

**ACHIEVING THE DREAM IN CONNECTICUT:  
STATE POLICIES AFFECTING ACCESS TO, AND SUCCESS  
IN, COMMUNITY COLLEGES FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR  
AND LOW-INCOME STUDENTS<sup>1</sup>**

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## ABSTRACT

This report provides an audit of state policies in Connecticut affecting access to, and success in, community colleges for students of color and low-income students. It was commissioned by Lumina Foundation for Education as part of a series of policy audits of the states involved in Achieving the Dream. Lumina Foundation is the primary funder of the initiative (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhuser, 2006; Dougherty, Marshall, & Soonachan, 2006).

Connecticut is one of two states in the second round of the Achieving the Dream initiative. In joining the initiative along with Ohio, it brings in a northern state that is quite different from the five southern and southwestern states that comprised the first round of the Achieving the Dream initiative. Connecticut has an economy that is historically centered in manufacturing, a diverse white ethnic community, and a political culture that in Elazar's (1984) terms is individualistic rather than traditionalist.

This report is the product of intensive interviews that we conducted in Connecticut and an analysis of documents produced both by state agencies and external organizations, such as the Education Commission of the States. We interviewed officials of the Connecticut Community Colleges system and the Department of Higher Education, state legislators and staff, local community college officials, and heads of organizations representing African Americans and Latinos.

We first set the stage by explaining why we focused on certain policies and what methods we used to investigate them. We then move to analyzing the state context: the size and composition of the state's population; the nature of its economy; and the structure, governance, and finance of the community college system. We then describe the state's policies (whether legislative statutes or decisions by the Board of Governors for Higher Education or the Board of Trustees for Community Colleges) that affect access to and success in the community college for students of color and low-income students. The Achieving the Dream initiative is focused on student success, but access remains an issue in Connecticut and therefore it is covered as well. This report also addresses the state's provisions for performance accountability. It has clear relevance to the aim of the Achieving the Dream initiative to use the analysis of data as the main lever to improve both community college efforts and state policies to improve student access and success. As we go along, we note any evaluations that our interviewees made of those state policies and any policy proposals they themselves offered. In the summary and conclusions, we describe policy directions the state may wish to consider in its quest for greater equality of access and success in community colleges.

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## **THE POLICIES EXAMINED**

To identify the important state policies shaping student access and success, we solicited the opinions of key policy actors and observers<sup>2</sup> and reviewed the research and policy literature on community colleges and higher education more generally. We examined reports by leading research and policy organizations,<sup>3</sup> publications by the lead state agencies dealing with community colleges in the Achieving the Dream states, and journals and books dealing with community colleges and higher education.

### **Access Policies**

Despite the huge growth in higher education in the United States over the last 100 years, large differences in college access still remain, particularly by race and income. For example, among 1992 high school graduates, 75% had enrolled in some form of postsecondary education by the year 2000. However, the figures for Hispanics, Native Americans, and those in the bottom quartile in socioeconomic status (SES) in the eighth grade were only 70%, 66%, and 52%, respectively (Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2002: 21).<sup>4</sup>

With regard to access, we have looked at state policies addressing student admissions, tuition, student financial aid, outreach programs, provisions for a comprehensive curriculum, and facilitation of access at distant locations and nontraditional times.

Admissions policy is of interest because, while community colleges are open door in ethos, this policy is under pressure as colleges face both increasing enrollment demand and more stingy state and local government funding (Cavanaugh, 2003; Hebel, 2004). Moreover, the increasing number of undocumented students raises important questions for an institution committed to access for the disadvantaged.

Tuition and financial aid are of immediate concern given that both tuition at state institutions and state student aid significantly affect whether students go to college (Heller, 1999; St. John, 1991). In the case of tuition, we have examined not only its average level but also whether a state has policies extending in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants.

In the case of state financial aid, we have analyzed the extent of need-based aid available (particularly in comparison to merit-based aid) and whether states have any substantial programs specifically for minority students. Furthermore, we have examined whether undocumented and part-time students are eligible for state aid. Part-time students are of interest here because so many low-income and minority students attend college part time. Hence, we have looked at whether states have student aid programs specifically for part-timers, rather than simply making them eligible for general aid programs.

Because outreach is so important for low-income and minority students, we have looked for state support of programs to encourage interest in college on the part of minority and low-income students. We have particularly investigated whether states fund early intervention programs similar to the federal Talent Search and GEAR UP programs and authorize and fund dual-enrollment programs allowing high school students to take college-level courses and get high

school credit for them (Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success, 2005; Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004, 2005; Perna & Swail, 2002).

Provisions for an accessible curriculum are of interest because many low-income and minority students are attracted to higher education by the availability of occupational and adult education programs (Grubb, Badway, & Bell, 2003; Prince & Jenkins, 2005). Hence, we have investigated whether these curricular options are mandated and financed by the states.

Finally, because minority and low-income students are more place and time bound (Choy & Ottinger, 1998: 51), we have sought to determine whether states have encouraged community colleges to establish satellite campuses, schedule courses at nontraditional times, offer distance education, or offer short-term courses or fractional credit.

### **Success Policies**

Success within the community college remains an issue because many community college entrants leave higher education without a degree, with this number particularly great for low-income and minority students. For example, in the Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Survey (BPS:96) of first-time students entering college in 1995-96, 47% of those entering public two-year colleges had left higher education by June 2001 without a degree. But the figures for non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, and those with parents who had a high school degree or less were even higher: 61%, 52%, and 52%, respectively (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002: 12, 61).<sup>5</sup>

With regard to success, we examined state policies involving remedial and developmental education, academic and non-academic counseling and guidance, transfer to four-year colleges, provision of the baccalaureate degree at community colleges, noncredit to credit articulation, and workforce and economic development.

Remedial education (also called developmental education) is crucial because so many low-income and minority students come into college with inadequate academic skills (Parsad & Lewis, 2003). But what state policies ensure that students will receive it, particularly in high quality form? As part of this analysis, we have looked at state policies affecting such factors as alignment of high school exit and college readiness requirements and mandatory testing and placement at college entry.

Academic and non-academic counseling and guidance have been found to have significant impacts on college persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005: 404-406). But these are also practices that are easy for community colleges to skimp on, as they face cost pressures from other areas. Hence, we have examined what kind of support – financial and programmatic – states provide for community college counseling and guidance programs.

Transfer to the four-year college has become increasingly important as more students are encouraged to attain a baccalaureate degree but it has also become more difficult to do so. Low-income and minority students are increasingly priced out of four-year colleges and states increasingly encourage baccalaureate aspirants to start at community colleges because it is

cheaper for the states (Robertson, 2005; Wellman, 2002). We therefore have investigated the ways in which state policies aim to make transfer more likely and friction-free.

Baccalaureate provision at community colleges – either by community colleges themselves or by universities through centers at community colleges – has become increasingly attractive, particularly in response to the needs of place-bound students, labor market shortages, and cost-pressures on state governments (Floyd, Skolnik, & Walker, 2005). Still, this movement is very new, so we have investigated the degree to which it is receiving state support and guidance.

Noncredit to credit articulation has become increasingly of interest with heightening awareness that many low-income and minority people enter the community college through the noncredit side, whether through English as a second language, adult basic education, high school equivalency (GED), or other such programs. But if they are to find a secure pathway to economic advancement, such noncredit entrants need to find their way to the credit side of the curriculum, where the most remunerative credentials are to be found (Grubb et al., 2003; Prince & Jenkins, 2005). Hence, it becomes important to see what state policies are available to foster this transition from noncredit to credit education.

Finally, because minority and low-income students must find jobs, it is important not only that they get trained but also that remunerative jobs be available. Hence, the role state policy plays in aiding community colleges both to train workers and create new jobs is of interest (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

### **Performance Accountability**

Performance accountability spans both access and success. States are increasingly using measures of community college performance in facilitating both student access and student success as ways of monitoring and rewarding colleges. But to effectively serve the goals of equality of access and success, the right measures must be used, particularly ones that directly address equality for minority and low-income students. Moreover, there must also be means to ensure that state policymakers and local community college officials actually respond to those performance outcome indicators (Dougherty & Hong, 2006).

Therefore, we have examined state performance accountability policies, analyzing what measures the states collect and publicize and how these data guide policy making by state government bodies and programmatic efforts by community colleges themselves. In the case of state government, we have analyzed whether state appropriations to community colleges are allocated on the basis of institutional performance (whether in the form of performance funding or budgeting) and whether state bodies use performance outcomes to devise new access and success policies. In the case of the community colleges themselves, we have also been interested in determining whether they use data on their performance to make changes in their own institutional practices affecting student access and success.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

To secure information on what policies the states have and how well they are working, we conducted many interviews and reviewed the written academic and non-academic literature on these subjects. We have also informally conversed with community college policymakers at events sponsored by the Achieving the Dream initiative.

The written academic and non-academic sources included research and policy publications issued by national and regional organizations and state agencies and articles in newspapers in the states. The organizations were the same as those that we reviewed when creating the policy taxonomy (see above).

Our interviews were conducted over the telephone. We interviewed officials of the Connecticut Community Colleges system and the Department of Higher Education, state legislators or staff members from both houses, the presidents or top officials of three community colleges (differing in degree of urbanicity and area of the state),<sup>6</sup> and representatives of community organizations representing the African American and Latino communities in the state. The last set of interviews were of some importance to us because we hoped that the community organizations would shed light on how well the state access and success policies were working from the perspective of their intended beneficiaries.

## **THE STATE CONTEXT**

Interviewees characterized Connecticut as a study in contrast. One called it “a tale of two cities.” The state has both a particularly wealthy population and some of the poorest people in the nation. Some interviewees felt that there is, with regard to differentials in student access and success, “a whole sense of denial of how big the problem or the issues really are” Thus, this interviewee went on to say that “we don’t really want to have those issues of black versus white, poor versus rich, educated versus non-educated in our face and that’s what I would describe as the biggest policy barrier in this state...we still have a real difficult time understanding that it is a state issue.”

### **Population Size and Composition**

Approximately 3.5 million people reside in Connecticut (as of 2004), making the state the twenty-ninth most populous in the nation. In that year, 76 percent of the population identified itself racially as non-Hispanic white; 11 percent as Latino; 10 percent as Black/African American; 3 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander; 0.3 percent as American Indian; and 1 percent as of two or more races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006: 27).

Between 2001-02 and 2017-18, the composition of public high school graduates will greatly change. While the income distribution of the population will not change much, the racial-ethnic

composition will. The minority share of high school graduates is projected to rise from 24 percent in 2001-02 to 30 percent in 2013-14, with Hispanics accounting for the bulk of this increase (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003).

## **Economic Environment**

The state's gross state product in 2004 was \$187 billion, twenty-third largest in the nation. However, because the state population is small, the state per capita personal income in 2004 was \$45,398, the second highest in the nation (after the District of Columbia). Moreover, the state's poverty rate of 8.1 percent of individuals in 2003 was the third lowest in the country. Despite this high degree of prosperity, the state's personal income is quite unequally distributed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006: 446, 452, 471).

Connecticut's economy has long been concentrated in manufacturing and that manufacturing economy has been hit hard by imports and the export of jobs abroad. Still, in 2004, about one-eighth (12.0 percent) of the state's civilian labor force was employed in manufacturing, somewhat higher than the 10.9 percent average for the nation as a whole. However, the state's blue collar population is not as large as that for other states. Only 18.9 percent of Connecticut's civilian workers are employed in production, transportation, material moving, construction, maintenance, and natural resource extraction occupations, while the comparable figure for the United States as a whole is 23.4 percent. On the other hand, 39 percent of the state's workforce is in managerial and professional occupations, five percentage points higher than for the U.S. as a whole. These workers are particularly concentrated in the insurance and financial services industries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006: 405, 415).

## **Nature of the Community College System**

In fall 2005, the community college system enrolled 46,227 students, up 13 percent from the 40,825 in fall 2000. Minority students make up 32 percent of enrollments, up from 29 percent in fall 2001 (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006b: Table 1, 3, 6; Connecticut Community Colleges, 2005b: 12).

The student population is changing in several ways. First, the number of Hispanic students is rising rapidly. State officials expect that the Hispanic population will double by 2020, with other minority groups growing at a slower rate. Secondly, an increasing number of younger students are attending community colleges. For example, the proportion of students who are under 25 rose from 46 percent to 55 percent (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006b: Table 11). In addition, various interviewees noted the increasing number of students who require developmental education. Finally, the community colleges seem to be experiencing an increase in international students from the former Soviet Union, Asia, and Central and South America.

## **Governance and Finance**

Community colleges in Connecticut do not receive any local funding. State appropriations and tuition and fees provide almost all their funds. Connecticut has a single consolidated state appropriation for all community colleges, which is then divided among the colleges by the Board of Trustees for the community college system. In fiscal year 2005, 67 percent of total revenues came from the state (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2005a: 10).

Community colleges receive state funds in the form of unrestricted state appropriations (block grant plus tuition freeze), fringe benefits, and restricted state gifts, grants, and scholarships. The legislature appropriated \$137.5 million for FY2007, up from \$126.9 million for FY2005. However, during the past five years, the state share of total community college operating expenditures declined from 71 percent in FY 2002 to 67 percent in FY 2005 (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006c, 2006d: 112; Connecticut Community Colleges, 2002: 7; 2005: 10).

Nevertheless, the state has made major capital appropriations to the community colleges, allowing them to invest funds in new buildings and other capital expansion efforts. These appropriations have enabled major campus expansions and the construction of totally new campuses for some community colleges.

Connecticut has a state system of community colleges that is headed by a chancellor, serving as the CEO, who is appointed by the state-level Board of Trustees for Community-Technical Colleges.

Connecticut also has a State Department of Higher Education that coordinates many initiatives at the two- and four-year colleges, both public and private. It is widely regarded as a rather weak body, however. As a result, the subgroups underneath the Department of Higher Education – which include the Community College System, the Connecticut State University system, Charter Oak State College, and the University of Connecticut – tend to operate independently of each other.

There is a sense among community college officials that their institutions are still the stepchild in Connecticut, a small state with many of the top private colleges in the country and a nationally known state system (e.g., the University of Connecticut). However, this secondary status has been changing recently. As a local community college official noted, “We’ve gone from having to find out about meetings second and third hand to being invited to be one of the primary people at the table.” When asked what has driven this change, the response was that policy makers have begun to see “who was doing the doing when the call would go out...that we need more people in allied health, we need to address the teacher shortage, we need to really be looking at this whole notion of the knowledge economy, the entity in the state that was being responsive to and flexible to the needs of businesses and industry [was the community college].” There is a sense that Connecticut community colleges may be at a turning point, in large part because workforce needs are enabling the colleges to deal with issues of significance to the State and its position in the global economy.

Unlike other Achieving the Dream states, Connecticut colleges must deal with powerful labor unions and collective bargaining agreements. These unions have played an important role in raising the pay and fringe benefits of community college teachers and staff, who might otherwise suffer from the lower prestige of community colleges compared with four-year colleges. At the same time, a state official argued, collective bargaining agreements also make educational innovation difficult:

State labor law with labor unions and collective bargaining agreements, which are actually good and necessary, also provide some enormous constraints to flexibility because of collective bargaining agreements of the workload and the work year of a faculty member ... we have a 15 week semester or a 16 week semester with exams that [restrain] the creativity that's going to be needed to redesign developmental education programs. Students don't learn in 15 weeks blocks.

A local community college official noted that there are seven different collective bargaining agreements at his college and the faculty collective bargaining agreements have no requirement for faculty to advise students.

### **Enrollment Demands**

The Education Commission of the States (2003) has estimated that Connecticut needs to increase its postsecondary enrollments by 105,329 (52 percent) between 2000 and 2015 if it is to match the performance of the best-performing ("benchmark") states. This increase will depend overwhelmingly on an increase in the state's college going rate rather than in an increase in the size of its college age cohort. Between 2001-02 and 2017-18, the number of public high school graduates in Connecticut is expected to increase by only 2,052 students, an increase of 6.4 percent (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003).

### **ACCESS POLICIES**

The Connecticut community colleges are doing very well in providing access to students of color. Minority students comprised 32 percent of community college students in fall 2005, while making up 21 percent of the state population. As a result, community colleges enrolled 68 percent of all minority students in public higher education (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 7-8).

In our interviews, leaders in the minority community did not express a concern that access to the community college was an issue. For example, a Latino community college official who is active in a statewide Latino organization concerned about higher educational opportunity for Latinos stated:

I don't believe that the challenge is the access...because we are an open door institution. We have just a few programs that are closed or competitive admission so I don't think that when we talk about community colleges, the question really is, how are students going to enter the process. I am going to use [his college] as an example. Basically, our enrollment has been growing by at least 10 percent every year for the past four years so much by 2010 we are moving to a larger facility.

## Public Commitment

Public commitment to increase access for students of color and low-income students has not been displayed in terms of setting specific targets for minority or low-income participation. However, in 1982 the Legislature did mandate that the Board of Governors develop a plan to ensure the diversity of the state's colleges. The following year the Board issued a *Strategic Plan to Ensure Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Connecticut Public Higher Education* that "requires each public college and university to develop its own annual approach...to enroll African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American and Native American students in proportions that reflect each group's representation in the college's service area" (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 3). The state provides incentive grants through the Connecticut College Access and Success (ConnCAS) and the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation (ConnCAP) programs to fund college efforts to reach these goals (see the section below, Outreach to Potential Students, for additional information). In 2002, the Commissioner of Higher Education required the state's public institutions to submit five-year plans that established goals for the enrollment of each of the four underrepresented minority groups (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 3, 5-7, 12-13, 16).

Despite these efforts, some observers do not think the state is making enough of a commitment. Asked whether Connecticut has made a public commitment to access, a local community college official responded:

Yes insofar as this state has made a huge commitment in improving facilities and if you improve facilities, you are going to improve access....I mean, literally millions and millions of dollars have been committed to new facilities....What hasn't happened is, shall I say, some parallel dollars on the faculty, the staff, the programmatic dollars that are needed to support the new facility. So it's allowed people from a policy perspective to say, "we've already given at the office. We are giving you a new facility, the rest of it is up to you." It's been kind of the unspoken agenda.

Public commitment also takes the form of the affirmative action laws of the state. To comply with state law, the colleges must report annually on their staffing and each college must develop an affirmative action plan which then is reviewed by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). The CHRO does not simply rubber stamp these plans and often rejects what colleges submit. Hiring targets must be based on the demographics of a college's service area.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in 1989, the Board of Trustees for Community-Technical Colleges, in cooperation with community college system bargaining units, instituted the Minority Fellowship

Program to attract minority graduate students to serve as teaching and administrative fellows and mentors and role models for students at System colleges.

Below, we review specific state policies that stimulate community colleges to encourage access for students of color and low-income students. Some are specifically addressed to such students. But many – while not specifically directed to such students – do help them. The policies considered are the following: open door admissions, tuition, student aid, outreach to potential students, comprehensive curricula, and convenient access.

## **Open Door Admissions**

### **Current Policy**

The Connecticut community colleges offer open access to students who have a high school diploma or a GED or to those without a diploma but who demonstrate an ability to benefit (as measured by a placement test). The latter group tends to be adult learners rather than younger students.

There is no statutory language mandating that community colleges have open admissions. However, the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges in a resolution of February 23, 2003 declared open door admissions a “core value” (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2005a: 95; Connecticut Community Colleges, 2003). Moreover, in their Policy Manual, the Board of Trustees stated: “The admissions policies established by the board of trustees ensure that needed educational opportunities are available, within budget limits, to all who meet the minimal requirements of graduation from high school or the achievement of a high school equivalency certificate. Efforts to reach older and/or educationally disadvantaged students are facilitated by the fact that formal admissions requirements may be waived in appropriate circumstances” (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 62).

Despite rising enrollments and significant fiscal constraints, the community colleges have maintained their open door admissions policy. However, the colleges have found themselves limiting access to specific programs and courses, particularly in allied health because of increased demand, stringent program requirements, the need for clinical placements, and staffing requirements. Moreover, state and local community college officials have discussed whether the open door may have to be restricted in the future. For example, the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Community Colleges stated (2003):

In addition to evaluating effectiveness of programs and services, the Board will also consider the efficiency and effectiveness of operational and organizational structures in order to sustain delivery of high quality instruction and services and preservation of the fundamental values that define the community college: access, opportunity, and ongoing responsiveness and relevance to the needs of the state and its students. The results of this operational examination may recommend a redefinition of concepts such as “comprehensive” and “open door” that will include consideration of resource limitations. The open door will extend to all components of our mission within the limits of our resources. (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2003: 3)

This conversation about open access continues to this day. As a local community college official put it, “We’ve often conversed about this problem and whether or not, regretfully at some point, we are going to have say, ‘enough, we just can’t take anymore because we don’t have the facility, we don’t have the instructional staff, we don’t have a support staff.’”

### ***Admission of Undocumented Students***

By state law, students have to be citizens or legal immigrants to be admitted to community colleges. Some community colleges handle this by allowing undocumented immigrants to take noncredit courses and by using financial aid from private sources to pay for out-of-state tuition charged to non-resident immigrant students.

## **Tuition**

### **Current Policy**

Although there was some discussion among our interviewees that Connecticut has a high tuition base, there was a consensus that the community colleges are certainly the most affordable segment of higher education in the state. In 2005-06, the average resident tuition and required fees for full-time students at Connecticut community colleges were \$2,536, which put the state at twentieth highest in the nation (Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006). However, it is one-third the cost of tuition for the University of Connecticut and one-half the cost of the regional public universities in the Connecticut State University System.

The estimated total net cost of attending a community college (tuition minus student aid) in 2004 was on average 37 percent of the median family income of the bottom 40 percent of the population in family income (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2006).

### ***Tuition Charged Undocumented Immigrants***

In 2005, the state House of Representatives failed to pass by a 65-77 vote a bill (HB 6973) that would have made eligible for in-state tuition anyone who: (1) graduated from a Connecticut high

school; (2) attended any educational institution in the state for at least three years before seeking in-state tuition status; and (3) is seeking admission to, or is currently a student at, the University of Connecticut, one of the Connecticut State Universities, or a community-technical college. Undocumented immigrants would have been required to file an affidavit with their college stating that they had applied to legalize their immigration status or would do so as soon as they are legally eligible (Coleman, 2005; Gillespie, 2005). Because of the defeat of this legislation, immigrant students must still pay out-of-state tuition rates at the community colleges.

### ***Tuition Caps***

State statute prohibits public colleges from raising tuition by more than 15 percent in any given year. Also the Board of Governors has set a target of students having to pay no more than 25 to 30 percent of community college operating costs (Education Commission of the States, 2000).

## **Student Aid**

### **Current Policy**

Of total disbursements for financial aid in Connecticut, 17 percent come from the state through Connecticut Aid to Public College Students, 23 percent from institutional budgets, and 60 percent from the federal government. The state aid takes the form of a general fund appropriation from the Legislature that the Department of Higher Education then distributes on the basis of a formula to the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut State University, and the community colleges.

The state operates six main programs: Capitol Scholarship, CT Aid for Public College Students, CT Independent College Student Grant Program, CT Minority Teacher Incentive Grant, Tuition Set-Aside Aid, and the CT Family Education Loan Program (CT FELP). For community college students, the main program of concern is the CT Aid for Public College Students. The Capitol Scholars program tends not to be an option for nontraditional community college students because it requires that students be in the top 20 percent of their high school graduating class (or have SAT scores of 1080 or higher) and be full-time students (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006a).

One of the community college system's recent initiatives has been to centralize the infrastructure for financial aid. As before, the colleges still determine student need but there is now a Board of Trustees policy on how aid is packaged by the colleges so there is consistency across them. There is a focus on grants rather than loans and ensuring that students take advantage of available federal dollars. There is a broad push for all students to fill out the federal FAFSA aid application form.

### ***Need-Based Aid***

Of the \$65.8 million the state disbursed in student aid for undergraduate students in all colleges (two-year and four-year) in 2004-05, 69 percent went to need-only aid. The remainder went for merit aid, 8 percent; and to special purpose programs, 23 percent (National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, 2006: 13-14). However, at the community colleges, 99% of financial aid is need based and 90% is in the form of grants. The determination of need is made by the colleges themselves.

There is recognition that the need for financial aid is greater than the amount currently provided. In 2004-05, the state spent an average of \$320.89 in undergraduate need based grants per full-time equivalent undergraduate student, which was lower than the national average of \$410.41 (National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, 2006: 23). Though funding did increase over a number of years, funding for student financial aid was flat funded in the past year.

### ***Tuition Linked Aid***

In 1984 legislation allowing Connecticut community colleges to retain their tuition revenue required that they set aside a portion of it for financial aid. Although this set aside is no longer statutory, the state system still earmarks a minimum of 15 percent of tuition revenues for student financial aid.

### ***Aid for Special Populations***

#### ***Students of Color***

There is small set aside for minority students within the CT Aid for Public College Students program. Beyond that, there is no aid targeted for minority community college students or minority students generally. The CT Minority Teacher Incentive Grant is restricted to juniors or seniors enrolled in a Connecticut college or university teacher preparation program (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006a).

#### ***Part-Time Students***

Part-time students comprise 65 percent of students in the Connecticut community colleges (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006b: Table 1; Connecticut Community Colleges, 2005b: 9). There is no student aid targeted to these students, but they are eligible for aid under the CT Aid for Public College Students programs. However, that program prioritizes students with the greatest need for financial aid, which therefore favors full-time students who are paying more tuition.

### *Undocumented Immigrants*

The state has no program for student aid to undocumented immigrant college students. However, private resources have been successfully used to pay out-of-state tuition rates for these students.

### **Evaluations by Respondents**

Minority group leaders mentioned the need for more financial aid. A Latino educational leader stated: “We need to provide more money for our students to be able to have access. Even though at community colleges by and large the tuition is relatively low, if you come in from a home [where] there is no one working, every dollar counts, so more commitment from financial aid [is needed].”

In addition, a state official expressed concern that the present student aid system has not sufficiently targeted the goals of access and retention:

We think there are probably ways that it could be monitored better in respect to how it is serving the goals of access and retention and success than the current methodology, which simply allows the institution to utilize the dollars as long as they can establish any level of need.

Finally, a state legislator expressed concern about meeting the needs of middle-class students, particularly in light of federal cuts in loan programs. There currently is a bill before the state legislature to authorize a study of this issue.

## **Outreach to Potential Students**

Low-cost attendance and an open door are not enough to ensure proper access by students of color and low-income students. Also important are efforts to reach into the high school and middle school, to interest potential students in the idea of going to college.

### **Current Policies**

#### *Early Intervention Programs*

The state encourages active outreach by community colleges and provides some limited funds. One of the Board of Higher Education’s strategic goals for 2003-06 is the development of partnerships and collaborations across K-16 (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2005a: 96, 106).

The Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation (ConnCAP) program funds partnerships involving higher education institutions and K-12 districts to better motivate and prepare middle school and high school students who are under-achievers and who come from low-income

families. In 2004-05, the Department of Higher Education gave out nearly \$1.8 million in ConnCAP funding. ConnCAP programs typically provide students with a six-week summer program of intensive instruction in academic subjects and study and life skills. During the school year, ConnCAP programs provide tutoring, counseling, and career exploration (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 16).

In addition, the Connecticut College Access and Success (ConnCAS) program provides incentive grants to public colleges and universities to support outreach, admission, and retention activities. In the 2004-05 program year, the Department awarded \$635,500 in ConnCAS grants, with the size of the individual institutional grants based on institutional performance. Students enrolled in ConnCAS-supported programs are provided a transitional summer program that involves at least one credit-bearing, introductory college-level course, combined with supportive services including tutoring and counseling during the regular school year (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 16).

Finally, the state has received a six-year \$13 million GEAR UP grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant funds the provision of informational, developmental, and enrichment services to about 12,000 middle school and high school students in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. It also underwrites scholarships, but community college students have received only a handful. The vast bulk of the scholarships go to students in pre-college programs and in the four-year colleges (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 18).

### ***Dual Enrollment***

Board of Trustees policy allows community colleges to establish dual enrollment programs for high school juniors and seniors with a 3.0 average or higher, but it does not mandate them. If colleges choose to pursue such programs, the state specifies some requirements for them. Among the requirements are the waiving of student tuition and fees and the use of state funds only for credit courses (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2003: 5-6; Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 199-201; Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2005; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2006b: 103-104). The high schools receive full state aid for the high school students who are enrolling in community college courses.

The Board of Trustees has moved to expand the dual-enrollment offerings of its community colleges by providing special funding for High School Partnership students taking community colleges courses in math, science, and technology. In addition, community college credit can be earned through a coordinated course of study delivered in high schools in Tech Prep programs.

In addition, in November 2005, the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education (2005b) endorsed a staff recommendation that:

[T]he Board of Governors for Higher Education and the State Board of Education should establish a coordinating mechanism or coordinating body to standardize, publicize, administer, and evaluate all collegiate opportunities for high school students. The above mentioned state coordinating mechanism should develop a process to standardize institutional programs designed for high school students so that there are common expectations for program costs, curricular contents, and number of college credits awarded. Students participating in the recognized programs should not encounter problems in receiving the standard number of credits towards their general education or certain programmatic requirements by any Connecticut college or university. (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2005b: 45-46)

Recently, additional funds were appropriated by the state system office for the system's college experience program.

### **Evaluation by Respondents**

Some local college officials see state support for outreach programs as only "lip service" with no strong commitment. As a local community college official put it, outreach to the high schools is

...very much supported, it's applauded, it's touted, it's often showcased; it's just not necessarily supported with dollars from the state....As I've looked around the state, the places where things are working best for low-income and minority students is where connections have been made directly between the community college, the businesses and/or particular business or business sector within a community, and community-based agencies, community foundations, etc. that have gathered around a table.

## **Comprehensive Curriculum**

One of the ways that students of color and low-income students are welcomed into community college is through programs that are not exclusively academic, including occupational education and adult education.

### **Current Policy**

Connecticut has statutory language requiring community colleges to provide a comprehensive curriculum, including occupational education, remedial education, adult and continuing education, and transfer preparation:

(a) The primary responsibilities of the regional community-technical colleges shall be (1) to provide programs of occupational, vocational, technical and technological and career education designed to provide training for immediate employment, job retraining or upgrading of skills to meet individual, community and state manpower needs; (2) to provide programs of general study including, but not limited to, remediation, general and adult education and continuing education designed to meet individual student goals; (3) to provide programs of study for college transfer representing the first two years of baccalaureate education; (4) to provide community service programs as defined in subsection (b) of this section....(General Statutes of Connecticut, Revised to January 1, 2005, Volume 3, Title 10, Chapter 185b, Section 10a-80, pg. 907, quoted in Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 97)

### ***Adult Education***

Community colleges have a very minimal role in adult basic education (ABE), which is mostly provided by local school districts. The state appropriates about \$19 million for adult education to the Department of Education, which then distributes it to the 165 school districts in Connecticut in support of ABE. Local communities invest \$21 million in ABE, and community colleges – since they are not locally funded – do not get this local aid.<sup>8</sup> A state official noted:

the local communities are investing another \$21 million into ABE...If community colleges which are not locally funded at all...were to take that over, we would clearly lose the \$21 million of local support because my school board is going to provide a resource for my town to support adult basic education because it's my town that's running the program.

Community colleges do offer English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, both for credit and non credit.

### **Convenient Access**

Especially for students who need to work while in college, access to the community college is greatly aided when community colleges reach out through nontraditional schedules, dispersed locations, and distance education.

### **Current Policy**

#### ***Location***

In February 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges declared as one of the “core values” of the community colleges “[a]ccessible locations statewide that serve student and community needs” (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2003: 2). Convenience is largely addressed by locating community colleges throughout the state, with the

result that there is a college about every 20 miles. As a state official noted, “there is an enormous commitment by the state...which recognized that community colleges are located in the geographic regions...where the majority of minorities are residing in Connecticut.”

### ***Distance Education***

Community colleges offer four online degree programs through a portal maintained by the state-financed Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006d; Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium, 2006). They are also the state’s largest provider of course content through the Consortium.

Tuition rates are the same for on campus and distance education courses regardless of whether the students are in-state or out-of-state (Education Commission for the States, 2000).

## **SUCCESS POLICIES**

The Connecticut community colleges present a mixed picture of how well they are providing for the success of students of color and minority students. While comprising 21 percent of the state population, minority people make up 32 percent of community college students. However, the minority proportion of community college graduates – 25 percent -- is much less than the minority proportion of community college students. This gap between share of enrollments and share of graduates is pronounced for African Americans and Latinos but not Asians and Native Americans (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006e: 7-8, 12). A local community college official concluded: “When you really look at the data,... what you see are just incredible attrition rates. You see massive numbers of students who are not completing degrees if they indicated that was a goal, or being stopped at some basic developmental type mathematic courses or English courses.”

### **Public Commitment**

Connecticut has officially made a commitment to improve the success of its students of color. The Board of Governors in 1983 adopted a Strategic Plan to Ensure Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Connecticut Public Higher Education that requires each public college and university to “develop its own annual approach...to retain African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American and Native American students in proportions equal to the rate achieved by the college’s student body as a whole [and] to graduate African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American and Native American students in proportions that reflect each group’s representation in the college’s student population” (Board of Governors, 2006e: 5). In 2002, the Commissioner of Higher Education required the state’s public institutions to submit five-year plans to promote the college access and success of underrepresented minority students which established student diversity goals for the enrollment, retention, and graduation for each of the four underrepresented minority groups (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2005b: 5). Interestingly, there is less

attention to income than race differences. Yet income plays a major role in producing differentials in student success.<sup>9</sup>

Historically, graduation has been only one of many goals for community college students.<sup>10</sup> But degree attainment has become important as Connecticut faces the challenges of changing job requirements, global competition, and workforce shortages. Moreover, the student body is getting younger and with this are coming more students who have aspirations for a degree. As a state community college official put it,

if you have an 18-year-old population in greater numbers coming from high school to college, they are coming with a different goal and their goal is to graduate from the college. So I think we are more focused today than we were just two years ago on getting students through certificate or associate degree programs either to prepare them directly for work or to prepare them to transfer to a baccalaureate program.

In addition to this increasing interest in graduation, Connecticut policy makers are also concerned about transfer rates. A state official noted: “[T]he transfer rate is low. It’s low by anybody’s comparison. Now, we know that transfer is low everywhere in community colleges. But ours is a sophisticated system. We have high expectations for college enrollment and success here, and we need more transfers, especially in workforce fields of need.”

Yet, despite these views, some local respondents did not report a strong public commitment to student success. As a local community college official observed: “I don’t get the sense that there is a strong statewide policy initiative. Clearly, it again goes back to the mission that we have as a sector, but it’s more self-defined and again not particularly well funded. There isn’t the kind of funding that should be there... There isn’t much of a policy present that I see with respect to that. There may be a paper presence.” Another local official stated: “There is a lot of talking that’s gone on. In my opinion, there hasn’t been a lot of action that has gone on and my sense as I talk to my colleagues who are also at other community colleges in this state is that they also are experiencing somewhat similar things.... There’s a white paper produced. It’s distributed. I am never quite sure what happens after that point.”

One reason that there may not be a sense of a strong state policy commitment to student success is that the state does not have any formal targets for student success, much less any targets for minority and low-income student success. It has not set targets for how many more students of color and low-income students should graduate from community college, transfer to a university, or secure jobs. What may be at work is a belief that policies that are not race- and class-specific work better. A state official argued:

There isn’t a separate policy that says that because you are a minority student or an academically disadvantaged student that we have a different policy for you or a different program for you, but we recognize what our population is and our goal is student success for all students. We don’t isolate the policy – because this is a Hispanic neighborhood, we are going to do this; because this is a black neighborhood, we are going to do this; because this is an Asian neighborhood, we are going to do this. We are not at that stage.

In addition to not setting formal targets for increasing the success of students of color and low-income students, the state has not laid out a clear set of policy interventions for achieving such an increased rate of success.

Below we examine the following state-level policies affecting success in the community college: remedial and developmental education, academic and non-academic guidance and support, transfer assistance, baccalaureate provision, non-credit to credit articulation, and workforce and economic development.

## **Remedial and Developmental Education**

Many students of color and low-income students come into the community college inadequately prepared to do college level study. They therefore need remedial education or developmental education. What does the state do to make sure such remediation is provided effectively?

### **Current Policy**

The statutory language in the community college mission includes a reference to providing developmental education: “The primary responsibilities of the regional community-technical colleges shall be... (2) to provide programs of general study including, but not limited to, remediation, general and adult education and continuing education designed to meet individual student goals” (General Statutes of Connecticut, Revised to January 1, 2005, Volume 3, Title 10, Chapter 185b, Section 10a-80, pg. 907, quoted in Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 97). About 40 percent of the students in Connecticut receive remedial or developmental education in reading, writing, and comprehension, while about 60 percent require it in mathematics.

### ***Financing***

The state funds remedial education enrollments through its general appropriation to community colleges (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). The state funds community colleges through a block grant appropriation that the Board of Trustees of the community college system in turn divides among the community colleges, without deciding expenditures at the programmatic level. Remedial education therefore is funded from a college’s overall budget allocation to cover total college operating expenses, leaving a lot of leeway at the local level.

### ***Entrance Testing***

Since the late 1980s, the Board of Trustees has required placement testing for entering students. There are a number of exceptions, however: students who have fewer than 12 credits, who have not announced an interest in an academic program when they begin taking classes at the community college, who are taking non-credit courses, or who have successfully passed courses at another college (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 165). There is ongoing debate

about the point at which the Accuplacer assessment exam should be given, and whether students can declare a major without taking it.

The Board of Trustees of the community college system specifies the use of the Accuplacer exam (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 165). However, there is no policy regarding what score dictates the need for remediation, and the score that determines developmental placement varies from college to college (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). According to a state official, “The reason for that is our focus has been on the developmental education program itself and we have multiple ways of delivering developmental ed courses. There are some colleges who will have two, three, and four levels of mathematics and there are other colleges that will have one or two.”

The absence of common cutoff scores can cause problems, with a student receiving very different treatment at different colleges. As a local community college official noted, “our cutoff scores I’ve been told...are quite high so if a student doesn’t make it into college level math, they may go to [another college] down the street and may even enroll as a student or just take math there.”

### ***Assignment to Remediation***

Students who fail to get a high enough score on the placement test are not required by the state to undergo remediation. According to a state official, “What we mandate is that we sit with the student, review the results of that assessment, and provide academic advice to that student of where they will be best served and where they will succeed.” As a result, for students who fail the placement exam, colleges differ in whether and when they require remediation and in what kind of remediation they suggest.

### ***Opportunity to Take Non-Remedial Courses***

The Board of Trustees does not regulate whether community colleges decide that community college students being remediated can also take courses for credit outside the skill area in which they need remediation.

### ***Student Eligibility for State Financial Aid***

Students in developmental education do receive state financial aid. As long as they continue to make satisfactory progress towards a degree they are entitled to continue to receive state financial aid throughout their course of study.

### ***Institutions Which Can Offer Remediation***

Connecticut seems to be drifting toward a system where remedial education is concentrated at community colleges. A local community college official commented that four-year institutions are being “dissuaded” from offering remediation.

### ***Content of Remediation***

The Board of Trustees maintains a common course numbering system – including remedial courses -- that requires that for a given course 80% or more of course content must be equivalent across colleges. This is done in order to facilitate transfer among the community colleges and to other constituent units of higher education. Within these parameters, the course content is developed by faculty within the program area.

### ***Credit for Remedial Courses***

Remedial courses receive credit but it is not applicable toward a degree program or transferable to another institution.

### ***Exiting Remediation***

The Board of Trustees has established successful performance at college-level work in the field of remediated study as the standard for successful remediation. With a passing grade of C or better in a developmental course, a student may enter a college-level course in the same field. If the student completes that course with a C or better, the student's remedial experience is considered to have been successful.

### ***Reducing the Need for Remediation***

There is no state mandate that the community colleges and the K-12 system collaborate to improve the preparation of students entering community college. However, there is encouragement from the General Assembly, the Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Education to work on improving the alignment between high school and college academic standards. In 2005, the Departments of Education and Higher Education held a math summit with Connecticut State University – involving a group of high school and community college faculty – to discuss curriculum alignment in the area of mathematics and to compare results of the State Department of Education’s Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and the Accuplacer exam. In addition, the community colleges have been offering the Accuplacer exam to high school juniors and seniors so that both high school students and teachers can have a better understanding of college level requirements.

In October 2005, the Connecticut community colleges were awarded by the Department of Labor a Community-Based Job Training grant for \$2.147 million to address the needs of students for academic remediation and support as they enter nursing and allied health programs. The aim is to improve the academic skills and retention rates of these students.

### **Evaluations by Respondents**

Because of the variations across community colleges in the placement test cutoff scores they use to determine who needs remediation, some respondents noted that students can enter a community college credit program with lower scores than the program would normally allow because they were deemed as not needing remediation by another community college with lower cutoff scores.

### **Proposals by Respondents**

One of our local respondents mentioned the need to find ways of helping students get through remedial courses more quickly so that they do not feel mired in it and get discouraged:

Some students [say], “I’m here for a degree in accounting, but here I am taking three developmental courses”....I think that we need to find ways of being more creative in the curriculum and trying to develop a system where a student – let’s say that if you tested into developmental English, writing, reading, and math – that it will only take you one semester to get through that sequence of courses and you are into the college level courses....Right now, you are looking at a year’s worth of courses before fall and spring that may impact someone’s decision to say, “this isn’t for me, this is not what I came here for.”

## **Academic Guidance and Support**

### **Current Policy**

The State of Connecticut requires community colleges – as part of their statutory mission – to provide student support services to support student development: “The primary responsibilities of the regional community-technical colleges shall be...(5) to provide student support services including, but not limited to, admissions, counseling, testing, placement, individualized instruction and efforts to serve students with special needs” (General Statutes of Connecticut, Revised to January 1, 2005, Volume 3, Title 10, Chapter 185b, Section 10a-80, pg. 907, quoted in Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 97). In February 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges declared as one of the “core values” of the community colleges is to provide “comprehensive services including instruction and student support to promote academic success” (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2003: 2).

Despite this declaration, there is no penalty for failing to offer these services. Moreover, the state does not earmark any funds specifically for counseling and guidance. The system budget is

made through a block grant appropriation and college budgets are allocated on the basis of overall operational expenses.

More than most of the Achieving the Dream states, however, Connecticut does set requirements for the form that student services should take. The Board of Trustees of the community college system has specified what services should be provided, set minimum qualifications for student counselors, and provided guidance on staffing ratios. With regard to the services that should be provided, the policy manual of the Board of Trustees states:

The core functions which should exist at all colleges are ... EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION, e.g., transfer procedures, academic policies, and graduation requirements; EDUCATIONAL SKILLS, e.g., college study skills workshops, test anxiety reduction training, and communication skills; GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, e.g., assistance with admission, registration, and graduation evaluation.;... TEACHING, e.g., opportunities for counselors to teach approved credit or non-credit courses related to student development or other areas of expertise and workshops and seminars consistent with student needs. (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 112-113)

With regard to staffing, the state policy manual states:

The delivery of the core counseling services depends on a staff of student development professionals. To qualify for the title of counselor, a student development specialist must have completed at least a master's degree or have equivalent experience in a counseling related field. Paraprofessional counselors and peer advisors should be used as an adjunct to the professional counseling staff to expand the scope of their activities but they cannot be equated to the professional personnel in a staffing formula.... The core counseling services should be available to both full-time and part-time students. The Denison Staffing Formula provides one set of guidelines which may be utilized in determining desirable minimum staffing standards. (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 113)

### **Evaluation by Respondents**

The fact that the state requires academic guidance and counseling but does not specifically fund them was criticized by a local college official: "It's always the lip service. 'We want you to do this, we are not going to make a separate appropriation to have it happen and no you can't raise tuition above a certain level in order to pay for it.'"

### **Non-Academic Guidance and Support**

The state does not specifically fund non-academic guidance and support; colleges can draw on their state funding to pay for these services. However, as can be seen above, the Board of Trustees does require such guidance and support and sets out guidelines for its provision (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 112-113):

The core functions which should exist at all colleges are ASSESSMENT SERVICES, e.g., personal and occupational testing, values clarification, and goal identification; CAREER EXPLORATION, e.g., testing, special seminars, personal counseling, decision-making techniques, lifespan planning programs, orientation activities, and career games; COMMUNITY RESOURCE, e.g., pre-retirement counseling, parent effectiveness training, consultation on human relations, and other services based on assessment of community needs; CONSULTATION SERVICES, e.g., sharing information with students and members of their families, members of the faculty and staff of the college, and representatives of the regional community in such areas as human relations, communication, and student development;... PERSONAL GROWTH EXPERIENCES, e.g., individual and group counseling; PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, e.g., encouragement of regular participation in various activities such as in-service training, graduate study, and counseling related professional associations; REFERRAL RESOURCES, e.g., maintenance of a directory of college and community resources to facilitate consultation and referral of problems such as legal aid, financial aid, drug rehabilitation, employment opportunities, and services for minorities. (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006g: 112-113)

## **Transfer Assistance**

The Connecticut higher education system has been making major strides toward a more comprehensive system of transfer articulation and assistance that does not rely on bilateral agreements with the various public and private four-year colleges. Much remains to be done, however.

### **Current Policy**

#### ***Student Aid***

The state does not have a state aid program specifically for transfer students.

#### ***Transfer Advising***

The Guaranteed Admissions Program between the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut Community Colleges calls for trained academic counselors at both the college and university level to help students transfer successfully. Moreover, the Department of Higher Education has plans to add transfer information to its web site. However, the constituent units of higher education do not earmark any state funding specifically for transfer advising.

### ***Transfer of Academic Associate Degrees***

Associate degree graduates are guaranteed admission into the Connecticut State University System, junior status, and acceptance of at least 60 credits if they receive a grade point average of 2.0 or higher. However, admittance into specific majors requires meeting the requirements of those majors (Connecticut Community Colleges, 1997).

Associate degree holders are also eligible for guaranteed transfer into the University of Connecticut under certain conditions. To transfer into the College of Liberal Arts, they must earn an associate degree in a liberal arts transfer program from one of nine participating community colleges, and have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (University of Connecticut, 2005).

The community college system does not have systemwide articulation agreements with the private four-year colleges. Rather, there are agreements worked out by individual community colleges with individual private colleges regarding particular majors (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006f).

### ***Occupational Education Transfer***

The Legislature authorized in 2002 the Advisory Council on Student Transfer and Articulation to develop a plan to "... (2) Ensure that there are appropriate system-to-system articulation agreements between all the community-technical college programs and programs offered by the Connecticut State University system and the University of Connecticut including, but not limited to, business, nursing, allied health and other professional or pre-professional programs selected by the council" (Connecticut Code, chap. 185, sec. 10a-19b).

Today there are "career path agreements" in business, early childhood education, teacher preparation, allied health, nursing, and engineering. They are at the systemic level, not left to arrangements between specific institutions. To transfer into the School of Business at the University of Connecticut, students must earn the associate degree in the appropriate business administration transfer program from a participating community college and earn a minimum grade point average of 3.0 and achieve a 3.0 or higher in the courses used to meet junior/senior-level major requirements (University of Connecticut, 2005). Also, a pathway program called the College of Technology has been developed for students interested in engineering. Students meeting certain academic qualifications can earn an associate degree and transfer from engineering technology programs at the community colleges to an engineering program at the University of Connecticut, Connecticut State University, Fairfield University, the University of New Haven, and the University of Hartford (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2005a: 97; Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006b; University of Connecticut, 2005).

### ***General Education Transfer***

There is a 36 credit general education agreement between the community colleges and the Connecticut State University System. It specifies which courses will be accepted for transfer,

assuming that the student graduates with a C average or better (Connecticut Community Colleges, 1997).

### ***Specific Major Modules***

Except for certain occupational courses, the Connecticut system of higher education has not specified specific course modules for different majors by which students are guaranteed transfer of certain pre-major courses.

### ***Common Course Numbering***

There is a common course number system for credit courses across the community colleges but it does not extend to the four-year schools (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006e). It was developed to address student complaints that when they transferred between community colleges not all their courses were accepted.

### **Evaluation by Respondents**

Though the state system of higher education has been making strides toward a more seamless transfer system, various observers see a need for a lot more work. A local community college official stated: “From a state policy perspective [there] is the Byzantine nonexistence of what I consider any true articulation and transfer agreements between sectors...Connecticut is way behind the times when it comes to any kind of meaningful transfer and articulation agreement.”

### **Policy Proposals by Respondents**

The community college system proposed in spring 2006 that a state scholarship be established precisely for transfer students from community colleges to the State University System and to the University of Connecticut.

## **Baccalaureate Provision**

Community colleges are not allowed to offer baccalaureate degrees and there is no systematic provision for universities offering upper-division instruction at community college facilities.<sup>11</sup> However, both the opening of university centers at community colleges and the offering of bachelor degrees by community colleges have been subjects of discussion in community college circles. However, some interviewees felt that this effort would be hotly contested by the four-year colleges and the Department of Higher Education because the state is small and there are many accessible four year colleges.

## **Non-Credit to Credit Articulation**

There does not appear to be any formal state encouragement for the movement of students from non-credit programs such as Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language into community college credit programs. The state community college system has, however, declared a commitment to “develop career ladders initiatives that connect and span non-credit and credit programs” (Herzog, 2005: 16). Moreover, a state official noted: “That’s our goal internally within our colleges to move people from a non-credit ESL program into a credit ESL program to move them into mainstream college work. We have those pathways in place.”

## **Workforce and Economic Development**

Beyond graduating students, community colleges also face the task of placing them in jobs. This is one of the reasons community colleges have long been interested in workforce and economic development (Dougherty, 1994; Dougherty and Bakia, 2000).

In February 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges declared as one of the “core values” of the community colleges “relevant curricula and responsive program development including education and training services for business and industry” (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2003). The 12 community colleges are part of the Business and Industry Services Network, a collaborative program linking business, state government, and education. The colleges are able to develop and deliver customized workforce training programs, business needs assessment, and consultation services. The Connecticut Department of Labor maintains an “Education and Training Connection” website that allows students and employers to find out about workforce training provided by a variety of suppliers, including community colleges (Connecticut Community Colleges, 2006c; Connecticut Department of Labor, 2006).

## **PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY**

As in other states, performance accountability has become a major concern in Connecticut in recent years. As a state official noted, “the issue of public accountability, I think, has had a major influence in the last years. I mean, we started talking about accountability a decade ago and it’s much much more transparent today than at anytime in the past.”

## Current Policy

### Performance Indicators

The Board of Governors for Higher Education collects and publishes a variety of indicators on community college performance (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006). They are reported by individual college but – except for enrollment and graduation rates – they are not broken down by the race or income of students.

At present the state has a performance reporting system and a small performance funding system for community colleges. We review the performance reporting indicators below and then analyze how the data are used (see Table 1).

#### *Access Measure: Enrollment Composition*

This is the proportion of students of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) enrolled in the community colleges compared with the proportions in the state's population, age 18 and older. For the system, the performance goal is for enrollments to mirror or exceed the state's minority population percentage among college-age students (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 110-111).

#### *Success Measures*

The following figures are publicly broken down by community college and, for the graduation rate alone, by the race and ethnic background of students.

*Retention:* The percentage of first-time, full-time degree seeking students who enroll in a given fall semester and return the following fall. The system performance goal is to achieve and maintain a minimum retention rate of 60 percent for all students (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 130-131).

*Remedial Success:* The percentage of students who successfully complete course work (defined as a C or better) in developmental mathematics. By 2011, it is expected that the percentage of successful completers among students enrolled in a developmental mathematics course will rise to 60 percent (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 104).

*Graduation Number:* The number of degrees conferred by the credit program. The performance improvement goal for the system is to award 4,000 degrees and certificates annually (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 118-120).

*Graduation Rate:* The percentage of first-time, full-time degree seeking or certificate seeking students in a cohort who graduate within three years. The rate is broken down not only by community college but also by race and ethnic group. The system performance goal is to

meet or exceed the national average for community colleges (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 132-133).

Among community college officials, the issue has been raised about when and how graduation should be used as a measure of student success. A local community college official argued:

One of the things that...we keep on arguing for are different measures of success in terms of if a student comes here and their intent is to take one course and go to UCONN the next semester and they do that, that would be a success for us. But the way in which the stats are currently structured, [it] would be a failure, so I know that's really a national problem that many community colleges have.

*Licensure Placement Rate:* The percentage of successful completers on licensure and certification examinations. There is a performance goal that graduates taking licensure or certification exams will maintain or exceed a 75 percent pass rate (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 103).

*Job Placement:* The number and percentage of occupational program graduates who were employed in Connecticut at the time of graduation and retained in employment six months thereafter. The results are reported for clusters of three colleges apiece. The clusters are defined by the size and degree of urbanicity of the colleges. The performance improvement goal for the system is to maintain or exceed a 75 percent rate of employment and retention in employment (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 120).

*Specialized Accreditation:* The number of community college programs maintaining specialized accreditations. The system goal is that 100 percent of all programs with specialized accreditations will maintain them (Connecticut Board of Governors, 2006d: 106).

Table 1 below presents the measures that comprise the state's current performance reporting system and indicates whether they are disaggregated by race and income.

## **Data Collection**

The State of Connecticut does not have a data warehouse covering P-20. Data are collected separately for the community colleges, the state colleges, the University of Connecticut, and the P-12 system. Even in the case of the community colleges, the system is not really a warehouse, but it is possible to put together student unit data going back about five years from all 12 colleges. However, the data system is still missing financial aid and post-graduation wage data.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1:  
Connecticut Outcomes Data**

Measure	Reported to the Public		
	By CC	By Race	By SES
<b>ACCESS MEASURES</b>			
<i>Enrollment composition:</i> Proportion of students of color (Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) enrolled in the community colleges compared to the proportions in the state's population, 18 and older.	X	X	
<b>SUCCESS MEASURES</b>			
<i>Retention:</i> Percentage of first-time, full-time degree seeking students who enroll in a given fall semester and return the following fall.	X		
<i>Remediation:</i> Successful completion of developmental mathematics.	X		
<i>Graduation number:</i> The number and percentage of degrees conferred by the credit program.	X		
<i>Graduation rate:</i> Percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking or certificate-seeking students in a cohort who graduate within three years.	X	X	
<i>Transfers to another college (two-year or four-year):</i> Number.			
<i>Licensure passage rate:</i> Percentage of successful completers on licensure and certification examinations.	X		
<i>Job placement:</i> Number and percentage of occupational program graduates who were employed in Connecticut at time of graduation and remained in employment six months thereafter.	X		
<i>Specialized accreditation:</i> Number of community college programs maintaining specialized accreditations.	X		

*Source:* Connecticut Board of Governors (2006d)

## **Connection of Performance Measures to State Funding**

The state has a small performance incentive system insofar as the Board of Governors for Higher Education provides an incentive grant to colleges trying to bring their racial-ethnic composition in closer correspondence with that of the state population. In the first round of funding, community colleges need to set goals. Renewal of their grant requires meeting those goals.

A state official expressed a desire to increase the size of the performance component of state financing of the community colleges: “It would be nice to have...some incentive funds around performance, so that we’re asking colleges to do more in terms of retention and ensuring student success, that there is a way of incenting them to do more.”

## **Evaluations by Respondents**

### **Use of Data by State Officials to Craft State Policies**

There is little evidence, from documents or interviews, that performance data are used by the state in decision making with regard to access or success policies. A state official commented:

Let me also be brutally honest about the state’s accountability report... no one knows what to do with it. The policy makers themselves don’t have time for that detail, don’t understand the detail....So there’s a whole lot more that needs to be done in the education of policy makers on ... what that data means, but the reality is that their attention span to the detail of understanding the data is very very difficult. There’s just lots of constraints on ... the time they are dealing with [it] so I think it’s a large battle....it’s a large challenge.

### **Use by Community Colleges**

There is little evidence, from documents or interviews, that performance data are used by the community colleges themselves in improving access or success for their students, particularly students of color and low-income students. There is a sense that Connecticut does not do a good job in supporting community colleges in their development of a capacity to analyze the data on their own performance. As a local community college official put it, “It is more, ‘here is the report card and look how badly you’re doing.’ So there’s nothing inspiring about how to make it better.” Another local official echoed this view: “We do some [analysis of data on the success of students]...but I would say to be quite honest, otherwise there really hasn’t been very much cognition of that. It really has not been something historically that I’ve seen the college really engage in.” Furthermore, two community college presidents we interviewed were not aware of state targets for low-income and minority students regarding success in graduation, transfer, job placement.

A state official concurred that local community college staff still do not use performance data as much as they could:

Let me also mention, the other piece of data, the acceptance of that data from the people that are actually more important than the policy makers are the folks internally, faculty and staff....The leadership of the college has got to figure out a way to get rank and file faculty to embrace the use of the data and that's a whole lot easier said than done...One of [the] college presidents was telling me about faculty that their reaction is, you know, everything was fine until you started looking at the data which is the same reaction we got in the 1980s when we required assessment testing – everything was fine.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Connecticut has been one of the less active Achieving the Dream states with regard to state policy making, although its level of activity has been increasing in recent years. Indeed, the state has been making a strong push in such areas as transfer policy, guidance and counseling, and performance accountability. In the area of transfer policy, the state has been moving to develop systemwide transfer articulation agreements as opposed to agreements between specific institutions only. With regard to academic and non-academic counseling, Connecticut has the most extensive and well-articulated state standards of all the Achieving the Dream states for the form guidance and counseling should take. Finally, in the area of performance accountability, the state has been developing more extensive indicators of how well its community colleges are performing.

Nevertheless, there are several areas where state-level policymakers may wish to consider further policy making: benefits for undocumented students; remediation; transfer; baccalaureate provision; academic and non-academic counseling and guidance; non-credit to credit transfer; and performance accountability.

The rising number of undocumented students in Connecticut suggests the need to revisit the controversial question of providing such students with guaranteed admission, in-state tuition, and state student aid. However, given how much controversy this issue has raised in the past, there may be a need for more effective political mobilization, including casting the issue in a new way that does not as easily provoke past responses.

The community college system's remediation policies are missing several elements present in the policies of several other Achieving the Dream states. One is state specified common cutoff score on the placement exam. In the absence of such state specification, the community colleges find themselves at odds with each other, with students getting different placements depending on the college. Another is a state mandate that students must undergo remediation if they do not get a high enough score on the placement exam. These are all areas where the state may wish to consider further policy making.

Connecticut has been making a major effort to ease transfer, but much remains to be done. As with the other Achieving the Dream states, the State of Connecticut should consider providing

student aid specifically targeted to transfer students and enhancing community college transfer advising efforts by providing state funds and standards to ensure effective transfer advising. In addition, the state needs to push for statewide articulation agreements with the private colleges rather than bilateral arrangements. Moreover, it would be useful if the statewide agreements with the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State University System could eventually be consolidated. Finally, transfer would be much eased by a common course numbering system encompassing both the community colleges and the public universities. The great political difficulty that many of these proposals face is the autonomy of the public universities (particularly the University of Connecticut). However, as noted below, there is evidence from Virginia that public universities become considerably more receptive to working with the community colleges on transfer articulation when it becomes a performance accountability measure for the universities themselves.

The very independence of the public universities suggests that the state of Connecticut may wish to explore the possibility of allowing community colleges to award their own baccalaureate degrees or at the very least have the public universities offer upper-division courses at the community colleges. These arrangements would make it more likely that vocational students will be able to receive baccalaureate degrees.

Like the other Achieving the Dream states, Connecticut may wish to consider providing financial incentives for colleges to provide extensive academic and non-academic guidance and counseling. As noted above, the state is well ahead of other Achieving the Dream states in setting state standards for such programs. However, the lack of clear state funding tends to leave guidance and counseling at the mercy of the vicissitudes of community college funding and the belief that counseling can be cut back when financial times are hard.

Connecticut is already pursuing efforts to facilitate student movement from non-credit to credit programs. This effort is important and should be redoubled, since such movement is particularly important for students of color and low-income students who often enter the community college through the non-credit side.

Finally, with regard to performance accountability, Connecticut should consider making performance measures more visible so that local community college officials and other stakeholders are more aware of, and responsive to, performance measures. In addition, the state should consider adding performance measures addressing transfer (number and rate) and post-transfer success (post-transfer retention and graduation). These measures should not just be applied to the community colleges but to the public universities as well, since transfer success is as much due to the efforts of the four-year colleges as of the two-year colleges. Moreover, it is important that all the performance measures be broken down by student income and race so that a clear picture can emerge of how higher education is affecting students with different backgrounds. The state should also move to create a state data warehouse encompassing the K-12, community college, and university sectors. Finally, Connecticut – like all the other Achieving the Dream states – should consider providing specific funding and technical assistance to community college institutional researchers. It is particularly important for smaller, more rural colleges with limited resources to gather and evaluate data on their institutional performance.

Cutting across many of the policy categories above is the role of staffing in encouraging minority student access and opportunity. The community college system has made diversifying its faculty and staff a priority, with the aim of increasing the proportion of minority faculty and staff by 5 percent over the next two years (Herzog, 2005: 17). Minority group leaders whom we interviewed emphasized the importance of such efforts. A leader of a statewide Latino group stated:

One recommendation [we made in meetings with college presidents] was “why don’t you diversify your faculty”.... We started the conversation by asking them: “Can you provide us with specific numbers of how many Latinos are in your faculty roster? How many are in administration and at what levels? How many students are enrolled in your system?”....One of the things we told [a college president] is you have to motivate the students and that is not an easy task. If you don’t have faculty who have that capacity it will be a bad experience for those students for a number of reasons.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup> We talked to Katherine Boswell formerly of the Education Commission of the States, Kay McClenney of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas, Davis Jenkins of the University of Illinois-Chicago, Christopher Mazzeo then of the National Governors Association, Richard Kazis of Jobs for the Future, Frank Newman, Lara Couturier, and Jamie Scurry of the Futures Project, Sarah Rubin of MDC, Inc., Katherine Hughes and Tom Bailey of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Patricia Windham of the Florida Department of Education, and Frank Renz of the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges.

<sup>3</sup> The research and policy organizations included the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, The Institute for Higher Education Policy, the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Particularly useful were the state policy reports developed by the Center for Community College Policy at ECS and the State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) of WICHE.

<sup>4</sup> The figure for Black, non-Hispanics was 76% (Ingels et al., 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, among high school graduates in 1992 who entered the community college within the next two years, 62% had secured a college degree or attended a four-year college, but the figures for Blacks, Hispanics, and students in the lowest quartile in socioeconomic status (SES) were only 51%, 47%, and 51%, respectively. This study went on to analyze income and race differences in degree attainment and transfer to four-year colleges among students who entered the community college with the intention of receiving a degree. Once high school preparation and number of risk factors for high school and college dropout were controlled, SES and race differences in degree attainment and attendance at four-year colleges ceased to be significant. This underscores the importance of class and race differences in high school preparation and presence of dropout risk factors in creating class and race differences in degree attainment and transfer. The college risk factors analyzed were delayed college enrollment, part-time attendance, completion only of a high school certificate or GED, working full time when first enrolled, and being a parent (particularly a single parent) while enrolled in college (Hoachlander, Sikora, & Horn, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> More specifically, we first broke the community colleges into three categories by urbanicity: urban (city or large town), suburban, and rural or small town. For each category, we calculated two statistics: the mean proportion minority (nonwhite) of the student body and the mean proportion receiving Pell grants. We then selected colleges that were as close as possible to each of those two means. We qualified this selection, however, to include at least one college that was part of the Achieving the Dream initiative and to ensure that the colleges were not all concentrated in one area of the state.

<sup>7</sup> This focus on the character of the service area may cause difficulties if the racial composition of the service area differs from that of the student body. Colleges in heavily white areas that are trying to diversify their hiring in order to better accord with a significantly minority student body may find that their affirmative action plans are rejected by CHRO because their new hires do not fit the nature of their service area.

<sup>8</sup> However, the community colleges are working more closely with ABE so that students who really belong in ABE find the most appropriate educational services to meet their particular needs.

<sup>9</sup> As a local community college official noted, “we are looking at the demographics of that population. Low income is perhaps a much bigger factor than that of race. The low-income factor is the common factor and that seems to absolutely cut across any kind of racial issues.”

<sup>10</sup> As a state official noted, “Our goal is not to get them graduated from a community college. Our goal is to meet their goal ... So we don’t have a generic policy to say that our goal is to get everyone graduated.”

<sup>11</sup> The public universities do offer some upper-division courses in nursing, business, and criminal justice at Naugatuck Valley Community College.

<sup>12</sup> In theory, it should be possible to track a student from the community college system to one of those universities using National Clearinghouse data and Social Security numbers (Morest, 2006, personal communication).