



For Release

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TASK FORCE: COMMUNITY COLLEGES ON PATH TO “SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL” The Century Foundation Releases Final Report of Community College Task Force

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Century Foundation (www.TCF.org) today released the final report of a task force convened in February 2012 to study the country’s community colleges and make recommendation for their sustainability and improvement. The report was released at an event featuring task force co-chairs Eduardo Padrón (president of Miami-Dade College in Florida) and Anthony Marx (former president of Amherst College in Massachusetts and president of the New York Public Library), as well as the U.S. undersecretary of education, Martha Kanter.

“We were fortunate to have some of the brightest and most experienced thinkers and practitioners in higher education on the task force,” said Century Foundation senior fellow Richard D. Kahlenberg, executive director of the group, which was funded by the Ford Foundation.” While a lot of great work is already being done on community colleges, what distinguishes this group is its commitment to addressing growing economic and racial stratification in higher education that makes the work of two-year institutions so difficult.”

Among the report’s findings is a high non-completion rate among community college students:

Eighty-one percent of students entering community college for the first time saying they eventually want to transfer and earn at least a bachelor’s degree but just 12 percent do so within six years.

Among low-income students with “high” qualifications for college (those who have completed “at least Trigonometry”), 69 percent of students who began in a four-year institution earned a bachelor’s degree, compared with just 19 percent of those who started in a community college.

The report also highlights the comparative lack of investment in community colleges, even though they enroll, educate, and train a larger and more diverse population than any other segment of higher education:

More than 60 percent of community college students receive some developmental/remedial education, at an estimated cost of \$2 billion per year.

While wealthy students outnumber poor students at the most selective four-year colleges by 14:1, community colleges educate twice as many low-income students as high-income students.

Between 1999 and 2009, community college funding increased just one dollar per student, while per-student funding at private research universities jumped almost \$14,000.

“We are proud of our mission and success as an open door to educational achievement and workforce success,” said task force co-chair Padrón. “But community colleges lack adequate resources. They will continue to play an enormous role in our country, and policy makers need to step up to help.”

In addition to confronting the challenges faced by community colleges, the task force commissioned three original academic research papers and made specific policy recommendations. Those eight recommendations – to improve funding of community colleges and reduce racial and economic stratification between two- and four-year institutions – are:

- Adopting a federal “adequacy-based” funding formula in higher education similar to federal and state programs for K–12 schools that will make extra resources available to schools and populations with the highest poverty and remediation needs, and that otherwise need the most assistance.
- Establishing greater transparency in public financial subsidies to higher education.
- Encouraging growth in re-designed institutions that facilitate connections between community and four-year colleges.
- Taking concrete steps to improve community college transfers to four-year institutions.
- Encouraging innovations such as Honors Programs to build more inclusive and diverse student populations in community colleges.
- Promoting innovations in early college programs that enhance community college diversity.
- Prioritizing funding for new programs at economically and racially isolated community colleges.
- Incentivizing four-year institutions to engage in affirmative action for low-wealth students.

“It’s not just about funding. Four-year colleges have a great role to play here—especially the highly selective ones,” said Marx. “When we created transfer positions at Amherst for community college graduates, we learned that those who came from two-year schools had higher GPA and completion rates than our overall student body.”

The complete task force report and background research papers are here:

<http://tcf.org/bookstore/detail/bridging-the-higher-education-divide>

Twenty-two members served on the task force. A complete list is here:

<http://tcf.org/work/education/detail/century-foundation-convenes-national-task-force-to-recommend-ways-to-streng>

Founded in 1919, The Century Foundation has offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., and is one of America’s oldest think tanks. More information about The Century Foundation is here: www.TCF.org

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