Community College 3.0: A Focus on Post-Completion Success

Josh Wyner, Founder and Executive Director

Aspen Institute College Excellence Program

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Student Outcomes Framework

Our Six-Part Framework in Action

Success in community college.

- Students learn
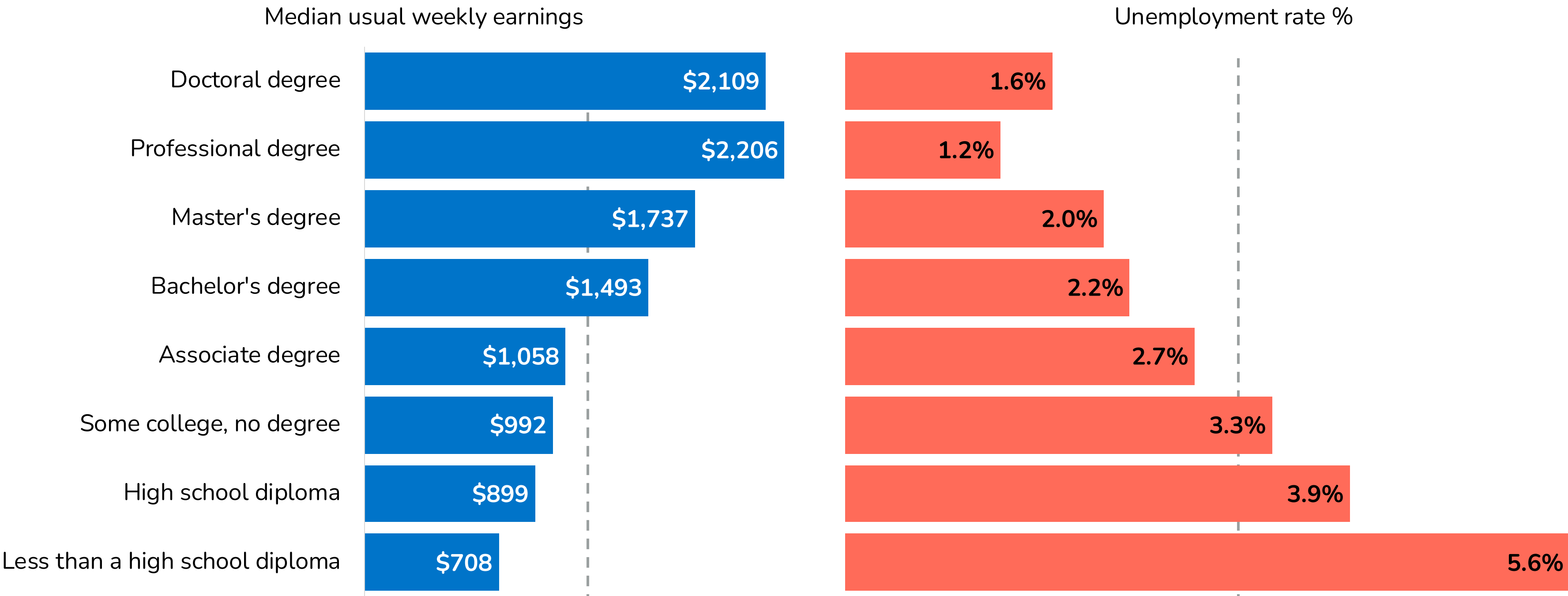- Students complete

Success after community college.

- Students get good jobs
- Students transfer and attain bachelor's degrees

Equitable access and success.

- Enrollment reflects service area
- Students have high & equitable access to programs of value
- Equity in learning, completion, transfer, and workforce outcomes for students of color and low-income students

Postsecondary education is critical to economic mobility.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2023

	Median usual weekly earnings	Unemployment rate %
Doctoral degree	$2,109	1.6%
Professional degree	$2,206	1.2%
Master's degree	$1,737	2.0%
Bachelor's degree	$1,493	2.2%
Associate degree	$1,058	2.7%
Some college, no degree	$992	3.3%
High school diploma	$899	3.9%
Less than a high school diploma	$708	5.6%

All workers: $1,170

Total: 3%

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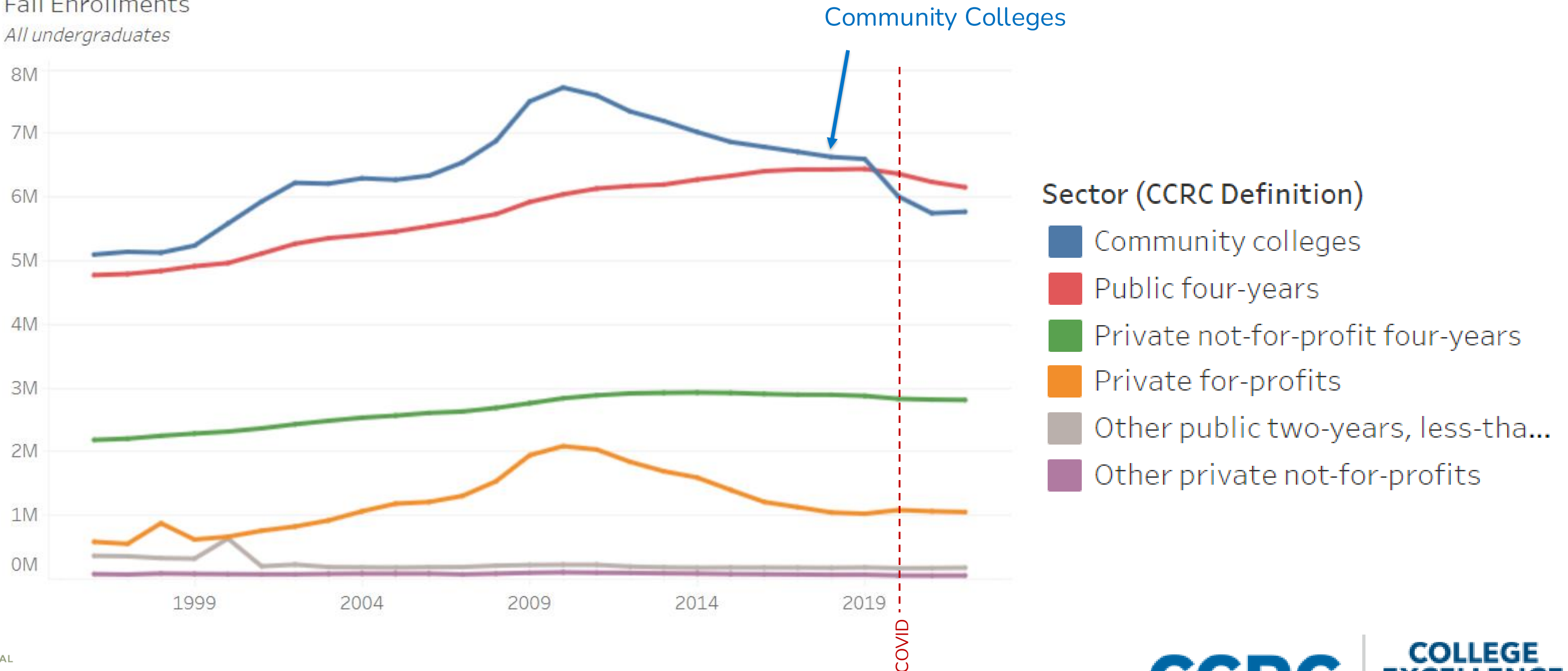
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Community college completion rates are improving.

Graduation rates have improved over a decade:

from **37%** in the 2007 cohort to **43%** in the 2018 cohort.

Bachelor's attainment rates among community college students have also improved:

from **14%** for the 2011 cohort to **16%** for 2017 cohort.

And yet, community college enrollments have declined since 2010.

Fall Enrollments
All undergraduates

Community Colleges

Sector (CCRC Definition)

- Community colleges
- Public four-years
- Private not-for-profit four-years
- Private for-profits
- Other public two-years, less-tha...
- Other private not-for-profits

COVID

Source: IPEDS.
https://public.tableau.com/profile/john.fink#!/vizhome/UndergraduateEnrollmentTrendsbySector/Summary

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There are many reasons for these declines.

Some beyond community colleges' control.

But community colleges can do more.
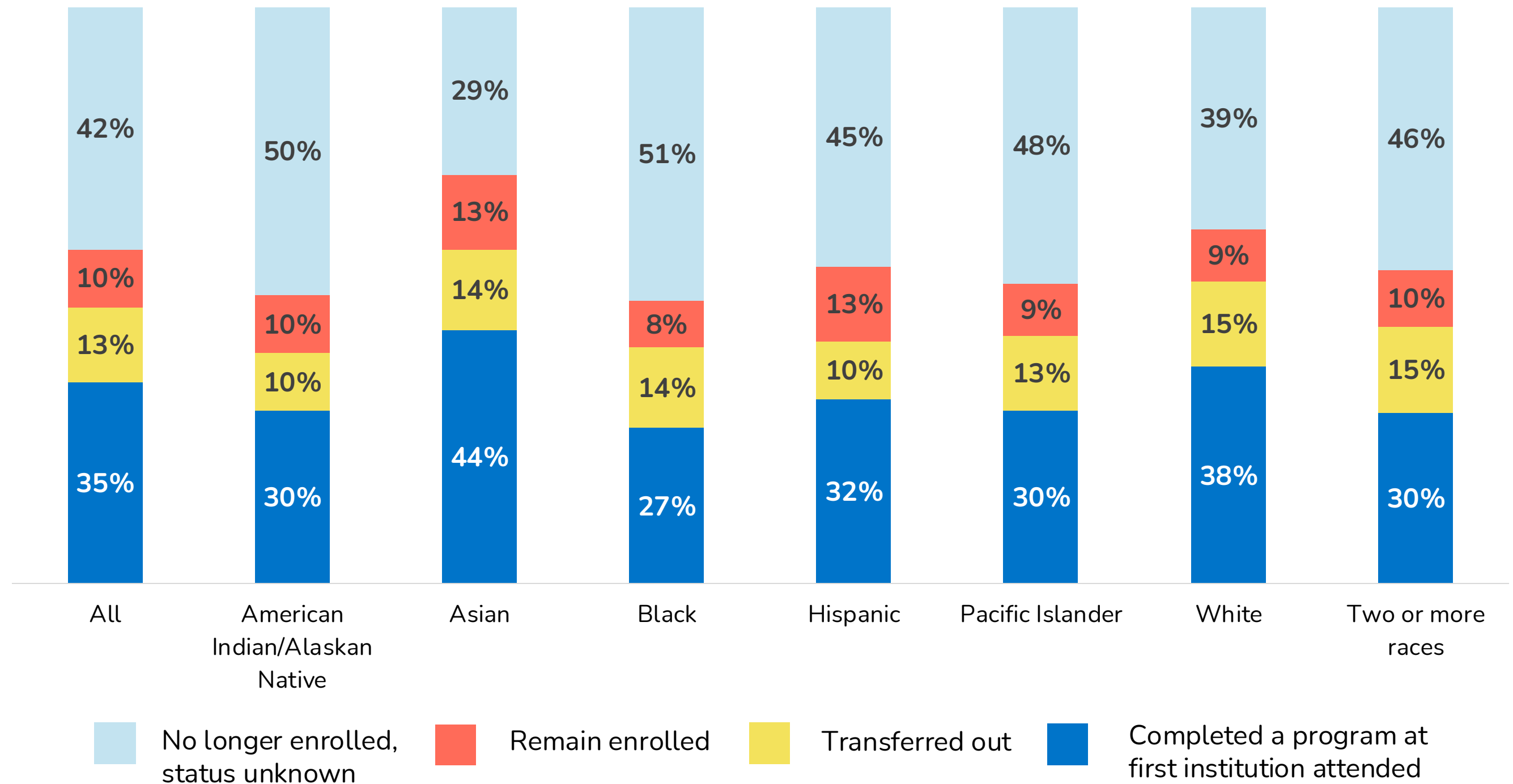
Graduation rates still must get better.

Three-Year Outcomes for FTFT Two-Year Public Starters by Race/Ethnicity, 2018 Cohort

Graduation rates have improved over a decade: from 37% in the 2007 cohort to 43% in the 2018 cohort.

But still, most community college starters do not earn any credential in three years; outcomes for students of color are even worse.

	All	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Two or more races
No longer enrolled, status unknown	42%	50%	29%	51%	45%	48%	39%	46%
Remain enrolled	10%	10%	13%	8%	13%	9%	9%	10%
Transferred out	13%	10%	14%	14%	10%	13%	15%	15%
Completed a program at first institution attended	35%	30%	44%	27%	32%	30%	38%	30%

Legend: No longer enrolled, status unknown | Remain enrolled | Transferred out | Completed a program at first institution attended

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Why does adding a focus on post-completion success matter so much?

- Evidence consistently shows that fewer than half of certificate and associate degree holders earn more than $35,000/year two years after completion.

- For most associate degrees to confer strong labor market value, a bachelor's degree is needed.

- But bachelor's attainment levels for community college students remain low and inequitable.

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Broken transfer negatively impacts millions of students.

80% of community college students **want a bachelor's degree**

33% of community college students **transfer to a four-year institution**

16% of community college students **will graduate with a bachelor's degree** within six years of starting college

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Bachelor's attainment varies by race/ethnicity.

Overall U.S. Population (Age 25 and over): No HS diploma 9%, HS Diploma/GED 28%, Some college 15%, Associate 11%, Bachelor's or higher 38%

Asian American: No HS diploma 8%, HS Diploma/GED 19%, Some college 8%, Associate 6%, Bachelor's or higher 59%

Black/African American: No HS diploma 10%, HS Diploma/GED 34%, Some college 18%, Associate 11%, Bachelor's or higher 28%

Hispanic (of any race): No HS diploma 25%, HS Diploma/GED 33%, Some college 13%, Associate 9%, Bachelor's or higher 21%
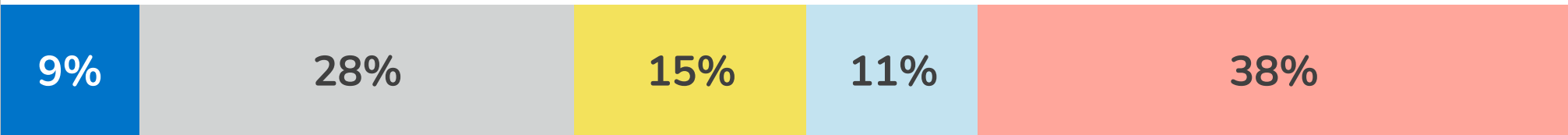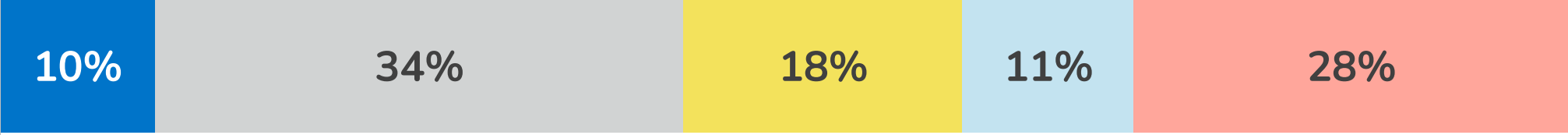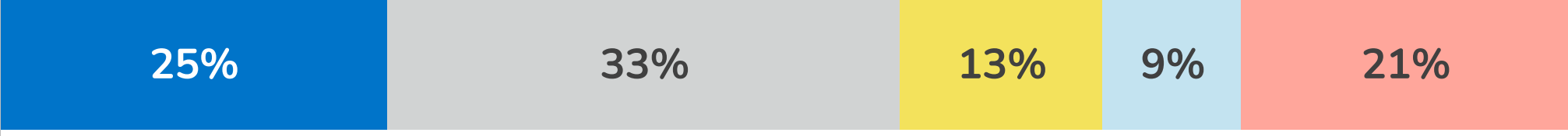
White (non-Hispanic): No HS diploma 9%, HS Diploma/GED 28%, Some college 15%, Associate 11%, Bachelor's or higher 38%
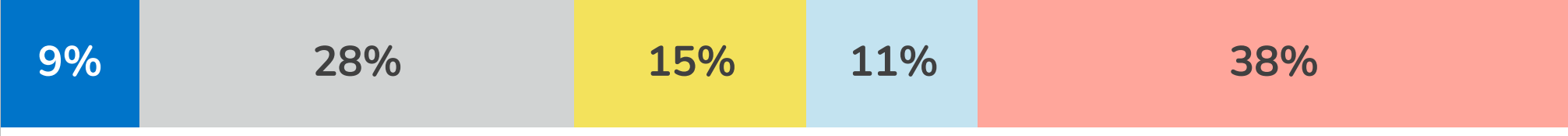
Legend: ■ No HS diploma ■ HS Diploma/GED ■ Some college ■ Associate ■ Bachelor's or higher

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Bachelor's attainment varies by family income level.

Bachelor's degree attainment rate by age 24 by family income quartile, dependent family members (1999-2020)

Legend: Fourth (Highest) Quartile — Third Quartile — Second Quartile — First (Lowest) Quartile

End values (2020): 59%, 40%, 25%, 15%

Source: Cahalan, Margaret W.; Addison, Marisha; Brunt, Nicole; Patel, Pooja R.; Vaughan III, Terry; Genao, Alysia; & Perna, Laura W. (2022). Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2022 Historical Trend Report. Washington, DC: The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), and Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy of the University of Pennsylvania (PennAHEAD).

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72.6 million | 87.8 million

	2021	2031
Bachelor's degree pathway	42.6	58.2
Middle-skills pathway	16.2	16.4
High school pathway	13.8	13.2

■ High school pathway ■ Middle-skills pathway ■ Bachelor's degree pathway

Number of good jobs (in millions)

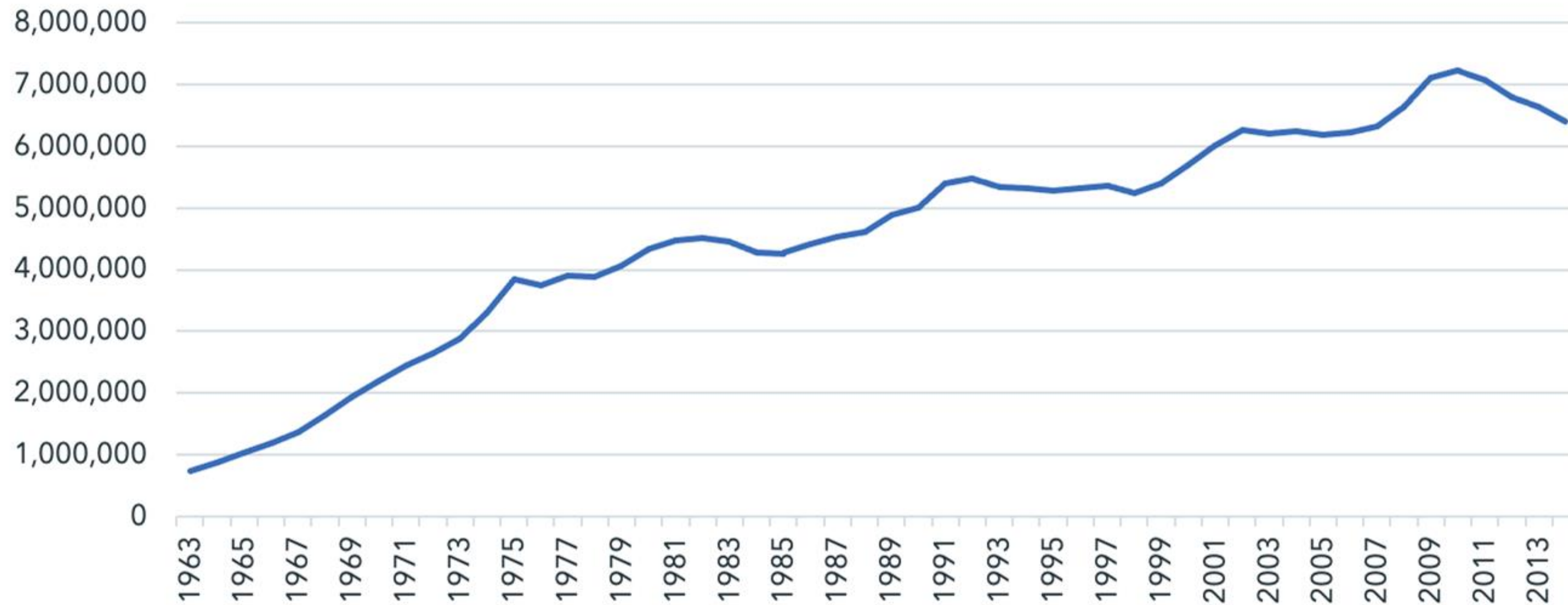**The number of good jobs for workers on the bachelor's degree pathway will grow by more than 15 million, while the number of good jobs on the high school pathway will decline by nearly 600,000.**

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How can community colleges deliver value and thrive?

Community Colleges

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
1.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
3.0

Post-College Success

Completion

Completion

Access

Access

Access

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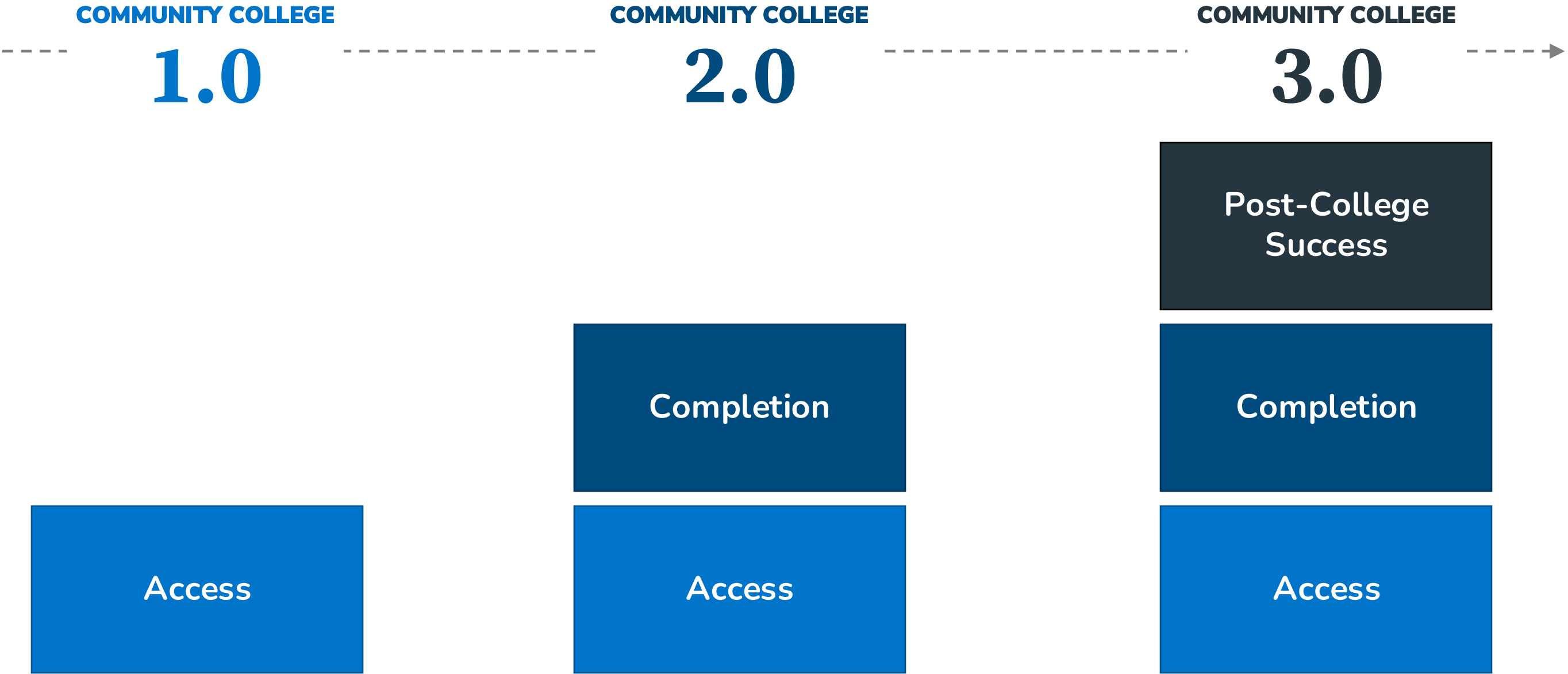
Total fall enrollment at community colleges, 1963-2014

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 2015, Table 303.25; 2011, Table 199

Community College 1.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1.0

Access

LEGACY

- Increased course and program options to meet the increased demand associated with expanded enrollment

- Increased developmental education needs due to more underprepared students

- Young leaders moved into president and provost positions

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Community College 2.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2.0

Access

Completion

LEGACY #1 FROM CC 1.0

LARGE NUMBER OF UNDERPREPARED STUDENTS ENROLLING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

REFORM	Improve developmental education outcomes through acceleration, contextualization, etc.
OUTCOME	Higher rates of students completing developmental sequence, but lack of improvement in overall completion rates.

Community College 2.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2.0

Access

Completion

LEGACY #2 FROM CC 1.0

LARGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS AND COURSES OFFERED AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

REFORM	**Guided pathways:** • Clear course sequences and other learning per degree • Reorganizing advising to get students on and through pathways
OUTCOME	Leaders must take on institution-wide reform rather than a series of independent initiatives; new kinds of leadership are needed.

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Completion is important, but it's not enough

→ Students don't **aim to complete**

Completion is important, but it's not enough

→ Students don't **aim to complete**

→ All credentials don't have **equal value**

→ Some degrees don't have **independent value**

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Completion is important, but it's not enough

→ Students don't **aim to complete**

→ All credentials don't have **equal value**

→ Some degrees don't have **independent value**

→ **Program enrollment varies** substantially by value

Community Colleges

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
1.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2.0

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
3.0

Post-College Success

Completion

Completion

Access

Access

Access

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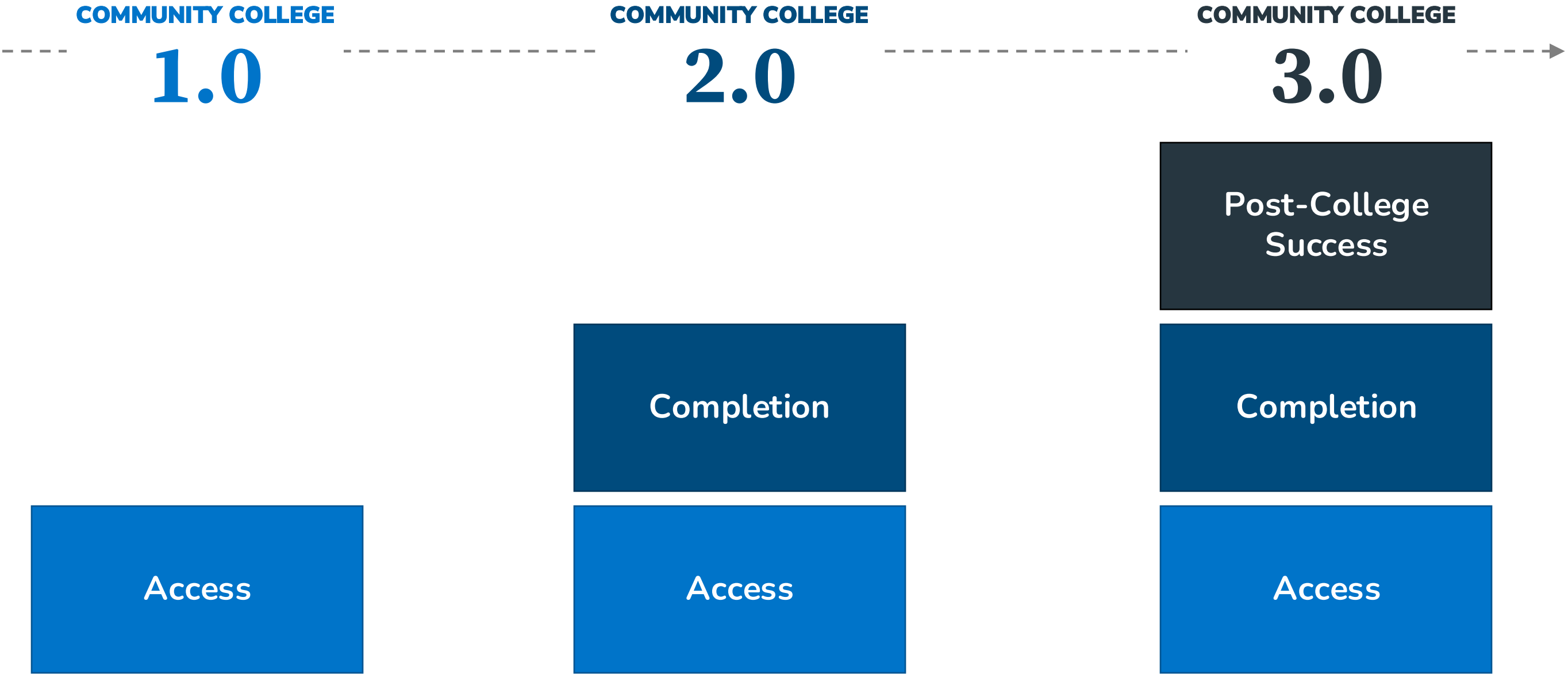
What are excellent colleges doing to achieve strong 3.0 outcomes for students?

Imperial Valley College

Connecting Students to Programs of Value

Context:

- Small, rural community near the U.S.-Mexico border
- Scarce transfer destinations

Reforms:

- **Goal:** All high school seniors apply to IVC and have an educational plan
- IVC offers dual enrollment in 14 out of 15 K-12 districts in service area with advising from both IVC and high school staff
- School districts fund two "higher education weeks," organized in partnership with IVC and San Diego State
- Districts welcome IVC staff in schools throughout the year; college-going activities embedded in curriculum
- President holds standing monthly meeting with all service area superintendents and principals; IVC senior team leaders meet monthly with their K-12 counterparts to enact tactical solutions

2023 WINNER

ASPEN PRIZE

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Imperial Valley College

Connecting Students to Programs of Value

Results:

- College has seen large enrollment increases over the past three years, including an increase from the prior semester of:
    - 18 percent in spring 2022
    - 38 percent in summer 2022
    - 13 percent in fall 2022

- 60%-70% of high school graduates in service area enroll at IVC (70%-80% of dual enrollment students)

- Three-year graduation rate improved 12 percentage points from 2015-2019

2023 WINNER

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Lake Area Technical College

Partnering with Employers to Ensure Programs Prepare Students for the Workforce
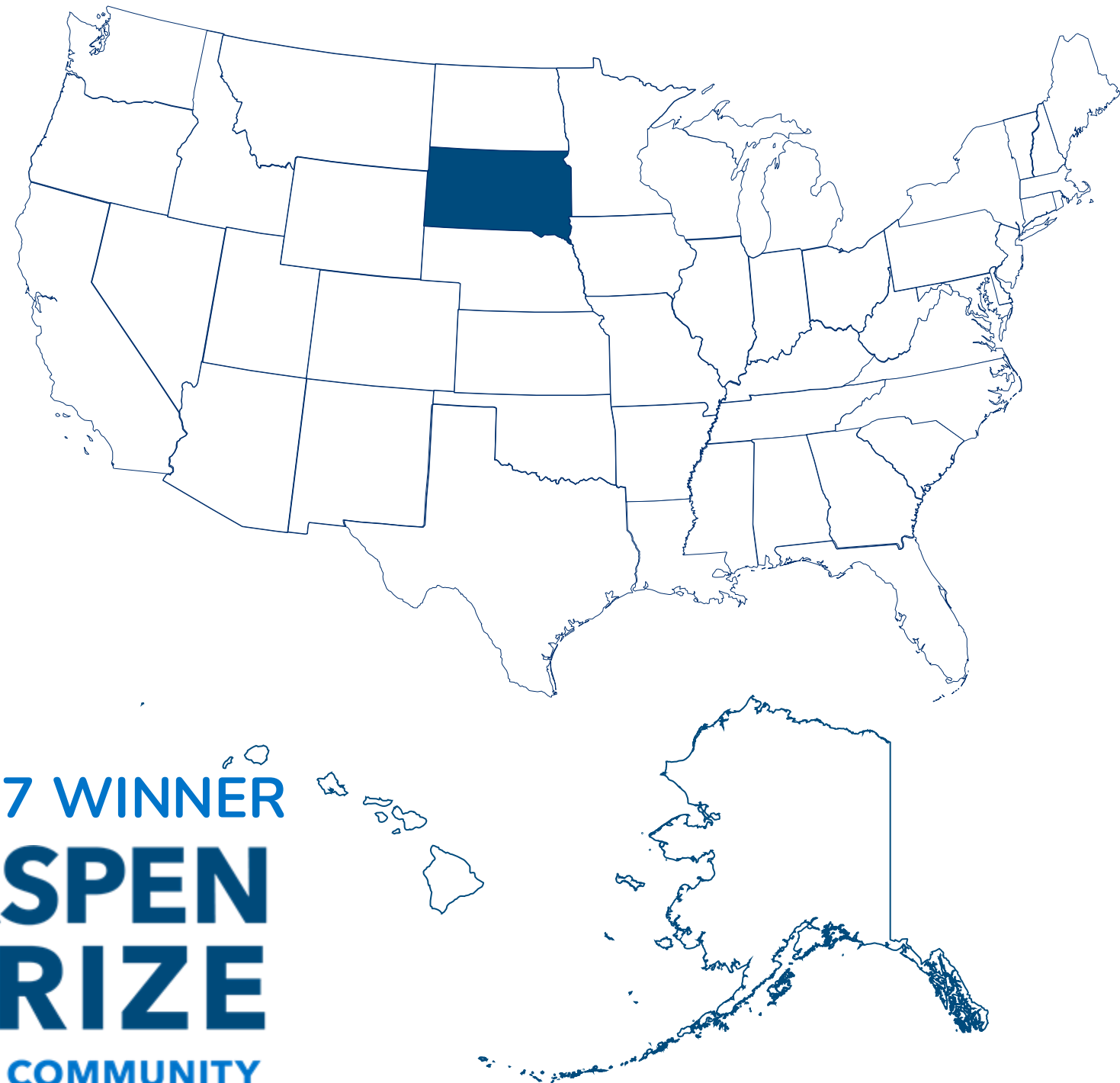
Reforms:

- Structured, cohort-based, block-schedule programs ensure students stay on track.

- Built a culture and processes by which the college designs and consistently updates programs based on industry needs and job expectations.

- Faculty responsible for building WBL into every program for every student.

- College redefined student success as job placement and good wages.

Results:

- 76% graduation/attainment rate is among the nation's highest.

- 99% employment rate and 27% wage premium for new graduates.

2017 WINNER

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Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Revamping Low-Opportunity Programs to Improve Post-graduation Outcomes
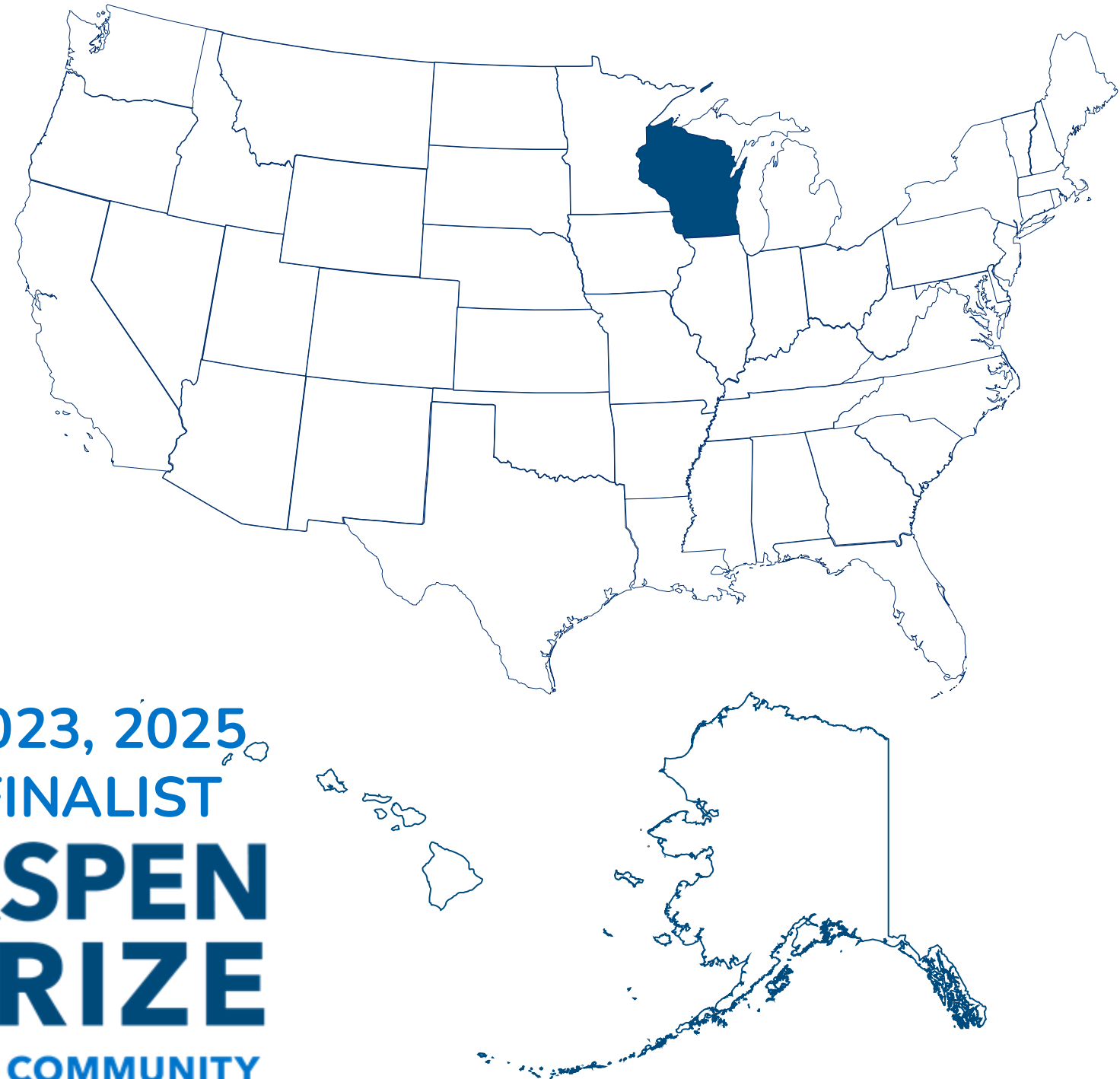
2023, 2025 FINALIST

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Context: Small college, rural setting

Reforms:

- Community College 3.0 is the guiding vision for the college

- Shared, college-wide goals ("College Health Indicators") include post-completion outcomes

- Annual analysis of employer needs and labor market data

- Revamp programs that have limited or no labor market demand. For each "low-value" program, identify innovative, actionable reforms to improve the post-graduation opportunities for students.

Results:

- 63% graduation and transfer rate

- Five years after completion, students who attain an associate degree or one-year certificate have earnings that far exceed the average for new hires in the region.

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Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Scaled Development of Comprehensive, Tailored Educational Plans
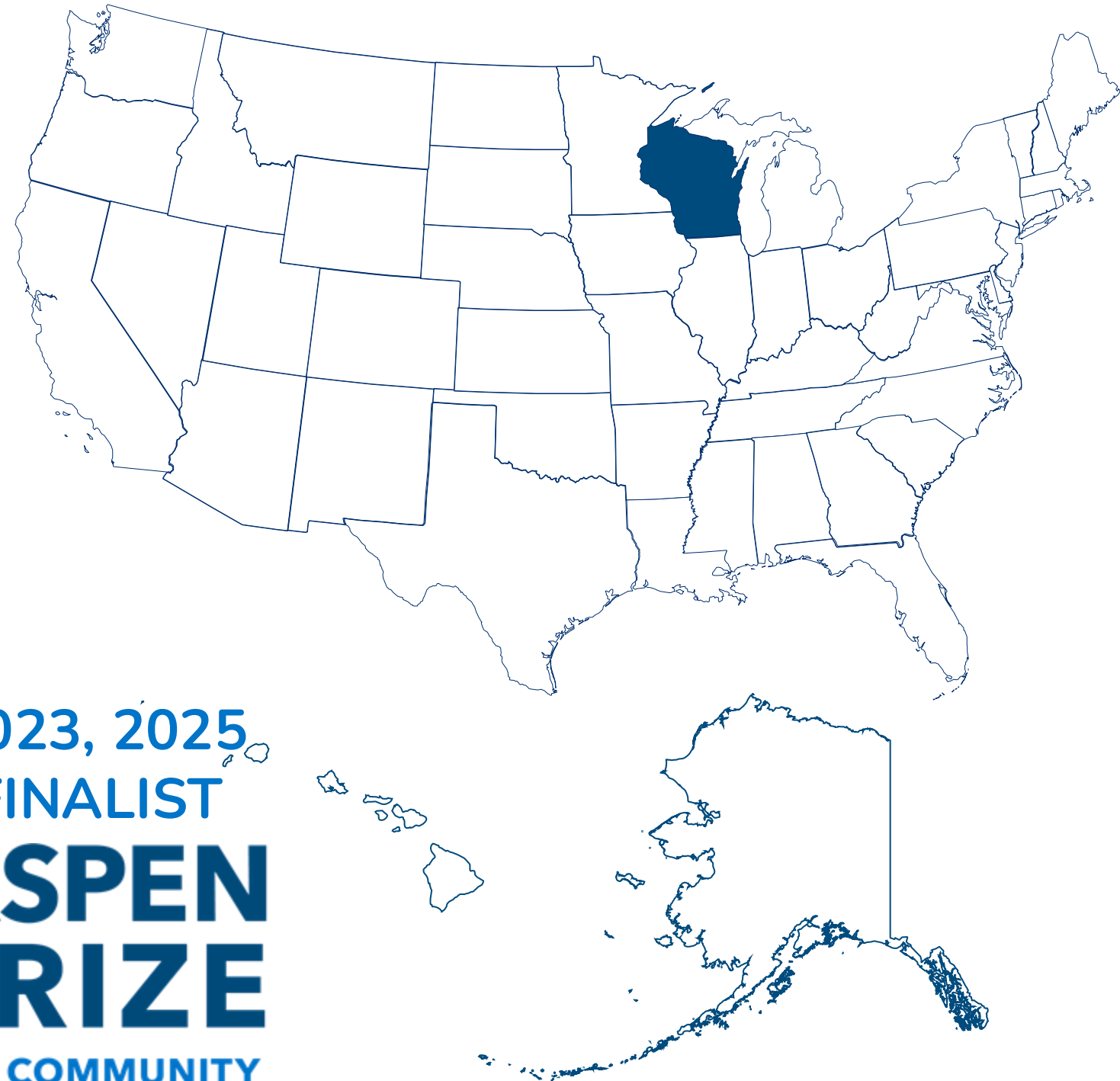
2023, 2025 FINALIST

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Reforms:

- Redesign and scaled implementation of student success plans (SSPs) for all FTE students

- SSPs contain career assessment, financial plan throughout the student's entire time, and the development of a first-year academic plan

- SSPs are the core of the pre-admissions meeting with students to connect them with a pathway before application

- Registration holds make SSPs inevitable

Results:

- Since implementation in 2023, 40% of students have completed student success plans with many more underway

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Keys to Becoming a 3.0 College

Conduct analysis on and set goals for students' post-graduation success

- Set a living-wage standard and transfer/BA attainment benchmarks, and use them to assess all programs' disaggregated enrollment and student outcomes

- Classify all transfer and workforce programs by post-completion value

- Set goals to increase the number of students in high-value programs and decrease the number in low-value programs, including goals for specific student groups

Keys to Becoming a 3.0 College

Pursue student-facing strategies that help more students enter and complete programs with strong post-completion value

- Align advising to the goal of every student making earlier and better program decisions and having a clear educational plan

- Help students make earlier program decisions through partnerships with K-12 schools and adult-serving organizations

Keys to Becoming a 3.0 College

Implement strategies to strengthen the college's programs

- Expand high-value workforce programs and diversify the student population

- Devise concrete strategy to recruit stranded workers into short-term credentials of value, with ladders into better jobs and further education

- Devise strategies for strengthening, shrinking, or closing low-value workforce programs

- Ensure that students in pre-health programs have a path to a credential tied to a good job (either directly or after transfer/BA attainment)

- Go big on bachelor's attainment, with targets for universities that will dramatically increase student outcomes through dual admission or other transformational models

- Connect general studies to majors

Table Discussion

- Where do you think your college is on the 1.0 to 3.0 spectrum?

- How can your college structure guided pathways work to increase post-completion success and value for your students?

- How is your guided pathways work informed by workforce needs in your community?
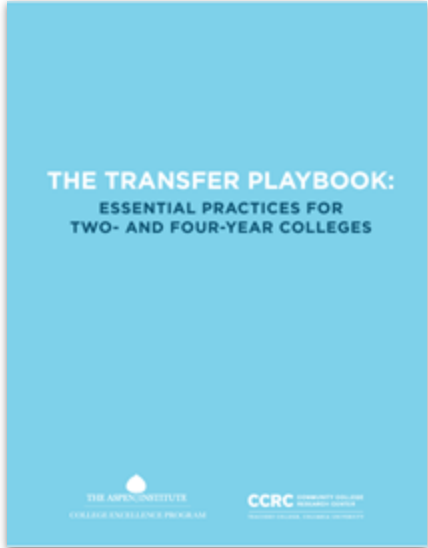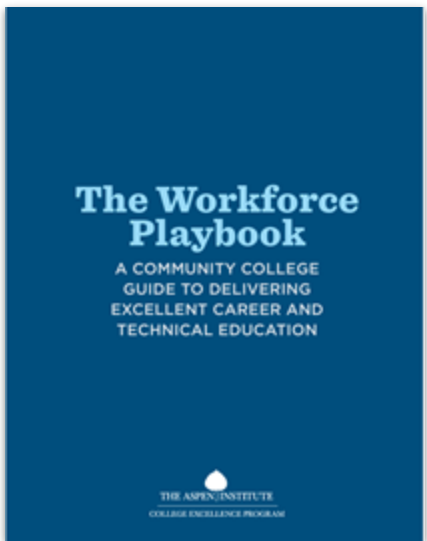
Whole Group Debrief

- Where do you think your college is on the 1.0 to 3.0 spectrum?

- How can your college structure guided pathways work to increase post-completion success and value for your students?

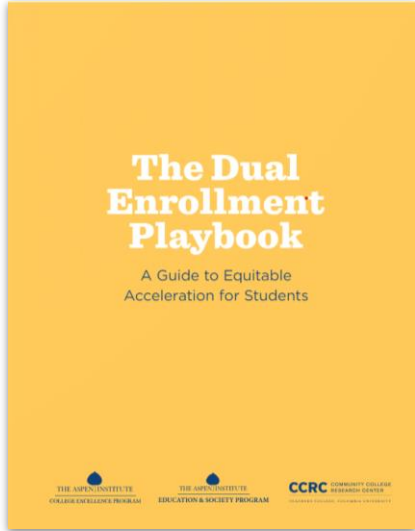- How is your guided pathways work informed by workforce needs in your community?

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Additional Resources

The Transfer Playbook (Link)

The Workforce Playbook (Link)

The Dual Enrollment Playbook (Link)

College Excellence Program Website (Link)

Unlocking Opportunity Guides (Link)

Coming Soon: Be the first to access the Transfer Playbook 2.0!

Unlocking Opportunity

Eight Strategies to Strengthen the Value of Community College Credentials

Read the blog post here:

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITY

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TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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Moderator: Pascale Charlot

Managing Director
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President
Lorain County Community College

Joe Schaffer

President
Laramie County Community College

Tim Stokes

President
South Puget Sound Community College

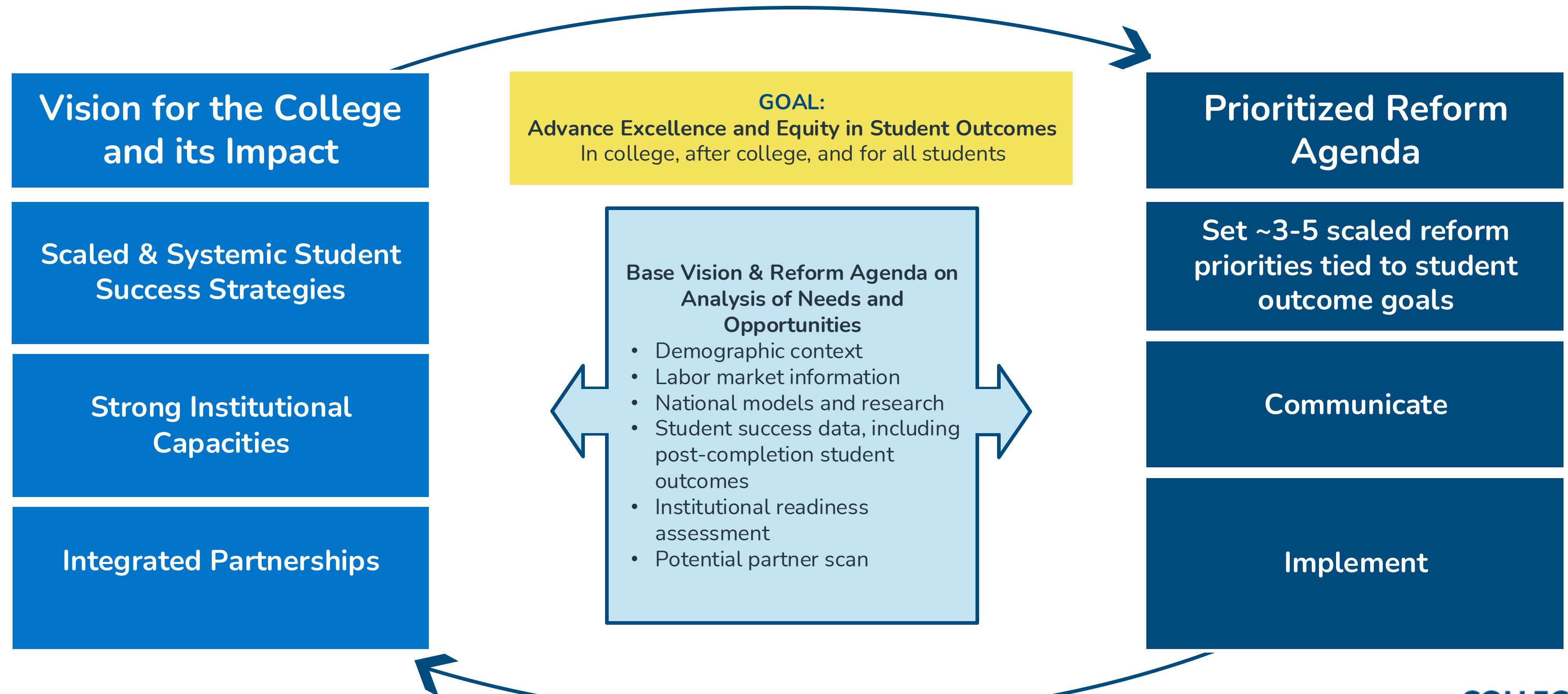# Presidential Panel: Building a Leadership Structure for Improvement

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A President's Model:
Strengthening college-wide student outcomes through prioritized reforms

Vision for the College and its Impact

Scaled & Systemic Student Success Strategies

Strong Institutional Capacities

Integrated Partnerships

GOAL:
Advance Excellence and Equity in Student Outcomes
In college, after college, and for all students

Base Vision & Reform Agenda on Analysis of Needs and Opportunities
- Demographic context
- Labor market information
- National models and research
- Student success data, including post-completion student outcomes
- Institutional readiness assessment
- Potential partner scan

Prioritized Reform Agenda

Set ~3-5 scaled reform priorities tied to student outcome goals

Communicate

Implement

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The Senior Team: Common Purpose & Collaboration

Josh Wyner, Founder and Executive Director

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What levers for change exist at the cabinet level?

Composition

Common Purpose

Collaboration + Implementation

What levers for change exist at the cabinet level?

Composition	Common Purpose	Collaboration + Implementation

Methodology for curriculum development:

- Aspen identified 19 four-year and two-year institutions for research, based on strength of student success and equity outcomes and reputation for strong executive leadership
- Conducted in-depth interviews with presidents and chancellors
- Conducted follow-up research with college/university leaders on attributes of specific cabinet roles

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What levers for change exist at the cabinet level?

Composition

Common Purpose

Collaboration + Implementation

What attributes are most important within high-performing senior teams?

- **Mission-aligned:** Committed to student success, outcomes-oriented

- **Good communicators/collaborators:** Emotionally intelligent, good listeners, collaborative in process and action

- **Trustworthy:** Ethical, reliable with follow-through

- **Bold:** Energetic, ambitious, willing to push back, courageous, willing to take risks

- **Strategic and innovative:** Analytical, strategic thinking, resourceful and curious about innovations around the country and in other sectors

What levers for change exist at the cabinet level?

Composition

Common Purpose

Collaboration + Implementation

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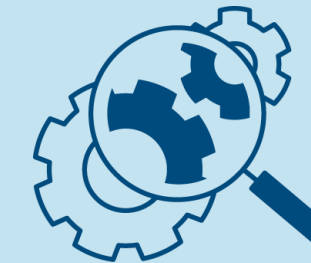
How can the cabinet develop and foster a common understanding of purpose?

Use consistent, compelling language

- Develop talking points/ideas on reform.

- List the big goals for the year.

- Hold regular meetings to address strategy.

Emphasize common data

- Define a limited set of aligned goals.

- Keep goals in front of everyone.

- Include data review as a standing agenda item.

- Dedicate time for the cabinet to discuss progress to metrics.

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How can the cabinet develop and foster a common understanding of purpose?

Replicate communications, data, and resource processes in divisions

- Ensure that each cabinet member has a plan in place aligned to the institutional plan:
  - Communications plan to increase understanding of the importance of the student success agenda
  - Data plan to use common data sets aligned to student success goals and strategy
  - Resource allocation plan to reinforce the importance of reform and de-emphasize traditional measures (for example, enrollment growth)
- Share a set of common talking points to tailor for individual divisions
- Create a set of clear, compelling data slides to use in each division
- Create and implement a plan to communicate to the entire institution the link between resource allocation and student success, including through budget and other resource acquisition and allocation processes
- Discuss scale and sustainability for each new initiative

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What levers for change exist at the cabinet level?

Composition

Common Purpose

Collaboration + Implementation

How can leaders create the conditions for collaboration across units?

Create the conditions for honest and open feedback

- Make it clear that candid discussion and transparency are valued, and that feedback is welcome.

- Set a policy for the cabinet to disagree openly behind closed doors but present a unified front outside.

- Reauthorize cabinet "rules of engagement" when a new member joins.

Ensure appropriate leadership of the initiative

- At cabinet meetings, set aside time to discuss whether collaboration between and within units is adequate for implementation.

- Ask about specific opportunities to deepen understanding and collaboration between units.

- Consider whether the project leads within the units have the appropriate level of positional authority to collaborate effectively.

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How can leaders create the conditions for collaboration across units?

Signal the importance of collaboration through performance review and improvement processes

- In cabinet members' annual evaluations and goal-setting, include some common goals for all cabinet members.

- Reserve time in one-on-one meetings to discuss institution-wide goals.

- Consider having each cabinet member's review depend substantially on evaluations from other cabinet members.

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What systems can support strong implementation?

Ensure divisions have accountability systems in place for follow-through

- At the cabinet level, discuss the importance of planning for scale and sustainability, as well as accountability for results.

- Consider training mid-level managers on implementation.

- As a team, normalize and encourage admitting challenges.

- At the cabinet level, expect to set SMART goals for each major initiative

  - Continue/modify/stop decisions will be made at set milestones.

What systems can support strong implementation?

Typical goal:

Create course maps for 10 programs of study.

SMART goal:

By August 2026, ensure that faculty and advisors have worked together to create full-time and part-time program maps that set forth course sequences, learning goals, and applied learning requirements for 10 programs of study in a format that is readily available and easily understood by students.

Prioritize plans for programs of study that (1) are among those most frequently pursued by students, and (2) have significant gaps in success for Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and/or Pell-eligible students.

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College Team Activity: Reflections on the Senior Team Assessment Tool

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Assessment Tool: Independent Reflection

Spend the next 10 minutes independently exploring your senior team assessment results. Consider:

- Where is your team the strongest? Where is institutional reform aligned with key actions from senior leadership?

- Where are there misalignments and/or opportunities for improvement?

- As you consider your guided pathways work, does the team have a sense of common purpose? To what extent is the team collaborating effectively to advance guided pathways reform?

Assessment Tool: Group Discussion

As a team, discuss the results of the assessment tool.

- What areas of alignment and misalignment does the assessment tool reveal? What surprised you and why?

- Given your assessment results, what barriers might your senior team face in enacting guided pathways and moving toward community college 3.0?

- What accountability models and systems can you create as a senior team to support implementing your guided pathways?

Assessment Tool: Keep, Stop, Start

Consider the Keep, Stop, Start framework to determine the steps your team will take to maintain and improve strategies of transformational senior teams.

- **Keep:** What policies, routines, communications efforts/patterns, or other practices do you have in place that support common purpose & collaboration?

- **Stop:** What are you currently doing that does not support common purpose & collaboration? What might you stop or significantly change?

- **Start:** What ideas from the presentation might you try with your team?

CEO Role-Alike Roundtable: Leading the Senior Team

Pascale Charlot, Managing Director

Josh Wyner, Founder and Executive Director

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Introductions

Briefly introduce yourself by sharing your name, institution, and tenure.

Senior Teams—Composition

Does the college have:

- *the right team...*
- *with the right skills and attributes...*
- *organized in the right way...*

...to advance the institutional reform agenda?

What makes up a strong team capable of creating transformational change at the college?

- What attributes are required for **all cabinet** members and collectively across the cabinet?

- What attributes are uniquely required for **key cabinet positions** (vice president of academic affairs, chief financial officer, vice president of student services, etc.)?

- What kinds of **diversity** are needed among the group (thought, lived and professional experience, race, ethnicity, gender, attitude, etc.)?

- How do the skills and attributes of the existing cabinet **align with the goals and needs of the institution's reform agenda**?

- **What changes might be needed** in the composition of the cabinet or in roles and responsibilities?

Do you have the right team with the right attributes in the right roles to advance reform?

- **Mission-aligned:** Are they committed to student access, success, and equity? Are they outcomes-oriented?

- **Good communicators/collaborators:** Are they emotionally intelligent and good listeners? Are they collaborative in process and action? Can they deliver the message to advance the goals of reform?

- **Trustworthy:** Are they ethical? Do they follow through on what they say?

- **Bold:** Are they energetic/ambitious? Are they willing to push back? Are they courageous/willing to take risks?

- **Strategic and innovative:** Are they analytical, strategic thinkers? Are they resourceful and curious about innovations around the country and in other sectors?

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Transformational qualities of three, key leadership roles:

VP of Academic Affairs

Chief Financial Officer

VP of Student Services

Why focus on these three roles?

Chief Financial Officer
Traditional to Transformational

From...

Believes the CFO "owns" the budget, withholding information from others to ensure the fiscal strength of the institution in good and in difficult times.

Believes student success goals, such as improving retention and completion, are the responsibility of other cabinet members.

Treats the budget as a fixed amount of resources to be parsed out among units within the college.

To...

Aims to build widespread fiscal knowledge and budget transparency, believing they are essential to ensuring that unit leaders can align spending to mission; builds trust that resources are aligned to mission and connects their efforts to those of others within the institution.
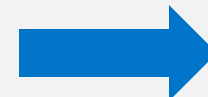
Shares responsibility for student success by collaborating with academic and student services to ensure that fiscal resources and processes are fully aligned with student success goals and activities.

Partners with the president and other cabinet members to creatively generate resources, including by building and leveraging external partnerships, creating operational efficiencies, and activating resources often regarded as unavailable, such as savings from hiring delays

Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs

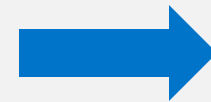## Traditional to Transformational

From...

Believes it is solely the responsibility of disciplines and departments to determine the content of and requirements for faculty professional development.

Believes student success goals, such as improving retention and completion, are the responsibility of divisions that provide student services and the senior team members who oversee them.

Leads academic units based on tradition and history, seeing the scope and pace of change as constrained by expectations rooted in the past—regardless of the trajectory of student success or evidence about the student experience.

To...

Takes responsibility for advancing excellent teaching practices through professional development by devising college-wide goals for professional development, allocating resources accordingly, and visibly recognizing teaching excellence.

Shares responsibility for student success by ensuring that faculty are fully engaged and by collaborating with student services to ensure that academic enterprises (including faculty advising practices) are fully aligned with student success goals and activities.

Regularly analyzes and uses data, predictive analytics, and qualitative evidence of the student experience to make decisions about programs, evaluate their effectiveness, celebrate successes, and communicate priorities.

Vice President for Student Services

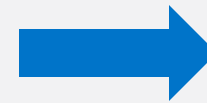## Traditional to Transformational

From...

Believes it is up to individual student service units to decide the content and process of professional development, and that professional development goals and resources should be decided solely by directors and division heads.

Believes it is up to student service units to decide the criteria and process for hiring staff, and that the vice president for student services is not responsible for ensuring alignment of such criteria and processes with college-wide priorities.

Believes improving student retention and completion is not a significant faculty responsibility, but rather the responsibility of student services units that oversee student advising, student life, and provide out-of-classroom academic and nonacademic supports.

To...

Takes responsibility for advancing excellent practices through professional development that is significantly integrated across student service units and is supported through adequate resource allocation and visible recognition.

Takes responsibility for aligning staff hiring with institutional priorities for student services delivery; ensures that the college has adopted prioritized attributes for hiring diverse staff with the technical expertise needed in each unit and that college-wide priorities are utilized in hiring systems (for example, interview questions, assessment rubrics, and committee deliberations).

Shares responsibility for advancing student retention and completion by collaborating with the provost/VPAA and academic units to ensure that faculty are fully engaged in the classroom, in their advising practices, and in collaboration with advisors and other staff.

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Lessons from Unlocking Opportunity

Questions & Reflections

What questions/reflections do you have about composing a senior team to lead guided pathways work?

Senior Team Attributes Matrix

You will spend the next 10 minutes independently completing the Senior Team Attributes Matrix. Consider the traditional-transformational from-to chart for the three key senior team roles as you work. Reflect on the following:

- As a whole, what are the strengths of the senior team? What are the gaps?

- What are some attributes you need more of to enact your reform agenda?

- To what extent is there alignment between (1) how you filled out the matrix and (2) the strengths and weaknesses suggested in the completed senior team assessment tool? If/where there is misalignment, why might that be?

Group Discussion

- Where do you see particular strengths or gaps in your cabinet's composition?

- Where do your three key leadership roles (VPSS, VPAA, and CFO) fall on the traditional-to-transformational spectrum? How might these three positions be better leveraged to contribute to your guided pathways work?

- What do your matrix and senior team assessment results imply about how you evaluate and provide feedback to individuals and teams? Are you considering making any changes as a result?

- As the president, what next steps might you take regarding senior team composition? Consider potential turnover, role reassignment, and professional development opportunities.