

Title: "In-Depth Analysis of American Community Colleges"

Thank you Dr. Rai and Dr. Teas. I have no doubt everyone in this room will learn a tremendous amount from this exchange.

Thank you to the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. India Educational Foundation Fulbright Commission and to everyone in this room for helping make this symposium happen.

This is my first visit to India and I am appreciative of the opportunity today to talk about America's educational ideals and how they have helped shape community colleges into open access institutions, educating a diverse citizenry with equally diverse skill sets.

The American Ideal (Education for ALL)

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

These are the famous words that grace the base of America's Statue of Liberty, written in 1883 by immigrant Emma Lazarus. Imagine being a young child or even an adult—cold, scared, and tired after a long journey across the ocean. All that you have ever known is now thousands of miles away. There is no turning back. You do not speak the same language as anyone around you. You have little, if any, idea where you are or what you will do now.

Education historian Diane Ravitch says one of the main reasons so many people flocked to America was because of the one reason that brings us together today: education. She calls education a magnet to immigrants who could not receive formal education in their own countries.

The idea of a public education for all started very early in this country. One of the first proponents was founding father Thomas Jefferson. He believed an essential component of democracy and political liberty was education, including the responsibility to provide *all* children with access to a *free* education regardless of where—or to whom—they were born. In 1786 he wrote to a friend:

"I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised, for the preservation of freedom and happiness..."

Around the same time, Congress passed a law requiring land throughout the states to be set aside for educational purposes. Public high schools, the creation of the United States Department of Education and other government-led education initiatives soon followed.

But Jefferson's ideal did not necessarily mean a top-tier education plan for everyone. Certainly, everyone would have elementary education but as they continued on there should be different tracks depending on individual strengths—a laboring track and a learned one. Like a pyramid—Jefferson envisioned one side would pursue careers of the mind; the other side, just as equally important, would pursue the physical trades. To support the base—America's freedom and its future—both sides of the triangle were essential. At the heart of Jefferson's idea is the premise

that learning—whether by books or through hands-on training—is necessary for a better, more prosperous future for the individual, the community, and the country.

Every student has a fundamental place in society. It's our job as educators to help students achieve their goals.

The Montgomery College Ideal/ Tomorrow's Workforce

At Montgomery College, we take this mission to heart. We change lives: whether that means helping someone complete courses required to pursue a career as a doctor, teacher, or engineer, or even to receive the training and certification necessary to repair automobiles, create video games, or even open a business. We focus on practical, career-focused education that strengthens the skills of individual students.

In the last fiscal year, 63 percent of the state of Maryland's new, licensed nurses were products of community colleges. A USA Today newspaper article even estimates 80 percent of America's emergency responders, including police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians, received their training at community colleges.

We enroll 60,000 students every year at Montgomery College. Some students come to us for two years to receive an associate's degree in hopes of transferring to a four-year college or university. Thousands of other students enroll in our noncredit Workforce Training and Continuing Education programs, designed to give students the tools they need to transition into a new career, reenter the workforce, or maintain current technical skills. This is the place for student to learn English, automotive or construction knowledge, or other technical skill sets.

The future American economy will only continue to thrive if Montgomery College and other community colleges continue to adapt to meet the evolving demands of industries. We need scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs, just as much as electricians, nurses, surgical technicians, and fire fighters. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke recently told Time Magazine that “the best solution to income inequality is providing a high-quality education for *everybody*. In our highly technological, globalized economy, people without education will not be able to improve their economic situation.”

What happens if we don't help prepare this skilled workforce? Well, job growth without skilled and qualified employees to fill those jobs means a stagnant economy at best. Community colleges are needed more than ever to help build our economy at home and, in turn, help build the global economy.

So how did community colleges become crucial to our society? Let me start at the beginning and share some of our history.

History of Community Colleges

Community college came about because enlightened people realized higher education should not be reserved for a few. Giving *more* people—*all* people—the opportunity to earn a degree was a win for all. Both the individual and the community benefit when good jobs are filled by an educated workforce.

I want to share a few of the key events in the development of community colleges, as outlined by the American Association of Community Colleges—also known as AACC.¹ As you will see, the

¹ <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/history/Pages/default.aspx>

reasons that spurred the creation of community colleges are nearly identical to the reasons why they are so crucial in the current economic climate.

In the 1900s, the world, in a sense, became...smaller. Economic growth was no longer confined to the United States' borders and, as global competition increased, so did the need for more trained workers. High schools took the lead in developing workforce training both for those students not quite ready for higher education and for those who did not want to leave their community to pursue education.

Central High School in Illinois—my home state—is credited with paving the way. In 1901, the high school created what was called a junior college as an experimental program with just six students. More than a century later the school still serves the same purpose. It is now the oldest, public two-year college, growing from just 6 students to more than 35-thousand.² This junior college trend picked up steam and just 19 years later, in 1920, the American Association of Junior Colleges—now called the AACC, which I mentioned earlier—was founded. The organization was founded to provide a national focus and leadership on issues facing junior colleges, which subsequently became what we call today community colleges.

With the Great Depression of the 1930s came the increasing need not just for liberal arts education but for workforce development. The National Association of Scholars estimates around this time in our history, there were junior colleges in all by five states.

But it was really the end of World War II in 1945 that cemented the community college model in American education, thanks largely to help from the federal government. Montgomery College

² <http://www.jjc.edu/about/college-info/Pages/history.aspx>

itself began during that time, in September 1946.³ There was no campus when Montgomery College started, just 186 men and women attending night classes at a local high school.

Historians point to two major happenings around this time that proved monumental to the community college mission. First, the G-I Bill provided federal assistance for World War II veterans to receive an college education. The Department of Veteran Affairs estimates anywhere from 8 million to 16 million veterans received some sort of college-level education because of the financial support provided by the bill.⁴ Millions of Americans, no matter what economic, social or racial group, now had greater access to higher education.

It also was around this time that U.S. President Harry Truman commissioned a report to study the country's education system. The resulting report from the Truman Commission suggested that all Americans should be able to receive 2 years of college-level education *for free*.

The report said, "If the ladder of educational opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at all at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them. It is obvious, that free and universal access to education, in terms of the interest, ability, and need of the student, must be a major goal in American education."⁵

³ <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/edu/plain.aspx?id=2496>

⁴ http://www.gibill.va.gov/gi_bill_info/history.htm

⁵ <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/courses/eol474/sp98/truman.html>

As a result of the commission's report, more money became available for more students, *not* just veterans. The Higher Education Act passed, and today it still serves as the basis for federal student aid in the United States.

Also significant in the report was the recommendation that junior colleges change their names to community colleges, reflecting our importance in the community and the importance of our mission.

Soon these community hubs of education started popping up in more and more communities. The AACC says that, in the 1960s, more than 450 public community colleges opened their doors. Let me say that again—450! That is more than the *total* number prior to that decade.

Today, there are nearly 12-hundred community colleges in the United States, and 90-percent of the U.S. population now lives within 25 miles of a community college. Also, more than half our nation's undergraduates have received some education from a community college, which adds up to some 100 million students who have passed through the doors of their local community college campuses.

Financial aid also continues to remain crucial to students attending community colleges. Today nearly half of community college students are able to receive a college education because of the financial aid they received. While not free, as the Truman Commission hoped, the average tuition at community college today is less than 3-thousand dollars a year. The costs more than double to attend a public 4-year college or university. And the costs of private colleges are even greater, sometimes as much as 10 times higher with tuition costing 30-thousand dollars annually.

What is a "Community" College?

Community colleges have become potentially the most transformative institutions in America because we engage in the true work of mobilizing millions of members of our society.

Community colleges have the power to change the trajectory of an individual; transform the quality of life for a family; and enhance the intellectual, economic, and cultural essence of a community.

Again, it's that word "*community*." Why did the government advocate for that word to be in our name? Webster's Dictionary defines community as "a unified body of individuals." A unified body of individuals – in an educational atmosphere – working to benefit themselves and the society at large. The name fits perfectly with that American ideal I talked about earlier. The word community in our name is not a noun. It is really a verb, a mental mindset, a way of thinking—we're all in this together.

Today on community college campuses, there is *racial* diversity: nearly half of the student population is made up of minorities. At Montgomery College- we have students who represent more than 170 countries.

Today on community college campuses, there is *social* diversity: 42 percent of students are the first in their families to attend college. Think about that: 4 out of 10 students in today's community colleges are the first generation to ever attend college. The most reliable way to break a cycle of poverty for a family is for one family member to get a college degree. Studies show that going to college has both personal and national benefits, including higher salaries, improved health, increased volunteerism, and reduced reliance on welfare and other social support programs.

Today on community college campuses, there is *gender* diversity. While they were formerly a *minority* in educational environments, women have now become a *majority of the students* at community colleges. Currently, AACC estimates 58 percent of community college students are women.

Community colleges accept, educate, and graduate the academically talented and the academically disenfranchised, the native son and the immigrant daughter, the career seeker and the dislocated worker, and the child exploring youth programs and the senior citizen seeking intellectual challenge. At community colleges, we serve both the “haves” and the “have-nots.” We pride ourselves on being inclusive, on being there for every student who needs us. Each college truly has become the community’s college.

We are many things to many people.

To a student like *Julie*, we are a place for a 30-something stay-at-home mother to re-enter college life so she can pursue the career she always wanted before she had kids. After her weight increased to 375 pounds, Julie reached her lowest point and knew her life needed to change. So she started walking, which turned to running, which turned to racing, including completing a half marathon. But body is one thing, brain is another. One cannot thrive without the other. So, she now attends Montgomery College to receive her degree as a Personal Trainer, with the goal of helping other change their own lives. She says “the thought of returning to college seemed like such a huge, daunting endeavor. But, all of those races, all of that training, have shown me that goals are achievable when you put in the work.”

To a student like *Marcia*, we are a place where a visually impaired woman with no high school degree can become a business owner. Montgomery College helped Marcia earn her GED, which in our country serves as the equivalent to a high school degree. Marcia moved successfully from Montgomery College to culinary school and then to an internship. Last spring Marcia opened her very own business, a small food shop serving federal workers. And it is only the start... as Marcia says, “determination, hard work, and a goal are all you need!”

To a student like *Aaron*, we are a place where a teenager, with a troubled past in juvenile detention and a problematic high school career, can become a force of good in his community. Thanks to family support, Aaron ended up at Montgomery College, where he served as president of the Latino Student Union and a member of Student Senate, while at the same time interning at a law firm and at the world-famous Smithsonian Institution museum in Washington, DC. Aaron went from Montgomery College to American University, a wonderful four-year, from which he graduated with honors last spring with a degree in philosophy. He has since received a fellowship to study at the University of California-Berkeley, as part of the Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship, as well as a full scholarship to continue working on his master’s degree at American University.

To a student like *Joy*, we are a place where a 16-year-old honors student who graduates from high school a year early, can grow up before having to live on her own. Joy’s parents sent her to Montgomery College, where she worked on our college foundation courses, earning two years worth of college credits, before transferring to Oklahoma University, where she earned her bachelor’s degree. Today, Joy is a working professional, proud of her careers journalism and education.

One of our retired history professors, Dr. Tom Walker, wrote about our history and estimated that in the past 60 years, more than half a million students have passed through our college. He finds that “Their employment history is as varied as the economy itself. Many have started their own businesses and others have climbed the ladder of success in established private and public corporations. Many Montgomery College students have succeeded as judges, lawyers, physicians, teachers, public servants, and politicians. Some have returned to the college as teachers, administrators, and staff. Others have taken the skills they learned at the College and entered directly the trades and semiprofessional fields so vital to the economy of the region. Some have distinguished themselves in the arts. Others had carved out careers in sports.”

Our past is one of which we are proud. But with all the accomplishments, we still have challenges. Your path to creating a successful community college system in India will not be without obstacles. So let’s address the problems—and the solutions—to creating an educational process where anyone—no matter who they are or who their family is—can find their own path to success.

Challenges

First of all, there is the reality that students come to us from all different skill levels. It can be challenging to push them all across the finish line. Many of our students come to us with sub-par math and reading skills. But... it is not in our community college mission to turn our backs... on *anyone*.

So what do community colleges do? They work with these students and have them enroll in specialized mathematics, reading, or English curricula called developmental education, which

are designed to help get students up to speed and doing math, reading books, or writing papers on a college level. We take this extra time and attention because our studies have shown that if these students, who need developmental education, successfully complete the specialized courses, they will go on to excel in college-level courses at the same rate as their fellow students who did not go through the developmental program.

To tackle the challenge we still face with our developmental math students, our math professors are taking a proactive, innovative approach to teaching those students who arrive with sub-par math skills. They are moving to a mastery-based, learn-on-your-own pace program to better meet student needs and accelerate the path to college-level math. It's a major undertaking, but it is too important not to. It takes real courage to step up and change how we teach out students.

But we must. President Obama has challenged us to double the number of community college students who earn degrees by 2020. Community colleges in our state of Maryland have signed the "Promise to Act," a pledge to increase the number of degrees awarded by nearly two-thirds by 2025.

How do we as community colleges achieve this?

One way to do this is to be more than just a place of classrooms and lectures. We must cater to the whole person. We must create resilient, strong, and smart students who leave our community colleges as more complete person. I like to apply a concept called "other mothering," which arose out of necessity during times of slavery. Basically the origin comes from the fact that mothers had to depend on fellow women in the community to help raise their children. I am sure you have heard the saying: "it takes a village."

This positive, community-minded concept applies to what our own institutions are working to achieve. There are three components of “other mothering” which apply to the community college ideal: ethic of care, cultural advancement and institutional guardianship.

In terms of ethic of care, it is not enough for community college professors and leaders to simply teach the material, they must have an intentional, intrusive, compassionate response to the lives and experiences of their students. Perhaps each student is assigned to an advisor and that advisor maintains weekly or biweekly interaction with that student. Perhaps a faculty or staff member “interferes” in the life of a student who is struggling, disconnected, overwhelmed.

Second, the community college atmosphere must be a place of cultural advancement, which teaches the importance not just of individual success but also of shared responsibility and community improvement. Perhaps this means an organization demonstrates an appreciation for and validation of academic support structures that appreciate cultural differences and also celebrates academic achievement within a cultural context. Perhaps an institution’s equity and diversity plan recognizes the need for cultural diversity within its faculty and staff—and assesses itself against its own articulated goals.

Third, the community college itself must embrace its significance within the community, and must hold fast to both the power and responsibility that comes with that role. Perhaps this means partnering with local businesses or community organizations to advance mentoring, employment, and workforce development. Perhaps they know that their college opens its campus to the community—that there is a healthy and mutual goal of community advancement. Perhaps they see their college actively engaged in social justice acts and taking positions on social justice issues within their community.

This last point blends into another challenge: the need for community college to actively be in tune with its community so that it can maintain its relevancy in light of changing work force demands. Community colleges must lead the way not only because we provide access and affordability, but because we are the most flexible, the most able to respond to the need for workforce-driven curricula in the new economy. We are able to try new ideas, to adapt to what our community needs from us. Community colleges are key to the jobs of the future, including those careers that don't yet exist.

I challenge my employees and I encourage you to do the same: to experiment. I would rather we be courageous and learn from our mistakes, than be timid and unwilling to take risks. The possibility of failure exists for every scientist, every inventor and every pioneer. The key is continuous learning and identifying that which does work.

For instance, Montgomery College has listened to government and businesses leaders and is in the process of developing a 40-acre Science and Technology Park on one of our campuses. It is a win-win for the College and the community, achieving academic and economic development goals. In addition to being home to a new Bioscience Education Center and a county-run business incubator, our College will be home to the first new hospital built in our county in 30 years. The College will be able provide students with state-of-the-art educational opportunities to train and learn in an actual hospital environment and open the door to future career opportunities. The College will be able to expand our nursing program, adding hundreds of nurses to an industry needing all the trained professionals it can get. Additionally, the Science and Technology Park would provide an additional source of revenue to support the operations of the College. In addition to benefitting from a new, cutting-edge hospital, the community also will

benefit from an influx of researchers working on developing life-saving medicine and from the creation of thousands of high-wage jobs in the area, which, in turn, boosts tax revenue.

Through this partnership, Montgomery College will be able to keep in front of the rapid changes in industry, helping us prepare our students for the jobs of today and of tomorrow. A recent newspaper article quoted the director of our county's Department of Economic Development as saying there are a few industries experiencing an uptick in hiring, even in this economy. Guess what are among the few industries that are actually still hiring: healthcare and biotech. We already are poised to be at the forefront of supplying the skilled human workforce in both those fields, thanks to our future Science and Technology Park and the future hospital.

(SLIDE SEVENTEEN)

The Chronicle of Higher Education gives example after example of community colleges that are responding to the economic changes and, in turn, helping shape future economic growth. A perfect example is what a community college did in Detroit, Michigan—the hub of the American automobile industry, which has faced devastation in current economic downturn. I know this industry is especially relevant here considering your interest in automotive technology training. In Detroit, carmakers had to retool to meet the changing demands of American auto consumers, including creating more fuel-efficient, green cars. So, it only made sense for Macomb Community College, called “Chrysler’s community college” in one article, to retool too. The college began teaching electric and hybrid technology. They created a manufacturing boot-camp with hands-on training to teach students the latest technological innovations in the trade. It expanded its non-automotive course offerings, providing students with access to job fields are

managing to see growth in the current economy. In addition, the college worked with universities to set up additional vocational training programs.

In North Carolina, when traditional industries took a downward turn, community colleges turned to a new industry—biotechnology. Even in this economy, estimates say the state's biomanufacturing industry is growing by 10-percent a year. Former president of the North Carolina Community College system told the Chronicle quote "The beauty of community colleges is that we can turn on a dime. By the time a university gets a building built, we can train a work force." Imagine that—an entire workforce in the time it takes a university to get a new academic building. This is why so many people turn to community colleges.

Harvard Graduate School of Education confirms that in our country a high school degree alone is no longer sufficient to compete. The report projects that nearly two-thirds of the jobs created in the next decade will require workers have at least some post-secondary education. Some means an associate's degree or a professional license or a certificate—just what we offer at community college.

We must prepare a skilled workforce to create job growth and, in turn, spur the economy—both locally and globally. The global economy is one that hinges on skilled workforce development.

We must do all this with the reality of fewer and fewer financial resources. As community colleges, we rely on county and state funding in order to operate. The global economic downturn is affecting every layer of government in the United States.

As you know, states and counties are facing millions of dollars of budget gaps there are no easy cuts. Of course, legislators all want to support community colleges, but the question is where will

the money come from? Do you sacrifice emergency services? Libraries? Public transportation? There is more need and less funding to go around. In a few hours, back across the ocean in Maryland, the CEO of our county—the County Executive—will announce his plans for funding county agencies, resident services and—of particular importance to me—our Montgomery College, the community’s college. So, while I am actively engaged in your country and learning with you, I also have my thoughts and attention focused on with what is going on in my community at home.

This new reality of fewer resources has meant the college has had to make budget cuts, implement a savings plan and increase tuition by a modest amount. But, **we have not and we will not sacrifice quality**. We continue to serve *all* students and adhere to our mission with fewer resources. If you think about it, many of the concepts I’ve already discussed do not rely on capital—at least not in the traditional sense. They rely on *human capital* – on having teachers and leaders who believe in the mission and in the students. Yes, funding is crucial but we must succeed, even with less. Our students depend on us.

One solution that we’ve instituted at the College is encouraging our faculty and staff to be entrepreneurial. For us, this requires a shift in our culture. We can no longer rely on what we’re given. We must actively seek out revenue-generating opportunities for the college. It means reaching out for more grants, looking for more community donors, and forming more partnerships with the business community.

It is crucial as you begin to develop the financial structure of your community college model here in India to think about diversification of revenue streams and embrace an entrepreneurial spirit. I believe your culture already does do this particularly well— and we as Americans and

educators can learn a tremendous amount by the sense of creativity and ingenuity that exist on practically every block here in India.

I am urging my staff and faculty to rethink our perspective. While the economy may a negative problem, our solutions can be positive. The saying “necessity breeds innovation” is becoming more than a slogan. This economic downturn will force us to become think of new and creative ways to save and to make enhance revenue. For example: look at the revenue we expect to generate because of our plan to build that Science and Technology Park I told you about a few moments ago.

We have to adapt what we already know works. For example: our Workforce Development and Continuing Education division is entirely self-sustaining. Every dollar spent investing in that program comes back to the College in full or, even better, in excess. This enables this area of the College to continue innovating and expanding without the financial fears we face in other educational programs. It is only if we embrace a cultural shift and realize the passive approach is a thing of the past, and if we focus on turning negative problems into positive solutions, will we be able to come out ahead.

Conclusion/ Journey to Community College

I have talked a lot this morning, so let me wrap up with a story about a hypothetical student called Marie, or Sanjay, or Keisha, or Jose. We have students of all names and all backgrounds. I hope will help sum up the ideal we are community colleges believe in and strive for every day.

In our country, women and minorities are under-represented in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – commonly known as STEM– and there are a number of efforts underway to expand access to this field to more of our population.

No one in Marie’s family has attended college. We know Marie has a place in our society’s workforce, but she needs the educational structure in place to help her realize it. Marie dreams of college, but since no one in her family has attended college, she’s not exactly sure what’s involved...

Luckily, she does know about Montgomery College, based on her past experience and on recent meetings she has had with her counselor and an MC recruiter who visits her school regularly.

Perhaps she takes a Montgomery College course offered at her high school, but here’s the really exciting news! Marie becomes the first person in her family to enroll in college, choosing – you guessed it - Montgomery College. Once enrolled, she is drawn to engineering—an excellent choice. Marie may benefit from special programs. For example, scholarships that promote full-time enrollment, academic achievement, and successful transfer and completion of a bachelor’s degree.

Marie also can utilize tutoring services through the college’s Math/Science Centers. To gain relevant job experience, she can seek an internship placement with a local engineering firm.

Once she successfully completes her coursework at Montgomery College, what’s next for Marie? There’s a good chance she’ll transfer.

No matter what, Marie is now likely to go on to great things – the data shows that our students do as well as students who begin as freshmen in the School of Engineering at the University of Maryland. Our women graduates often choose to live and work in the area, giving back to the community that gave them their start.

There is also the possibility that Marie will serve as a role model for others in her family and community.... folks for whom college was once a far-off dream, helping them realize how attainable and accessible college can be...Community colleges provide that open door, it is just a question of who has the courage to step through it.

There are many students just like Marie, who are here in India waiting for the opportunity to better themselves and, in turn, their country. This is their community and this is the community's chance to play an integral role in ensuring every child is armed with the tools for a productive future.

This is an exciting time. You have the power to shape your future and the future of so many generations to come. The American ideal, the community college model, is not limited by geographic or ethnic boundaries. It can and will work here.

Montgomery College and America's community colleges stand ready to be your partners, and

Thank you!