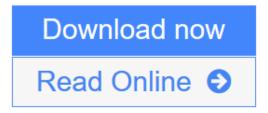# Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success

Thomas R. Bailey , Shanna Smith Jaggars , Davis Jenkins

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In the United States, 1,200 community colleges enroll over ten million students each year--nearly half of the nation's undergraduates. Yet fewer than 40 percent of entrants complete an undergraduate degree within six years. This fact has put pressure on community colleges to improve academic outcomes for their students. *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* is a concise, evidence-based guide for educational leaders whose institutions typically receive short shrift in academic and policy discussions. It makes a compelling case that two-year colleges can substantially increase their rates of student success, if they are willing to rethink the ways in which they organize programs of study, support services, and instruction.

Community colleges were originally designed to expand college enrollments at low cost, not to maximize completion of high-quality programs of study. The result was a cafeteria-style model in which students pick courses from a bewildering array of choices, with little guidance. The authors urge administrators and faculty to reject this traditional model in favor of "guided pathways"--clearer, more educationally coherent programs of study that simplify students' choices without limiting their options and that enable them to complete credentials and advance to further education and the labor market more quickly and at less cost.

Distilling a wealth of data amassed from the Community College Research Center (Teachers College, Columbia University), *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* offers a fundamental redesign of the way two-year colleges operate, stressing the integration of services and instruction into more clearly structured programs of study that support every student's goals.

Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success Details

Date   : Published April 9th 2015 by Harvard University Press
ISBN   : 9780674368286
Author : Thomas R. Bailey , Shanna Smith Jaggars , Davis Jenkins
Format : Hardcover 304 pages
Genre   : Education, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success for online ebook

J.L. Sutton says

Bailey etc. emphasize the importance of completion at the nation's community colleges (with their estimated 10 million students per year). By stressing outcomes, the authors argue against the 'cafeteria-style model' of course delivery available at many community colleges. The answer to improving completion is on guided student pathways; however, organizational changes need to take place in order to maximize the impact of this practice. Supplemental to this are such practices as peer collaboration, student success courses and faculty-student support services partnerships.

Lance Eaton says

I wanted to really like this book. There are some points to it that are valuable and think can help improve outcomes at community colleges. In particular, the way it considers choice design and providing clearer pathways for students I think is incredibly useful to consider. However, it flails when it talks about classroom design or even when it tries to accurately discuss the student populations. It says that including the part-time faculty is important and yet makes mention of them on less than eight pages in the entire book; the rest of the time, the authors focus on full-time faculty in their remarks. Most problematic is that it is simply too vague and simple. It defines success as graduation but never provides what is a meaningful completion rate to acquire, which is useful to consider when even the authors note that more than half the students are likely to stop because of financial limitations and at least three out of five students are responsible for someone (a child, an ailing parent, etc). I do think it's a relevant read for those who work in the realm of community college, but it has it is not necessarily a great book by any means.

If you enjoyed this review, feel free to check out my other reviews and writings at **By Any Other Nerd** /

Kenley Neufeld says

Comprehensive and strategic approach to improving community colleges and student learning. Based in research, and concrete examples, this can be a guidebook for colleges to reflect on the instructional programs and student support services. M

George Woodbury says

This is an interesting look at how to increase success at community colleges. Philosophically I am generally not in favor of limiting student options in any fashion, but so many of our students arrive with no long term goals (or poorly defined goals) that it inhibits their chances of making it all the way to graduation. The idea of pathways gives students the focus needed to make progress towards graduation and transfer.

I really like the idea that faculty, staff, and administration need to work together to make this a reality.

Chapters 3 (Instruction) and 4 (Developmental Education) are sure to generate discussion among faculty.

I support the authors' call for a shift from the knowledge transmission model to the learning facilitation model. How many of us are prepared to focus on conceptual understanding over procedures only, help students develop meta cognitive skills, adopt learner centered instruction?

I have some issues with tying dev ed courses and college level courses (like dev math and statistics) into one course, but we definitely need to take a new look at our developmental sequences. Are there too many courses? Do they cover too many topics? Are there ways to incorporate other important (life and student) skills into these courses?

I'm looking forward to a campus wide discussion of these ideas.

Karen says

I enjoyed this book mostly because the authors seem to clearly speak about today's community college population. However, many of the guidelines for revising today's community college education will be challenging in a time when budgets for education are being slashed. Furthermore, the authors presented solutions and used big community colleges as examples. I would love to see someone tackle the plights of small community colleges!

Tambra Riggs-Gutiérrez says

Excellent. Wrote a book review for this title as part of an Internship requirement for a graduate course. Highly recommend to anyone working in the community college field.

SocProf says

Most of this is more speculation of what could work with very limited anecdotal evidence to support it. Some of this seems commonsense: who could object to the need for strong advising and more collaborative culture? But if one were to follow the prescriptions (rather vague) from this book, it would take years to conceptualize, design, and deploy what the authors advocate. Not to mention that this would require an initial outlay of resources that seems considerable.
So, the problem of community college completion rates is a real one. I am not sure that this is the solution.

Cassi Paslick says

This is truly a must-read for all stakeholders in the community college system. The book explores how the system works for current students, and contrasts that with how the system could work so much better. Examples of colleges exploring "guided pathways" are found throughout the book. Different sections explore how different areas of a college would need to change, in order to create a more coherent and successful educational experience for students at open-enrollment institutions. This could be a great intermediate step

on the way toward competency based learning.

Mark Taylor says

Great presentation of the issues and initiatives that community colleges are grappling with.

Kyle says

This is the first book I've ever read that's made me want to be a part of a book club. Every chapter came with new ideas, well organized and researched, that together made a persuasive argument to change from a college with "cafeteria" style course offerings to one offering guided pathways to credentials. At the end, I had several pages of notes that I'd love to discuss with my coworkers, even about seemingly unrelated things like budgeting. Highly recommended to anyone working in a community college.

Levi Hernandez says

I understand what this book is trying to accomplish, however, endless repetition of the same content left me feeling rather tired. The book is either a thesis or a dissertation that was written to earn a degree. The heartbreaking part of this book is that as much as it looks good on paper, things cannot change unless people are willing to change. If we want to see the results of the book, there has to be constant participation from faculty and staff members. The school also has to allow every department to be involved.

Jonna Higgins-Freese says

Having followed CCRC's research and agenda in recent years, I was already familiar with much of the material, but it was fascinating to see it pulled together into the overarching "guided pathways" model for improving community college/credential completion rates. I'm still unconvinced regarding some of their underlying assumptions -- that lack of skills, versus inequitable wage structures, accounts for income and wealth disparities in the United States, for example (see http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/a...). However, for a number of pedagogical and philosophical reasons, the guided pathways approach seems to me to be a positive step forward regardless of whether it actually provides the mechanism for reducing income inequality.

Shari says

A very academic read suggesting community colleges completing revamp their whole way of thinking by putting their students on a guided pathway for college completion and success.

Molly says

This is not a book for everyone. However as someone who works at a community college and cares about student success, I found many of the ideas intriguing (if not a little bit frightening when thinking about implementing them). I enjoyed the case studies and am looking forward to discussions about guided pathways with my colleagues.

Karla says

Interesting food for thought and discussion about the mission and success of the community college system. The book certainly has flaws, but it is serving as a good springboard for conversation at our institution.