

## **A Typology of Community College-Based Partnership Activities**

Written by

Belkis Suazo deCastro and Melinda Mechur Karp

of the

Community College Research Center

for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education

Improving access to postsecondary credentials is an important way to help individuals invest in their human capital and increase their access to high-wage careers. The challenge for community colleges is to provide learning opportunities in an affordable and efficient time-to-degree manner, while at the same time meeting the occupational and training demands both of student constituents and of an increasingly knowledge-based economy. In recent years, this challenge has intensified due to a growing student population, a depressed economy, decreased funding, greater accountability of student performance, and a mismatch between students' college preparedness and the technical demands of our economy. Community colleges are addressing this challenge, in part, by engaging in institutional innovations that allow them to partner with other institutions in order to streamline their services and meet the needs of students more efficiently and effectively.

Partnerships (also referred to as collaborations) can take many forms and serve many purposes. They can also be supported—or hindered—by local, state, and federal policies. The purpose of this paper is to present a typology of the various types of collaborations in which colleges can engage in order to provide guidance for fiscal and regulatory policy change. We hope that providing such a framework will help policymakers identify the types of activities they want to support and develop appropriate policies to do so.

### **Community college partnerships**

Community colleges have a long history of partnering with other organizations to deliver services. In fact, the junior college movement began as an extension of the K-12 system, with many junior colleges making use of existing high school buildings (Cohen and Brawer, 2003). Over the years, community colleges have continued to partner with other institutions: with employers, through contract training and other labor market initiatives; with high schools, through middle colleges and Tech Prep; and with four-year colleges, through articulation and transfer agreements. The turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has seen increasing pressure on colleges to engage in collaborations. The result is that institutions are increasingly becoming “blended”—with the line between high school, community college, and four-year college becoming more and more indistinct.

Three important trends have contributed to more collaborations. First, a struggling economy has decreased community colleges' operating budgets as states reduced appropriations to higher education (Zuckerman 2006). Community colleges are often “under-funded,” meaning that state funding formulas underestimate their fiscal needs. This has encouraged colleges and other institutions to find ways to pool their resources.

At the same time, community colleges have experienced an increase in student enrollment; between 1990 and 2005, student enrollment in public community colleges grew by 24 percent (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2006: Table 182). These students are more diverse, in terms of academic, linguistic, ethnic, and economic background, than in the past. Moreover, they increasingly view the community college as a stepping stone on the way to a bachelor's degree. Finally, industry demands are also pushing community colleges to create new degree programs that offer industry-recognized credentials and that facilitate transfer between sub-baccalaureate and baccalaureate degree programs.

To address these changes, community colleges have had to rethink how they structure and finance their programs and support services to meet students' needs and help them transition to four-year institutions and the workforce. One way to do this is to work with partner institutions to create innovative initiatives that blend high school, community college, four-year college, and workforce development on one campus. Community colleges now engage in a wide range of partnership activities that, on the surface, appear highly variable. For example, a college may house a high school on its campus while simultaneously serving as a satellite campus for a regional four-year institution. Others provide employer-sponsored training to technical students as well as internships for students completing certification programs. Some allow a local community group to use college facilities on weekends. Still others offer professional development to local teachers.

Despite these differences, community college partnership activities broadly can be seen as belonging to one of four categories, or types. Each type, regardless of who the partner is, addresses a different goal. As such, the challenges faced by different partnership types will vary, as will the policy levers that can influence them. The remainder of this paper describes the four types of partnerships, presents some of the challenges that come about when institutions engage in such partnerships, and highlights ways that these challenges can be met. We conclude with recommendations for federal policymakers.

### **Typology of partnership activities**

The typology distinguishes among the various activities that community college partnerships can entail. It is important to note that in developing the typology we have focused on the goal of the partnership and the possible outcomes, rather than on the participants, structure, or location. In other words, the defining feature of each type is the purpose of the activity; the result is that partnerships within each type can vary along other dimensions. In addition, some partnerships are multi-faceted and have multiple goals. Moreover, these partnerships may belong to more than one type, as each activity falls under a different category. Appendix A summarizes the four categories within the typology.

#### **Curricular Alignment and Articulation**

Curricular alignment and articulation partnerships promote the streamlining of educational requirements and expectations across institutions and businesses. These

activities are focused on creating a coherent pathway to and through various educational levels so that students easily move from high school to community college and then to a baccalaureate degree and employment. The emphasis is on working with partner institutions to create coherent curricula and norms to allow for ease of transfer.

These activities require staff members across partnering institutions to converse with one another and come to a consensus regarding what they expect their students to be able to know and do. This means that community college instructors need to be clear about what they expect incoming students to know, in order to effectively communicate these expectations to high school instructors. Community college personnel must also be willing to listen carefully to four-year college instructors and employers when they express their expectations and to incorporate these expectations into community college programs.

Curricular alignment activities also require partnering institutions to examine their course offerings and determine whether or not they build students' skills in a sequential way that ensures adequate preparation for successive educational or employment steps in their trajectories. This means engaging in curriculum analysis and perhaps revising course content to better reflect partners' expectations.

Curricular alignment activities can take a variety of approaches. One of the most common, particularly in community college-baccalaureate partnerships, is to create *articulation agreements*, in which the institutions specify a sequence of courses that are easily transferable to partnering colleges. In essence, the agreements specify which courses at partnering institutions are equivalent in curricular content. For example, a student completing an articulated course of study at a community college could transfer all of his or her credits directly into a baccalaureate program at the partnering four-year institution. This type of arrangement is also common among high school-community college Tech Prep partnerships.

For example, at Lorain County Community College in Ohio, students who complete an applied associate of science degree in engineering technology automatically receive transfer credits toward the bachelor's degree of science in engineering technology at the University of Toledo (Lorain Community College 2008). In Texas, the state responded to inconsistent and poorly publicized high school-community college articulation agreements by developing a statewide articulation effort. The articulation process for the Advanced Technical Credit program, in which high school students earn college credit for entry-level technical courses, now occurs under the auspices of a statewide taskforce that oversees curriculum development, governance, and information dissemination.

Another common partnership activity supporting curricular articulation and alignment is the development of *common course numbering*. In such a system (generally instituted at the state level), institutions work together to determine the content of a given course, e.g., English 101, and commit to using this content in any course with that number. This allows students to transfer their credit to other institutions since it is understood that the content is the same. It also ensures that students who complete a course are prepared for

the next course in the sequence. In states with common course numbering systems, students are assured that within their system of higher education, English 101 in a community college is equivalent to English 101 in another community college and even at a four-year college or university.

To create a common course numbering system, institutional representatives work together to determine what the content of a given course should be. They must decide together what students should know at the end of the course and the level of competency that they must exhibit to earn credit. As of 2001, eight states (Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, and Wyoming) mandated that all community colleges and four-year institutions participate in a common course numbering system (Education Commission of the States 2001).

A third form of articulation activity is to *align exit and entry standards*. In this activity, institutions work together to determine what students should be able to do upon transition into the next level of education or the workforce. Most common is the alignment of high school graduation requirements and college placement requirements. High schools and colleges work together to establish the minimum performance level students must attain on high school exit exams or SAT/ACT exams in order to be exempt from remedial coursework at the college. This helps students understand what the academic expectations of the college are, while also minimizing the number of exams they have to take. For example, the City University of New York aligned its entry standards with the New York State Regents examinations in English and math.

Finally, community colleges may engage in *alignment activities with employer partners*, in which colleges align their course outcomes with business hiring requirements and/or certification exams. Colleges work with employers to craft curricula (usually in technical fields) that meet the labor market needs of the industry. In Iowa, for example, it is state policy to provide incentive funding for colleges that create or expand associate degree programs leading to high-wage employment. To receive funds, colleges must work with employer partners who promise to hire program graduates and pay them wages well above the federal poverty line.

Curricular alignment and articulation activities are not without their challenges. Institutions engaging in these activities often encounter the following difficulties:

- *“Trust and Turf” Issues*: Institutions do not like being told what to do by others, or may resent the implication that they are currently not preparing their students well for further education and employment. Faculty may resist being told what to teach as part of articulation agreements or of common course numbering systems. Institutions may have trouble finding ways to express their expectations to one another constructively, leading to a breakdown in the articulation process. Some of these issues may disappear over time, but institutions also need to find ways to move past such concerns. They are perhaps one of the most difficult challenges faced by partnerships.

- *Time Constraints:* Engaging in cross-sector communication is time-consuming. Partners may have difficulty coordinating schedules and finding the hours to devote to communication and planning. Building such activities into personnel job descriptions is one strategy to overcome this.
- *Breakdowns over time:* Articulation agreements and other alignment activities may work initially but become dated over the years until they no longer reflect institutional expectations. Partnerships need to build in a schedule for revisiting their agreements on a regular basis and revising curricula and other joint activities as necessary.

Articulation and alignment activities are often supported by state policy. Federal policy can play a role, as well, by providing incentive funding for such activities or requiring community colleges to meet regularly with partnering high schools and four-year colleges. The Perkins Act, for example, has encouraged secondary-community college partnerships in many states. Future policies should find ways to strengthen and sustain such efforts. Possible federal policy levers for doing this might include:

- *Providing funds for articulation efforts.* For example, funding release time for instructors to meet regarding course alignment can be costly for institutions; federal funding streams dedicated to such activities could encourage the cross-institutional conversations necessary for curricular articulation.
- *Encouraging ongoing communication and continual updating* of curricula and articulation agreements through regulatory mandates. For example, states or institutions receiving federal funds could be required to show evidence that they engage in collaborative curricular activities on a regular basis, rather than just showing evidence of one-time articulation agreements or common course numbers.
- *Requiring grantee partnerships to designate a lead institution with a specified role.* Many trust and turf issues arise because partners do not have clearly stated expectations of one another. Federal requirements that grantees define their individual roles within a partnership can help move colleges toward more collegial and long-lasting partnerships, thereby paving the way for meaningful alignment work.
- *Providing national guidance regarding expectations of student outcomes.* For example, what should community college general education graduates know prior to enrolling in a bachelor's degree program? What competencies should certificate completers be able to exhibit? While these would not be mandatory standards, they could help states and institutions set their own aligned curricula.

### Academic and Social Support

Alignment partnerships emphasize curriculum and academics. Academic and social support partnerships focus on providing guidance and information, as well as on promoting social connections that can encourage college enrollment and completion. These collaborative activities work to create a learning environment that nurtures students from high school through their postsecondary years and into the workforce by

providing information about the college process, assisting them at key transition points, and helping build their self-esteem. Some may also provide a haven in which to develop peer relationships that encourage an academic orientation.

Academic and social support activities often focus on the knowledge and skills students need outside of traditional academic endeavors. These include helping students to plan their course taking and career plans, to understand the normative requirements and soft skills of postsecondary education and the world of work, and to navigate the social and physical structure of the college. Such activities are particularly important in guiding students who are underrepresented in higher education and/or who traditionally have struggled in education and the workplace.

Support services partnerships can vary in content. Some may focus on providing academic support, such as counseling, course advising, or tutoring. Others may focus on normative support, such as learning soft skills and expectations.

*Academically-oriented* support activities often focus on preparing students for college. This includes helping them understand what it means to be “college ready” and to plan their high school course-taking in a way that ensures they are prepared for college-level work upon graduation. In California, for example, the Early Awareness Program (EAP) is a partnership between the California State University, the California Department of Education, and the California State Board of Education. The program provides high school students with an early warning system regarding their academic preparedness for college by notifying them of their readiness after taking an augmented version of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade California Standards Test. Students in need of additional preparation are then able to use their 12<sup>th</sup> grade year to burnish their skills in specially-designed courses developed jointly by high school and college teachers.

Similarly, Portland Community College and Portland State University implemented an advising component in their articulation agreements in order to ensure that students understand what they need to do to transfer, and to allow their credits to move from one institution to the next seamlessly (Rivard, 2001). It offers guidance to students on financial aid and academic planning from their initial enrollment at the community college through their transition to Portland State University. Other academic support partnerships provide students tutoring opportunities and other class-related supports, such as where dual enrollment programs allow high school students to access college tutoring centers.

Some support service partnerships *focus on soft skills* to help students understand what is expected of them in college and/or the workplace. These activities are focused less on courses and course content and more on the “intangible” knowledge that is so important to college and career success. For example, many K12-community college partnerships help students gain early exposure to college expectations. In the Early College High School Initiative at LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York, students are required to attend workshops and counseling services to encourage commitment to academic excellence and student responsibility (Born 2006). These

seminars, among other things, help acclimate students to the college environment, provide guidance as to the appropriate way to behave in college classrooms, and help students understand what professors expect of them in class.

There are challenges facing support service-oriented partnerships, however. They include:

- *Determining “readiness” and “norms”*: The purpose of support services partnership activities is to help students get ready for college and understand the normative expectations of college and the workplace. But who determines what it means to be “ready”? And what are the norms, or social rules and standards, of college? What is expected of college students or employees? It is not evident that there is consensus on these issues. Thus, one of the first things that partnerships engaging in these activities must do is come to an agreement as to what it is students need to understand and be able to do to be successful in college and beyond. This requires in-depth conversations among partners, like those addressed in the alignment discussion above.
- *Teaching readiness and norms*: A related challenge is determining how best to prepare students to meet college expectations and to support them in their academic and occupational endeavors. It is not yet clear which program features best promote this type of learning, though emerging evidence indicates that intensive, longer-term activities (such as one-on-one counseling or structured support classes) may have the greatest impact on student success/readiness
- *Funding*: Since most funding structures are based on course enrollment, finding funds to pay for support activities is difficult for many institutions. Providing counselors, one-on-one advising, tutoring, and non-credit workshops are not revenue-producing activities, but they still make intensive use of staff and time.
- *Student participation*: Getting students to participate in support activities can be a challenge. Students often do not understand the value of meeting with counselors or attending activities focused on learning the norms, standards, and expectations of college life. Thus, they must be actively incentivized to participate. Moreover, the logistics of providing such activities to students can be daunting. For example, finding enough time to incorporate extensive support sessions given students’ heavy academic schedules is often difficult.
- *Control*: Though these activities are, of course, partnerships, it is important to identify a lead institution to help create a sense of obligation and responsibility. This can be a challenge. Who sets the rules and standards? For example, if colleges deem it necessary for students to learn certain norms, must high schools teach those norms, without any question? Or do high schools have a say as well? Similarly, must colleges teach workplace skills that employers demand, even if they question the long-term value of those skills? Careful negotiation is necessary to determine the lead institution and the room for accommodation within a partnership.

Policy at the state and federal level can play a role in developing and sustaining support service oriented partnerships. We have already mentioned the Iowa and California examples. Policymakers are much less often concerned with these activities than with alignment activities, however. Additional ways they could encourage institutions to collaborate on fostering student support include:

- *Privilege partnerships that have a support-service orientation.* In competitive funding streams, prioritizing those partnerships that include support service components could serve as an impetus for institutions to develop such activities. Even among partnerships not eventually funded, the conversations surrounding the importance of and feasibility of delivering support activities would be encouraged. Moreover, emphasizing these activities in request for proposals would send a message that they are worthwhile endeavors.
- *Funding partnerships beyond ADA/FTE (Average Daily Attendance/Full-Time Equivalent).* Because intensive support services are costly, providing additional funds to partnerships engaging in these activities is an important way to encourage their development. State and federal funding streams could offer a “bonus” for each student enrolled in an advisement class or for each hour spent advising students. States can also invest indirectly by setting up dedicated funding streams for activities like California’s EAP. In such ways, academic and social support activities would not be ignored in favor of more traditional academic partnership activities like alignment efforts.
- *Leading the conversation.* Determining the types of academic knowledge, normative understandings, and degree of planning that indicates “preparedness” is tricky. Federal and state governments can take the lead by helping institutional partnerships figure out what it means to be college and career-ready. This could occur at a local level by brokering conversations or supporting institutional efforts. It could also occur at a state or federal level by conducting research and/or engaging in information gathering that would lead to a consensus of what students should know and be able to do at various points in their educational careers. These benchmarks would then serve as a jumping-off point for institutional partnerships’ work in the area of academic and social support.

### Professional Development

Professional development activities help staff and teaching faculty improve students’ college preparation and access. In many cases, professional development promotes the collaboration necessary to align curriculum and inform high school students and staff of the requirements and expectations needed to be successful in college. Professional development can occur outside of collaborations, of course. But when colleges work with partners to provide such development, they are able to leverage institutional expertise to enhance their offerings and potentially increase effectiveness.

For example, when colleges partner with high schools to provide professional development around instruction, the respective areas of expertise of the institutional



partners can benefit all players. College faculty know what is expected in the college environment, while high school teachers tend to be experts in pedagogy and workforce partners understand local labor market demands. Professional development partnerships that cross sectors therefore allow each partner to share its know-how with others in the collaboration. This should improve instructional practice and student experiences.

The Looking Both Ways (LBW) project, sponsored by the City University of New York in cooperation with the New York City Department of Education, was such a partnership (the project ran from 1998 to 2006). LBW brought faculty from the university and New York City high schools together to discuss literacy and language, with the aim of improving writing instruction at both the secondary and postsecondary levels (CUNY, nd). Participants visited one another's classrooms and interacted around issues of writing and literacy pedagogy in order to improve their classroom practice.

Similarly, the Automobile Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative (AMTEC) is a collaboration involving 12 community colleges and 14 automotive manufacturing companies, led by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. It aims to develop and implement training for high-skilled technicians working in automotive manufacturing. As part of its work, AMTEC runs professional development "academies" that bring together community college and industry representatives to share best practices and encourage their adoption nationally. These academies enable the industry to share current strategies, goals, and needs with college personnel in order to enhance college instruction.

Many dual enrollment programs also offer professional development for instructors. High school-based instructors frequently receive training in college policies, syllabi, and pedagogical methods. For example, in the Career Edge Academies (career-focused dual enrollment programs) offered by Kirkwood Community College (IA), instructors attend program orientations and curriculum-focused meetings run by college staff members. They may also attend staff meetings with their college-faculty colleagues. Such arrangements serve the dual purpose of ensuring program quality and enhancing high school teachers' knowledge base for use in their high school classrooms.

In addition to funding issues, there are other barriers faced by sites engaged in professional development collaborations. These include:

- *Time constraints:* Teachers have busy schedules, especially during the school year, and are often reluctant to take time away from classroom duties to participate in professional development. Moreover, in unionized workplaces, fitting cross-institutional activities into contract regulations can be challenging. Thus, finding time to engage in professional development activities can be a challenge. This is further complicated by the often conflicting schedules of K-12, college, and employer partners.
- *Reluctance to buy in:* Teachers and employers are often skeptical of professional development activities, particularly when offered in conjunction with

other institutions. Assuring participants that professional development activities are worthwhile is an important ingredient in any collaborative strategy.

- *Turf issues:* As with alignment activities, various partners may feel that their expertise is being discounted or that they are being told “how to do their jobs” by outsiders. For example, high school teachers may resent being told what content to include in their courses, while college instructors may feel that they are not in need of pedagogical advice. If participants resent their colleagues, they may be unwilling to fully participate in professional development partnership activities.

Policymakers can encourage this type of collaboration in a number of ways. First, since professional development, like support-services, does not generate ADA/FTE, providing dedicating funding for such activities is an important policy lever. Other possible ways that state and federal policymakers can support professional development-oriented partnerships include:

- *Providing guidance on best practices.* This includes models for scheduling and organizing professional development collaborations, as well as the pedagogies that such collaborations might seek to promote. Having concrete models on which to base professional development collaborative activities will aid institutions seeking to partner with others to offer such activities. Institutions often indicate that even figuring out the logistics of such a partnership is a daunting disincentive; by providing models that have been shown to work elsewhere, state and federal departments of education could encourage further collaborative efforts.
- *Gathering and disseminating information on professional development experts.* Having a centralized location in which to find workshop facilitators or other human resources will help institutions plan and conduct professional development activities. External facilitators may also help address some turf issues and may assist potential attendees in overcoming their reluctance to participate.
- *Mandating professional development activities in other partnership initiatives.* For example, many dual enrollment collaborations require professional development for instructors. By folding professional development activities into other collaborations, policymakers can emphasize their importance and encourage their spread.

### Resource-Sharing

Community colleges can also engage in partnerships that focus on resource-sharing. These involve cross-institutional use of facilities, funds, or equipment. Such collaborations hold strong appeal for colleges as they can have immediate impact on revenue by expanding resources and sharing costs.

For example, colleges may partner with other institutions to make infrastructure purchases at a group rate. A recent example of such a partnership is the 2005 partnership involving the Community College of Southern Nevada, Nevada State College-

Henderson, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. These institutions negotiated a contract with WebCT, an e-learning system for students and faculty, to acquire access to Internet courses and supplementary instruction. This contract is expected to save the partnership \$454,000 annually by sharing administrative functions, hardware, and support services (Business Wire 2005).

These types of collaborations may also include sharing physical space. An example is Seminole Community College (SCC) Center for Economic Development in Florida, formed in 2005 to pool resources to create and deliver programs for economic productivity. Located in a new three-story building, the center houses several partners that include Seminole Regional Chamber of Commerce, Seminole County Economic Development Department, Florida High Tech Corridor Council, SCC's Corporate Education Center, and Metro-Orlando Economic Development Commission.

Middle and early college high schools also exemplify space-sharing collaborations. These schools are housed on community college campuses and provide high school students with the opportunity to take both high school and college courses, leading to a high school diploma as well as, potentially, an associate's degree upon graduation. Middle and early college high school students generally take their classes during the day—using college space that would otherwise go unused. Then, in the evening, the same classrooms can be used for college classes. In this way, use of these facilities is optimized. (It should also be noted that middle and early colleges engage in collaborative activities that exemplify other features of the typology discussed in this paper, namely curricular alignment and support services. As such, they are an excellent example of the way that a single program can encompass multiple collaborative efforts.)

Space-sharing can also occur in partnerships between community colleges and four-year colleges. For example, the University of Louisiana at Monroe and Louisiana Delta Community College signed a partnership agreement permitting LDCC to be housed on the ULM campus in response to the state's limited resources and students' growing needs. Under the agreement, Delta pays ULM a fee for each student per semester to use ULM's facilities, including the library, student recreational facilities, and cafeterias. To facilitate this sharing arrangement, Delta revised its academic calendar to coincide with ULM academic schedule, and the two institutions developed a co- and cross enrollment agreement to streamline the admissions process. This arrangement has led to cost savings, smoother student transitions between institutions, and optimal use of resources.

University centers are another example of community colleges and four year colleges sharing space. In these arrangements, four-year institutions use community college buildings to offer their courses. For example, Macomb Community College outside of Detroit has had a university center since 1988. Using a specially-levied property tax, the college built a cluster of buildings in which eight four-year college partners offer classes. Students taking courses at the university center are considered Macomb students, but they earn credits and pay tuition to the four-year institutions.

Resource-sharing can extend into the community. Tippecanoe County and Ivy Tech College in Indiana created a collaboration involving a new county public library. The arrangement allowed the partners to share specific resources and provide “enhanced services” both to the general public and to the college students such as extended hours, a more comprehensive collection of library materials, and more classroom space, an auditorium, and a bookstore. These amenities were beyond what each institution would have had in separate facilities (TCPL/IVY, 2002). The partnership was so successful that these institutions have collaborated in using two additional facilities. In another example, the community college in Broward County (FL) partners with community groups and schools, allowing them to use college meeting rooms and other facilities to administer youth programs.

Though the benefits to this type of collaboration seem obvious and relatively easy to implement, there are a number of concerns involving resource-sharing partnerships. Among them are:

- *Oversight and logistics:* When two institutions use the same facilities, which one has oversight and what role each plays in maintenance and control must be determined. Cost-sharing and allocation of revenues also must be done in a fair and equitable manner. The details of these arrangements need to be clearly spelled out; otherwise, institutions may have mismatched expectations or feel that they are not benefiting fairly.
- *Safety and security:* Bringing the public, especially minor children, onto a college campus has potential legal and safety implications. Institutions need to think about special provisions that may be needed and should consider additional security measures. Open campuses can create new safety concerns as well, since it is more difficult to control the flow of people in and out of campus buildings.
- *Implications for missions and public perception:* Bringing two institutions together in partnership is likely to have implications for their respective missions, or at least in the perception of those missions. What does it mean if a community college offers four-year degrees on its campus? Does it lose its essence as a community college? What if it has high school students on its campus? Some colleges have found that the public image changed after sharing space. For example, one community college in California decided to stop partnering with a middle college high school when the public began to see the college as less legitimate because high school students were on the campus. These implications need to be thought through and carefully managed when colleges share their space with other institutions.
- *Ensuring support over time:* As institutional circumstances and leadership change, partnerships may become threatened. What seemed like a good facilities-sharing arrangement at one point may seem less beneficial in another circumstance or to another leader. Partnerships therefore need to find ways to periodically “check in” and make sure that all partners still feel positively about the arrangement. From the start, there should be flexibility within their arrangements that allow for shifts over time.

State and federal policymakers can support facilities-based partnership activities in several ways.

- *Providing sample partnership agreements.* Policymakers might also support research on what types of agreements appear to lead to sustainable resource-sharing partnerships. This type of information would be valuable to institutions seeking to share facilities, as it would help guide their conversations and create partnerships that can persist under changing contexts and leaders.
- *Providing additional funding.* Though resource-sharing partnerships create economies of scale and cost-efficiencies, they do incur some additional costs, such as those for safety and security. Policymakers can support these partnerships by providing an appropriate increase in funding to be used for such aspects of the partnership.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Community college-based partnerships consist of a wide range of collaborative activities. This paper intentionally limited its discussion to partnership activities that promote college access, student and staff development, and institutional stability. To varying degrees, the activities discussed have helped community colleges respond to the economic pressures, legislative demands, and institutional constraints that have challenged their ability to address the needs of increasing numbers of students. We discussed four types of collaborative partnership activities:

- Alignment and articulation of curricular content to facilitate the transfer of college course credits and completion of subbaccalaureate and baccalaureate credentials.
- Student support services to promote motivation and provide information about college preparedness, expectations, procedures, and guidelines.
- Staff development to promote high quality training for teaching faculty and enhanced curriculum design to better prepare students for college and the workplace; and
- Resource sharing to promote a fiscally sound environment that maximizes inter-institutional resources and minimizes costs.

Many innovations at the community college encompass more than one of these activity types. For example, early college high schools are partnerships that engage in alignment activities, support services, and resource development activities. Though the varied activities lead to a cohesive programmatic reform, the challenges for each activity are slightly varied. As such, multi-pronged collaborations such as early colleges must be attentive v

By using the typology provided, institutions and policymakers can identify the types of collaborative activities in which they currently engage or would like to engage in the future. They can then use the typology to identify the potential challenges they will face and find ways to overcome those challenges. Moreover, they can focus their collaborative efforts around a specific goal, framing their work within one typological activity. This should improve the efficiency and efficacy of partnership efforts by guiding and focusing the work.

For each type of activity, we have discussed supportive policy levers. A final policy role that cuts across all categories of the typology concerns data collection and research. Partnership success and student progress require data tracking systems. Many community colleges lack a data system to monitor student advancement within their own institutions or movement into other educational institutions. States and community college practitioners should work together to promote a data tracking system to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of curricular partnerships in promoting access and retention in postsecondary education. Better data provide opportunities for in-depth research on how student experiences and institutional practitioners interact to affect student outcomes.

Much is still unknown about collaborative partnerships, including their prevalence, common structures and, most importantly, their outcomes. The empirical information on how partnerships emerge and how collaborative efforts are sustained remains sparse. More research is needed to understand the organizational dynamics that are involved in partnership activities. Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers should work toward making data available to identify the wide range of partnership activities and their effectiveness and efficiencies in meeting student and institutional demands.

Among other things, research should examine:

- the prevalence of collaborative partnerships and of each of the four partnership types outlined here,
- the demographics of students involved in various partnerships,
- the pathways by which students move through partnership activities, and
- the influence of partnership participation on student outcomes, as well as on institutional outcomes, such as return-on-investment.

Because such research questions involve a partnership that crosses institutional and sector lines, it is important that a central entity, such as a state or the federal government, support data collection to answer them. Data are irrelevant if they are not used, of course, so policymakers should send a strong message regarding the importance of data by authorizing analyses and disseminating findings widely.

Finally, it should be noted that partnering with other institutions has the potential to significantly impact the mission of the community college. It calls into question the fundamental nature of publicly-funded two-year institutions of higher education. What is the purpose of the community college? And does it change when colleges start to meld

with other institutions? Others have already noted that colleges already struggle under the burden of multiple missions (see, for example, Bailey and Morest, 2006). What is the implication of adding additional activities and goals to the college?

Colleges run the risk of diluting their mission and focus when adding additional partnership activities to their agendas. Moreover, there is a danger that college leaders and staff will be unable to understand how these new activities contribute to the main mission of the college. Colleges therefore need to think about the implications of such partnerships, not only for students, employers, and the bottom line, but for their institutional missions and future.

## APPENDIX A

*Summary of four partnership activity types*

	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	<b>Sample activities</b>
<b>Curricular alignment and articulation</b>	Alignment in curricular content, competencies, and course credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathways to and through various educational levels</li> <li>• Coherent curricula and norms to allow for ease of student transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulation agreements</li> <li>• Common course numbering</li> </ul>
<b>Academic and social support</b>	Provide guidance and information to direct students towards educational and career success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and helpful information for use in planning</li> <li>• A common understanding of what students need to know and be able to do to be ready for college and career success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive course advising</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Workshops and student success courses</li> <li>• Early warning assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	Enhance staff and teacher preparation through sharing of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting communication for collaboration</li> <li>• Leveraging institutional expertise to improve instructional practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint workshops</li> <li>• Cross-sector professional mentoring</li> </ul>
<b>Resource-sharing</b>	Generate new income streams and reduce costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared space, facilities, and equipment</li> <li>• Lowered cost burden</li> <li>• More efficient use of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximally used facilities</li> <li>• Community-on-the-campus</li> </ul>



## References

- Bailey, T. and V.S. Morest. (eds.) 2006. *Defending the community college equity agenda*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Born, T. 2006. Middle and early college high schools providing multilevel support and accelerated learning. In D D. Bragg and E. A. Barnett (eds.), *New Directions for Community Colleges: Academic Pathways To and From The Community College*, 135:49-58. Wiley InterScience. Available: [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com)
- Business Wire*. (2005, October 19). Nevada halves costs, extends scarce resources by forming multi-institution e-learning enterprise with WebCT Vista: Three institutions share costs of hardware, administration and support while laying a solid, system-wide e-learning foundation for future. Retrieved February 1, 2008 from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0EIN/is\\_2005\\_Oct\\_19/ai\\_n15699338](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0EIN/is_2005_Oct_19/ai_n15699338)
- Cohen, A.M., and F.B. Brawer. 2003. *The American community college*. (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Education Commission of the States. 2001. *State notes: Transfer and articulation*. Denver: Education Commission of the States.
- Ingersoll, R. M. and T. M. Smith. 2002. The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8):30-33.
- Lorain County Community College. 2008. Program materials available at <http://www.lorainccc.edu/Transfer+Information/Articulation.htm> Accessed March 1, 2008.
- A Partnership for Student Achievement*. (n.d.). New York: City University of New York.
- Phillippe, K. A. and L. G. Sullivan. 2005. *National profile of community colleges: trends and statistics*. Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- Rivard, N. A seamless transition: University, community college partnerships can increase student success. *Matrix: The Magazine for Leaders in Education*. February 2001. Available at [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0HJE/is\\_1\\_2/ai\\_79961253](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HJE/is_1_2/ai_79961253)
- Snyder, T. D., S. A. Dillow, and C. M. Hoffman. 2006. *Digest of education statistics* (NCES 2007-017). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- TCPL-IVY. 2002. *Joint-use library project proposal*: Tippecanoe County Public Library, Ivy Tech State College. Lafayette, Indiana. Available at <http://www.tcpl.lib.in.us/branch/proposal.htm>.
- Zuckerman, M. B. Fairness and the future. *US News and World Report* (April 16, 2006).