

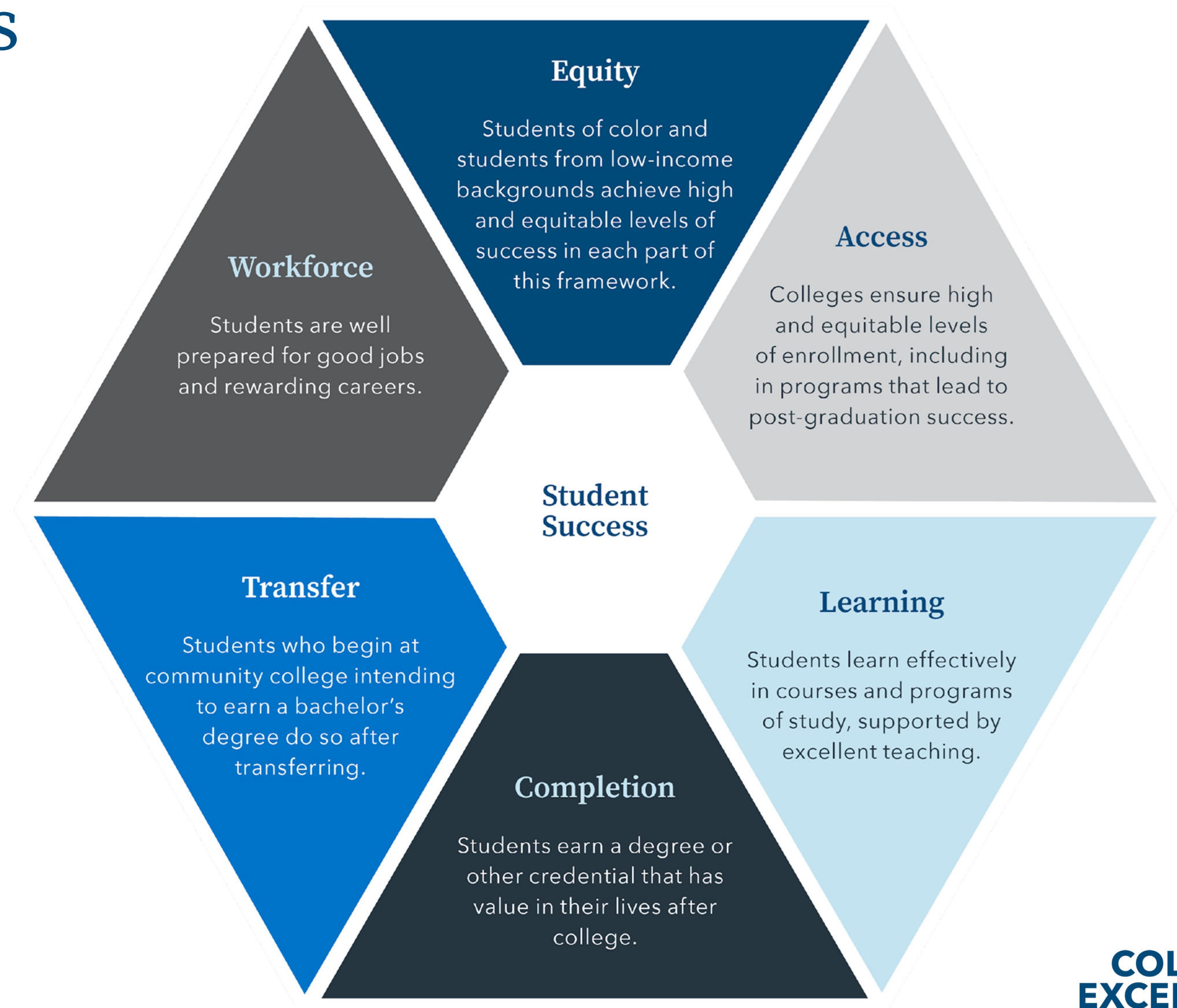
Advancing Student Success in Rural Community Colleges

OCTOBER 20, 2022

Josh Wyner, Executive Director, College Excellence Program

Aspen's Framework for Student Success

We define college excellence as student success—as changed lives, as thriving families, as strong communities, and as colleges achieving strong and improving student outcomes across our six-part framework.



Challenges & Opportunities

Strengths of Rural Community Colleges

1. Strong assets on which to build employment opportunities
 - Some legacy (health care, tourism, agriculture)
 - Some emerging/new (recreation, modern manufacturing, renewables)
2. Connection to place
3. Small size and importance in region
4. Can-do spirit
5. Influx of diverse talent
6. Guided pathways work

Challenges Facing Rural Community Colleges

1. Affordable housing for faculty and students (and childcare)
2. Distance between homes, K12, colleges, employers and universities
3. Gaps between available good jobs and skilled workforce
 - For some, gap is not enough talent/people
 - For others, gap is not enough good jobs
4. Staffing college functions
5. Trust/understanding....
 - That college is worth it
 - That good jobs are available/desirable with the right skills
6. Equity gaps in student success

Elements of Strong Rural Community Colleges

**1. Create
Pathways to
Economic
Mobility**

**2. Convince
Students to
Enroll and
Stay in
College**

**3. Build
Strategic
Partnerships**

**4. Utilize Small
Size as a
Strength**

1.

Create Pathways to Economic Mobility

Create Pathways to Economic Mobility

Key Insights

1. Build trust by delivering value
2. Use data to reveal immediate opportunities; develop collective vision to provide long-term opportunity
3. Include transfer as important workforce strategy
4. Ensure hands-on-learning to support retention and completion

Ensure Connections Between Programs and Existing Workforce Needs

Challenge: Most students want to stay in or return to the area, but without sufficient opportunities, they may feel pressure to leave for additional education or better employment.

Solution: Community colleges and employers work together to build strong programs tied to local opportunities.



Ensure Connections Between Programs and Existing Workforce Needs

West Kentucky's River Barge Industry Pathways

- Low-skilled river barge deckhands can follow clear, industry-supported path to harbor management roles from diesel technology certificate to a bachelor's degree in engineering.

West Kentucky graduates earn \$10,000 more than average new hires in area.

Bachelor's in Engineering

AAS in Marine Technology and Engineering

Diesel Technology Certificate

Boat Captain and Harbor Management Roles

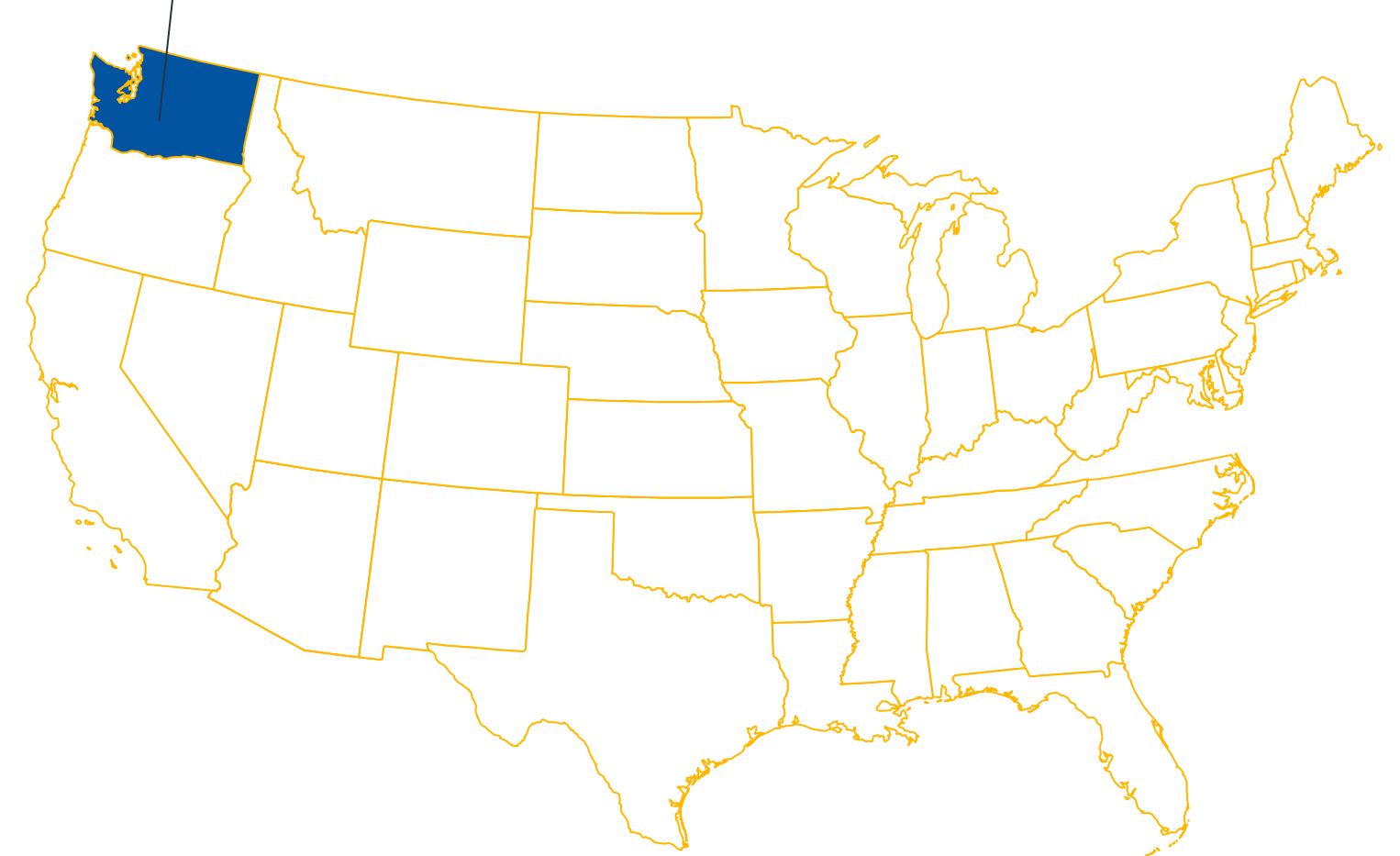
Diesel Mechanic

River barge deckhand

Generate New Industries and Employment Opportunities for Students

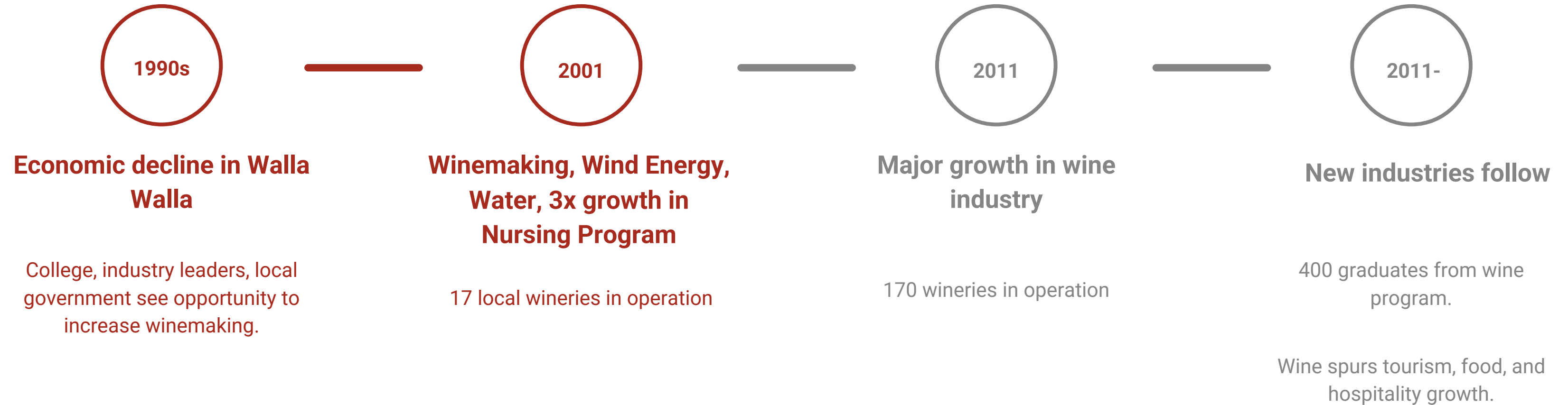
Challenge: Many rural community colleges do not have the luxury of responding to existing workforce needs. Retaining people in the area requires creating meaningful career opportunities.

Solution: College leaders play a key role in creating new economies by working with industry, local government, and economic development leaders to create opportunities for students to thrive.



Generate New Industries and Employment Opportunities for Students

Walla Walla Community College's Center for Enology and Viticulture



Graduates earn nearly twice the average for new hires in the region.

2.

**Convince Students to
Enroll and Stay in
College**

Convince Students to Enroll and Stay in College

Key Insights

1. Reach prospective students through trusted intermediaries (K12, employers)
2. Define equity goals by who is left out/underserved in your community and at your college
3. Tailor communications strategies to different populations (especially when demography is changing)
4. Advance equity using language and concepts that appeal to community values

Generate New Industries and Employment Opportunities for Students

Patrick & Henry Community College as the Economic Development Hub

Late 1990s

Large textile manufacturers close, leaving the area with 9,360 fewer jobs in ten years.

Early 2000s

Community mistrust in manufacturing jobs but also retains hope that jobs will return.

2007 - 2017

P&HCC begins effort to build advanced manufacturing training center on campus, where economic development conversations happen in the community.

Overcoming Misperceptions

Patrick & Henry Changes Perspective on Manufacturing

“Manufacturing was a dirty word in the community. If you said it, you had to go wash your mouth out with soap.”

– Greg Hodges, President, Patrick & Henry Community College.

Patrick & Henry amped up outreach and brought students, families, and K-12 guidance counselors onto campus to show them the advanced manufacturing facilities, explain the potential career pathways. Employers may also cover some students' costs, an additional incentive.



44% of students receive Pell Grants and
39% graduate in three years.

Tighten Connections Where Students Come From

Increasing Dual Enrollment & Advising Partnerships

Imperial Valley Community College

- K-12 students take dual enrollment classes but also choose programs of study, financial aid, and other preparatory work prior to finishing high schools
- 60 percent of high school graduates enroll at Imperial Valley
- Result: Substantially and steadily improving completion rates

Wanatchee Valley College

- Worked with Bridgeport school district to expand dual enrollment
- Led to default dual enrollment for students, dramatically expanding Hispanic enrollment in an agricultural rural community
- Result: Steadily increasing college going rates

Tighten Connections Where Students Come From

Increasing Dual Enrollment & Advising Partnerships

Five Principles for Effective and Equitable Dual Enrollment Partnerships

- Set shared goals including goals for increasing equitable access & success
- Expand access by broadening eligibility and reducing cost
- Proactively advise students onto pathways
- Ensure high quality instruction
- Organize teams and build relationships

<https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Aspen-CCRC-DE-Playbook-Highlights.pdf>

3.

Build Strategic Partnerships

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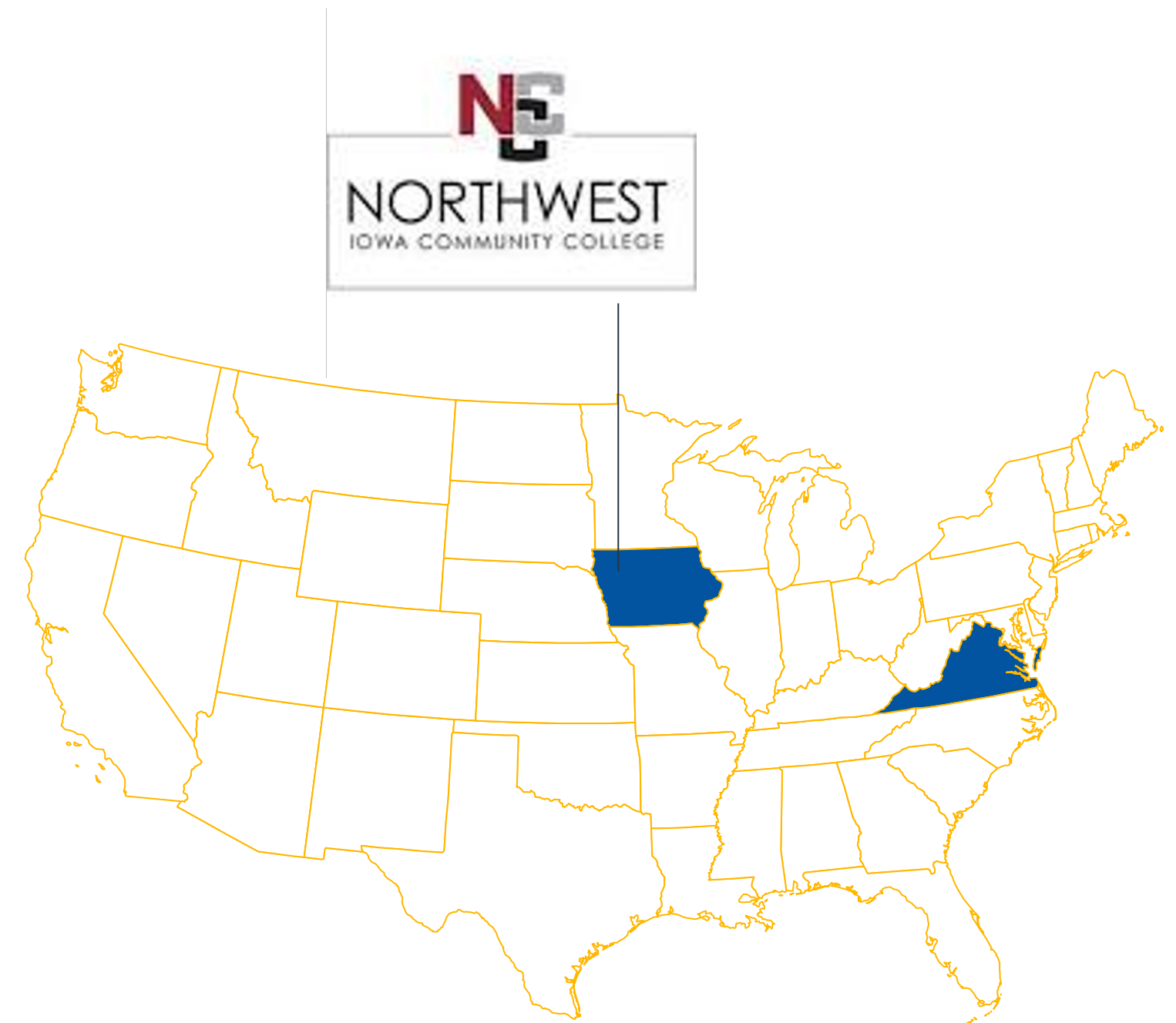
Key Insights

1. Deliver expanded educational opportunities only partners can provide
2. Access new resources through partnership (including some that may never appear in college budget)
3. Create efficiencies through shared services

Partner with Local Employers and Community Organizations to Generate Mission-Aligned Resources

Challenge: Rural college leaders must grapple with disperse, insufficient community resources.

Solution: Formalize partnerships with employers, local government, funders and other organizations to solidify relationships and long-term sustainable plans to unlock additional resources in community.



Partner with Local Employers and Community Organizations to Generate Mission-Aligned Resources

NCC Helps Create “Big Five” Meeting to “Take Turns Winning”

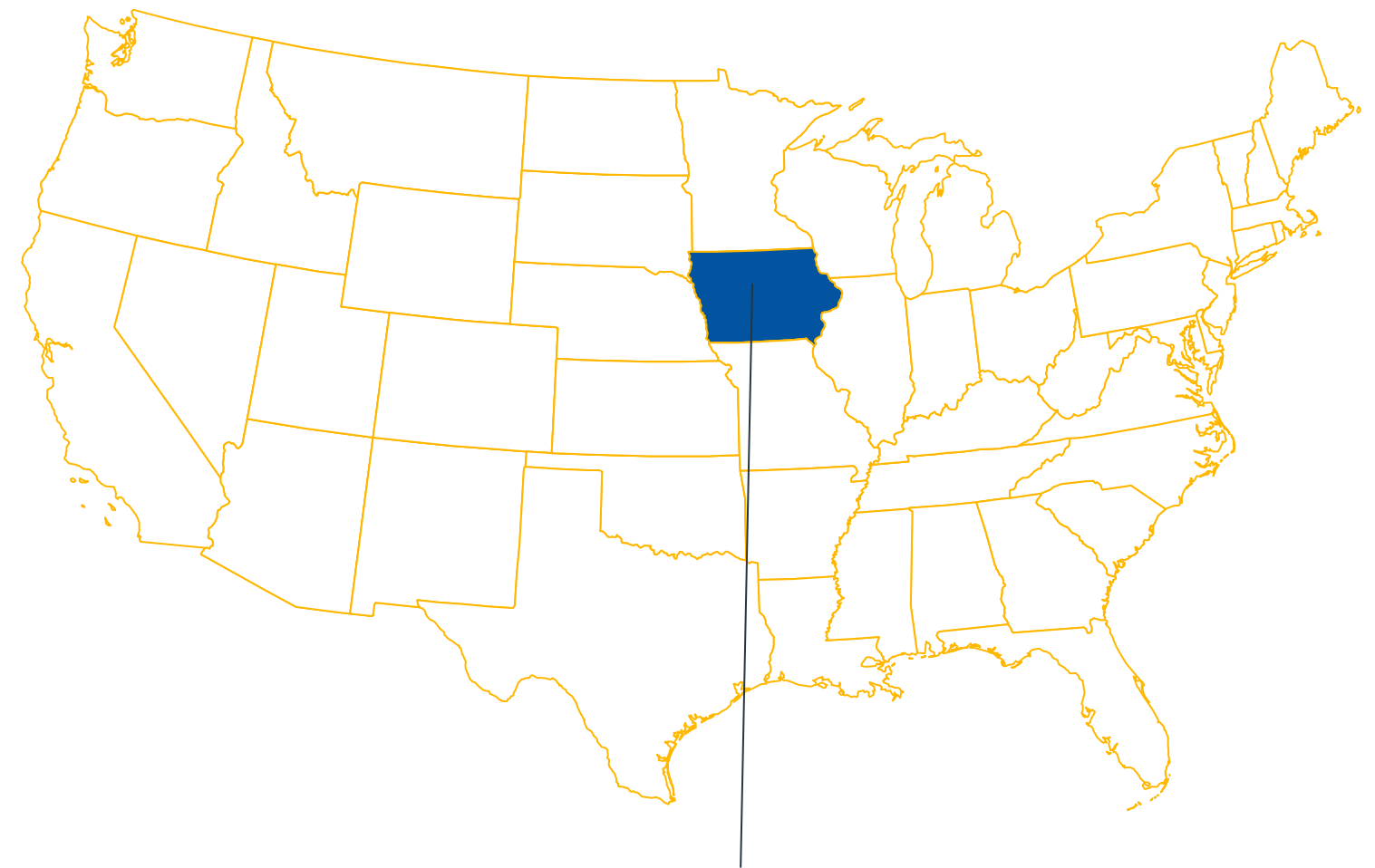
Northwest Iowa Community College’s president John Hartog helped create the “Big Five” meeting series that includes him, the Sheldon, Iowa city manager, county leadership, university leaders, the K-12 superintendent, and representatives from the state legislature. College strategizes with others about issuing bonds and was part of effort to create a turf project that benefited students and community.



Partner with Other Education Providers to Create Opportunities and Resources for Student Success

NCC Partners with Other Community Colleges to Increase Data and Technical Capacity

Northwest Iowa Community College partners with two other Iowa community colleges to fund an external institutional research function and partners with five other colleges in the Iowa Community College Online Consortium to offer online courses and share expensive software.

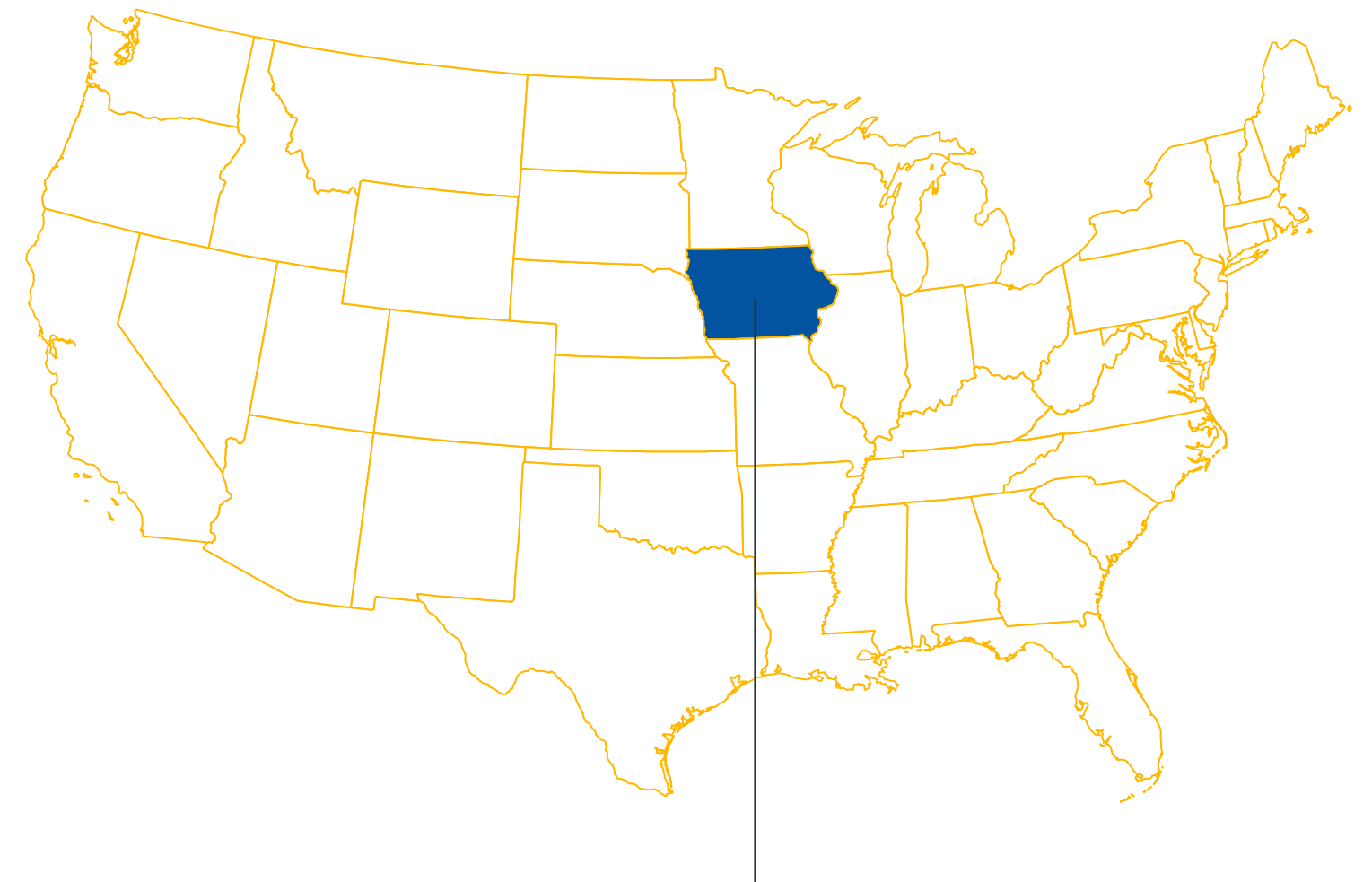


78% three-year graduation and transfer rate in 2019

Partner with Local Employers and Community Organizations to Generate Mission-Aligned Resources

NCC Bring Universities Closer to Home

NCC partners with the Western Iowa Regents Resource Center to offer bachelor's degrees on NCC's campus. Through the partnership, NCC leaders closely track students' post-transfer outcomes.



Average 3.13 first term GPA
compared to 2.9 statewide and
95% retention in first year post-
transfer

Effective Rural Transfer Partnerships

Three Principles

1. Align transfer pathways with local workforce needs to prevent outmigration
 - Students from urban and rural schools enroll in college at similar rates (62%)
 - Students from rural schools graduate from college at higher rates (41% vs. 36%)
 - But rural areas have fewer bachelor's degrees holders (33% vs 19%)
2. Address geographic realities to expand access
3. Address issues of affordability to enable diverse students to complete bachelors

<https://tacklingtransfer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Rural-Transfer-Pathways.pdf>

Effective Rural Transfer Partnerships

Three Models

1. Deliver entire bachelor's on community college campus
 - Community college offers bachelors degrees (where allowed)
 - Lindsey Wilson School of Professional counselling – 20 centers in four states
2. Start at community college, take upper-division courses on-line
 - Shasta College with Cal-State Chico (2-hour drive)
 - On-line bachelor's completion focused in areas of community need (business, criminal justice, early childhood education, IT, and social work)
3. Return migration pathways
 - Closing teacher shortage in Johnston County NC
 - Johnston County Public Schools: recruit in middle school, align high school dual enrollment to pathways, incentives for return migration made clear
 - Johnston Community College: teach DE and ensure efficient completion of associate's
 - North Carolina State University: upper division courses with rural focus

<https://tacklingtransfer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Rural-Transfer-Pathways.pdf>

4.

**Utilize Small Size as a
Strength**

Utilize Small Size as a Strength

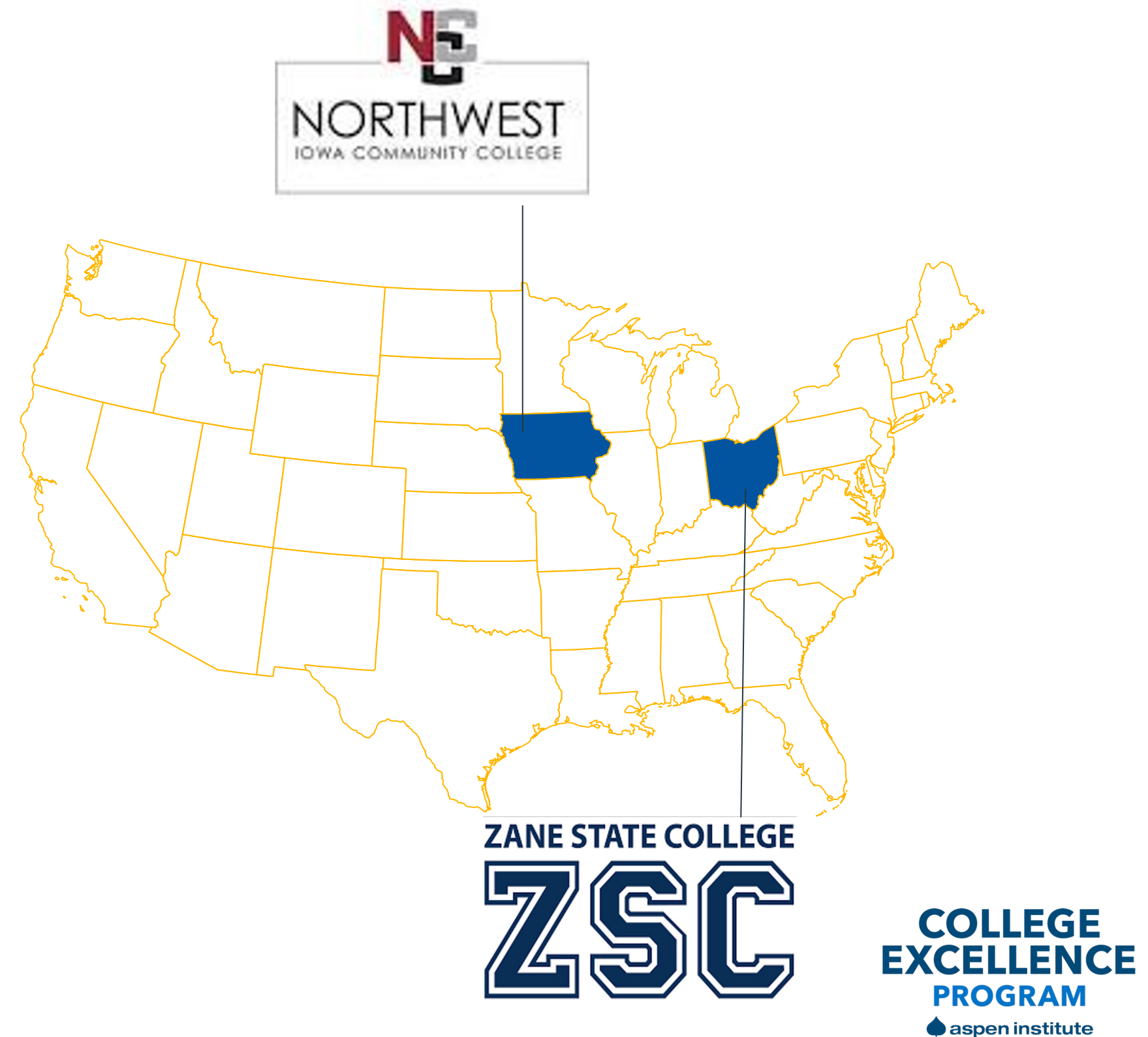
Key Insights

1. Combine functions to deliver efficiency and improve/align student success
2. Structure advising to take advantage of small size
3. Create discipline in messaging notwithstanding small size

Combining Functions to Advance Student Success

Challenge: College leaders, faculty and staff at rural colleges often wear multiple hats as they juggle a diverse set of student needs. Fewer students doesn't mean fewer roles.

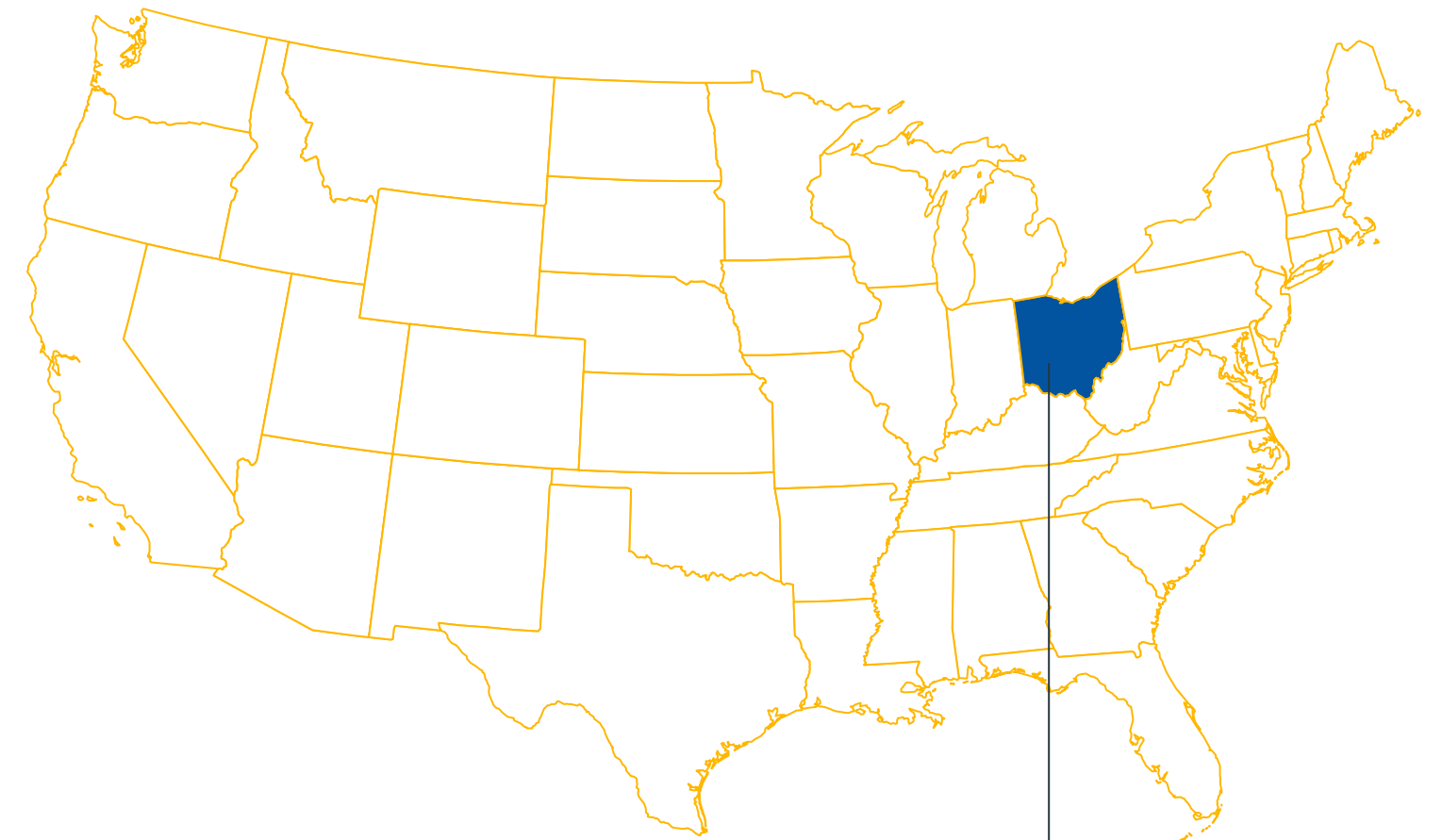
Solution: Design roles, communication plans, and training to ensure that college personal relationships align with and enhance student success strategy.



Combining Functions to Advance Student Success

Zane State Ensures Data are Shared Effectively on Campus

Zane State combined information technology and institutional research, recognizing that IT systems often hold much of the data that IR researchers need. Zane State also created a “data quality team” that decides who needs what data, when they need it, and how they need it.

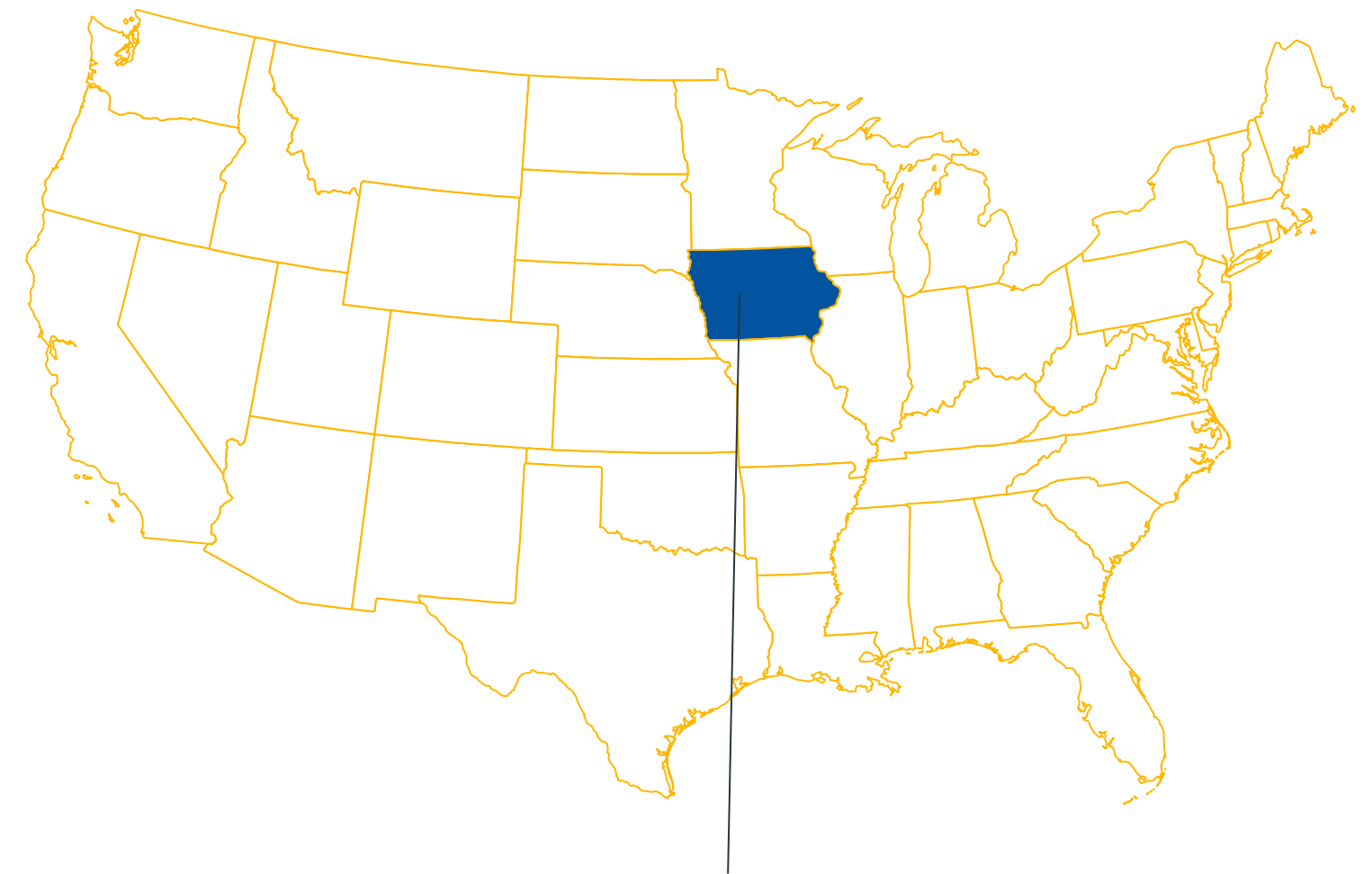


61% three-year graduation and transfer rate in 2019

Combining Functions to Advance Student Success

Northwest Iowa Becomes More Effective by Aligning Individual Strengths and Related Institutional Roles

- Institutional research combined with other student success functions.
- Mariah Oliver is the college's grant writer, student support coordinator, and IR leader.
- Combined responsibilities puts her in a valuable role as she works to understand student needs, communicate those needs externally, and to back those requests with data.

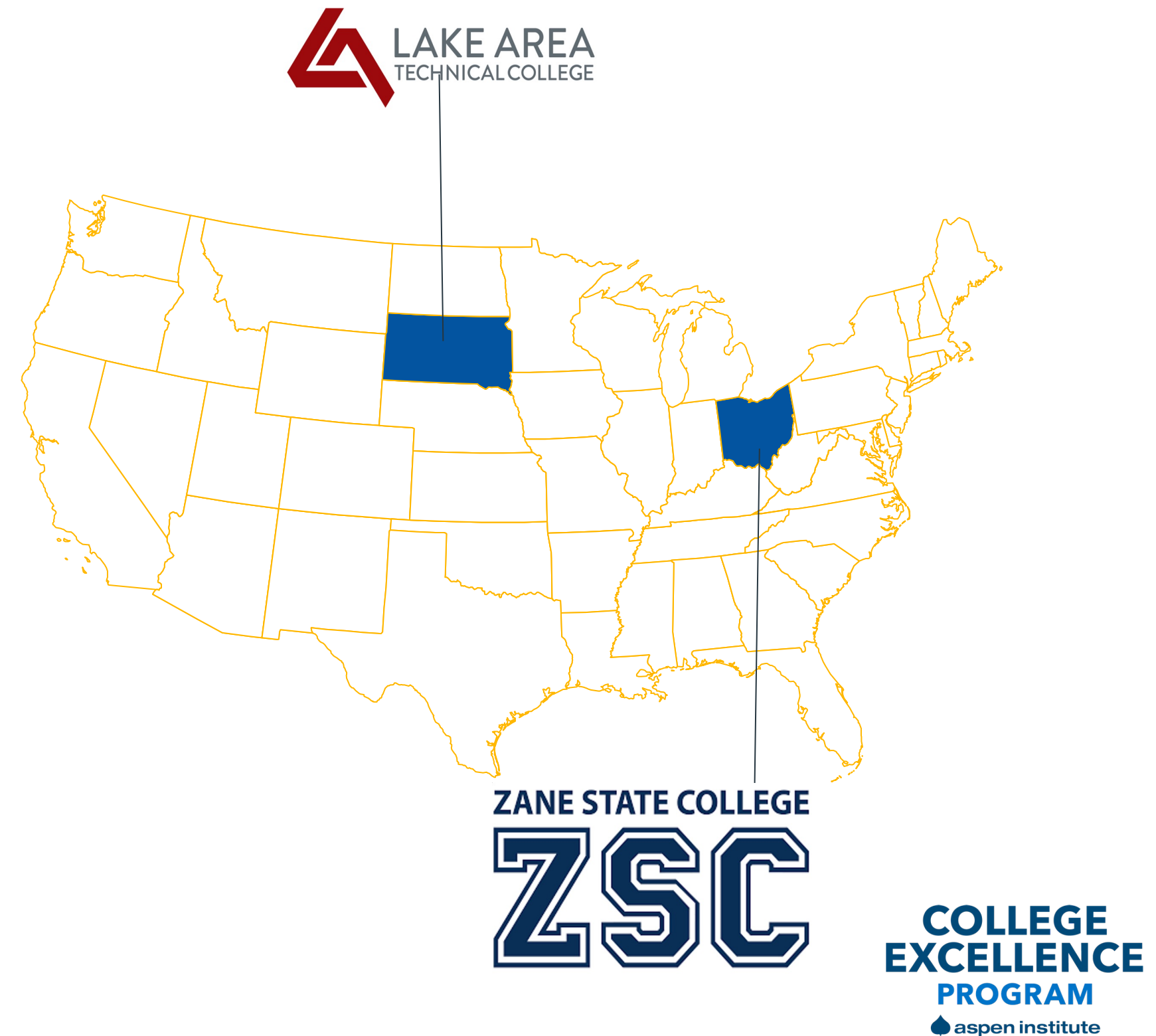


78% three-year graduation and transfer rate in 2019

Advising Students Effectively and Efficiently

Challenge: Hiring adequate advising staff can be difficult when there are other institutional priorities.

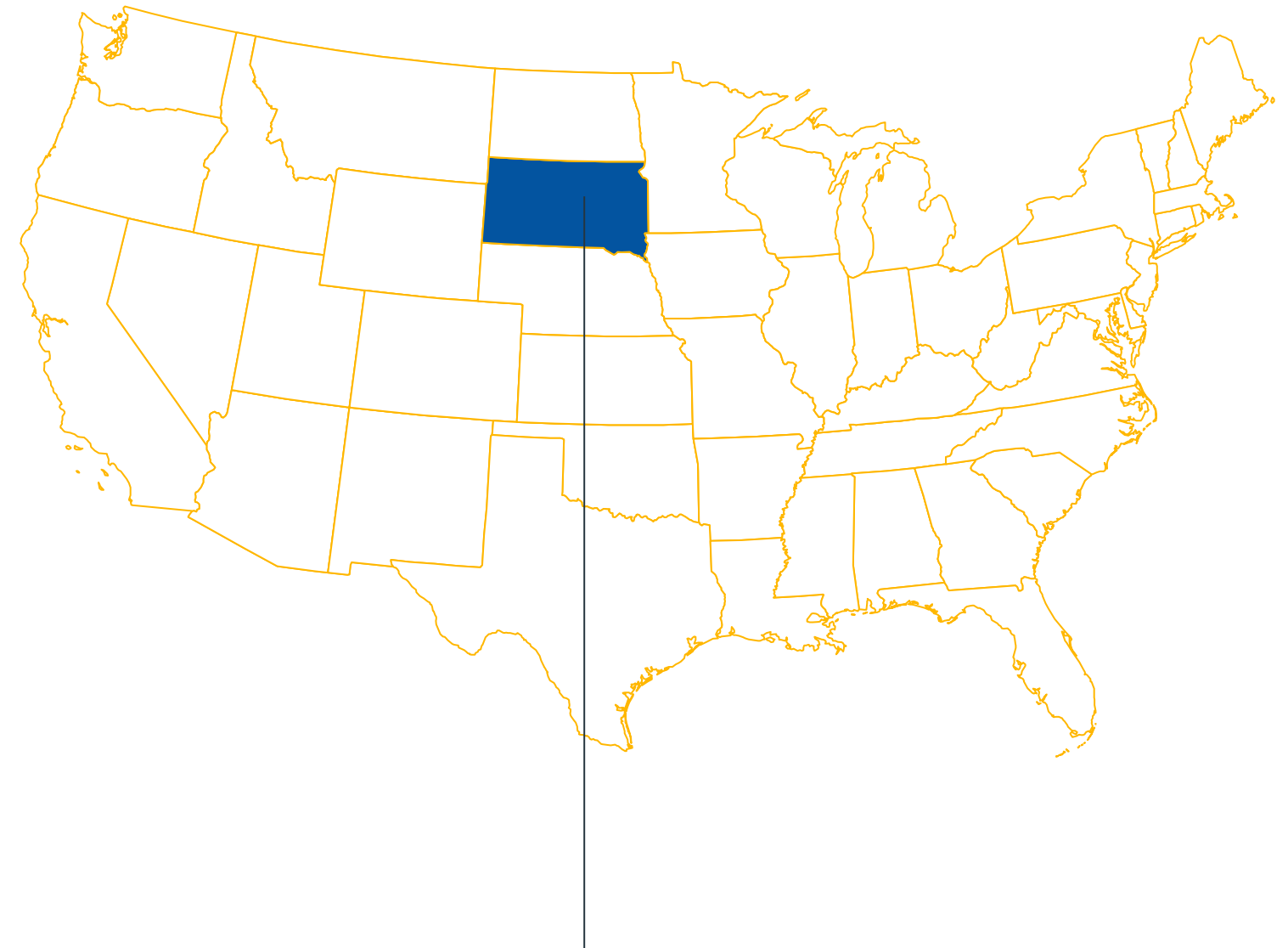
Solution: Build on close personal relationships among staff, faculty, and students and create formal advising processes to ensure that students do not fall through the cracks.



Advising Students Effectively and Efficiently

All Lake Area Technical College Faculty are Advisors

- Cohort model with no course choice
- Very few professional advisors, with faculty connecting students to needed services.
- Students are required to meet one-on-one with faculty.
- Faculty report nuanced understanding of student needs, and foster peer caring.



76% three-year graduation and transfer rate for all students in 2019.

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Thank you!

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