

THE ACCT 2016 INVITATIONAL SYMPOSIUM: GETTING IN THE FAST LANE

Ensuring Economic Security and Meeting the Workforce Needs of the Nation

Discussion Papers 2016 Invitational Symposium

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE?

▶ ▶ **BY MARK SCHNEIDER**

ACCT
ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

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*Ensuring Economic Security and Meeting
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**What is the Value of the
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ACCT represents the community college trustees who govern our nation's community, technical, and junior colleges. ACCT aims to foster the principles and practices of exemplary governance while promoting high quality and affordable higher education, cutting-edge workforce training, student success, and the opportunity for all individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency and security.

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INTRODUCTION

In partnership with Strada Education Network, formerly known as USA Funds, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) hosted its seventh Invitational Symposium on Student Success in October 2016. The Symposium brought together community college leaders, trustees and experts in workforce development to learn strategies about how to improve the return on students' investments in higher education.

Papers prepared by five researchers were delivered during the symposium. Authors explored the value of obtaining an associate degree and presented data on both the opportunities and the challenges students face in obtaining a sub-baccalaureate degree or credential. These papers are meant to help inform boardroom discussions and to give policymakers and community college leaders tools and data to support these important discussions. Each paper also provides a study guide with questions to help spur these critical conversations.

Community colleges provide an affordable pathway for many to the middle class, equipping students with degrees or other credentials that can lead to gainful employment and helping to match prospective workers with unfilled job openings. The purpose of these papers is to provide perspectives on how well community colleges meet the needs of their students and if they are, in fact, providing students with a viable path to economic advancement.

In this paper, researcher Mark Schneider, vice president and institute fellow, American Institutes for Research (DC), compares sub-baccalaureate credentials with baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate degrees. In 2014, there were 100,000 more sub-baccalaureate degrees or credentials awarded than bachelor's degrees. He shows that majors matter, and specific degrees offer the potential of high earnings, particularly in fields where graduates will "fix things or people." He advises that one of the best ways to ensure that community colleges can help students achieve labor market success is to develop strong pipelines from the college to the workplace. The paper provides a checklist of high-impact practices that colleges can employ to support students on their journey to degree completion and ultimately improved employment outcomes.

To view the researchers' presentations and to download a PDF version of these papers please visit the ACCT Trustee Education website at: www.trustee-education.org/

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Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Executive Vice President for Research, Education and Board Services

Colleen Allen

Director, Educational Services



RETURN ON INVESTMENT: What is the Value of the Associate Degree?

MARK SCHNEIDER

For most of the last 50 years, postsecondary education has been dominated by the traditional image of ivory towers, where courses and curricula were created mostly by faculty and where it was widely assumed that the degrees being awarded would lead to solid wages and a middle-class life.¹ The product of that idyllic world was a bachelor's degree that took four years to get at a reasonable cost. Community colleges and career and technical education were, at best, afterthoughts.

But that world is being challenged by rapidly rising tuition, rising student debt (and high default rates), and the underemployment of graduates.² As a result, there is growing interest in faster and cheaper postsecondary pathways that can lead to high wages. Herein lies the challenge and the opportunity for community colleges: Can they demonstrate to students, families and taxpayers that they offer pathways into the middle class that are more efficient than the bachelor's degree?

The answer is yes.

Facts on the ground are already providing a foundation for that message. As evident in Table 1 (drawn from IPEDS), the most common postsecondary credential awarded in the United States is the bachelor's degree—as it has been for decades. More specifically, according to IPEDS, over 1.5 million bachelor's degrees were awarded in 2008 and almost 1.9 million in 2014 (an increase of 21 percent).

The data also show the associate degree is the second most commonly granted degree—with a rate of increase between 2008 and 2014 almost twice that of the bachelor's, narrowing the numbers gap between the two degrees. But the data show something perhaps even more important: There has been growth in the number of sub-baccalaureate certificates granted, the bulk of them awarded by community colleges. Adding certificates and associate degrees together, in 2014, there were over 100,000 more sub-baccalaureate credentials awarded than bachelor's degrees.

TABLE 1: CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS AWARDED

	Year 2008	Year 2014	Growth
Associate degrees	722,122	1,003,267	39%
Bachelor's degrees	1,542,440	1,866,178	21%
Certificates of less than 1 year	370,176	479,242	29%
Certificates of 1 but less than 2 years	286,476	451,650	58%
Certificates of 2 but less than 4-years	28,644	37,138	30%
Total Sub- baccalaureate	1,407,418	1,971,297	40%

There are many factors that have likely contributed to the rapid growth of sub-baccalaureate credentials.

- **Demographics:** The nation’s population is changing at a rate not seen in a century, and community colleges enroll a large share of non-traditional students.³
- **State policy:** Some of the growth is a result of state policies that encourage or even require students to begin their postsecondary education in community college before transferring to a bachelor’s institution. These so-called 2+2 programs are becoming increasingly common and are core to many state higher education policies. This is crystal clear in Florida’s 2+2 Pathways to Success.⁴
- **Costs:** Community colleges are, overall, much more affordable than four-year colleges, and because general education courses are often “commodities,” in other words transferable, students reduce their cost of a bachelor’s degree by beginning at a community college.

But some of the growth in enrollments can also be traced to the fact that community colleges are the nation’s primary way of delivering career and technical education (CTE), and there is growing evidence that CTE degrees and certificates can provide training that allows students to out-earn their peers who have pursued bachelor’s (and often even master’s) degrees.

I will illustrate this using data from the State of Texas, but the patterns are the same in every state in which College Measures⁵ has worked.

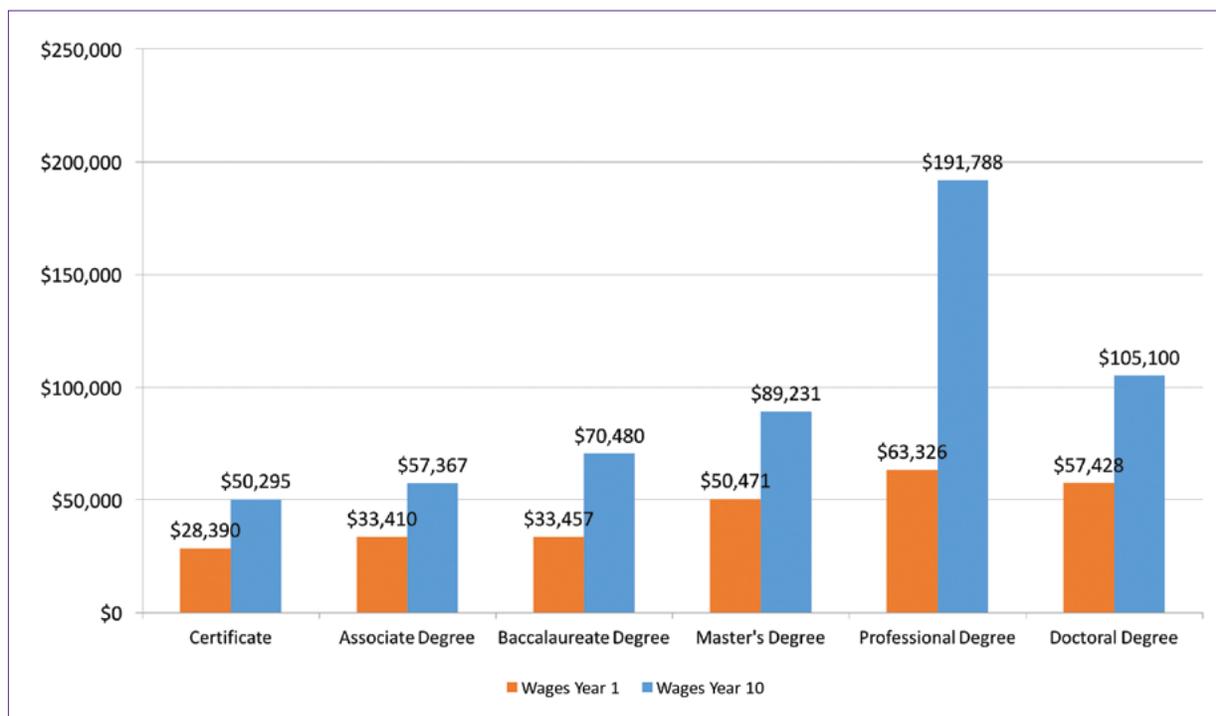
Figure 1 (page 4) shows the wages of a cohort of students with different levels of postsecondary credentials one and 10 years after completing. These data illustrate several trends. Here, I focus only on baccalaureate and sub-baccalaureate credentials:

1. Immediately after graduation, on average, students with associate degrees who enter the labor market earn about as much as bachelor’s graduates.
2. However, the earnings curve for bachelor’s graduates is steeper than for students who hold sub-baccalaureate credentials—so that 10 years after graduation, on average, bachelor’s degree students earn more.
3. But even if at the 10-year mark holders of sub-baccalaureate credentials have, on average, fallen behind bachelor’s graduates, their earnings usually put them squarely in the middle of their state’s income distribution.
4. Finally, averages hide considerable variation—and once we unpack these averages to look at the wages of students who complete different programs of study, a far more instructive perspective on student success opens up.

This new perspective shows why majors matter—and shows how students with career and technical training from community colleges can earn wages higher than many of their peers who pursued bachelor’s degrees.

“Adding certificates and associate degrees together, in 2014, there were over 100,000 more sub-baccalaureate credentials awarded than bachelor’s degrees.”

FIGURE 1: TEXAS: MEDIAN WAGES AMONG COMPLETERS IN 2005 AND 2014 (1 AND 10 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION), BY CREDENTIAL



Source: Mark Schneider, Majors Matter: Differences in Wages Over Time in Texas. Available at <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Majors-Matter-Differences-in-Wages-Over-Time-in-Texas-July-2016.pdf>

WAGES AND CERTIFICATES

Consider the data in Table 2 which move from overall averages to variation in wages across the largest certificate programs in Texas. The range in wages both in the first and again at the 10th year after completion is wide, to say the least.

Ten years after completion, certificates in two fields—Communication Disorders Sciences and Services; and Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services—are associated with median annual earnings less than the median wages of high school graduates.

In contrast, consider the certificates with the highest wages:

- Quality Control and Safety Technologies/Technicians
- Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians
- Physical Science Technologies/Technicians
- Mechanical Engineering Related Technologies/Technicians

Note the one phrase they share in their descriptions: Technologies/Technicians. Just below these programs is Plumbing and Related Water Supply Services—clearly a program aimed, like the others, on training students to fix things. Note too that low-paying fields in year 1 (marked in red) are similarly low-paying 10 years after.

TABLE 2: HIGHEST AND LOWEST PAYING CERTIFICATES IN TEXAS

Program Name	Time to Degree (in years)	Wages Year 1	Wages Year 10
Communication Disorders Sciences and Services	3.6	\$22,000	\$23,000
Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services	3.9	\$18,000	\$23,000
Teaching Assistants/Aides	3	\$16,000	\$25,000
Cosmetology and Related Personal Grooming Services	2.2	\$14,000	\$25,000
Medians (58 certificate programs)	3.1	\$26,000	\$47,000
Plumbing and Related Water Supply Services	2.9	\$42,000	\$71,000
Quality Control and Safety Technologies/Technicians	3.3	\$45,000	\$73,000
Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians	2.2	\$38,000	\$80,000
Physical Science Technologies/Technicians	3.9	\$34,000	\$82,000
Mechanical Engineering Related Technologies/Technicians	2.1	N/A*	\$116,000

*Too few graduates with wage data to meet reporting requirements.

Source: Compiled from data provided to College Measures by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and accessible through www.launchmycareerTx.org⁶

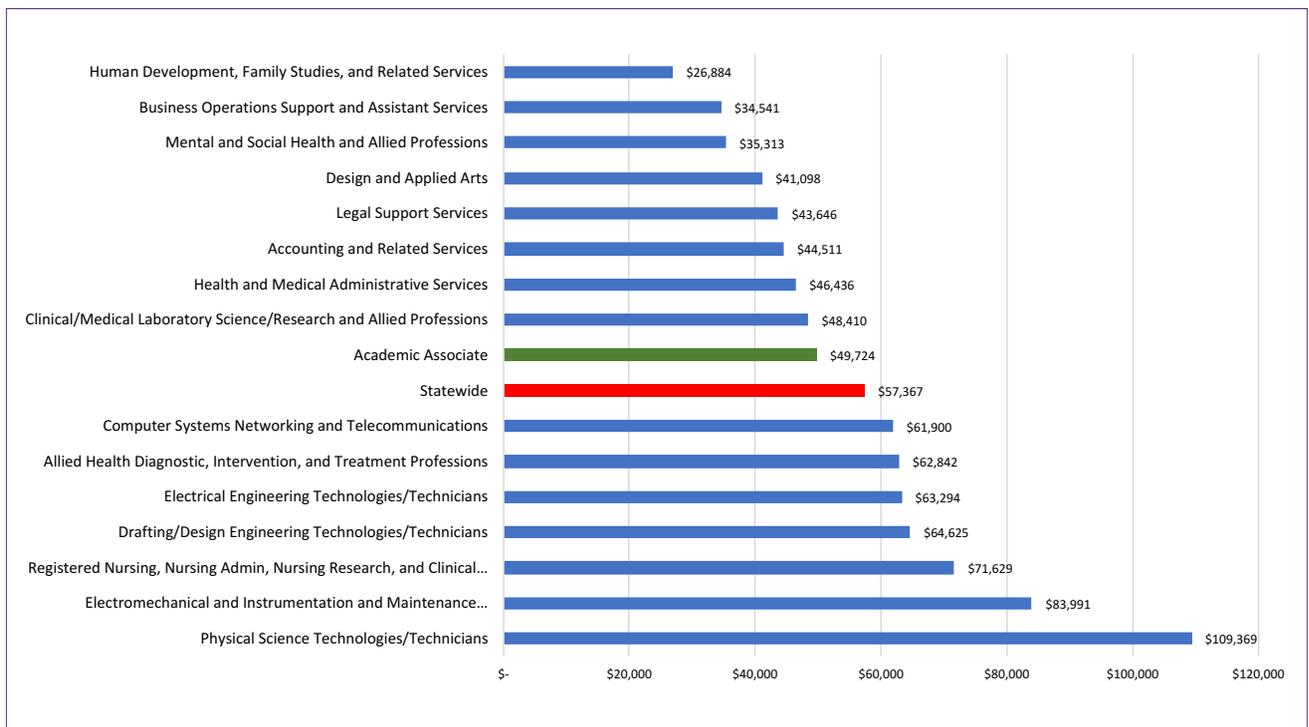
“Students who learn how to fix things or fix people win in the labor market.”

WAGES AND ASSOCIATE DEGREES

Figure 2 displays wages for associate degree holders in the largest programs in the state 10 years after graduation. The wages of graduates in the highest-paying field make approximately four times the earnings of graduates with degrees in the lowest-paying field.

Note that, once again, high-paying fields are either technology/technician or health care related. Students who learn how to fix things or fix people win in the labor market. Note too that the median wages of students who earned an academic-oriented associate degree are considerably lower than the median earnings of all associate graduates, which includes the higher wages earned by graduates who completed career and technical degrees⁷.

FIGURE 2: MEDIAN WAGES AMONG GRADUATES WITH ASSOCIATE DEGREES IN 2014
(10 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION), TEXAS



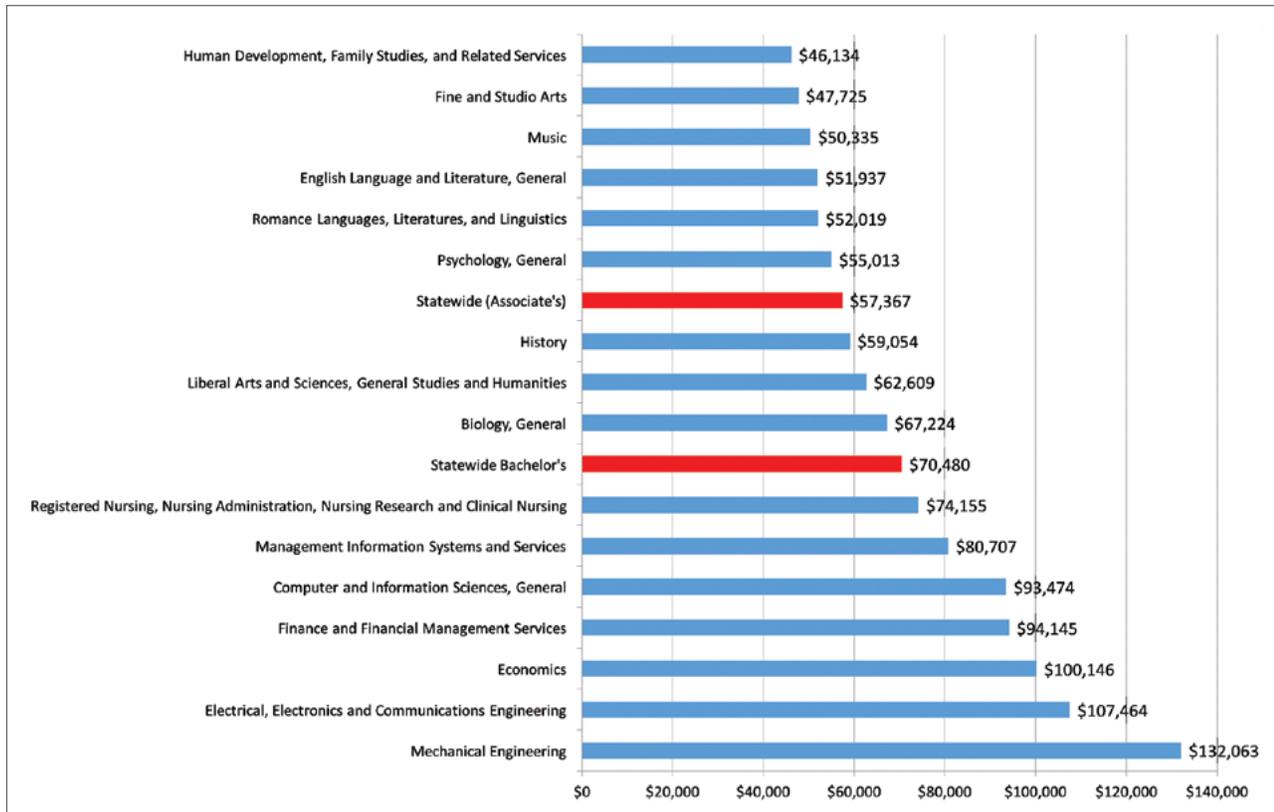
Source: Compiled from data provided to College Measures by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and accessible through www.launchmycareerTx.org⁸

WAGES AND BACHELOR'S DEGREES

Figure 3 shows the wages of bachelor's graduates. Several patterns deserve attention. First, as with associate degrees, there is a wage premium associated with concrete skills that can help businesses and help people keep healthy. Second, as in most states, biology,

the largest STEM field in the nation, doesn't yield particularly high wages. Perhaps the most striking data in the figure show that some of the lowest-paying bachelor's fields are traditional liberal arts/humanities fields: art, music, and languages.

FIGURE 3: MEDIAN WAGES AMONG GRADUATES WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN 2014
(10 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION), TEXAS



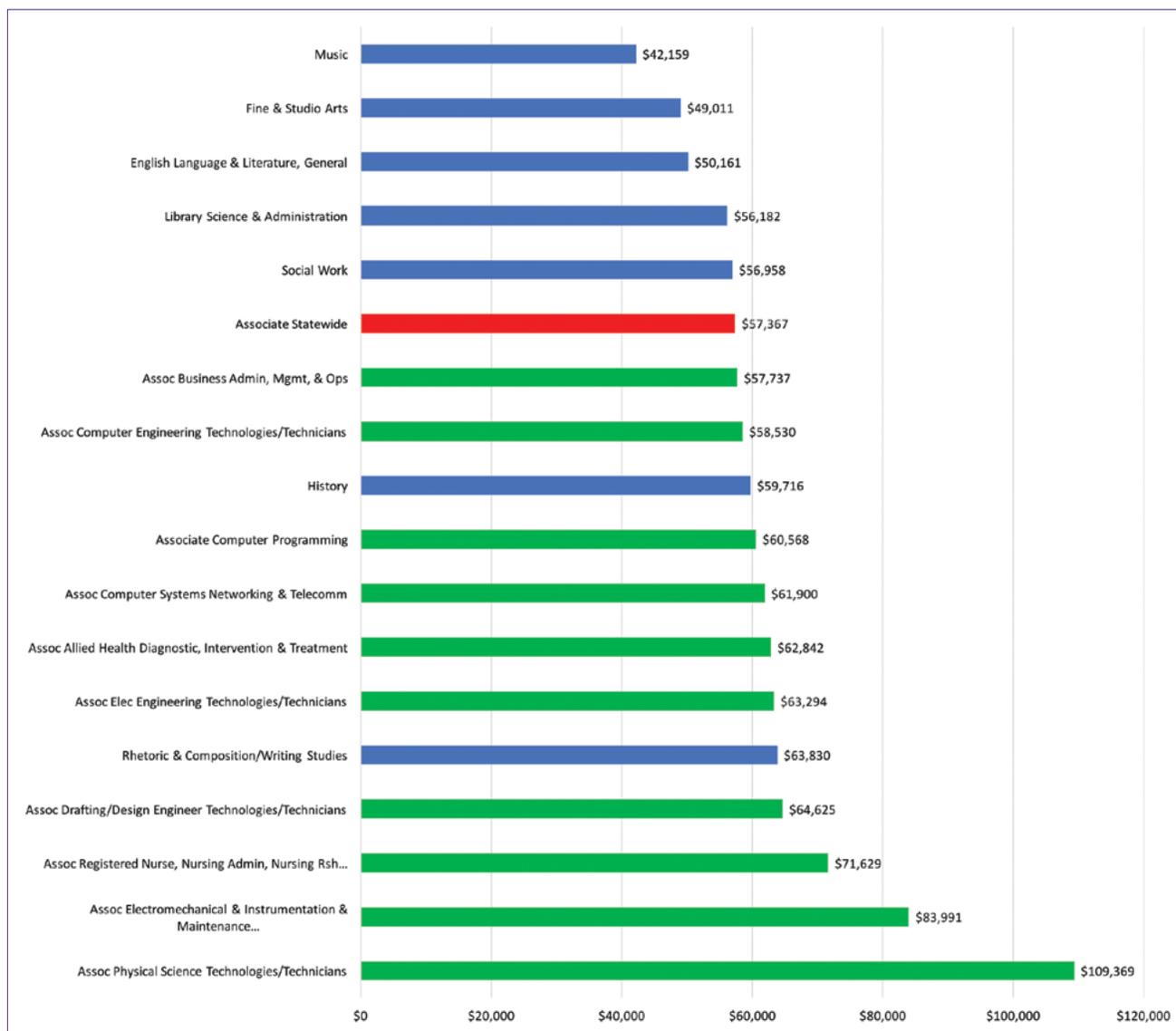
Source: Compiled from data provided to College Measures by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and accessible through www.launchmycareerTx.org⁹

“There are several master’s degree programs from which graduates earn less than all associate graduates...”

Perhaps even more surprising are the data presented in Figure 4, which show the wages of selected master's and associate graduates 10 years after completion. There are several master's degree programs from which

graduates earn less than all associate graduates, including arts, English, and social work. But the differences are even greater when we compare selected master's graduate wages with technical/technology associate degrees.

FIGURE 4: MEDIAN WAGES AMONG GRADUATES WITH MASTER'S AND ASSOCIATE DEGREES IN 2014
(10 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION), TEXAS



Blue bars are median wages for Master's graduates; green bars are median wages for Associate graduates.

Source: Compiled from data provided to College Measures by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and accessible through www.launchmycareerTx.org¹⁰

As these data show, community colleges can provide high-wage credentials. In the next two sections, I will briefly introduce two sets of activities that trustees should keep in mind to help their institutions ensure that students continue to get a high return on their investments. These are:

1. Improving College Value by Building Employer/Campus Ties, and

2. Identifying High-Impact Practices that Improve Student Success

The next few pages only skim the surface of the growing body of work in both areas; however, they do provide links for deeper dives, and highlight actionable paths forward for trustees seeking to assess the degree to which their colleges are engaged in practices that increase student success.



IMPROVING COLLEGE VALUE BY BUILDING EMPLOYER/CAMPUS TIES

A common goal for students pursuing postsecondary education is finding a good job and launching a good career. This is likely even more true of students in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) side of community colleges. One of the best ways to ensure that community colleges can help students achieve labor market success is to develop strong pipelines from the college into the workforce.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has resources on how better to connect schools to local employers. This work, grouped under the rubric of “Talent Pipeline Management” (TPM), asks employers and schools to think of themselves tied together in a supply chain that helps ensure that students find good jobs and employers find good workers.

Many talent pipeline resources can be found at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s web site: thetalentsupplychain.org. There you will find links to (1) a white paper¹¹ that explains the TPM approach and (2) an implementation guide¹² that provides basic and advanced practices for each of the six strategies the Chamber has developed. The homepage for TPM also describes the partners in this effort,¹³ including information about which strategies different partners tested out and in which industries.

Perhaps the most useful part of the talent pipeline project is the action-oriented guidance and checklists. Chart 1 shows the Chamber’s *Education and Workforce Providers Checklist* which includes action items that range from developing a culture supportive of employer-college partnerships to specific actions to help ensure alignment between college offerings and the needs of employers.

The *Checklist* presents both opportunities and challenges for trustees. On the opportunity side, the *Checklist* develops a roadmap that could increase student employment upon completion. But it presents challenges too. First, the language of the *Checklist* is relentlessly “business-ese” and may alienate academics. Second, the *Checklist* raises the question of who controls curriculum by clearly increasing the role of business in what has traditionally been a faculty-dominated process. Finally, this detailed set of actions raise the always present issue of the role of trustees in policy, management and micro-management of the college. In short, while the Chamber’s *Checklist* provides guidance on how to better link college resources to the goal of helping students launch good careers with good pay, it may be fraught with political and management challenges for trustees.

The Aspen Institute has developed a shorter set of questions as part of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. While the full Aspen Prize competition is based on many different dimensions, here are the half-dozen criteria Aspen uses to assess the alignment of college activities with employment outcomes:

- The college aligns its program offerings with projections of labor market demand for jobs with good wages.
- Employers play an active role in program and curriculum design.
- The college monitors students' post-graduation success in employment/earnings and uses that information to improve offerings.

- The college provides significant opportunities for students to learn on-the-job with employers while enrolled in college.
- College systems and culture promote honest and regular feedback from employers about program quality.
- The college works effectively to place students in jobs.

These are far less extensive than the Chamber's but the language is more college "user friendly" and less confrontational with regard to curriculum and other college practices. Hence, the Aspen checklist may be less likely to set off conflicts. In short, Aspen's guidance may serve as a good way for trustees to begin exploring the degree to which their colleges are developing ties with employers to improve student outcomes.

“One of the best ways to ensure that community colleges can help students achieve labor market success is to develop strong pipelines from the college into the workforce.”



CHART 1: A TALENT PIPELINE CHECKLIST

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE PROVIDER CHECKLIST

1. Recognize employers as end-customers.

- ✓ Develop renewed commitment among top leadership and frontline staff to recognize employers as the end-customers.
- ✓ Engage local and regional economic development stakeholders as well as employers and employer collaboratives (e.g., chambers of commerce) to improve alignment with employer demand.

2. Manage your employer partnerships.

- ✓ Identify employers that the organization has the commitment and capacity to serve as a preferred education and workforce partner.
- ✓ Assign responsibility for cultivating, establishing, and managing employer partnerships at the organizational and program levels.

3. Develop talent solutions for employer partners.

- ✓ Identify and remove barriers to innovation that prevent flexibility and reduce responsiveness in meeting the needs of employers.
- ✓ Develop responsive and flexible competency-based delivery platforms that leverage standardized frameworks but enable customization based on employers served.
- ✓ Embed modular and stackable industry-recognized skill credentials.
- ✓ Implement accelerated and work-based solutions designed to improve time-to-full productivity.
- ✓ Develop shared and integrated service delivery strategies with other partners in the network.
- ✓ Extend alumni services to support program graduates in optimizing on-boarding with employer partners and updating their skills.

4. Align performance and incentives to employer measures.

- ✓ Develop balanced scorecards that prioritize employer measures that address time, quality, and cost, including time-to-full productivity.
- ✓ Provide incentives for leadership and program managers to improve performance in cooperation with employers and other network partners.
- ✓ Manage program improvement through the development and use of leading and lagging performance measures and predictive analytics.

5. Share performance data across network partners.

- ✓ Share data in cooperation with employers and all network partners for improving performance.
- ✓ Communicate partner performance through the use of performance dashboards.

6. Develop recruitment strategies based on employer partnerships.

- ✓ Recruit students and workers based on capacity and proven ability to meet the needs of identified employers.
- ✓ Communicate preferred provider status to students, workers, and funders backed by performance data.
- ✓ Coordinate with network partners to identify, recruit, and on-board a diverse pool of qualified applicants.

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HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES

The tools just discussed focus on student success after students leave college. But there are practices that increase the likelihood that students will succeed while they are enrolled. The literature on high-impact practices is voluminous, and I only highlight the paths that seem to me most promising.

Perhaps no recent intervention has garnered as much publicity as the City University of New York (CUNY) systems' ASAP (*Accelerated Study in Associate Programs*). This program is often held out as an example of how changing practices can have a major positive effect on community college student success. ASAP offers low-income students in developmental courses block scheduling for the first year, noncredit seminars on

goals and planning, comprehensive advising, tutoring, career services, a tuition waiver, free public transportation, and free textbooks in exchange for full-time enrollment. In a rigorous evaluation, ASAP participants were found to have accumulated more college credits, were more likely to complete developmental course requirements, and were more likely to earn a college credential than a comparison group.¹⁴

ASAP is an expensive intervention and questions still abound regarding the extent to which it can be replicated and scaled up. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) has done extensive work on high impact practices. Chart 2 shows the practices the organization suggests to increase student engagement and success.¹⁵

CHART 2: CCCSE PROMISING PRACTICES

Promising Practices for Community College Student Success

The promising practices described on the following pages are part of collegiate learning experiences that attend to students' needs from their first interactions with the college through the successful completion of their first academic term and beyond. The practices are divided into three groups: planning for success, initiating success, and sustaining success.

Planning for Success	Initiating Success	Sustaining Success
■ <i>Assessment and Placement</i>	■ <i>Accelerated or Fast-Track Developmental Education</i>	■ <i>Class Attendance</i>
■ <i>Orientation</i>	■ <i>First-Year Experience</i>	■ <i>Alert and Intervention</i>
■ <i>Academic Goal Setting and Planning</i>	■ <i>Student Success Course</i>	■ <i>Experiential Learning beyond the Classroom</i>
■ <i>Registration before Classes Begin</i>	■ <i>Learning Community</i>	■ <i>Tutoring</i>
		■ <i>Supplemental Instruction</i>

Reprinted with permission from the Center for Community College Student Engagement.

The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) also has a guide for *High-Impact Educational Practices*.¹⁶ While most of the practices shown in Chart 3 are more germane to four-year colleges, other

high-impact practices, such as the emphasis on collaborative learning, and, even more importantly, the importance of community-based learning and internships, are clearly central to the mission of community colleges.

High-Impact Educational Practices



First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

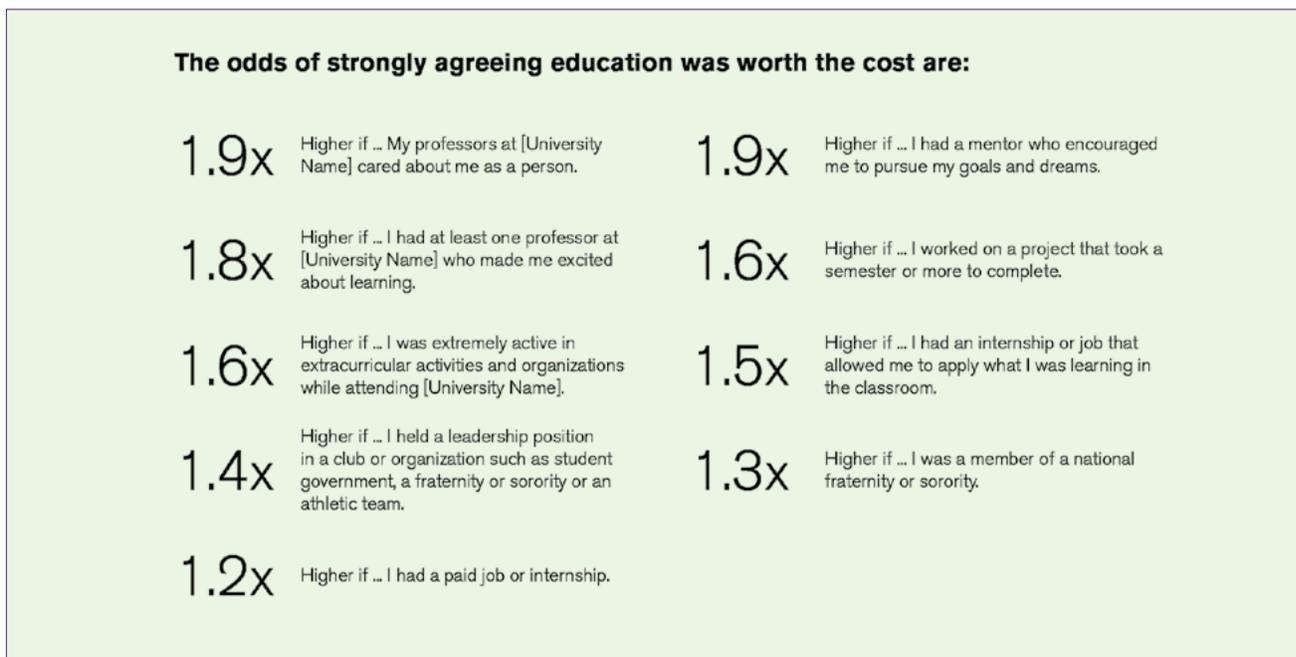
Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



A simpler and more direct path forward for trustees lies in the recent work done by the Gallup organization, which has surveyed tens of thousands of graduates with associate and bachelor's degrees. While the Gallup-Purdue Index 2014 Report of bachelor's graduates is better known than its work with associate graduates, I expect this will likely change in the near future, as Gallup is expected to release more associate level data.

While there is valuable information in Gallup's first associate report "Gallup-USA Funds Associate Degree Graduates Report,"¹⁷ a more clearly defined path forward is contained in the data from their latest bachelor's graduate study "The Gallup-Purdue Index 2015 Report."¹⁸ In Chart 4, the outcome measured was the odds of a graduate strongly agreeing that their education was worth the cost, but in other reports, Gallup has documented the importance of these same college factors on other valuable student outcomes.

CHART 4: GALLUP HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES



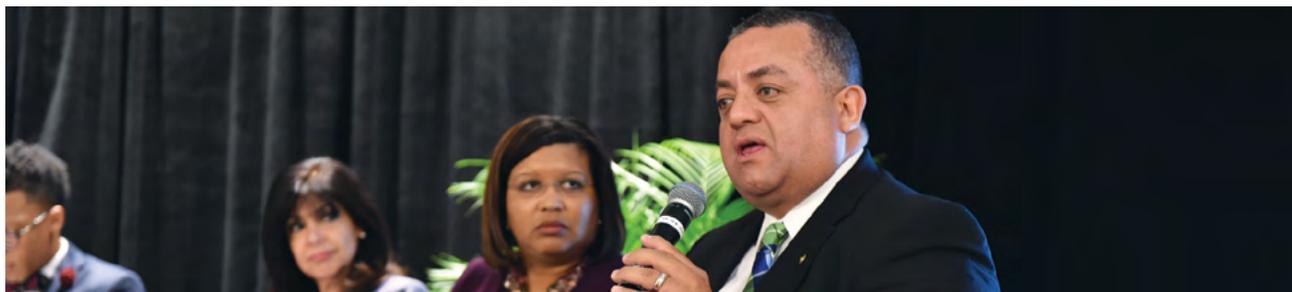
Reprinted with permission from Gallup.

The chart on page 14 shows Gallup research points of high-impact practices that can be relatively easily assessed by surveying programs within the college. Here are some of the items that could populate such a checklist:

- Does a program encourage or link students to paid internships?
 - How many students in the last 3 (or so) years have had such internships?
 - Where were these internships?
 - Are these internships monitored to assess the extent to which they align with curriculum and a student's studies?
- Does a program have a system of mentorships?
 - What does that mentoring system entail?
 - Do all students have mentors?

- Are faculty recognized or rewarded for taking mentorships seriously?
- Are any students mentored by potential employers or local business leaders?
 - How is that employer-based mentorship organized and monitored?
- Does a program provide opportunities for long-term projects?
 - What is the balance of classroom-based versus outside-oriented projects?
 - Are these projects linked to employers?

Note that many of these questions emphasize links between employers and students and build on the work of the Aspen Institute and the Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management.



THE CHALLENGE

Community colleges have emerged from the shadows of the ivory tower and are now getting well-deserved recognition as central to the postsecondary system of this nation. And while community colleges are charged with many tasks, central is their role as the nation's premier career and technical education provider. While trustees have responsibilities to see that their colleges are fulfilling their other roles, for example, as launch pads for students who seek ultimately to attain bachelor's degrees, community college trustees' responsibility for fulfilling the CTE mission is central. Fortunately, there is a growing number of tools and instruments that can help them fulfill those responsibilities.

For example, in states that have linked wage outcomes to student records, tools, such as those developed by College Measures, can be tapped to see how well graduates from specific programs are doing in the labor market. College specific versions of LaunchMyCareer can be deployed in career and student service

offices, making career centers more useful and more relevant.

The checklists provided by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Talent Pipeline Management program can be deployed to start measuring the extent to which colleges are fulfilling their role in that system—and increasing the likelihood that students will find employment at good wages. The modified checklist presented above, based on Gallup and the Aspen Institute, provide another starting point for exploring the degree to which different programs in a college are working to fulfill student needs and desires for good jobs and good wages. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) have provided other guidance that can be used to assess the use of high-impact practices.

The tools are there, now the challenge is to use them and implement changes based on the data.

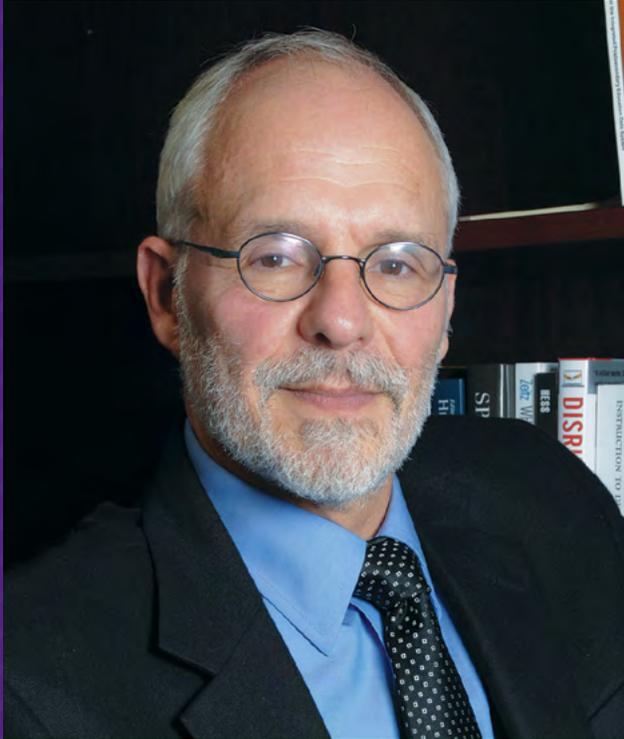
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- 5 College Measures is a division of the American Institutes for Research (www.air.org). Since 2010, College Measures has been working to improve the productivity and efficiency of higher education in the United States. Supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and USA Funds, College Measures works with state governments to help students and other stakeholders measure the labor market success of students who complete higher education credentials. Since its founding, College Measures has partnered with Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia to make wage outcomes of graduates from higher education programs accessible to the public. Its most current efforts can be found at www.launchmycareerColorado.org, <http://launchmycareertn.org/> and <http://launchmycareertx.org/>
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STUDY GUIDE/ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- One of the primary challenges (and opportunities) facing community colleges is to demonstrate that the degrees they offer can be an efficient pathway into the workforce. How can that message be best crafted? What kind of evidence can be marshalled to make the point? Does your college have the data to help students identify high-paying jobs and careers that flow from their studies? How can the college get labor market data and evidence of student success?
- How can your college help students balance the need for good careers against the desire that students have to pursue fields of study for which they have a passion? Similarly, how can your college help students reach a balance between jobs that have high social value but that may have low wages (early childhood education is the clearest example)?
- How strong are the ties between your college and local employers? How can they be improved? Do these ties reflect the likely economic shifts in the region, anticipating the hot jobs and the hot skills of the evolving labor market? How can the college work to get a better idea of what those jobs and skills are likely to be?
- What role can trustees play in making sure that the college is implementing high-impact practices that increase student success while students are in college and afterwards?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



MARK SCHNEIDER

Mark Schneider is a vice president and an institute fellow at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and President of College Measures. Prior to joining AIR, Dr. Schneider served as commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics from 2005-2008. In 2013, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* selected him as one of the 10 people who had the most impact on higher education policy that year.

He is the author of numerous articles and books on education policy, including most recent, *The University Next Door*, edited with KC Deane, (2014). Other books include *Getting to Graduation*, edited with Andrew Kelly, (2012), and *Higher Education Accountability*, edited with Kevin Carey, (2010); *Charter Schools: Hope or Hype?* written with Jack Buckley, (2007). Schneider's 2000 book, *Choosing Schools*, won the Policy Study Organization's Aaron Wildavsky Best Book Award.

Dr. Schneider is also a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and distinguished professor emeritus of political science at the State University of New York, Stony Brook.

Dr. Schneider has been working on increasing accountability by making data on college productivity and the labor market success of college graduates more publicly available. To that end, he created www.collegemeasures.org

His most recent efforts to help students understand the value of college degrees can be found at www.LaunchMyCareerColorado.org and www.LaunchMyCareerTN.org.



Tel. 202-775-4667
www.acct.org
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Tel. 317-806-1200
www.stradaeducation.org