

# Advancing Community College Practices: Insights from Research 2024



Douglas A. Smith, Ph.D. Associate Professor  
Zoë M. Thornton, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Practice  
Joseph Romero-Reyes, Ph.D. Assistant Professor

smithda@iastate.edu  
zmthorn@iastate.edu  
josephr2@iastate.edu

## Dual/Concurrent Enrollment

Special Issue on **Dual Enrollment: A Story of Access, Equity, and Opportunity**. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2024(207). Editors Lowry, K., & Hardman, L.

- **Access:** Designing on-ramps and bridges for underserved student populations
- **Support:** Advising and teaching for transition into and through dual enrollment coursework.
- **Institutional Strategies:** addressing partnerships, enhanced capacity, and rural dynamics.

## Human Resource Issues

Special Issue on **Community College Human Resource Issues in the Rural Context**. *Journal of Education Human Resources*, 42(1). Editors Smith, D. A., Cain, C. M., & Thornton, Z. M.

- **Recruitment and Retention:** Challenges due to geographic isolation, limited resources, and lower salaries. Faculty often face burnout and high turnover rates.
- **External Factors:** Geographic issues, economic concerns, social responsibilities, and counter-stream migration significantly influence faculty attrition.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Difficulties in attracting and retaining diverse faculty. Need for intentional recruitment, professional development, and mentoring programs.
- **Remote Work Policies:** Accelerated adoption due to COVID-19. Policies can enhance recruitment and retention but must balance institutional and staff needs, provide training, and focus on student success.

## Funding Adequacy

Romano, R. M., & Palmer, J. C. (2023). **Funding adequacy and the community college**. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2023(203), 165-172.

- **Equal vs. Adequate Funding:** Equal funding does not necessarily mean adequate funding, as different districts may need varying amounts to ensure all students meet learning goals.
- **Vertical Equity:** The concept of vertical equity argues that unequals should be treated unequally, meaning more resources for those with greater needs.
- **Funding Adequacy Models:** These models calculate the additional funding required for some districts to ensure all students achieve expected outcomes, and have shown success in K-12 education by improving outcomes for lower-income students.
- **Application:** Funding adequacy models from K-12 can be adapted for community colleges, but challenges include defining standard outcomes and securing funding without constitutional mandates.

Levin, J., Baker, B., Lee, J., Atchison, D., & Kelchen, R. (2022). **An Examination of the costs of Texas community colleges**. REL 2023-142. Appendixes. *Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest*.

- **Needs Analysis:** Colleges with more first-generation, economically and academically disadvantaged, older, and English learner students earn fewer success points.

- **Equity Analysis:** Colleges with more academically disadvantaged students spend less per student, indicating resource inequities.
- **Cost Function Analysis:** Current spending is insufficient to provide equal opportunities for disadvantaged students to achieve the same outcomes as their peers.

### **Post-Pandemic Recovery and Enrollment**

Sullivan, P., Bell, A., & Nielsen, D. (2023). **The Complex Nature of Student Retention at America's Community Colleges.** *Community College Review*, 51(3), 311–336.

- Family and Personal Factors:
- Financial concerns:
- Work related challenges
- Academic Problems

McKinney, L., Burrige, A. B., Lee, M. M., Bourdeau, G. V., & Miller-Waters, M. (2022). **Incentivizing Full-Time Enrollment at Community Colleges: What Influences Students' Decision to Take More Courses?** *Community College Review*, 50(2), 144–170.

Wang, X., Contreras-García, N., & Wickersham, K. (2024). **Take a Page Out of the Community College Playbook: How a Community College Education Prepared Students to Meet Pandemic Challenges.** *Teachers College Record*, 126(1), 171-190.

### **Reimagining Retention, Persistence, & Support**

Romero-Reyes, J. (Accepted). **"More than a workshop" : Perspectives from first-generation and low-income men of color participating in a community college men of color initiative:** *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*.

Summary: Programming, active coaching and mentorship, and the relationships formed within the initiative significantly enriched student's community college experiences and aspirations for vertical transfer. The initiative established a multilevel support system, activating aspects of student's community cultural wealth.

Romero-Reyes, J. & Becerra, E. (Accepted). **Reflections from the Trenches: How Critical Race Theory Informs Community College Men of Color Initiatives:** *New Directions for Community Colleges*.

Summary: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and theories based on CRT, such as Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), were instrumental in two key areas: 1) Professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators and 2) Student programming.

### **Competency-Based Education**

Collins, K. (2024). **Understanding the college-wide implementation of competency-based education using systems thinking: More than just teaching.** <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/entities/publication/6c51cefd-8734-4d82-8ddd-2d9b81701397>

- The study aimed to understand how implementing Competency-Based Education (CBE) at a community college affects various non-teaching departments and staff, and how the college can better support this transition.
- The study found that clear communication, collaboration across departments, and strong support from college leadership are crucial for successfully implementing CBE. It also highlighted the importance of continuous improvement and leveraging external resources and partnerships.

## **Community College-University Alliances**

Hills, M. (2024). **An Alliance in Today's Higher Education Landscape.** Iowa State University repository for dissertations: <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/home>

- The study aimed to explore how a partnership between a public community college and a private university could help both institutions share resources, increase enrollment, and support their local community.
- The partnership showed promise by sharing staff, creating joint programs, and hosting events, but it faced challenges like financial issues and communication barriers. Despite these, the study suggests that such alliances could be a viable way for colleges to survive and thrive in the future.

## **Adult Education and Literacy**

Richmond, Ashleigh (2024). **An Evaluation of Student Achievement in Reading.** Iowa State University repository for dissertations: <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/home>

- The dissertation aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a reading program called Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) in improving the reading skills of adult learners in Iowa's community colleges.
- The study found that while the STAR program did help improve reading skills, the gains were relatively small. The research also highlighted the need for more consistent implementation and better tracking of instructional hours to fully capture the program's impact.

## **Research Resources**

### **Sample peer-reviewed journals:**

*Community College Journal of Research and Practice*

*Community College Review (peer-reviewed journal, not the blog of the same name)*

*Innovative Higher Education*

*Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*

*Journal of College Student Development*

*Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*

*Journal of Higher Education*

*Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*

*Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*

*Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*

*NASPA Journal*

*New Directions for Community Colleges*

*New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*

*New Directions for...(multiple with varying emphases: Higher Education; Student Services; etc)*

*Research in Higher Education*

*The Review of Higher Education*

***\*This is not an exhaustive list.***

### **Helpful resources for literature, research, and current topics:**

American Council on Education: <http://www.acenet.edu/Pages/default.aspx>

American Association of Community Colleges: <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/>

Association of Community College Trustees: <https://www.acct.org/>

American Association of State Colleges & Universities: <https://aascu.org/>

Community College Research Center (CCRC): <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>

Education Commission of the States: <https://www.ecs.org>

Iowa Department of Education: <https://www.educateiowa.gov>

IDOE - Higher Education & Post-Secondary Readiness: <https://educate.iowa.gov/higher-ed>

National Institute for (CC) Staff and Organizational Development: <http://www.nisod.org>

NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education): <https://www.naspa.org>

The League for Innovation in the Community College: <https://www.league.org>

## **Free Daily or Weekly News Updates Impacting Higher Education**

### **Primary Sources:**

- Diverse Issues in Higher Education
- Inside Higher Ed
- The Chronicle of Higher Education
- Community Colleges for Iowa: <https://www.ccfioriowa.org/links/newsletter/iowa-community-colleges-newsletter/>

### **Multiple additional sources:**

- ACCT newsletter
- AACC newsletter – Community College Daily
- American Council for Education
- Education Dive: Higher Education
- Educause Review
- Eduwire Daily Update
- Daily Lumina News
- University Business Daily
- Edweek Update
- Innovation Daily
- Gallup News
- Education Commission of the States
- ccnewsnow.com
- ecampusnews.com
- SHEEO Policy Headlines
- NISOD Weekly Digest