

A New Way Forward Is Needed to Jump-Start Degree Completion

By Stephen G. Katsinas, Louis E. Shedd, Jonathan P. Koh, Michael S. Malley and J. Lucas Adair, The University of Alabama; Mark M. D'Amico, University of North Carolina at Charlotte; and Janice N. Friedel, Iowa State University

KEY FINDINGS:

- Community college *productivity has dramatically increased*. Associate Degrees and First-Certificates awarded rose by 75% and 122%, respectively from 2000-1 to 2012-13.
- *But productivity increases are slowing due to:* (a) cuts in state appropriations after ARRA funds ended in FY2011, (b) 2012 cuts in Pell, and (c) improving economy.
- *Last year, completions in most states declined:* among 22 of 42 respondents said degree completions decreased or remained flat from 2012-13 to 2013-14; by 2:1 most say it will be difficult to raise completions with state cuts.
- *State cuts are increasing:* In 2013-14, 14 predicted state appropriations wouldn't cover inflation; for 2014-15, 31 did so.
- State and federal student aid policies are *still not aligned*.
- 3 of 4 indicate long-term operating budget plans needed to increase degrees and certificates *do not exist* in their states.
- *A new way forward is needed to jump-start degree completion*, to make America #1 again in adult degree and certificate completion.

INTRODUCTION

Without sustained operating budgets and consistently funded federal and state student financial aid, can our nation's community colleges be expected to increase graduation rates? In this report we present results of our latest survey of National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges, with 50 of 51 possible responses. The news is not good. Last year, a majority among respondents from 42 states say community college degree completion rates have remained flat or are decreasing. Can American higher education possibly accomplish the "moon shot" needed to restore America to #1 in the world without substantial, sustained federal and state funding?

The very titles of our two most recent reports speak to the difficulty of this challenge at the institution level and statewide. *Halfway Out of Recession, But a Long Way to Go*, the 2013 National Survey of Access and Finance Issues, found 14 states failed to increase their state appropriations in Fiscal Year 2013-14 at levels sufficient to cover the 1.8 percent predicted Higher Education Price Index (p. 9).¹ Our November 2014 study found the situation actually worsened. *Recovery Continues, But Competition Is Fierce*, revealed 31 states failed to increase appropriations in FY2014-15 to meet the 3.0 predicted HEPI inflation rate.² These data are consistent with the recent 2015 "Grapevine" report of Illinois State University and the State Higher Education Executive Officers, which concluded that half the states are appropriating less for higher education than they did five years ago,³ supporting the thesis advanced by Doyle and Delaney that the duration in bouncesbacks from recessionary cuts in appropriations has grown in the decades since the Vietnam War.⁴

Figure 1. College Completion is Flat or Decreasing in Most States

Last year, the community college completion rates in your state...
(of 42 expressing an opinion):

Remained Flat or Decreased (22 states)

Increased (20 states)

Source: 2014 National Survey of Access and Finance Issues, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama.
Note: 5 respondents indicated "don't know" and are not tabulated here.

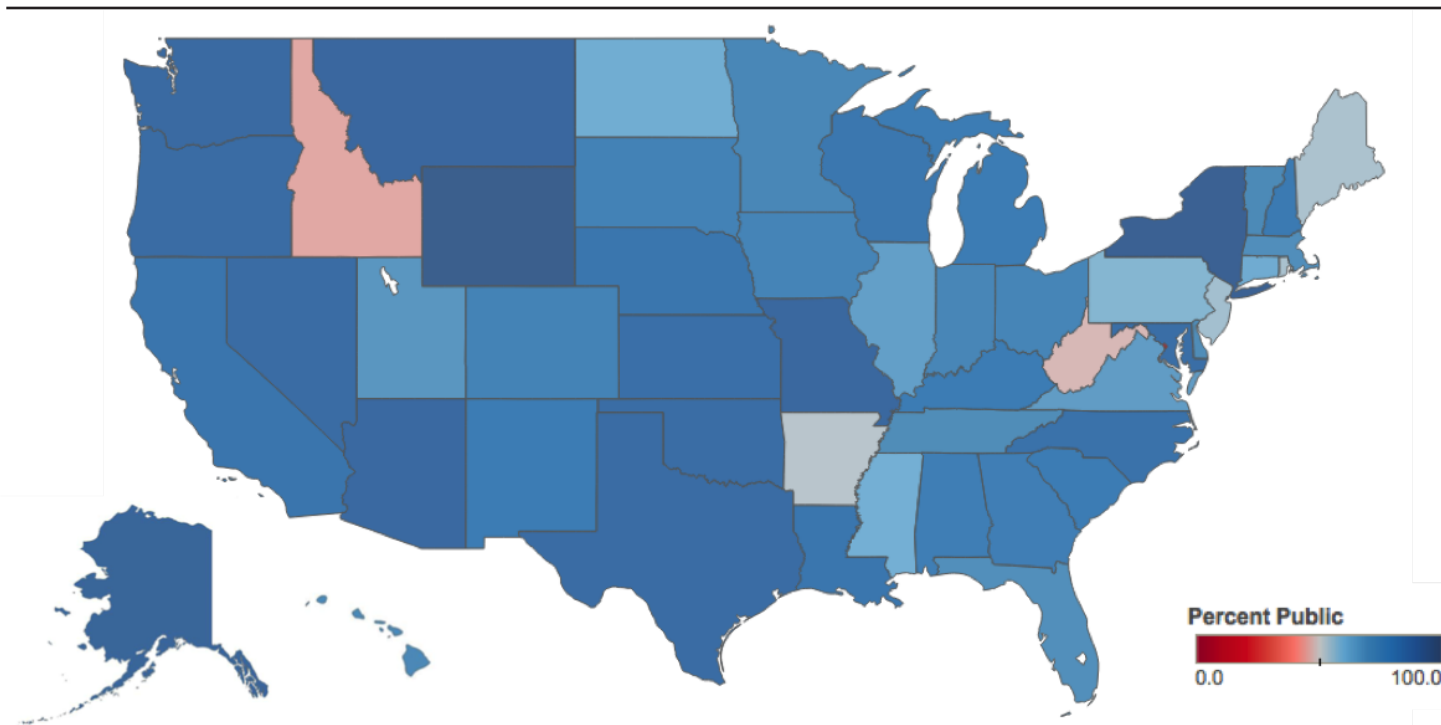
A New Way Forward Is Needed

The Education Policy Center addressed these issues in our December 2011 national survey of state-level community college leaders. Our report, *Challenging Success: Can College Degree Completion Be Increased as States Cut Budgets?* revealed:

- Just 4 and 3 of 51 respondents, respectively, indicated a long-term plan exists to fund, respectively, the operating and capital budgets needed to increase numbers of adults with college degrees/certificates.
- Capacity was strained in 24 states, particularly in those with growing minority populations.
- 39 of 51 disagreed that their state funding system adequately rewards community college transfer, and by a 2:1 margin, state college leaders believed it will be difficult to raise graduation rates due to state budget cuts.

The current research brief continues this work by assessing college degree completion issues from the unique perspective of state community college directors responsible for coordination, supervision, and management of community colleges. The University of Alabama's Education Policy Center has surveyed National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges members since 2003 in our *Access and Funding in Public Higher Education* report series.⁵ The members of NCSDDC possess broad knowledge of policy and practice related to college completion and access across all education sectors.⁶ *A New Way Forward Is Needed to Jump-Start Degree Completion* presents data from the special section of the 2014 survey comparing similarly worded items from 2011.⁷ The survey was conducted from July 5 to September 24, 2014.⁸ We thank our advisory panel for input⁹ and the 50 NCSDDC members who responded (no results were provided from South Dakota).¹⁰ Responsibility for any errors is ours alone.¹¹ The following caveats should be considered when interpreting results: First, results are respondents' *perceptions*, not actual measures.

Figure 2. With Public Institutions Enrolling 3 in 4 of All Undergraduate Students, Their Fiscal Health is Key to Increasing Degree Completion (2012-2013)



Source: Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama analysis of U.S. Dept. of Education IPEDS 2012-2013 Enrollment data

Second, the community college coordinating agency in most states is *not* assigned formal authority to coordinate the development and monitor progress of long-term state plans for *all* public higher education sectors (which often are mandated by statute). Third, responses may not add to 50, as respondents were not required to respond to every item.

At the time of our 2011 report, America was in the midst of the longest and deepest recession since the 1930s with unemployment in the double digits. The nation's higher education institutions found themselves in a college enrollment boom. Between 2009 and 2012, an additional 1 million Americans reached the traditional college-going ages of 18 to 24 years old. To this is added the 3 million more young adults ages 25 to 34.¹² Much of the growth is in America's minority populations. In Illinois, for example, African Americans and Hispanics comprised 13.8% and 5.6%, respectively, of the total population in 1980—by 2010, Illinois added by 1.4 million people, and African Americans and Hispanics comprised 15% and 16%,¹³ respectively. Without a long-term perspective and accompanying plans to finance the operating and capital budgets, will seats at the table of higher education be there for these students?

We note at the onset the importance of public higher education in delivering access. Figure 2 shows the ratio between undergraduate enrollments at privately and publicly controlled institutions in the

2012-13 year in the fifty states. Of the 24,556,246 undergraduate students in 2012-13, only 6,338,046 (26%) attended privately-controlled institutions—while an overwhelming majority, 18,218,200 (74%) attended public institutions. In many states, these percentages are far higher—in the mid-80s and low 90s—when graduate enrollments are considered, because in most states, the graduate programs are supported by revenue from undergraduate enrollments.

Increasing College Completion With Funding Cuts and Without Long-Term Plans

Increasing degrees cannot and will not happen without carefully thought out, well executed plans to finance access and student success. Such plans must include both operating and capital budgets. *Yet in 2014, 3 of 4 respondents indicate long-term plans do not exist in their states to fund the operating nor the capital budget increases needed to increase numbers of adults with college degrees and certificates.* While most of the media focus regarding public higher education is on operating budgets, we examine capacity and adequacy of the physical infrastructure, because in 2011 and today we do not believe it possible to reach the additional millions of new students without expanding the physical infrastructure. In 2011, when asked, “Funding for facilities (new construction and ren-

Figure 3. Completion Hinges on Consistent Funding and Long-Term Planning

	In my state...							
	To increase the numbers of adults with college degrees and first-certificates, a long-term plan exists in my state to finance the needed...				The funding and incentive systems adequately reward community college efforts to increase transfer toward the baccalaureate degree.		In light of state funding cuts, achieving increases in graduation rates will be difficult.	
	operating budgets		capital budgets					
	2011	2014	2011	2014	2011	2014	2011	2014
Strongly Agree/Agree	4	11	3	9	4	5	24	26
Neutral/Don't Know	11	5	8	6	8	12	16	12
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	36	33	40	33	39	31	11	11
Source: 2011 & 2014 National Surveys of Access and Finance Issues, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama								

ovation) is a major need in my state,” 36 were in agreement, while our November 2014 survey found 42 were in need.¹⁴ Yet while the facilities needs are great, respondents from just 9 states indicate long-term plans exist in their states to finance the capital budgets needed to increase college degree and certificate completion (Figure 3).

The small improvement between 2011 and 2014 as it pertains to funding and incentive systems rewarding community college efforts to increase transfer toward the baccalaureate degree is therefore not surprising. In 2011 when asked “In light of state funding cuts, achieving increases in graduation rates will be difficult,” 24 were in agreement, 16 neutral, and 11 were in disagreement. In 2014, responses were slightly worse with 26 in agreement, 12 neutral, and 11 in disagreement. The finding that approximately half of states in 2011 and 2014 found the lack of funds as a major challenge to improving graduation rates is troubling and clearly shows that meeting nationally established goals may hinge on consistent funding and long-term planning, both of which are lacking in many states today.

Rationing Opportunity: Capacity, Enrollment, & Completion Concerns

The underfunding of postsecondary education is not a new phenomenon as it relates to providing access to higher education through the years. After his election in 1992, President Clinton said he received great response on the campaign trail to

his proposal for a new GI Bill for service learning, whereby students would give the nation two years of service in return for two years of college. After the election when the numbers were run, the cost was too high, and a \$10 billion demonstration program was created instead. Many years later and as the landscape shifted from one focused on access to one considering access and completions, President Obama’s American Graduation Initiative was to provide \$12 billion to enhance student success. Ultimately, \$2 billion was allocated through U.S. Department of Labor grants.

Another key access issue is related to the blame put upon flagship universities for their lack of commitment. Education Trust’s 2006 report, *Engines of Inequality*, charged most public flagship universities were doing a poor job of enrolling and graduating underrepresented minority and low-income students.¹⁵ This argument was repeated in 2010’s *Opportunity Adrift, Our Flagship Universities Are Straying from Their Public Mission*.¹⁶

Throughout the years of the survey, we have focused on enrollment caps at universities as an important access related issue. In 2008, we asked if “Enrollments had been capped at some or all of my state’s public flagship universities,” 9 were in agreement. By 2011, 12 agreed, and in 2014, the number stayed relatively steady at 11. While most were in disagreement (33), the 11 in agreement in 2014 include respondents from some of our largest states (e.g., California, Florida, and Texas). Similarly,

Figure 4. Many Public Flagship and Regional Universities Still Have Enrollment Caps

	Enrollments have been capped at some or all of my state's public...					
	<i>public flagship universities</i>			<i>public regional universities</i>		
	2008	2011	2014	2008	2011	2014
Strongly Agree/Agree	9	12	11	4	7	6
Neutral/Don't Know	7	8	5	8	8	4
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	27	26	33	30	31	38
Source: 2008, 2011 & 2014 National Surveys of Access and Finance Issues, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama						

Figure 5. Enrollment Declines at Community Colleges Follow Cuts in Pell and Improving Economy

	Estimated change in your state's community college enrollment last year (FY2013-14) to this year (FY2014-15).	Please estimate the percentage change (increase or decrease) in enrollment from last year (FY2013-14) to next year (FY2014-15) at the following types of community colleges in your state:			What were the major causes for projected enrollment changes? (among 48 responses)		
		Rural	Suburban	Urban	Improving economy, students find work and leave college.	Changes in my state's population, including the high school age population.	Pell Grant cuts or limitations (no longer available in summer, or lack of dollars).
Responses (50 possible)	48	44	38	41	41	25	18
Median	-0.50%	-1%	-0.3%	-0.2%			
Mean	-1.2%	-1.5%	-0.9%	-0.8%			

Source: 2014 National Survey of Access and Finance Issues, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama

we look at public regional universities, as both institutions of access for first-time college goers and also as community college student transfer destinations. When asked if enrollments had been capped at some or all of the public regional universities, most were in disagreement, but 6 did agree, including California. Enrollment caps at public flagship universities and regional universities were reported in all three of our nation's three largest states, and six of the ten states with the largest population increase over the past year according to the Census Bureau.¹⁷

Increasing the number of college completers requires not only improving graduation rates, but it also requires *enrolling* students. And perhaps the best time to increase the overall percentages of high school graduates going onto college is when the pool of high school graduates is declining. This is the case nationally until about 2017. Yet Table 4 shows modest enrollment declines at community colleges from last year to this year in most states. Reasons include the improved economy (41 responses), a declining high school graduation class size (25 responses), and cuts in the Pell Grant program (18 responses) following the new eligibility restrictions and the elimination of one-time Summer Pell Grant funding. Of course, it's good to see an expanding economy, but a spate of studies document the need for more high-technology jobs. Recent EPC reports reveal state funding cuts have reduced community colleges' capacity to offer high-demand, higher cost science, technology, engineering, and information technology-related

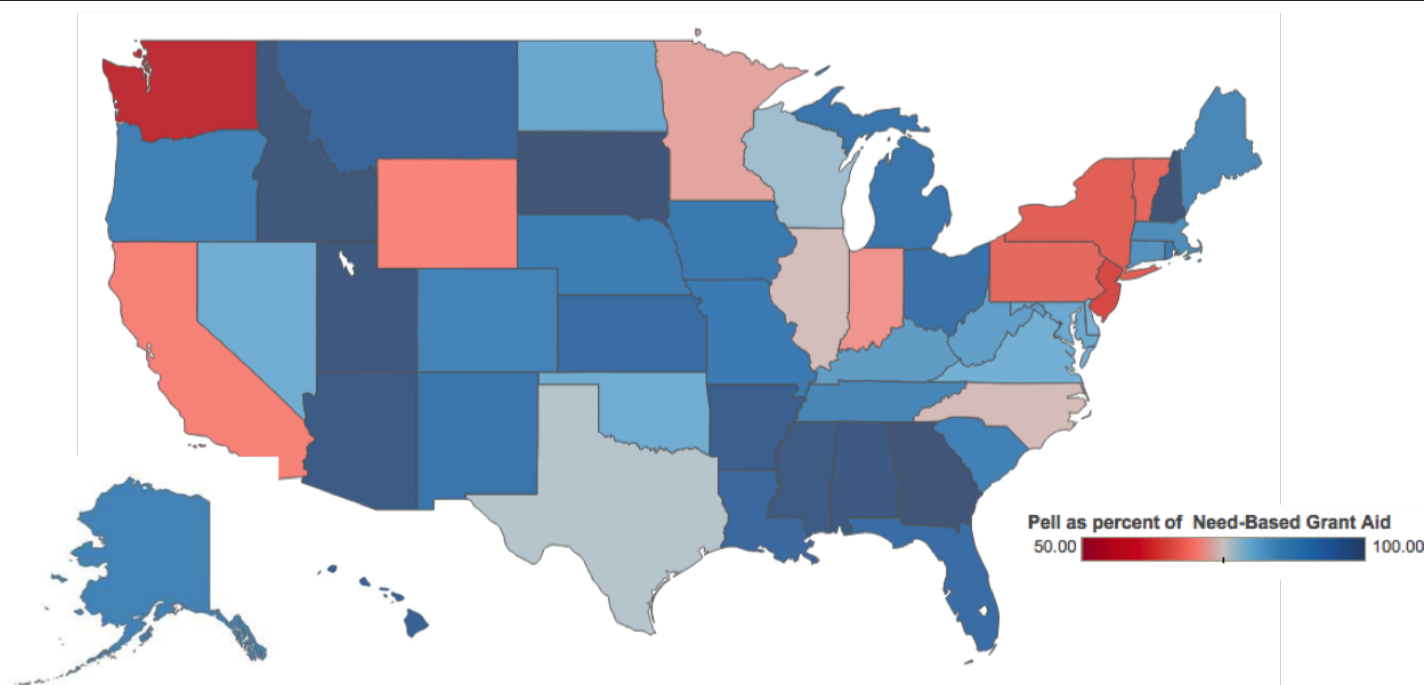
training.¹⁸ Increased degree production hinges on expanding access and subsequent enrollment.

Unaligned Federal and State Student Aid Policies

Responsibility is shared between state governments and the federal government for student financial aid. This fact explains the traction two policy recommendations—a program of federal/state matching grants that incorporate maintenance of effort (MOE), and state grant aid programs to encourage students to enroll full-time—are gaining in national policy discussions, as Congress moves to reauthorize the Higher Education Act in 2015. Policy experts are increasingly focusing on need-based aid, because, as Andy Carlson, who co-authored the April 2014 SHEEO report titled *Moving the Needle: How Financial Aid Policies Can Help States Meet Student Completion Goals*, notes, “most policymakers would say merit programs are a poor use of resources because students who can pay are going to go to college anyway.”¹⁹ In a powerful way, Figure 2, maps the relative percentages of federal Pell Grant and state-funded need based aid across the fifty states, and shows why all public higher education sectors have a stake in the matter.

Recent reports by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities²⁰ and the Center for American Progress have proposed MOE matches and have cited how MOE provisions in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus package held down tuition increases and

Figure 6. Federal Pell Grants Are Lion's Share of Need-Based Aid
In All States Pell Exceeds 50 Percent of Total Need-Based Aid (2012–2013)



Source: Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama analysis of National Association of State Student Grant Aid Programs' data

preserved public higher education state appropriations in the “Great Recession.” That the ARRA’s MOE provisions accomplished both of these intended purposes was the conclusion of state community college directors in our National Access and Finance Surveys in 2010 and 2011.

The EPC’s interest in need-based access has resulted in 19 separate studies of Pell Grants since 2010, with special emphasis on populations typically overlooked in the national debates over student aid policy, the nation’s 58 million rural Americans, and the rural Deep South. Our studies found that increased Pell funding from 2007 forward, and especially the short-lived summer Pell Grant, resulted in significant increases in community college enrollments, enrollment increases that were greater due to the MOE provisions within ARRA, which limited tuition increases to about 5% nationally. But in June 2012, responding to a budget shortfall due the wildly popular Pell Grant program, Congress enacted \$2 billion in cuts to the federal Pell Grants. These cuts were effective immediately with the Fall 2012 term; EPC’s study of the impact of these cuts in the three Deep South states of Alabama, Arkansas,

and Mississippi estimated about 17,000 community college students lost Pell eligibility in 2012–2013, demonstrating well the joint federal-state shared responsibility for helping poor kids access college.²¹ This is the context for our 2014 survey item, asking about the 2014 *Condition of Education’s* finding of a widening gap between the share of whites 25 to 29 years old with a bachelor’s degree or higher, and African-Americans and Hispanics from 13 to 20 and from 18 to 25 percentage points, respectively, from 1990 to 2013. In 2014, respondents from 15 states were in agreement this gap widened, 24 were neutral, and 9 were in disagreement.

A consistent theme of our reports is that policy alignment—the alignment of state policies involving appropriations for public institution operating budgets, tuition, and state-funded student aid does not exist in most states. This is key if the so-called “high tuition/high aid” model is to work properly: Each and every time tuition is raised, state-funded student aid should be raised as well.

But this is not happening in most states (Figure 7). Just one in three states reports policy alignment in 2014, roughly the same as in 2010, although

Figure 7. Student Aid and Tuition Policies
Still Not Aligned in Most States

	In the most recently approved budget (FY2014-15), state funded need-based and merit-based student aid has kept pace with tuition increases in my state.			Policies for appropriations (operating budgets), tuition, and state financial aid (merit and/or need-based) are closely aligned in my state.		
	2008	2010	2014	2008	2010	2014
Strongly Agree/Agree	11	7	14	9	14	13
Neutral/Don't Know	5	2	9	5	6	10
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	30	37	24	31	28	26
Source: 2008, 2011, and 2014 National Survey of Access and Finance Issues, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama						

slightly more than the 9 states in 2008. Will it take until 2020 for alignment to be reached in half the states? The lack of policy alignment likely means states have little incentives not to increase tuition by whatever amount the federal government raises the maximum Pell Grant. As a recent State Higher Education Executive Officers report concluded, “Existing grant aid programs do not provide sufficient support for tuition and living expenses, nor do most encourage timely completion.”²²

Default Rates Are Up

State community college directors share the general public’s concern regarding student indebtedness. Among the 33 respondents expressing an opinion, by a margin of better than two to one, student loan default rates are increasing (24 in agreement, 11 in disagreement). Respondents from most states (35) indicate that ALL community colleges in their states participate in the student loan programs, but a significant minority (11) do not (Alabama, California, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia). Perhaps states and/or particular institutions choose not to be involved in the loan programs to help students avoid taking on debt, but this issue bears close scrutiny in that the practical effect may be that some students may be driven toward unsecured loans or credit card debt that carries exorbitant interest rates to secure access to college.

When asked if “Community colleges in my state report their student loan debt levels are nega-

tively impacted by the high debt of students transferring in from for-profit colleges,” a slight plurality of those indicating an opinion were in agreement (14 indicated agreement, 23 were neutral or didn’t know, and 11 were in disagreement). When asked, “student aid to career-focused programs at for-profit and non-profit colleges should be cut off if the program’s student-loan default rates reaches 30%, or if half of its graduates failed two student-loan debt standards, as recently proposed in Congress,” for those expressing an opinion, a margin of about two to one indicated agreement (17 indicated agreement, 9 disagreement, and 21 were neutral or didn’t know).

Good Faith Efforts to Promote Completion Despite Budget Cuts

We invited respondents to offer their opinions on issues related to distance learning and other key challenges. Community colleges are well aware of the new laws requiring them to obtain approval of each state or territory in which they enroll distance education or correspondence students (46 in agreement). They are well aware of the new State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (45 in agreement). They are also well aware of OpenStax and other online sources for free textbooks offer a potential resource to reduce the cost of attendance for students (31 in agreement, 16 neutral, none in disagreement).

Respondents were asked about the status of common course numbering of general education courses across higher education sectors (public community colleges, regional universities, and public flagship universities, as well as independent non-profit colleges), to reduce the loss of credits improve transfer and degree completion. Among the 47 respondents offering an opinion as to whether common course numbering exists across their state’s community colleges, 30 were in agreement and 17 were in disagreement. When asked if common course numbers exist across their state’s community colleges and public four-year universities, among the 46 respondents offering an opinion, 17 were in agreement and 29 in disagreement. Seven respondents indicated that common course numbering existed across their state’s community colleges and the non-profit independent colleges in their states. We surmise that state community college leaders are trying to be part of the solution and

Figure 8. Community College Default Rates Are Up

	Student loan default rates are increasing at community colleges in my state.
Strongly Agree/Agree	24
Neutral/Don't Know	13
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	11
Source: 2014 National Survey of Access and Finance Issues, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama	

improve policies to promote college transfer, even in tough budgetary times.

A New Way Forward Is Needed to Jump-Start Degree Completion

Given the emphasis on increasing college degree completion by the federal government and major philanthropic foundations, we find the comparison of responses from our 2011 assessment and 2014 troubling. Using data collected from the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Figure 3 shows associate's degrees awarded at U.S. community colleges in the 2000-1, 2007-8, and 2012-13 years. It shows that since the year 2000-1 academic year, there have been significant improvements in degrees awarded for both associate degrees and certifications in the vast majority of states.

But the data in Figure 9 do not fit with the data we report here. It is important to point out that the IPEDS data is only compiled up through 2012-13, while our survey data asked respondents what happened in their states between 2012-13 and 2013-14, years not yet reported in the IPEDS data base. Community colleges have made real gains in degree and certificate completions between 2000-1 and 2012-13 of 75% and 122%, respectively. But the combined message from the increases shown in the IPEDS data and our survey results suggests that community colleges may have reached the cusp of upward enrollment and degrees and certificates awarded trend, and will soon be facing a decline in these areas, for we know that if enrollment is falling (Figure 4 4), it's only a matter of time before degrees and certificates completed will fall. This is why we are safe in concluding that community

colleges have already made many policy improvements that have resulted in real gains, but further significant improvements are not likely without a major change in policy approach—and in particular, improvements will not come if state operating funds continue to decline. This strongly suggests an approach that deliberately integrates and aligns the shared responsibility that has long existed between the laboratories of democracy in the states and the federal government.

The increases in state-level long-term planning for the operating and capital budgets needed to expand numbers of adults with degrees and first-certificates are so small as to make achievement of the national objective of making America first in the world again in adult baccalaureate degree attainment a pipe dream. At current rates of improvement, it would take until 2023 simply for 32 states to develop long-term operating budget plans for their community colleges.

American business and industry deserves better. So too do America's growing first-generation, low-income, and minority populations of traditional aged students and young adults. As we note previously, long-term plans related to higher education are often not within the control of state community college systems, but rather they are a condition of uncertain financial environments within states for higher education. The current system will not return America to #1 in the world in adult degree and certificate completion. Another way forward is needed.

It was beyond the scope of this report to suggest what specific solutions at the federal and state levels, but these conclusions can still be offered. First, the lack of master planning runs counter to the goals of past federal higher education policy. The landmark Education Amendments of 1972, which reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965, required master plans for the coordination of higher education, including both public and private, to be submitted by states to Washington, D.C. (since these provisions were contained in Section 1202 of the Act, these were called "1202 commissions"). Developing multi-year funding plans was considered good public policy to more efficiently use public tax dollars by leading experts including the Southern Regional Education Board's A.J. Brumbaugh (1963) and Lyman Glenny, the Illinois Board of Higher Education's first executive director

writing on behalf of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (1966).²³ Part of the policy rationale at that time was that the post-World War “baby boom” bulge of 1965-1973 was about to end, so states could save much money by subsidizing their private institutions, rather than build expensive new physical plants that would soon go empty. The national commitment to matching grants for public higher education facilities that started with the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 was ended at about this time. It is important to note it was not until after World War II that a majority of community, junior, or technical colleges were publicly controlled. By 1970, the total public-private enrollments were in the 80-20 range in many states. Alexander W. Astin in 1972 wrote of the possible “extinction” of private non-selective institutions.²⁴

Now, as Louisiana State University President F. King Alexander noted in 2014, the pendulum has shifted far the other way. “Within the last two decades, for-profits have acquired 11% of the student population while generating 28% of all federal Pell Grants and 47% of all student loan defaults....the University of Phoenix generated \$3.7 billion – or 93% of their entire 2013 revenue stream – from federal support while having one of the lowest graduation rates in the nation.” He argues that all public higher education sectors—community colleges, regional universities, and flagship universities—need to pull together and advocate for a federal-state match that requires maintenance of effort (MOE), to use federal leverage to protect public higher education from deep state funding cuts, “has never been greater,” and citing OECD data, America ranks first in the world in college completion of 55 to 64 year olds, but 12th among younger generations.²⁵ While today’s recession might delay funding of multi-year plans, the public planning process is still essential to convince the public as to the needs and benefits of state investment in public higher education. *We note the critically important difference between requiring states to have long-term plans for operating and capital budgets of community colleges and telling states how to actually do the planning.*

We do not believe increased college completion can occur in the absence of long-term planning for operating and capital budgets with the supporting resources. We do not believe policy alignment can occur at the state level without consistent feder-

al student aid investments that states, institutions, and, most importantly, students can count on. The funding swings in Pell Grant appropriations and changing eligibility standards in recent years have made it more difficult for individuals and families to plan. Evidence of this is the movement away from President George W. Bush’s goal of a year round summer Pell Grant—a program that could have helped obtain the elusive three-year baccalaureate degree. If states continue to disinvest in their public community college and public higher education institutional operating budgets, our findings show that many state community college directors are not optimistic about improving completion rates; therefore, the nation will be challenged to restore its ranking as #1 in the world in adult degree attainment.

A new way forward is needed to jump-start degree and first-certificate completion at our nation’s community colleges. Community colleges have been mentioned by name in all but two State of the Union Addresses since 1996. The debate over President Obama’s free community college tuition proposals brings greater spotlight to community colleges than ever before as an obvious policy solution and lever to expand degree completion. But can community colleges expand degree and first-certificate completion as state investments decline? And if this is happening, what does it say about the efficacy of the President’s proposals? For millions of academically-talented first-generation low income, minority, and adult students, the portal of entry to postsecondary education and the American Dream is the community college. Additionally, businesses rely on federal Pell Grants for community colleges students as a backbone of our nation’s employment and training system. The responsibility to fund access and success is thus shared across the federal and state governments. To the degree that President Obama’s proposals for free community college tuition create incentives for states not to disinvest, we recommend federal policy-makers positively consider them. Clearly another way forward is needed.

Figure 9. Associate's Degrees and Certificates Awarded at U.S. Community Colleges, 2000-01, 2007-08, and 2012-13

	NUMBERS					
	Completions by Year			Change expressed in numbers and percentages		
	2000-01	2007-08	2012-13	2000-01 to 2007-08	2007-08 to 2012-13	2000-01 to 2012-13
Associate's Degrees	434346	557599	760679	123,253	203,080	326,333
Certificates	210033	315280	467104	105,247	151,824	257,071
				42	63	105
				65	90	154
				50	72	122

Notes: (1) Using the Grapevine definition of states with and without substantial local support in excess of 10% of total revenues, utilized in the Education Policy Center's 2010 report *Uncertain Recovery: Access and Funding Issues in Public Higher Education*; (2) Selected institutions fall under the following Carnegie 2010 Basic classifications: Associate's Public Rural-serving Small, Medium, and Large; Associate's Public Suburban-serving Single & Multiple Campuses; Associate's Public Special Use; Associate's Public 2-year colleges under 4-year Universities; Associate's Public 4-year Primarily Associate's; and Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges; (3) Certificate program data including less than 1 year, 1 but less than 2 year, & 2 but less than 4 year certificate programs were drawn down from the U.S. Department of Education/National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, analyzed by the Education Policy Center at The University of Alabama.

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- Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama. Various years. See <http://uaedpolicy.weebly.com/> Initial reports were conducted when Katsinas directed the Bill J. Priest Center at the University of North Texas.
- The National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges is one of more than 30 affiliated councils of the American Association of Community Colleges. This report was written independently; neither NCSDDC nor AACC endorsed this report.
- The reports began while Katsinas was the Buchholz Chair of Higher Education and Director of the Bill J. Priest Center for Community College Education at the University of North Texas in 2003. The survey was administered in 2004, but not in 2005 and 2006 as Katsinas transitioned to the University of Alabama. The survey has been conducted annually since 2007. The 2011 report, "Challenging success: Can college degree completion be increased as state budgets are cut?" and other reports can be found at the Education Policy Center web site, <http://uaedpolicy.ua.edu/access--funding-surveys.html>.

8. Responses were received from 50 of 51 NCSDECC members or their designees, representing every state except South Dakota. Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia were not surveyed. Responses from Arizona, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania came from state community college associations. Both the University System of Georgia (GA-USG) which coordinates community colleges, and the Technical College System of Georgia (GA-TCS) responded; the State University of New York responded for New York.
9. We would like to thank the members of our 2014 advisory committee: Dr. Marilyn J. Amey, Michigan State University; Brent D. Cejda, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Marc Cutright, University of North Texas; Pamela J. Eddy, College of William & Mary; Lynda B. Gilbert, Vice President for Financial Affairs & Treasurer, The University of Alabama; Linda Serra Hagedorn, Iowa State University; Arthur M. Hauptman, Washington, D.C.; Marshall A. Hill, Executive Director, National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements; Daniel J. Hurley, American Association of State Colleges and Universities; Cary A. Israel, President, Collin College (TX); Brian Johnson, Senior Fellow, Education Policy Center, Washington, D.C.; Thomas A. Konz, Toledo, Ohio; Derrick A. Manns, Vice President for Academics, Louisiana Technical and Community College System; R. Frank Mensel, Senior Fellow, Education Policy Center, The University of Alabama; Michael T. Miller, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville; Terrance A. Tollefson, Professor Emeritus, East Tennessee State University; and Anne R. Williamson, University of Alabama.
10. No fewer than 49 National Council of State Directors of Community College members have responded in any year since we began conducting these surveys, which enrolls about 0.2 percent of U.S. postsecondary enrollments.
11. The authors thank EPC Fellow Delphine A. Harris for her assistance with the 2011 report.
12. Unpublished analysis by EPC Fellow R. Matthew DeMonBrun, cited in 2009 and 2010 National Surveys of Access and Finance Issues.
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EDUCATION POLICY CENTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

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Annual Surveys of the National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges on finance and access issues: see www.uaedpolicy.ua.edu/access--funding-surveys.html.

Rural community colleges: The Center hosts the Rural Community College Alliance's webpage, as it fulfills its role as RCCA's research arm.

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The University of Alabama Superintendent's Academy, a partnership with the Alabama State Department of Education, broadens the pool of diverse, well-prepared leaders for Alabama's 137 public city and county school districts.

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Director: Stephen G. Katsinas, Ph.D.

Associate Director: Wayne J. Urban, Ph.D.

Director, The University of Alabama Superintendent's Academy: Richard L. Rice, Jr., Ph.D., J.D., C.P.A.

Research Associates: Jonathan Koh, Louis Shedd, Michael Malley, Lucas Adair, Undre Phillips, and Amanda Harbison.

Senior Fellows: Arthur Dunning, Mary A. Jolley, Vincent A. Lacey, John Petrovic, R. Frank Mensel, Pat Moeck, David S. Murphy, Robert Pedersen, James "Skip" Dotherow, Mark M. D'Amico, Janice N. Friedel, James E. Davis, and Linda Serra Hagedorn.

Research Fellows: John Petrovic, Delphine Harris, Michael A. Kennamer, John Clinton Kinkad, Kristie R Rankin, Melissa P. Tarrant, Anne Williamson, and Brian Johnson.

Peter S. Hlebowitsh, Dean of College of Education, The University of Alabama