



An Intermediary's Guide to
**Working with Higher
Education Partners**

AT A GLANCE

This guide supports intermediaries and their community college partners in forming productive and lasting relationships. The goal of these partnerships is to provide high school students with opportunities to earn college credits that will help them build their future careers.

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About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For more than 35 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

About Building Equitable Pathways

Building Equitable Pathways is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and aims to provide youth with the information and support they need to make informed choices for their futures—especially young people who historically have been denied access to these key resources. The goal is to dramatically increase the number of young people, ages 14 to 24, who are Black, Latinx, or experiencing poverty, who have the agency, social capital, skills, and credentials needed to thrive in the workforce and in life. A deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion stands at the heart of this initiative.

www.jff.org/equitablepathways

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Introduction

Intermediaries that design and build work-based learning delivery systems believe that postsecondary credentials—certifications and degrees (both associate’s and bachelor’s)—are a requirement for most good jobs. Indeed, such credentials increase access to economic mobility and, ultimately, greater equity. When coupled with work-based learning experiences, postsecondary credentials become even more powerful. But many intermediaries have little experience working with higher education partners to make sure that students earn the credentials they need. This guide draws on JFF’s long experience and lessons learned supporting intermediaries and their community college partners to form productive and lasting relationships that benefit young people.

As linking organizations, career pathways intermediaries must reach out to higher education institutions to ensure that:

- The required postsecondary credentials are available and aligned with labor market needs
- High school students can earn college credits through dual enrollment
- The community college is willing to collaborate with high schools and employers
- The college’s program is designed so that students have the option to transfer credits from a certification or two-year degree to a four-year program
- The college assesses prior experience and provides credit for it

The Community College Completion Agenda

Feel free to skip this section and go directly to “Steps to Building a Strong Partnership,” on page 4, if you are already familiar with trends to improve completion rates, reform remediation, and create guided pathways.

Community Colleges Gain the Spotlight

Starting around 2000, community colleges, most of which were founded in the 1960s, came into focus, largely through the funding strategies of the then-new Lumina Foundation. Lumina’s major contribution was an effort to collect data about student pathways: access, retention, and completion. The research revealed very high dropout rates—especially in the first semester and first year among students needing remediation—along with very high remediation rates, and, in

general, alarmingly low rates of degree or certification completion. To address these issues, in 2004 Lumina founded [Achieving the Dream](#) with seven partner organizations in the higher education field: the American Association of Community Colleges; the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas-Austin; the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University; JFF; MDC; MDRC; and Public Agenda. Together, staff from these organizations attempted to better understand who attends community colleges, their goals upon entry, and how to incentivize and support higher completion rates. Dubbed “the completion agenda,” Achieving the Dream continues today as a partnership with over 270 college members.

The founding of Achieving the Dream spawned a number of reforms aimed at different causes for and solutions to low community college completion rates. These reforms included improving the admissions process, placement testing, and developmental education. Data clearly revealed that inadequate academic preparation is a major impediment to completion. [Complete College America](#) is another reform organization that is focused on two- and four-year college completion; in a 2013 report, Complete College America asserted that, with at least 60 percent of students assigned to noncredit courses, remediation is a “bridge to nowhere.” Around the same time, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded the Completion by Design initiative, which expanded the focus from developmental education to a comprehensive community college completion strategy that redesigned each step of the credential pathway: admission, entry, progress, and completion. Such redesign work continues today.

The Big Prize: Increasing Community College Completion

While community college outcomes have improved, as have data collection and analysis, the most recent reform—guided pathways—is attempting to remedy yet another impediment to completion: too many choices. Data show that expecting students to choose well among thousands of courses when they have little experience of postsecondary education, inadequate preparation, and demands from family and jobs increases the likelihood of them dropping out. In guided pathways, students choose among a carefully selected set of default pathways that lead to an associate’s degree with immediate value in the labor market or a degree aligned with requirements for transfer to a four-year program without loss of credits (or perhaps a degree that meets both criteria). [More than 300 colleges](#) across the country are currently taking on large-scale guided pathways reforms.

In the most recent version of the completion agenda, community colleges are focusing beyond completion to career attainment. While systems vary across states in the degree to which they take workforce preparation as their primary mission, colleges are reaching out to engage employers, aligning their programs with the needs of businesses, and more generally embracing the mission to prepare their state’s workforce. These major reforms are challenging under the

best of times. Today, they are being undertaken with budgets that were severely constrained even before the economic disaster caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the pandemic, in many states' higher education systems, per-student funding was the lowest for community colleges; now, community colleges are doing more with less and facing even greater challenges. Students, many of whom are members of marginalized and under-resourced communities, are experiencing higher levels of unemployment, food insecurity, and homelessness, as well as the trauma of having family members become seriously ill or even dying from COVID-19. All this has resulted in uncertainty about enrollment and the need for additional resources and supports.

Engines of Economic Mobility for Students Experiencing Poverty

The good news is that, while there is much to improve, community colleges see themselves as engines of economic mobility with a mission of educating everyone who comes through their doors. The commitment of leaders and faculty to this mission is demonstrated every day in the challenges they meet in serving students and the difference they can make in students' life trajectories. In terms of "value add," community colleges show an extraordinary return on investment for the state, the institution, the community, and the student.

With their focus on better career and mobility outcomes for young people from communities that have been under-resourced and marginalized, it is significant that community colleges educate the majority of students of color who participate in higher education and certainly the greatest number of students who are experiencing poverty. Community colleges also host apprenticeship programs and design and deliver career training and skill development for employers and the state. They frequently serve as their state's sites for providing adult basic education and English for newcomers to the United States and as centers that help immigrants and refugees assess prior learning and retool for the U.S. labor market. And they do all this with budgets that in most states had declined over the last decade—and likely have already or will soon decline even further due to state budget cuts related to COVID-19. (There are, of course, exceptions in regard to funding. COVID-19 is sending students back to college for retraining and upskilling, and some states will increase funding to support enrollment growth. See, for example, [North Carolina](#)'s increase in community college support.)

Learn More

The [Fast Facts 2020](#) infographic from the American Association of Community Colleges gives a quick glimpse of the sector.

Steps to Building a Strong Partnership

This guide outlines the steps intermediaries can take to launch a successful partnership with a local community college. It covers preparing to form a new connection, identifying the right contacts, making your case, and centering your goal: to provide high school students with opportunities to earn college credits that will help them build their future careers.

1. Laying the Groundwork

Before reaching out to a potential community college partner, you should have an understanding of the national and state policy environment in which the college operates, as well as how the system is governed and funded. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) provides this brief overview of governance structures:

In most states, each community college has its own independently operating governing board. In nearly a dozen states, however, a statewide system governs all community and technical colleges. These systems, which are found in 11 states nationwide, offer varying combinations of local and statewide governance.

Knowing the governance structure of your partner college—whether it belongs to a centralized system or is relatively autonomous—will give you a sense of the locus of decision making and the degree of autonomy of the college. For example, the California Community College system, with 2.1 million students in 116 colleges, has its own board of governors plus 72 locally elected boards of trustees, while Massachusetts, a much smaller system, has one board of higher education responsible for coordinating all public higher education institutions and each institution has its own appointed board of trustees. Within institutions, it is also useful to understand organizational structures and the roles of specific offices and people. There will generally be academic and workforce sides of the house and, depending on the size of the college, deans and division chairs, as well as the various outreach and communications offices. Whether the faculty and staff are unionized also makes a difference in governance and decision-making. But whether faculty is unionized or not, faculty governance through a senate plays a much larger role than in K-12 public schools.

Because your goal is to serve students, you may also want to get an overview through the college website of programs of study (credit and noncredit), the demographics of the student body, and options for dual enrollment of high school students.

Learn More

For basic information on federal policy—for example, the status of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act or new Title IX regulations—the [American Council on Education](#) is a good source.

For information about community colleges in general, see the [AACC](#) website.

For a state-by-state rundown of governance structures, see the [State Postsecondary Governance Structures: State Profiles](#) infographic from the Education Commission of the States.

For more information about getting a first look at the college, see the “Approaching a Community College for the First Time” step below. We comment on student-level policies relevant to career pathways in two other steps: “Understanding Your College Partner” and “Anticipating Other Complexities.”

2. Approaching a Community College for the First Time

As the intermediary that organizes and leads an equitable career pathways initiative, it will be helpful to form a stakeholder committee and work with it to agree on vision and goals, intended outcomes, strategies, and a work plan. *JFF recommends having your higher education partner at the table from the earliest stages.* To do that, you will need to do some homework before asking the college to join the team.

Getting Basic Information: Who Runs Your Community College?

Most colleges’ websites include pages such as “About the College” and “Leadership.” Checking those pages might help you determine to what extent the college collaborates with high schools and nonprofits, is committed to career preparation, or partners with employers and regional or community economic development organizations. The college president’s biography and official statement to the community are good places to look for this sort of information.

You can also find information about the college’s internal organization on the leadership page. Look for a list of who serves on the board of trustees; the name and work history of the vice president for academic affairs, the provost, or the chief academic officer; and the name of the deans or directors of workforce and continuing education (these positions are more likely to exist at the larger colleges). Make note of any existing connections you have to the people in

leadership roles at the college. Do you know any of the members of the board of trustees or do you have ties to other boards they serve on?

You can use the section of the college's website that provides links to news stories to gain a sense of how the community sees the college. You can also directly check your local or regional media. Make note of any controversies going on among staff, students, and faculty and news about large grants or new programs, including those serving youth.

Dual Enrollment Programs for High School Students

The foundation of a pathway program is likely to be dual enrollment coursework, so you should know about the credit-bearing courses or programs your college provides for high school students. While about [one-third of U.S. students](#) take a college course while they are in high school, not all high schools provide such courses through college partnerships. Colleges enroll high school students for various reasons: state policy incentivizes them to do so through funding formulas, high school students fill empty seats, and the college's access and completion agenda supports early outreach to students, especially young people who are likely to face systemic barriers to completing their degree. At one end of the policy continuum, colleges allow high school students to enroll on a course-by-course basis and charge them tuition; at the other end, the college partners closely with high schools and provides structured early college programs of study free of cost to students. For example, in many parts of Texas, as many as one-third of community college students are also high school students pursuing a high school diploma and an associate's degree concurrently, at no cost to the student. Many go on to complete a degree at the college.

3. Finding an Institutional Champion

If there is no one on the college's website that you know, to whom should you reach out? You might think the office of community relations is a good choice. After all, yours is a community organization. But because your goal is to structure academic and/or certification programs for your students, you want to deal with the academic side of the college, where credit-bearing programs are housed. In a small institution, you might make an appointment with the president, especially if you have met them or know someone who can make an introduction. At a larger institution, your first contact should be the chief academic officer and/or the dean for workforce, especially if you want your students to be able to complete a particular number and sequence of college credits before high school graduation. If you have a specific sector of interest—for example, cybersecurity or health care—you could also approach the relevant department or division chair. Finally, you can connect with the person who leads dual enrollment programs and other programs that serve first-generation college-goers.

If your sole purpose is to access short-term industry certifications for your students, then first approach the dean for workforce and/or continuing education. In many institutions, noncredit programs and some credit programs are part of a continuing education division. Such divisions are often self-financed, not state-funded, so will have a different fee structure and set of offerings than the main institution.

No matter the potential champion you approach, you should explain that working with your intermediary organization will minimize requests from multiple high schools wanting different programs, since your organization will coordinate those requests and support efficient communication. As dual enrollment and early college have become more popular, many colleges have only had the experience of having high schools reach out directly. Community colleges can be overwhelmed by requests for courses and programs tailored to specific high school wishes and may be reluctant to enter into further one-off agreements.

4. Making Your Case

As community colleges have gained more visibility over the last decade, they have been asked, as is often said, “to do everything for everyone.” The pandemic has likely worsened this situation, as many people suddenly need reskilling or upskilling to find jobs. Nonetheless, community colleges are still stigmatized, forgotten, or thought to offer poor-quality education. They are often written off as last resorts for students who can’t get into four-year institutions. The reality, though, is that they are great places for getting a first credential and gaining more earning power without taking on a lot of debt. You will help make your case if you keep all of this in mind and approach the college with empathy and a good understanding of the college’s role in the community.

As you plan your approach, it’s good to keep in mind that most community colleges are trying to be the engines of economic mobility that your students require, and they’re doing that with very limited resources. In addition, they often serve students who face many challenges to completing their educations—students who are experiencing poverty, are managing multiple demands on their time from family

Approach College Leaders as Equals

“In our early meetings with college leaders, the attitudes around the table were often as important as the topics we discussed. We approached all meetings with a strong interest in learning about the college, its opportunities, and its expectations. We were also clear in describing our goals and identifying the resources we were committing in support of student success. It is crucial that the school district and the college work together as equal partners.”

Source: JFF’s [Hidalgo Early College District Toolkit](#)

and work, and may have inadequate academic preparation. It's not unusual for these students to experience large gaps between their last formal schooling and community college entrance.

Also remember that the college is committed to serving *all* of its students, and yours is likely a small organization advocating for a program that, at least at the outset, will serve only a small number of students—but still take up human resources.

Emphasize the Value You Can Add

That said, *you bring value to the college*. The students you work with are likely to be prepared and motivated; they have access to resources that can help them persist through completing a certification or degree or transferring to a four-year institution in good standing. All of that is thanks to the support that your organization and the students' high schools provide. While most high schools wave goodbye to their students at graduation, early college high schools support students as they take their first college courses while in high school; the same students are also aided by college staff. High school students in an early college program are often better prepared in composition and math and less likely to need remediation. In addition, a [body of research](#) confirms that students of color benefit from early college experiences and have higher college enrollment and graduation rates, making them ideal members of any higher education community.

The high school and intermediary will also have introduced students to the dimensions and requirements of their chosen career pathway. Students will have taken high school CTE courses and may have had work-based learning experiences, both of which make them good prospects to succeed and to contribute positively to the college's completion rates. And finally, because high schools take attendance and are accountable for student completion, your students are unlikely to drop out of their college courses. Remember that your college contact may hold the false perception that high school students are immature and will not work hard in college courses. How you present the support provided by your organization and the high school is critical to allaying fears.

Here are some additional advantages that community colleges gain from working with you:

- You may bring resources from already-funded philanthropic or government grants or contracts; you may make your college partner eligible for funding that requires a partnership between a college and its community partners including high schools.
- Your students can add to enrollments now and become a strong recruitment source for the future.
- If the partnership is successful, you will help to generate good will in the community, also prompting additional students to enroll.

- Thanks to your ties with employers, you bring highly valued opportunities for additional business engagement, internships, earn and learn programs, and the like.

One note of importance: in JFF's experience, your community college champion is likely to be reluctant to take on additional responsibilities without compensation or staffing. When you make your pitch, if you are able to offer to facilitate meetings and to provide a liaison to work between the college, your organization, partner high schools, and employers—in general, to minimize demands beyond those required for students in your program—you will be more readily welcomed.

To sum up your pitch, the college can gain the following from working with you:

- Well-prepared and motivated students who are supported by their high schools and likely to complete their programs
- Connections to additional employers
- Access to resources and funding
- Good will in the community and thus an enhanced profile
- Additional staff capacity

5. Asking for What You Need

Thus far, this guide has focused on your preparation to be well informed before you reach out to your potential new college partner. But of course, the purpose of your visit is to get the college to provide credit-bearing courses and certifications for your students in their chosen career areas.

As an intermediary, how you relate to the sending high school and whether your community college system has a history of working with high schools will in part determine how you articulate what you need.

The strength of your relationship with your high school partner and whether the community college system has a history of working with high schools will greatly influence the outcome and should inform how you prepare for the discussion.

Pathways that Lead to an Associate's Degree

Let's start with the biggest, most ambitious ask: you want your students to be able to earn an associate's degree that prepares them for the labor market immediately or allows them to transfer to a four-year institution. With an experienced postsecondary partner, your discussion can address substantive issues early on: labor market data about high-value regional career opportunities, programs and resources in the career pathways of interest, general education requirements, and whether there are clinical or work-based learning requirements or options. You will also want to know about the degrees and certifications offered and to address questions about who covers tuition and fees and pays for transportation, books, and materials. For an experienced community college, these questions will not be a surprise.

As a general rule, a degree or certification in which the credits can transfer to another public two- or four-year institution is the best bet, but transferability varies from state to state as well as within systems. It's best to inform yourself or ask, since some certifications and two-year degrees include a mix of transferable and terminal credits. You will also address administrative and logistical challenges early on, from applications and financial aid to scheduling. These are issues that your college partner has likely dealt with in the past.

Example From the Field: Experienced Postsecondary Partners

Both City University of New York (CUNY) and City Colleges of Chicago are systems of choice for most public school graduates in their respective cities. Both systems have a long history of working with high schools and currently have multiple early college high schools and dual enrollment opportunities. In both cases, there is an infrastructure and experience to draw upon.

CUNY has offered College Now, an extensive dual enrollment program, since the 1980s; Chicago Public Schools have established both STEM early college high schools and dual enrollment options. In addition, City Colleges of Chicago specialize in sectors; for an intermediary or high school that aims to offer a health pathway, for example, Malcolm X College is the obvious choice for partnership.

Pathways that Lead to an Industry Credential

With a less experienced postsecondary partner, you might start with a more modest goal—students will earn a credit-bearing industry certification. In this case, once you ascertain that your college offers the cert that you want, then the questions are more tactical than about content. For example, some certifications are nationally accepted, while others may have only state applicability, and regions vary in how much employers value standardized certifications.

You will also want to check the cost per credit as well as the cost of required or optional certification or licensing exam as well as any citizenship and/or health or arrest record barriers.

Curriculum Alignment with Labor Market Trends: For All Community College Pathways Programs

One important question all intermediaries will want to ask is whether the career pathways courses and program you select align to current regional labor market needs. You might think that all courses and pathways are up to date, but there are many reasons why that may not be the case: faculty may not have access to the latest tools and technologies, may be out of touch with local employers, or may go by national rather than regional trends. The faculty may also be emphasizing fundamentals, not the specifics of local employer requirements.

JFF relies on two tools among others to check for alignment: labor market information (LMI) and program of study mapping. In short, both traditional and “real-time” LMI aggregated for your labor market will give you a sense of which industries and sectors are hiring, which are stagnant and declining, which skills and competencies employers say they need, and some information about pay scales. Many states subscribe to a commercial company that mines data in real time. (Burning Glass and Emsi are among the most popular.) Many sources are available free of charge, including the federal government’s O*NET.

Learn More

For an overview of LMI and why it is not only useful, but also essential to creating high-value pathways, see JFF’s [Labor Market Information 101](#) webinar.

JFF’s report [When Is a Job Just a Job— and When Can It Launch a Career?](#) supports using LMI in pathways design and provides an equity lens that helps you ascertain whether a particular employer or sector will be welcoming to all qualified candidates or how “qualified” will be defined and by whom. It also provides mechanisms for assessing such job qualities such as career stability, advancement potential, and pay.

Program of Study Mapping

Going beyond LMI to the curriculum itself, JFF has developed a set of tools for mapping programs of study. Working with regional leaders across industry and education over a period of months, a facilitator guides the group to identify industry-relevant and in-demand skills and abilities called “competencies.” These competencies become “maps” that are then used to assess, revise, or develop the sequence of courses and experiences within a pathway.

In general, program of study mapping is a multi-month endeavor led by a coalition. Each model program of study is developed using a data-driven approach that starts with areas of anticipated

job growth and backward-maps them to a sequence of high school courses. The information below, the result of a JFF-facilitated [mapping process in Illinois](#), provides a quick overview of the steps involved in this analysis:

1. Identify high-priority occupations in the industry sector that are high-skill, high-wage, and in demand based on federal Department of Labor data for Illinois
2. Identify promising postsecondary credentials (degrees or certificates) that are broadly accessible through the Illinois community college system and lead to high-priority occupations
3. Map the stackable degrees and certificates that progress to promising credentials
4. Identify strategic community college courses that appear across the maximum number of promising credentials and provide a broad foundation of knowledge essential to that industry sector and are feasible for dual credit delivery
5. Map a course sequence from secondary through the first year of postsecondary that incorporates strategic early college credit (including at least six early college credits in the career-focused course sequence) and considers industry trends and innovations in career and technical education
6. Define related technical competencies for the foundational program of study courses that can be utilized to guide course development and postsecondary articulation

Learn More

See JFF's [Developing Pathways Using Industry-Aligned Competencies](#) webinar and [Recommended Technical and Essential Employability Competencies For College and Career Pathway Endorsements](#) for a more in-depth exploration of program of study mapping in Illinois.

These tools and materials have also been adapted by JFF's longtime collaborator, the Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, to produce [Model Program of Study Guides](#) for Illinois.

The Politics of Curriculum Revision

With the right tools and analytic frameworks, you will be able to assess the currency and relevance of a pathway or program of study. Getting the college to modify its curriculum, however, is a time-consuming and complicated process. We won't go into the intricacies of community college governance and decision-making and why curriculum revision takes time, but here are a few things to keep in mind.

Before being approved, new courses or programs generally go through multiple committee reviews, including a departmental committee, a division dean, and the faculty senate or curriculum committee, and possibly a union committee. If a completely new program, these committees plus a chief academic officer and a board of trustees at the institution, and often at the state level, undertake a review.

The bottom line: it's much quicker for a faculty member to revise an existing course than to create a new course or program and get it approved. The latter may well take a year at least. Thus, we encourage course revision as the best strategy. Faculty often welcome the chance for informal informational gatherings with employers, visits to enterprises, or participation with employers in a formal program of study mapping process. In these circumstances, faculty will make modifications and/or additions to update or add to existing courses without having to seek broader approval.

6. Anticipating Other Complexities

This section outlines a few additional topics to discuss with your community college partner: placement testing, who will teach, credit for prior or on-the-job learning, support services, and policy in regard to undocumented students.

Placement Testing

How will the college assess whether your students are ready for credit-bearing courses? Community colleges generally admit all students and then test them to assess their capabilities in writing, reading, and math to decide whether to place them in credit-bearing or remedial courses. How they are placed has major implications for other courses that will be available to them, since qualifying for credit-bearing English and math courses (known as “gatekeepers”) opens access to many other courses. There is an extensive [policy and practice literature](#) on this issue.

If possible, avoid agreeing that all students should take a standardized placement test. The most frequently used test, ACCUPLACER, does not align well with college requirements, costs too

much to administer, and is not worth the prep time. Forward-thinking educators recommend using multiple assessment measures—GPA, math courses taken, teacher recommendations, and a test—or developing an alternative with your high school partner. You may be only guiding from the sidelines on this issue, but an alternative you could suggest is that high school faculty prepare students for the final exercise of the college’s developmental education courses, and those who pass can enroll in credit-bearing courses. In your discussion about placement, you may also ask whether the junior- or senior-level English and math courses at your partner high school cover the material equivalent to the writing and math prerequisites.

Instructors

Who will provide instruction and where? There are five possible scenarios:

1. Instructors from the community college teach the college-level classes at the high school
2. High school teachers certified as adjuncts teach the college-level courses at the high school
3. Instructors teach classes on the college campus that are restricted to the high school student cohort
4. Instructors teach classes on the college campus that are open to both college and high school students
5. Some combination of these options

The best answer for your partnership may depend on state guidance or regulations about instructor credentialing, pay scales, and, in some cases, union contracts, but there may also be local variations. Whatever the case, costs, union contracts, and the distance between the high school and the college must all be taken into account. Under the best circumstance, high school students will gain the most from taking at least one or two courses on campus with “regular” college students.

Contingent or Adjunct Faculty

One further caution regarding expectations of instructors: you may imagine that most faculty teach full time and are tenured or are on what’s called the tenure track to permanent employment. That’s not the case. [Fully 70 percent of two- and four-year college faculty](#) are not on a tenure track; many work part time, getting paid by the course, with no security, no benefits, and no expectation that they will do anything other than show up for class. Many adjuncts are wonderful teachers, often with current careers in the subject they teach. Many contribute much more to their students and institutions than their pay would indicate. Nonetheless, students may

have very limited access to adjunct faculty for office hours, extra help, or contact by email outside of class. Such faculty likely have very little freedom to develop or change a course and may not be available for planning meetings and the like.

Credit for Learning at Work

Since your intermediary is focused on providing work-based learning, you may want your college partner to assess and provide credit for student work experiences. In some states and districts, public high schools and community colleges provide credit for such courses, and student experiences are rigorously evaluated. (See Tennessee's [Work-Based Learning Career Practicum](#).) If you are providing work-based learning directly through your committed employers, you will need to find out if your partner college assesses prior learning through a demonstration or exam, and you will want to structure the employer-based learning experience so that students can meet the college's competency assessments.

Student Support Services

The transition from high school to college requires that students adapt to a different culture and set of routines. Among these are the expectations that students stay on track and complete their assignments with relatively little instructor intervention and that they take initiative to seek out help such as using a writing center or taking advantage of office hours. Since your students will be matriculated at the college if they are in regular college courses, the college services should be open to them, but it's good to make agreements about such services from the start and then to ask their high school teachers or the college liaison to provide an orientation to the services available.

Finally, however mystifying and slow you find the routines and rules of a community college, you should remind yourself that your primary goal is to have your students enroll in a program and complete it. You are not there to change the college. When you hit roadblocks, you and your college champions will do best to figure out workarounds. Sometimes colleges will agree to waive rules due to special circumstances. And in some situations, you will invent new ways of working that will benefit your students as well as the college.

Undocumented Students in Higher Education

Because public K-12 schools are legally prohibited from asking students about their citizenship status, you may not know you are working with undocumented high school students, and you should not ask. This is an important and tricky equity issue, because when students apply to college, their immigration status becomes relevant for tuition and financial aid purposes. Thus, you should know your state's policies. No state prohibits any student from applying to college, but undocumented students cannot receive any federal financial aid. Both the cost of college and the fear of being deported are barriers.

Nonetheless, disclosing their immigration status to a trustworthy and knowledgeable adult can be a crucial step for students seeking information about their options and the processes for

accessing available financial aid and scholarships. One precedent of importance, cited here from a [College Board publication](#), is that along with “hospitals ... all schools, colleges, and universities have ‘sensitive location’ status. This means that classmates, educators, and campus faculty members have a right to defend undocumented students against inappropriate enforcement actions.” It is useful for students to know about sensitive location status.

State policies differ in regard to whether undocumented students are eligible for in-state tuition at public institutions or must pay full out-of-state or international student tuition, which can be at least three times the cost of tuition for residents. [At least 21 states](#) and the District of Columbia have passed laws or policies that permit undocumented students who meet certain eligibility criteria, such as residing in the state for a minimum number of years and graduating from a high school in the state, to pay in-state tuition. More than a dozen states have also extended state or institutional financial aid to undocumented students in recent years. Private institutions are less constrained by state and federal law so may be more flexible and welcoming than the state systems and may provide institutional scholarships. One important value of early college and dual enrollment is that, in many states, undocumented students may be able to accumulate college credits at no cost while they are still protected from disclosure because they are enrolled in high school. However, they may not be able to attain a college transcript to vouch for the credits attained.

Immigration Status Resources

These reports and organizations can help you check on your state’s policies and keep up with federal policy.

General Information

- [Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Students Are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?](#), Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, April 2020 (*also see Inside Higher Education’s [overview of this report](#)*)
- [DACA News and Information for Undocumented Students](#), College Board, June 22, 2020
- [Basic Facts About In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students](#), National Immigration Law Center, April 11, 2020
- [Resources to Help You Protect Immigrants](#), United We Dream, 2018

Latinx Student Advocacy and Information

- [MALDEF](#) (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)
- [Excelencia in Education](#)

7. Celebrating Success and Sharing Credit

Once you and your college partner have worked out agreements that enable high school students to enroll in a career pathways program, make sure you take a deep breath and celebrate. Then, activate your marketing and communications team as well as that of the college, the high schools, and your district to set the stage to share future updates and reports on the results of this collaboration to the benefit of all. Within a year, you should be able to count and publicize the number of credits high school students have attained, the number of students participating, and perhaps the number who will be enrolled in the college full time in the following year. You may have employers who are willing to praise the partnership and who will note the maturity and productivity of their student interns, and even how their internships have firmed up the students' college commitments. Your college leaders will welcome such public attention, and your community will be proud of all the young people who have met the challenge.

Additional Resources

- [Fast Facts 2020](#), American Association of Community Colleges
- [Community College FAQs](#), Community College Research Center
- Terry U. O'Banion, [The Continuing Evolution of the American Community College](#), League for Innovation in the Community College, February 2019
- Diane Auer Jones, [The Path Less Taken: Barriers to Providing CTE at Community Colleges](#), November 2017, AEI