



MYTHS & REALITIES

ABOUT COMMUNITY COLLEGE
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS



Myth 1: Community colleges do not play a role in the preparation of teachers.

Reality: Community colleges play an essential and growing role in the preparation and professional development of teachers. Because of their geographic ubiquity, affordable tuition, and close relationships with local school systems, community colleges are key players in providing the foundation for teacher preparation.

In addition to offering the first two years of course requirements for a baccalaureate degree, community colleges offer coordinated programs for transfer; associate, post-baccalaureate, and even baccalaureate degree programs; ongoing professional development opportunities for current educators; and comprehensive support services, all of which have increased student access to and completion of teacher preparation programs. Community colleges have the capacity not only to help meet the growing need for quality teachers, but also to increase the diversity of the teaching force.

Myth 2: Community college teacher education programs have been in existence for only a few years.

Reality: Community colleges have played a role in teacher preparation since their inception in the early 20th century. Much of their original function was to provide the foundation for upper division coursework. Due to legislation and community needs, this role has greatly evolved and expanded in recent years.

National community college associations report that 91% of community colleges in the United States offered teacher education coursework in 2007, and that 47% of community colleges had teacher education programs in 2008.

Myth 3: Future teachers cannot complete their post-baccalaureate education at a community college.

Reality: Many community colleges provide pathways for individuals who already have bachelor's degrees in another profession to switch careers and become certified as teachers. These programs help to recruit mid-career professionals, who have been laid off or are considering a career change, into the teaching profession.

In 2007, all 50 states and the District of Columbia reported at least one type of alternate route to teacher certification. There are a total of 130 alternative routes to teacher certification across the nation. Currently, approximately one-third of new teachers being hired are coming through alternative routes to teacher certification.

Myth 4: Teacher education programs at the community college do not transfer to four-year institutions.

Reality: Twenty-three states have developed statewide general education common core curricula in which a student who has completed an associate's degree or a predetermined transfer block of courses at one institution within the state is considered to have fulfilled comparable lower-division general education requirements at the receiving college or university, even if requirements differ.

At least 17 states have adopted statewide common course numbering systems for academic courses with comparable content at two- and four-year institutions.

Community colleges and universities also enter into articulation agreements to guarantee the transfer of an agreed-upon set of courses; offer joint admissions programs in which a community college student who ultimately intends to transfer is accepted concurrently at the community college and the partnering university; and offer associate's degrees in which a single set of standards and courses in teacher education is articulated among participating public and private two- and four-year institutions statewide.

Myth 5: Teacher preparation in the community college is less rigorous than in four-year colleges, and therefore community colleges prepare less qualified teachers.

Reality: In many states, community colleges are under the same state-level requirements for program approval as four-year institutions. These requirements can be invaluable for the purpose of statewide acceptance of community college-based teacher preparation programs. Additionally, community colleges often use boards and advisory committees that include members of the K-12 education system to review and approve the quality and variety of course offerings.

Students who transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions graduate at the same rate and succeed in their jobs on par with students at four-year colleges and universities who did not transfer.

Myth 6: Community colleges do not have adequate technology to prepare future teachers.

Reality: Community colleges have always responded adroitly to the demands of the times, and technology is the driving force behind the newest test of their agility. Incoming

digital-age students expect a higher education experience that utilizes technology to facilitate education. In addition, technological innovations in the workplace are expected to continue to fuel enrollment by people seeking training or skills upgrades.

Community colleges currently deliver instruction and services to students through distance learning and hybrid course options (in which some classroom time is replaced by online content), course management systems, database services, library systems, and online help desks, appealing to both the traditional and non-traditional student. Teacher education students at many community colleges are also utilizing electronic portfolios for their classroom experiences, and content specific faculty are working with teacher education faculty to offer core curriculum infused with real time data using technology as an instructional tool.

Myth 7: Community colleges are not allowed to grant teaching certificates or degrees in education.

Reality: Many community colleges offer associate's degrees in teaching that transfer to four-year institutions. While most community college programs provide only the first two years of a four-year teacher preparation program, some states are also allowing community colleges to offer full certification programs to meet critical shortages. In addition, some four-year colleges and universities are offering their teacher preparation programs on community college campuses.

The community college baccalaureate has developed in response to increased demands for higher education, combined with cost and capacity concerns associated with four-year institutions. As of 2008, at least one community college in 17 states conferred a bachelor's degree; community colleges in five states conferred a bachelor's degree in teacher education. These five states are Florida, Indiana, Nevada, New Mexico, and West Virginia.

Myth 8: Only a very small percentage of teacher education students attend community colleges.

Reality: Transcript studies on the institutions attended by the nation's current classroom teachers suggest that more than 50% attended a community college for at least part of their education. Community colleges often provide the only technology training and most of the general content area courses future teachers receive. It is estimated that four out of 10 teachers complete some of their math and science courses at community colleges.

Myth 9: Community college faculty do not have adequate academic preparation or backgrounds to teach future teachers.

Reality: In community colleges, master's degree holders fill 71% of full-time teaching positions. In certain fields, candidates holding PhDs are preferred. Many two-year institutions also increasingly prefer job applicants to have some teaching experience or experience with distance learning. In addition to instruction, community college faculty must also keep up with new developments in their field, and collaborate with education, government, business, nonprofit, and community organizations.

The mission of the community college is to provide a comprehensive education for individuals in its service region. Community college faculty are primarily rewarded for the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms, rather than for research and publishing.

Myth 10: Community colleges do not offer in-service or professional development courses or programs for current teachers.

Reality: Community colleges view professional development efforts as part of their mission. Like many of the other community college teacher education strategies, professional development programs are often tied to the needs of the communities in which colleges are located. Community colleges provide a venue and a means for school districts to obtain customized professional development for teachers based on specific district expectations and needs. Courses, workshops, and institutes enhance teacher competency in all areas, but more recently, community college professional development efforts often focus on areas related to education reform, such as mathematics, science, and technology.

Sources by Myth

- 1: The Crucial Role of Community Colleges in Teacher Preparation and Professional Development (NACCTEP, 2008); Community Colleges and Teacher Preparation: Roles, Issues and Opportunities (ECS, 2007)
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- 3: National Center for Alternative Certification Website (2009)
- 4: Education Commission of the States Website (2009)
- 5: Community Colleges and Teacher Preparation: Roles, Issues and Opportunities (ECS, 2007); Seamless Pipeline for Two-year to Four-year Institutions for Teacher Training (ECS, 2004)
- 6: American Association of Community Colleges Website (2009)
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- 8: Education Commission of the States Website (2009); Seamless Pipeline from Two-year to Four-year Institutions for Teacher Training (2004)
- 9: American Association of Community Colleges Website (2009); Occupational Outlook Handbook (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008-09)
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As community colleges emerge as a solution to the teacher quality and shortage issue, the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs (NACCTEP) created this pamphlet in an attempt to dispel any misperceptions individuals may have about the community college role in teacher education. *10 Myths About Community College Teacher Education Programs* can be used as an informational tool for future educators, current PreK-12 educators, NACCTEP members, educational organizations, and community and business representatives.

Second edition: Published July 2009