WINNING THE SKILLS RACE AND STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S MIDDLE CLASS:

An Action Agenda for Community Colleges

Findings and Recommendations from the National Commission on Community Colleges

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Our Collective Challenge: International Competitiveness

- National Adult Literacy Survey – Only 48% of adults meeting minimum standards
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – Reading scores of adolescents have not improved since 1984
- Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) – In 2006, among 30 countries, US ranked 24th in Math literacy and 17th in Science literacy; in 2003, US ranked 15th in Reading
- As many as 50% of entering college students must complete at least one developmental course

Our Collective Challenge: Access and Equity in Higher Education

- A widening "degree gap" – the difference in the rate of degree production between the USA and its top competitors – threatens our competitive position.
- To reduce this gap, the USA must produce:
  - 25.1% more Associate Degree holders
  - 19.6% more Bachelor's Degree holders

T. Reindl, Jobs for the Future, 2007

How can the nation respond effectively to these challenges?

- Community colleges must play a more prominent role in…
  - Strengthening the nation's international competitiveness
  - Increasing equity and access

Commission Findings: *Why are community colleges effective?*

- **Geographic Convenience**: 1,202 public community colleges
  - A campus is within driving distance of 90% of the population
- **Enrollment Capacity**: 11.6 million students
  - 6.6 million students for-credit
  - 5 million students non-credit
  - 40% full-time students
    - 27% employed full time
    - 50% employed part time
  - Average age is 29

Commission Findings…

- **Equity and Access**: Community colleges enroll 46% of all undergraduates in the USA
  - 55% of Hispanics
  - 47% of African-Americans
  - 47% of Asians
  - 57% of Native Americans
  - 40% of all foreign undergraduates

Commission Findings…

- **Degrees:** Award about 800,000 degrees and certificates annually
- **Training:** Certify nearly 80% of all "first responders" (firefighters, policemen, etc.)
- **Transfer & BA Completion**: Nearly 50% of all baccalaureate recipients have attended a community college prior to earning a bachelor's degree

Commission Findings…

- These colleges must be an important part of the nation's response to significant challenges:
  - Economic vulnerability
  - Instability of the middle class
  - Demographic change
  - Challenges to our nation's schools and communities

Commission Recommendations Aimed at Three Constituencies

- The Federal Government
- State Governments
- Community Colleges

1. Recommendations for the Federal Government

- **Institute a new Dept. of Labor program** centering emerging workforce development needs in community colleges.

2. Recommendations for States

- **Facilitate transfer** in areas of critical national and state workforce needs.

3. Recommendations for Community Colleges

- **Develop New Metrics for Community College Productivity**
  - Current and accepted measures apply in only limited ways to community colleges
  - Need to develop consensus on what should be measured
- **Meet National Goals for Associate and Bachelor's Degree Attainment**
  - 25.1% more Associate Degree holders
  - 19.6% more Bachelor's Degree holders