. The state board of governors, working within the framework of the state Education Code, defines rules relating to administrators with responsibility for academic affairs and student services. The local boards employ the administrators who can be dismissed at any time (as long as due process is followed) unless they have been granted an expressed contract, that the Code limits to four years. The state does not provide for administrative employment rights except to say that administrators must be notified if they are not to be continued (Lau, 1997).

To summarize, the flurry of state legislation that began in the early 1960s had several effects. It typically spelled out the responsibilities, funding, and management issues that were shared by state and local authorities, while separating the colleges from the public school districts, which had constructed many of them. Despite assurances that local boards would maintain certain prerogatives, it is obvious that control was gravitating toward the state capitals. Under federal prodding, nearly all the states created coordinating bodies for all public higher education, including community colleges. The states sponsored studies of need and feasibility that projected population growth, employment opportunities, and college demand. They set tuition policies, reimbursement schedules, and guidelines for capital expenditures, often leaving a portion of the latter to the local districts. A few built state systems encompassing all governance and funding, but most sustained hybrids.

Other areas, such as course requirements and staff responsibilities were less strictly controlled. But by the 1990s, more micromanagement was apparent as the state agencies sought evidence of college effects, especially in remedial and occupational education. Various groups lobbying on behalf of their members were active in gaining state approval for all sorts of special action, from faculty salaries to intercollegiate athletics. Oregon's State Board of Education set instructor standards. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board mandated an academic skills test and began linking approval of new associate degrees to the college's job training record. Florida's State Board of Regents set uniform general education requirements across all colleges and universities and limited the number of credit hours toward degrees for which it would provide reimbursement. Having established rules for college formation and support, the states moved steadily toward more detailed regulations. Little fell outside their purview.

Federal Policies

Federal policies affecting community colleges may be clustered under headings of access, funding, and curriculum. Under access the primary policy was the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill. By placing funds for college-going in the hands of the veterans of World War II the bill marked a major shift in direction of federal influence. For the first time federal monies were given to individuals rather than to the institutions. Each veteran was authorized to attend any college or university that would admit him and the government agreed to pay the tuition, pay for books and supplies, and pay a monthly stipend for living expenses. Since many veterans did not qualify for university admission or chose to attend the community colleges in their hometown, veteran enrollment swelled the two-year college campuses.

A second set of acts affecting access came in subsequent years as numerous forms of anti-discrimination legislation were passed. The civil rights acts of the 1960s and 1970s forbade discrimination in college admissions on the basis of race. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibited sex-bias in college admissions. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 mandated access and special facilities for disabled individuals who otherwise met academic and technical standards. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibited discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

Numerous court rulings pointed to the specifics in these acts enhancing access. In the 1970s a federal district court ruled in favor of two 16-year old plaintiffs who had sought entrance to Sonoma County Junior College in California. The court reasoned that the institution's requirement that students be 18 years old was not rational in relationship to the state's interest in educating qualified students. Also in the 1970s the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Southeastern Community College (North Carolina) was within its rights in denying the admission of a severely deaf student to its nursing program because the student's disability would preclude her taking part in the clinical aspects of the nursing program and would create serious difficulties in practicing the profession. However in other cases the courts have ruled that students must be admitted if reasonable accommodations can be made that would enable them to participate in educational programs. Accordingly the colleges were directed to build access ramps for physically-disabled students and to make accommodations in science laboratories so that visually-handicapped students might participate.

Federal funding for students was continued through the Pell Grant program along with supplemental educational opportunity grants, guaranteed student loans, and college work-study aid. Since the Pell Grant program began in the early 1970s students in community colleges have received between 18 and 26 percent of the awards each year. It is more difficult to estimate an exact federal contribution to students in the form of guaranteed loans because students who receive them are expected to repay them. The contribution of the federal government appears in the form of interest that is paid while the student is enrolled and when the government pays the banks if the student defaults. Because the students in community colleges tend to be from lower socioeconomic classes and because dropout rates are higher, default rates in the community colleges have been higher than those for students in the universities. This, then, represents a type of student subsidy.

Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 have been made several times, most recently in 1998. A review of these shows some effects on community colleges, a few direct but most tangential. Among the direct, the 1992 amendments established a Community College Liaison Office in the U.S. Department of Education and provided Presidential Access Scholarships for students in two-year programs. Among the less direct, they extended Pell Grant eligibility for students attending part time, authorized grants to colleges enrolling high proportions of Hispanic students, and allowed colleges to petition for funds to support child care services for disadvantaged students.

The 1998 amendments sharply increased the maximum Pell Grant award, while denying Pell Grants to students in colleges with 25 percent or greater default rates over a three-year period. Some community college students were affected because their colleges were struggling to keep from crossing the 25 percent default line. The amendments also demanded more disclosure of campus crime rates and mandated that colleges distribute voter registration forms to each enrolled student.

Curriculum

Federal government influence on community college curriculum has been felt primarily in the occupational areas. Beginning with the Vocational Act of 1963, which authorized federal funding of occupational programs in postsecondary institutions, the community colleges have been handsomely supported by this form of federal financing. Actually the Vocational Education Act was not the first to authorize federal funds for community colleges. In the 1930s several colleges were receiving federal money for occupational education that had been appropriated under the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act and the 1937 George-Deen Act. The colleges slipped in under those acts because as Eells pointed out they did not "mean that the *institution* must be of less than college grade – only that the particular *work offered*, for which federal aid is received, must be of less than college grade" (1941, p. 29). However the 1963 act and the amendments of 1968 and 1972 vastly augmented federal funds for vocational education. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 further modified the guidelines for distributing federal funding and by 1985 the community colleges were receiving around 22 percent of the Perkins money. Other federal programs providing funds for community college vocational education include Job Training Partnerships; Job Opportunities and Basic Skills; Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness; Worksite Literacy; and Cooperative Education.

Compared with the federal funds running to occupational education, federal support for other studies has been minuscule. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has had a few programs addressed to community college education but funding does not reach more than a couple of percentage points of that which the federal government makes available for occupational studies. Some colleges have taken advantage of programs sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and the National Science Foundation. Most federal legislation does not specify institutional type, however Title III (Developing Institutions) has benefited the colleges. And the Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Act singles out a particular group for direct support. Other funds appropriated by the federal government often loop through the states for administration. Many are block grants that can be used by the states to assist the colleges in developing curriculum, providing funds to various categories of students, training teachers, and so on. The federal interest in these areas goes all the way back to the various vocational education support appropriated early in the century.

Conclusion

The history of state and national policy affecting community colleges points up how the institutions have developed within a federated system ranging from the U.S. government to the local school districts. But without doubt the state governments have been most influential, especially since the 1960s when nearly all of them stepped up efforts to coordinate public higher education within their borders. State policies allocate decision-making authority to state agencies and to college officials. State regulations promote or inhibit institutional growth. State databases reveal college operation and compliance with regulations. State funds provide for operating expenses and capital outlay. Some states have imposed standards for associate degrees and certificates and for the types of courses qualifying for reimbursement. Some have established staff qualifications. Although the colleges are still localized institutions, drawing their students and character from their neighborhood, they operate within myriad state regulations. The influence of the federal government pales in light of state rules and support.

A stable set of institutions has been the main effect of state control. From the start, the states have demanded minimum numbers of students and reliable funding sources. The college leaders know what to expect; their communities are not faced with unforeseen closures, mergers, or reconstitutions as different types of schools. There is little tolerance for weak, drifting colleges hardly worthy of the name. The community colleges are reliable players in each state's education system.

Some of the other consequences of state influence have been institutional expansion and a lateral curriculum. Most states fund on the basis of student enrollment. Since more students result in more money, the college leaders have developed a mind set favoring growth, which stems from the knowledge that without augmented enrollment they cannot fund salary increases, new programs, and all the changes that make their colleges appear to be innovative. The institutions get reimbursed for students taking classes, whether the same or different students from one term to another. There have been few incentives for increased rates of program completion; thus the leaders react with alarm when states impose enrollment caps or request data on graduation or job-attainment rates. The federal government has colluded in this, Growth is Good, presumption through its ever-expanding student grant and loan programs.

Curricular breadth is a corollary of the growth dogma; more courses to serve more students with different aspirations enhance enrollments. Here again the federal government is a contributor. If it had not funded occupational education heavily, the colleges could not have developed the numerous vocational programs that have expanded their curriculums. Taken together the enrollment growth and the curricular breadth have yielded the community colleges' greatest contribution to American postsecondary education, Access, and their second greatest contribution, Workforce Development.

In the coming years, governmental influence will continue along the channels developed over the past several decades: federal support for students, state support for the colleges on a broader basis. The trend toward state-level coordination, in place for over one-third of a century, will continue. The requests for data on program outcomes will increase and pressures for funding on the basis of outcomes will become ever more insistent. Perhaps the latter evidences public distrust of the colleges, perhaps it suggests that they are so important a part of the social system that it is unconscionable for their staff to imply, "Send us the funds and don't ask questions." In any event a set of institutions attuned historically to process is being turned laboriously, gradually, toward a concern for product. Players in the global economy? Purveyors of education to people around the world? They began as schools serving their local communities and there they will remain as public perceptions hold them in the place from which they arose.

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