

Narrowing the Gaps in Educational Attainment: Assessing and Responding to Needs for Community College Services

by Aims C. McGuinness Jr. and Dennis P. Jones

Introduction

Some level of postsecondary education is becoming a necessity for entry into the American middle class. The loss of purchasing power over the past decade on the part of those without some education beyond high school bears witness to the extent to which the economy punishes those who do not pursue it.

The benefits of postsecondary education are by no means confined to those that accrue to the individual. Policymakers increasingly recognize that improving educational attainment is a key ingredient in their efforts to achieve broader social and economic goals. Indeed, high levels of educational attainment and performance are keys to achieving improvements in virtually every aspect of a state's quality of life and economic competitiveness. Conversely, low levels of education among the adult population in a state have been shown to negatively affect:

- Per-capita income and the strength of the state's economy as measured by gross state product, tax revenues per capita and other indices
- Health of the state's population.
- The well-being of children.
- The rate of violent crime.
- Voting rates.
- Preparation level of the workforce.

Just as important, there are varying degrees of disparity in educational attainment and performance within states—variations that often are masked by statewide averages. A state may perform well overall compared to other states based largely on the strength of the wealthiest elements of its population, but serious deficits in educational attainment may exist in inner city and rural areas and among low-income populations. In this article, we present a methodology for assessing within-state regional needs for community college services and describe the policy tools and strategies available to policymakers who intend to address these needs.

Editor's Note: This issue of UPDATE focuses on a few of the many ways that community colleges promote wide access to postsecondary education.

*This issue and back issues of UPDATE can be found on the web at:
<http://ocrl.ed.uiuc.edu>.*

This issue features:

- 1** Narrowing the Gaps in Educational Attainment
- 6** Transfer in Illinois: Meeting the Needs
- 10** Intrusive Advisement: A Model for Success
- 13** Developmental Writing and Student Success
- 15** Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success

State policymakers often look to community colleges as a way to narrow disparities in educational attainment among populations and regions of the state because of their mission and geographic location. One function of community colleges is to provide low-cost, open-access education and other services to residents and employers in specific regions of the state. Not all states, however, have statewide community college systems. And even in those that do, the institutions may not necessarily be linked to a state or regional strategy aimed at narrowing disparities. Therefore, it is important to focus first on using data to define the needs of key client groups within the state rather than on a specific institutional form. The results of such an analysis contribute to the identification of the social and economic conditions most in need of attention—that is, they help to define a “public agenda.”

Assessing Regional Needs for Community College Services

Four steps are involved in assessing regional needs for community college services: (1) identify the educational needs of key client groups, (2) relate client groups’ needs to available community college services, (3) identify gaps in services, and (4) summarize findings and identify priorities.

1. Identify the Educational Needs of Key Client Groups

Most needs assessments for educational services start from an institutional perspective: “Here are the services and programs we are equipped to provide; where do we look for markets for these offerings?” We argue that any strategy to raise educational attainment and improve state or regional performance on its related social or economic measures must begin with identifying the education and training needs of the various client groups that community colleges typically serve.

Community colleges usually serve four different client groups:

- **In-school youth.** These are high school students who are concurrently enrolled in a community college, as well as elementary and middle school students who participate in early-intervention programs and other services that promote strong preparation for college-level work
- **Recent high school graduates.** Typically, these are students who graduated from high school within the previous 6-12 months.
- **Adults.** This group includes those who left high school before obtaining a diploma or who entered the workforce directly from high school and are returning to education after a hiatus of one or more years.

- **Employers.** This client group is distinguished from the general adult population because the principal source of demand is the employer, not the adult—although adults are the clients actually served.

2. Relate Client Groups’ Educational Needs to Available Community College Services

Information about the educational needs of each of the different key client groups can then be related to the types of services that community colleges in the state provide. The services that community colleges typically provide in states with fully developed and effective institutions and systems include:

- Remedial and development education and adult basic education.
- General education.
- Transfer preparation.
- Career preparation.
- Customized training and rapid-response workforce development.
- Community service (noncredit courses and other services to the community).
- Brokering the services of other providers and/or functioning as a delivery site for those services.

Table 1 presents a conceptual framework or matrix illustrating the various ways in which community colleges serve each of the client groups. It can be used as a template for assessing the needs of client groups within regions of the state. The purpose of this region-by-region analysis is to obtain a picture of the variations across the state and the unmet need for the types of services identified.

Table 1. Conceptual Relationship Between Key Client Groups and Community College Services

Primary Client Groups	Services						
	Remedial and developmental education and adult education	General education	Transfer preparation	Career preparation	Customized training, rapid-response workforce development	Community service (non-credit courses and other services to the community)	Brokering and serving as a delivery site for other providers
In-school youth (secondary education)	X	X	X	X		X	X
Recent high school graduates	X	X	X	X		X	X
Adults	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Employers	X	X		X	X	X	X

Here are a few examples of the types of regional data that can be used to assess the need for remedial, developmental, and adult education services for each of the four groups:

- ***In-school youth.*** The percentage of 8th-grade students within a region who are performing below state standards on mathematics, reading, science or writing assessments is an indicator of potential needs for services that community colleges can provide to support secondary-school improvement. Additionally, high dropout rates among secondary school students can indicate the presence of a subpopulation that might benefit from involvement in an alternative learning environment.
- ***Recent high school graduates.*** Assessment data of entering college freshmen from a given region can be an indicator of the quality of preparation in that region's secondary schools. As states implement "gateway" assessments that students must pass before graduating from high school, regional student performance data are an indicator of the need for services at the community college level. At a minimum, they can serve as a temporary measure pending improvements in secondary school performance. College placement exams are another source of information in this regard.
- ***Adults.*** High-school dropout rates can be an indicator of the need for remedial and developmental services. Another data source is the region's population of 18- to 24-year-olds and those age 25 and older with less than a high school credential. Other data regarding the need for these services include county-level census data on educational attainment in the region, and surveys of adult literacy.
- ***Employers.*** An assessment tool such as ACT WorkKeys can provide valuable information about the needs of the business community for development of literacy and workplace skills. Alternative sources are employer reports on numbers of job applicants who fail screening tests.

3. Identify Gaps in Services

This step involves assessing the extent to which institutions are providing—or have the capacity to provide—needed services. In many states, community colleges are not the only providers of such services. Multiple forms of delivery may have evolved in for one or more of the services commonly associated with the community college mission. Within a particular region, other providers may include public and private universities (both main and branch campuses), workforce development centers, community learning centers, for-profit trade schools, state technical schools or colleges, and distance-learning providers. It is important to take these other delivery forms into consideration when addressing the question of whether there is a need for additional community college services or for changes in state policy.

It is important, too, to consider not only the particular service, but also whether the manner in which the service is provided is consistent with the community college mission in

terms of accessibility, price, cost and flexibility to meet client needs. For example, the characteristics that distinguish community colleges from most other providers are:

- ***Open access and a focus on student goal attainment.*** Community college services emphasize open access and a focus on assisting students in meeting their learning (and often their employment) goals. The emphasis is on assessment of entering students—not to determine who is to be admitted (except for certain programs such as nursing), but to ensure proper placement and, if necessary, remedial and developmental services and support.
- ***Low price.*** Price pertains to what students and their families pay through tuition and required fees. Low tuition is a fundamental dimension of community college services. Tuition and fees at community colleges are generally one-third to one-half of those at public universities in the same state.
- ***Low cost.*** Costs pertain to institutional outlays per student as measured by education and general (E & G) expenditures and transfers per full-time equivalent (FTE) student. The cost per student for community college services tends to be two-thirds or less of the costs incurred at state universities and only one-third of those at major public research universities.
- ***Flexibility and responsiveness to client needs.*** Community college services stress providing programs and courses at times and places—and through modes of delivery, pedagogy, and student support services such as assessment, advising, and child-care—that meet the needs of students and other clients. For example, the busiest time on most community college campuses is after 5 p.m., when employed adults have an opportunity to continue their education.

4. Summarize Findings and Identify Priorities

Drawing on the assessments of need and capacity, the next step is to summarize findings and set priorities. The following examples illustrate the kinds of findings that emerged from regional analyses of client group needs and community college services in the states of Kentucky and West Virginia.

A study of adult literacy in **Kentucky** found that 40% of the state's population age 16 to 64 functioned at the two lowest levels of literacy, but even more serious were the disparities within the state. In terms of educational attainment, in 31 of the state's 120 counties more than 52% of the adult population lacked a high school education. An analysis of the provision of adult education services revealed that the state was serving approximately 5% of the target population. A region-by-region analysis showed a highly splintered network of providers (mainly linked to public secondary schools) and a misalignment of the location of providers with the regions of greatest need. The community colleges governed by the state university played an extremely limited role in serving this population (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2000).

A study for the **West Virginia** legislature found that despite the state's rank of 47th in the nation in the percentage of the adult population age 25 and older with a high school diploma or equivalent, the state was serving only a fraction of the population that had not completed their secondary education. Adult education services reached less than 5% of the target population. At the same time, the state's higher education system was oriented primarily toward recent high school graduates. The state ranked 48th in the nation in part-time students as a percentage of the population age 25-44. Even more significant was the finding of wide disparities among counties. The report underscored that all but two of the state's 10 community colleges were appended to four-year institutions and that the culture of these "component" community colleges was strongly influenced by the priorities and culture of the sponsoring four-year institutions. Furthermore, the tuition rates for component community colleges were the same as those for the four-year institutions—meaning that community college students were not given the same lower-priced access as at the two freestanding community colleges. Progress in expanding services through community colleges to the state's undereducated adult population had been limited despite repeated legislative directives (State of West Virginia, 2000).

Both of these examples provide evidence of significant disparities among the states' regions in unmet educational needs and in the existing capacity of providers to meet these needs. Each led to concrete policy recommendations to address the identified problems. The next question, then, is: What steps are necessary to identify policy actions that are appropriate to narrow the gap between the state's educational needs and the capacity and services of its educational providers?

Shaping Policy Alternatives

Two steps are important in the process of developing policy alternatives to address the regional educational needs for various client groups and the gaps in community college services that may exist: (1) conduct an "audit" of existing policies to determine how they assist or detract from efforts to address the underlying problems¹ and (2) design policies that are aligned with the needs and unique culture and conditions in the state and each of its regions.

1. Conduct a Policy Audit

The objective of conducting a policy audit is to clear the underbrush—that is, remove barriers that would continue to be impediments even if well-designed new policies were implemented. External (state and system) policies have a decisive effect on whether the full range of community college services are actually provided, especially in a manner consistent with the institutional mission. Before adding new policies, programs, or procedures to those already in place, an audit of the current array of policies is needed. Such an audit typically has two major components:

- A systematic review of existing policies—at least those that are most obviously connected to the areas of performance that have been questioned.
- Interviews with knowledgeable individuals who can share their understanding of what is and what is not working and why.

2. Design Policy Alternatives

The priorities for narrowing the gaps between needs and services in each of the state's regions and the evidence from the policy audit provide the basic information for shaping policy alternatives. The following examples illustrate how policymakers in Kentucky and West Virginia used the results of such an analysis to shape policy alternatives to raise educational attainment, improve higher education performance and narrow regional disparities. Each state also made coordinated use of the policy tools described above.

In **Kentucky**, House Bill 1, enacted in 1997, created the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), drawing together under a single entity two units that had previously been subordinated to other entities. As a key element of the Commonwealth's Strategic Agenda for Postsecondary Education, KCTCS has spearheaded the state's efforts to uplift the educational attainment, quality of life and economies of each of the state's regions. Senate Bill 1, the Adult Education and Literacy Act of 2000, assigned overall leadership for this area to the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE). The CPE used data on educational attainment and per-capita income to identify target counties, and implemented financing policies that rewarded providers based on measurable improvements in performance in the counties for which they were responsible.²

In **West Virginia**, the Legislature in 2000 enacted Senate Bill 653, which called for a Compact for the Future of West Virginia linking higher education to the future of the state and enacting specific provisions to ensure the availability of community college services in each region. These provisions included "essential conditions" that each community college had to meet in order to ensure that policies were in place to support the community college mission (e.g., independent accreditation as a community college), and a state leadership structure to ensure consistent attention to the state's community and technical college and workforce development needs. Changes were also made in financing policy to support the move to independently accredited community colleges and to align tuition policies with that mission.³

Key Principles

As state policy leaders shape alternatives to address priorities, several principles related to policy design and implementation are especially important to keep in mind:

Strive for alignment among policies. Unfortunately, policy tools such as those discussed in this paper are rarely wielded in a coordinated fashion. A common problem is that states often implement policies in isolation from, and sometimes in direct conflict with, one another. One example is a policy to decentralize responsibility for governing institutions that would conflict with another policy providing for centralized regulatory control of operating budgets and academic policy. Another example is the frequent disconnect that occurs between and among state appropriations, tuition and student-aid policy decisions.

Align policies with institutional missions. Policy can have either positive or negative effects on mission and on the capacity of an institution to provide services to different client groups. For example, it is unrealistic to expect community colleges to serve students in secondary schools if both the schools and the colleges are penalized for doing so in the state's financing policies. Similarly, it is unrealistic to expect two or more institutions in a region to collaborate in providing community college services if the state funding policy pits the institutions against each other in competition for students.

Use differentiated policy to reflect regional differences. States should avoid "one-size-fits-all" policies that apply uniform solutions to highly diverse regional needs and capacity. The key is to develop a statewide policy framework (e.g., definition of "what" is to be achieved or a common set of performance goals and indicators) that can be achieved in different ways ("how") in relation to the unique needs and capacities of each of the state's regions.

Recognize there is no single answer. The reality is that there are multiple paths for achieving the goal of improving educational attainment and statewide performance within each of the state's regions. In some regions, community colleges may be the most effective policy alternative. In other regions, it may be appropriate to draw on several institutions through a learning center, consortia or other means to ensure that community college services are available. In some cases, the policy tool of financing may be most appropriate, whereas in other cases changes in governance may be necessary. The important point is that solutions should be designed to fit the needs, political and cultural contexts, and capacities of a region.

Conclusion

Narrowing gaps in educational attainment and performance between regions is crucial if state leaders are to improve the quality of life and economy for all the state's population. Community college services are an important means to achieve that goal.

How these services are provided depends on the unique needs of each region and the capacities and services of the educational providers in those regions. Before acting, state leaders should undertake a region-by-region analysis of various client group needs for various services, an assessment of the capacity and mission of existing providers to offer these services, and an audit of the policy barriers that must be overcome before improvements can be made. ♦

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- State of West Virginia. (2000). *Report of Study Committee on Higher Education*. Charleston, WV: Author.

Endnotes

1. For further description of use of policy audits and formulating policy alternatives, see Dennis P. Jones and Karen Paulson (2001). *Some Next Steps for States: A Follow-Up to Measuring Up 2000*. San Jose: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.
2. See websites of the Council on Postsecondary Education <http://www.cpe.state.ky.us/keyind/www/index/index.asp> and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System <http://www.kctcs.net> for further information in implementation.
3. See website of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission <http://www.hepc.wvnet.edu/> for information on implementation.

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Transfer in Illinois: Meeting the Needs of Different Racial/Ethnic Groups

by Daniel Cullen

The Illinois Board of Higher Education's (IBHE) *Illinois Commitment*¹ was created in 1999 to set goals for the state's higher education system. One of the six goals states that, "Illinois will increase the number and diversity of citizens completing training and education programs." This goal has been addressed in a number of ways including through measures to improve transfer for traditionally underrepresented students since they are statistically more likely to enter higher education via the community college. Transfer information tools and programs such as the Course Applicability System (CAS, see insert) and Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)² have the potential to assist with this process.

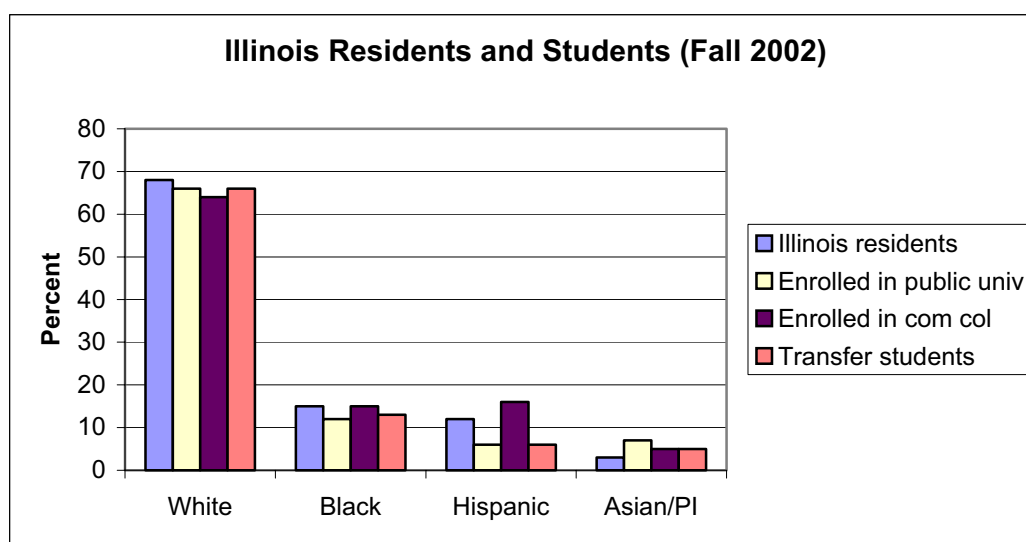
An examination of who is transferring to what sectors can be helpful in making these and other transfer-support systems work more effectively. As initiatives like CAS and IAI are implemented in Illinois, program managers and oversight boards should be mindful of the distribution of students by sector, as well as their mobility patterns. This brief review and analysis of IBHE data on transfer students in Illinois reveals important trends regarding the number and direction of transfers that take place in the state. While a total of 46,000 students transferred in the fall of 2002, there were important variations in the patterns of different groups that are worth noting.

For this brief article, I examined the most recently available IBHE data concerning transfer patterns within Illinois, broken down by racial/ethnic categories. These data are for the fall terms of 2001 and 2002. It is important to remember that many students transfer during other terms, and relative proportions may not be the same.

Traditionally, systems have been established with the idea that the majority of students interested in transfer are likely to begin in a community college and progress after two years to a 4-year institution. In reality, this is only one of a number of patterns that students follow as shown in Figures 1 and 2. For example, state statistics indicate that only 17 percent of Black and Hispanic students who transferred in Illinois in fall 2002 moved from a community college to a public four-year institution. In contrast, 27 percent of Whites moved from a community college to a public four-year institution. Clearly, any program which is designed only to assist in the transfer of students from a community college to a public four-year institution will serve only a fraction of the state's students, and will disproportionately leave out underrepresented students.

Looking more closely at the data, we see that almost two-thirds of all transfer students are White—in line with their proportion

Figure 1



Note: The information on Illinois residents from the 2000 US Census is provided for rough comparisons only. Because US Census Bureau categories may not match IBHE categories, because US Census data are for residents of all age ranges, and because Illinois institutions of higher education serve students from other states and countries, direct comparisons are not warranted.

in the different sectors of higher education and in the state population. About 40 percent of White students who transfer move to public universities, 35 percent to community colleges, and 25 percent to non-public institutions.

Less than 13 percent of transfer students in the state are Black; this proportion is slightly higher than the Black representation in the state's public four-year system, slightly lower than the Black representation in the Illinois public two-year system, and slightly lower than Black representation in the population. In contrast to the pattern seen among White Illinois college students, only about 30 percent of transferring Black students moved to state public universities, while 37 percent went to community colleges, and 33 percent enrolled in non-public institutions.

Hispanic students show a similar pattern to that of Black students, but only comprise 6.5 percent of total transfers. It is striking that so few Hispanics are transferring—according to the IBHE, almost 16 percent of Illinois community college students are Hispanic, compared to under 15 percent who are Black. However, a high proportion of Hispanic students are found in the community colleges' "pre-collegiate" programs. Of the 55,804 Hispanics enrolled in community colleges in fall 2002, 29,127 (52.2%) were pre-collegiate and 19,940 (35.7%) were undergraduates. This contrasts greatly with the distribution of Blacks and Whites in these programs. Of the 51,546 Black students at state community colleges, 7,722 (14.5%) were pre-collegiate and 36,339 (70.5%) were undergraduates. Of the 224,627 White students, only 4.7 percent were pre-collegiate and 69.2 percent were undergraduates. (The remainder of students were in continuing education programs.)

Asian/Pacific Islander students who transfer in Illinois are moving in a strikingly different pattern than that of other groups. A much larger proportion of those who transfer are going to community colleges. Looking at all fall 2001 and 2002 transfers, nearly half of Asian students, compared to one-third of all students, transferred to an Illinois community college. But if only students who transferred *from* a community college are examined, only 18 percent of Asian students transferred to another community college. This large discrepancy—46 percent of all transfers versus just 18 percent of transfers from a community college (2002)—indicates that many Asian students are following a "reverse transfer" pattern. While all racial/ethnic categories of students contain reverse transfers, their presence is most pronounced in the Asian category.

Another point to consider is that Black and Hispanic students who transfer in Illinois are transferring to community colleges more than to any other category of institution. They are transferring to public four-year and non-public, not-for-profit four-year institutions at roughly the same percentages, but both Blacks and Hispanics transfer to non-public schools in slightly greater numbers than to public universities. This demonstrates that, for underrepresented groups, the state support of transfer to non-public institutions is as important as support of transfer to public universities, and support for reverse transfer students is vital.

In contrast, White students are transferring to public universities more than to any other sector. While many White students are moving through the Illinois higher education system in a variety of patterns including reverse transfer to community colleges, the proportion of White students moving from a community college to a public university is higher than the proportion of underrepresented students making that transition; 34 percent of the 3,409 white students who transferred *from community colleges* in fall 2002 moved to a public four-year institution while 35 percent moved to a community college, and 24 percent moved to an independent not-for-profit institution.

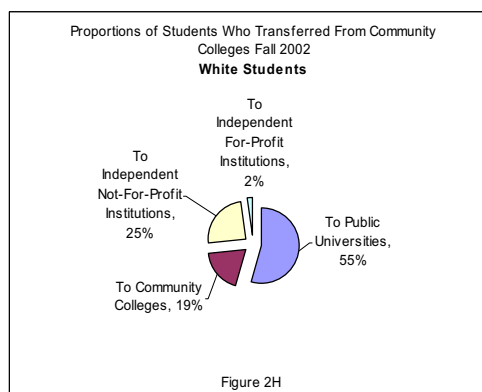
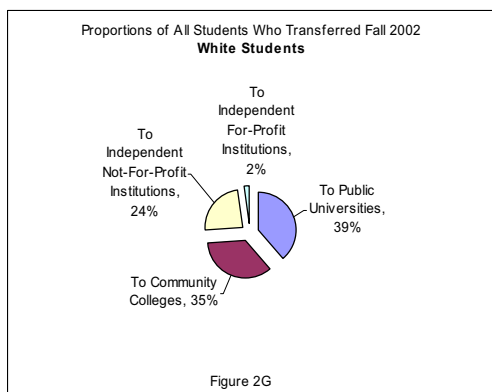
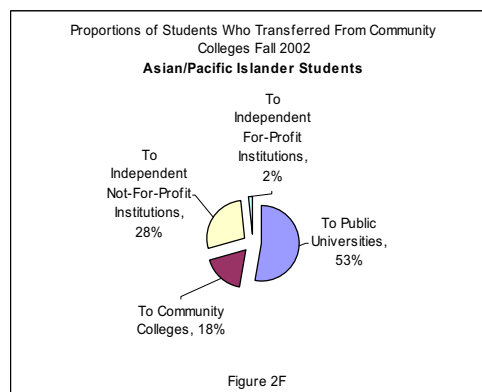
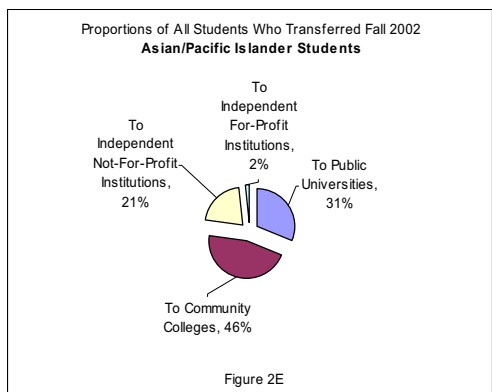
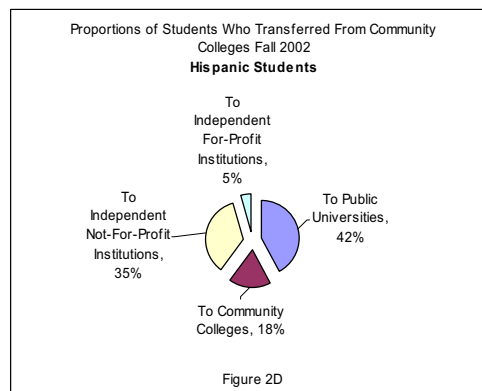
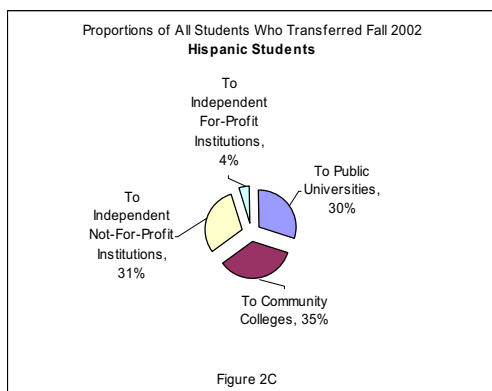
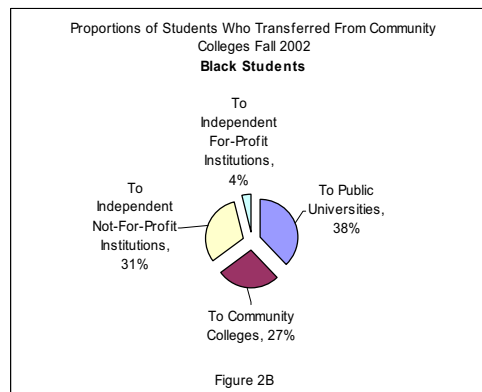
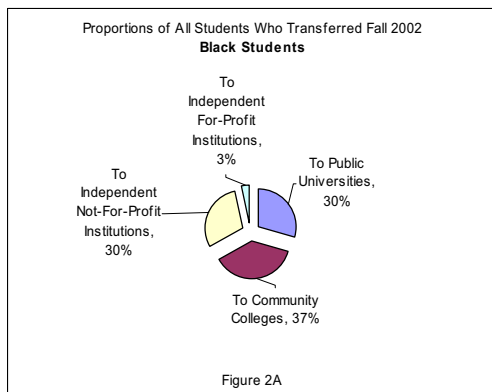
The statewide CAS system has so far prioritized the support of transfer from the state's community colleges to public universities, although expansion to serve students moving in different ways is planned. For the state to effectively serve the Illinois transfer student, the traditional "two-year college to four-year college" pattern should not be overemphasized. Particularly in order to meet the needs of minority students, it is vital that the state support transfer to community colleges and to non-public institutions as well as into public universities. ♦

Endnotes

1. For full details on the six goals of the *Illinois Commitment*, see: <http://www.ibhe.org/Board/Agendas/1999/February/1999-02-07.pdf>.
2. For more information about IAI, see www.iTransfer.org.

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Figure 2. Proportion of Students Transferring Overall and From Community Colleges by Race/Ethnicity



Illinois' New Course Applicability System

by Daniel Cullen

The state of Illinois is currently implementing the Course Applicability System (CAS) on a statewide basis. CAS, a web-based product developed by Miami University (Ohio), provides direct access to information about course equivalencies, academic programs, degree offerings, and, most importantly, details about how a student's transfer credits apply toward a specific degree at a targeted institution.

CAS users—students, advisors, parents, recruiters, or anyone with access to the Internet—can create what are called Planning Guides. These unofficial documents are similar to the degree audits native students can create and show precisely how courses at one institution will apply toward a specific degree at another institution. This allows for the selection of courses at source institutions to meet post-transfer goals and, ideally, to reduce time to degree.

CAS is currently available for planning transfer from any one of dozens of Illinois community colleges to either the University of Illinois at Chicago or Northern Illinois University. More universities are implementing the system rapidly—the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois State University, and Chicago State University are each nearly ready to make CAS fully available to students planning to transfer to those schools from a range of Illinois two-year and four-year institutions.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has purchased the CAS license for all Illinois public universities, so more are likely to implement the program in the near

future. The state has also indicated that funding will follow to bring CAS to non-public colleges and universities, as well as community colleges. (CAS can now be used to plan transfer *from* many Illinois community colleges, but not *to* them. As noted in the accompanying article, many students transfer to community colleges, so CAS would be a useful tool as those students plan their college careers.)

Funding for this statewide initiative has come through the IBHE's Higher Education Cooperative Act (HECA) grant program under the Access and Diversity category of grants. Because so many students who are members of underrepresented groups begin college at two-year institutions, creating a statewide system that gives students easy access to transfer-related information can potentially make the baccalaureate degree more available to first-generation college students, students of color, and other members of groups not proportionally represented in the state's four-year public institutions. This commitment to working toward more efficient transfer, including reduced time to degree, during the current budgetary climate demonstrates the IBHE interest in supporting inter-institutional mobility and increased diversity in Illinois higher education. ♦

Further information about the Illinois CAS program can be found on the IBHE web page at: <http://www.ibhe.org/CAS/>. Questions about the statewide program can be directed to Sheri Kallembach skallembach@niu.edu or Marilyn Marshall at mmmurphy@uillinois.edu.

Intrusive Advisement: A Model for Success at John A. Logan College

by Cheryl Thomas and Jane Minton

Since first generation college students, students who receive financial aid, and students with disabilities are considered at greater risk for dropping out, it is imperative that their college experience is a positive one from the beginning. The Student Success Center at John A. Logan College serves, primarily, this population. The Center houses Disability Support Services, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services, the campus tutoring program, and the federal TRIO program. Even while serving this at-risk population, statistics show retention and completion rates for the Center are significantly higher than rates for the college as a whole. Staff in the Student Success Center employ an advisement technique called *Intrusive Advisement* which they believe accounts for these increased retention and completion rates. It is an easily implemented style which takes into account the individuality and diversity of the population. The system has been well received by students, faculty, administrators, and staff, as its components contribute to the success of other entities within the college as well.

Intrusive Advisement

Intrusive advisement is based on the philosophy that the counselor and the student share responsibility for student academic success or failure (Connell, 2003). It is more than just putting students in classes. Intrusive advisement reflects the concept that students are people who matter. It indicates an understanding that students' well being (or lack thereof) has an effect on their academic outcome. The intrusive advisor is actively concerned for the welfare of every student. This requires responsible, pro-active behavior on the part of the advisor. Students are seen as individuals whose uniqueness and diversity are taken into consideration from the beginning of their academic journey until they have graduated or transferred.

Characteristics of Intrusive Advisors:

- ***Advisors must not only know the resources of the college, but know the staff involved in the various programs.*** It is up to the advisor to become well-acquainted with other professionals. Knowing, specifically, to whom a student should be referred will also increase the student's chances of success. It is only logical that a student is more likely to follow through with a referral if he knows *who* he is looking for rather than just walking into an unfamiliar department. Unfortunately, in some departments there are staff who are less personable than others. Sending a student to a particular staff person with, perhaps, a "heads up" call in advance can assure a welcome from the professional of choice rather than a negative experience. This also gives the staff person some background so that he or she is prepared at the first meeting. Additionally, the call in advance may prevent sending the student to the wrong person or department and, therefore, on a wild goose chase instead of a successful mission.
- ***Intrusive advisors should be trained in all relevant areas (academic and non-academic) that have a direct impact on the student's well being and success.*** This is not to say that advisors need to know as much as the professional staff in every department of the college, but that they need to be familiar with how things work. For example, if the student receives financial aid, there are penalties that could occur if a student drops a class. Advisors do not need to understand the entire workings of the financial aid process, but need to know enough about the process to inform the student of potential consequences. If advisors do not know the specifics, they need to make an immediate call to get the necessary information. It is the intrusive advisors' responsibility to inform the student rather than just dropping the class and saying nothing. One thing we know for certain about being human is that, if we don't know something, we often don't know to ask. The advisors must be willing to intervene and to inform the student, thus preventing the failure frequently resulting from "no one told me and I didn't know to ask."
- ***Intrusive advisors should be available so that they can be reached by the student when needed.*** A student should be able to drop in to get an answer to a "quick" question but make appointments if the question or effort involved requires more than a few minutes. The advisor should be on time for appointments and spend the time wisely (Railsback, 1998).
- ***They must truly know the college or university.*** There are multiple sources of help for students at any school. If the advisors have a stake in the student's successful retention and completion, they must be familiar with the services available that can prevent potential problems or rescue a struggling student. On any campus these usually include counseling and referral services, tutoring, transfer or career assistance, disability support services, student work, student support services, non-traditional programs, financial aid, minority programs, and a myriad of other programs. It is not enough just to know that programs exist; it is necessary to know what each program does and the population it serves.

- ***Intrusive advisors should monitor advisee progress with and without the student.*** Regularly reviewing and updating a curriculum guide should be mandatory. If a student drops or fails a class, she may not mention it when coming in to sign up for the next semester. Then, when she thinks her required courses have been completed, may find another semester is required. Ideally, the advisor and the advisee should have a plan for future semesters so that both know what to expect. Students rarely take the initiative to make such a plan but are very pleased if a plan is made.
- ***Intrusive advisors maintain clear boundaries with the student.*** They are neither the students' parent nor their best friend, but a professional whose job it is to foster independence while teaching the student the advisement process. The advisors need to show genuine concern for the success of the students. Personal characteristics should include a positive attitude, empathy, openness, and honesty.

Research

Research regarding retention indicates that intrusive advisement is essential to college retention programs. The college advisor is often the first person with whom a student has one-on-one contact, and it is critical that this meeting be a positive experience. Effective retention programs have come to understand that academic advising is the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students (Tinto 1987). The advisor must be able to meet a student and immediately make him or her comfortable in order to create strong connections between the student and the institution. This one-on-one relationship between advisor and student is essential in retaining students. Interpersonal relationships and sustained contact are important factors in advising success and students' satisfaction with advising (Winston et al., 1984). The advisement session must go beyond scheduling and registration to be meaningful. Intrusive advisors must take time to teach students how to be advised. This experience will be helpful to students in many other aspects of their education.

Student Outcomes

Because intrusively advised students are able to gain knowledge about their institution and about the world of higher education, they are able to discover more opportunities available to them. These students learn an important foundation on which they are able to build once they leave the community college and enter a university. The intrusive advisor takes time to teach important concepts like degree options, course requirements, pre-requisites, and graduation requirements. In addition to these, the advisor shares information about support services, campus activities and

college resources. Knowing this information, the student is able to ask relevant questions and make informed decisions about the college experience.

In addition to being more informed, intrusively advised students feel more connected to their institution because of the relationship with their advisors. This relationship is one which focuses on the positive abilities of the student. According to Crookston (1972), intrusive advisement focuses on the potentialities of the student, instead of focusing on his or her limitations, as is the case in the registration and scheduling style of advisement. Intrusive advisement relationships focus on identifying and accomplishing life goals, acquiring skills and attitudes that promote intellectual and personal growth, and sharing concerns for each other and for the academic community (Crookston, 1972). The intrusive advisor understands retention and success are not only impacted by academic preparedness but also by students' personal and social issues.

Student Success Center Outcomes

The Student Success Center at John A. Logan is composed of four programs, all of which work with at-risk students. Currently the center has four academic advisors who have practiced intrusive advisement for approximately four years, and the results are quite positive.

The Center currently monitors the retention, graduation, academic standing and grade-point averages of the students who are intrusively advised. The following table shows the Center's results in these areas for the past three academic years:

Student Success Center John A. Logan College Student Outcomes

	2000 – 2001	2001 – 2002	2002 - 2003
<i>Retention*</i>	87%	81%	78%
<i>Graduation**</i>	60%	53%	55%
<i>Good Academic Standing ***</i>	88%	87%	87%
<i>Average GPA (based on 5.0 scale)</i>	3.730	3.814	3.732

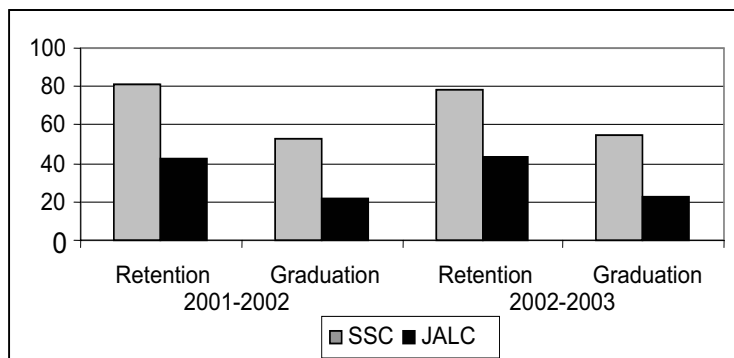
*Measured from fall to subsequent fall semester.

**Defined as graduating within 150% time of normal degree completion.

***Defined as having a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

The results shown above far exceed the campus averages for retention and graduation. The following graph compares the Student Success Center results with John A. Logan College students at-large, who are not intrusively advised.

**Retention and Graduation Rates
Student Success Center and John A. Logan College
2001-2002 and 2002-2003**



Intrusive advisement is an easily implemented comprehensive system that helps institutions increase retention and graduation rates. When the advisor and student jointly share responsibility for the student's success, and the individuality and diversity of each student is taken into account, the chances of a successful college experience increase. National research supports the use of intrusive advisement in campus retention programs. Actual data from the John A. Logan College Student Success Center supports this philosophy as well. ♦

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Cheryl and Jane have been presenting programs on intrusive advisement for over a year. Both feel very strongly about the impact of advisement on the success or failure of college students.

Developmental Writing and Student Success

by Denise M. Crews and Steven R. Aragon

Community colleges open their arms to a vast student population. For many of these students, the community college is their only opportunity to engage in the higher education system. Historically the community college has embraced the philosophy of open door access, meaning that all individuals, regardless of their academic preparation or other characteristics such as race, gender, or age, have the opportunity to participate in higher education. In comparison to a student attending a four-year institution, the typical community college student is likely to be female, less academically prepared, less economically secure, and a member of a minority group (Batzner, 1997; Cross, 1981; McCabe & Day, 1998).

According to Cohen and Brawer (1996), the increasing numbers of students leaving the community colleges have influenced the expansion of retention initiatives. These initiatives include learning communities, committees that focus on actions to retain students, block scheduling, and investigating new practices, policies, and methods to make improvements in current practices that are not effective. Developmental education is one retention initiative that is an essential component of the community college mission (Weissman, Bulakowski & Jumisko, 1997).

The roots of developmental education in America go back to the early 1800s. However, it was not until the 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education that a national mandate for developmental education was initiated and placed within the mission of the community college. The National Center for Education Statistics (1998) reports that approximately 30% of first time college students entering a college or university require developmental education. For community colleges, that number had earlier been found to be closer to 74% (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, & Bliss, 1992). Colleges cannot adopt a "sink or swim" sentiment regarding these admitted students.

Research on a Developmental Writing Course

To better understand the relationships between participation in a developmental education writing course and short- and long-term retention and academic performance, research was conducted at one Illinois community college. The study examined whether developmental writing course *participants* earned higher grades and persisted longer in their studies than nonparticipants. For the purpose of this study *nonparticipants* are those individuals who were identified as needing the course but who chose not to take it.

The college at which this research was conducted offers certificate and degree career programs that lead to immediate employment; transfer programs leading to a baccalaureate degree; programs in liberal studies and adult education; and special job

training and retraining programs. Each year approximately 5,000 students enroll in credit classes that are taught on the main campus or at one of the two extension centers. The full-time equivalency (FTE) is 3,378. Fifty-three percent of the student population is female and 47% of the total population report being employed. Consistent with the demographic characteristics of the surrounding communities, few students of color are represented in the college student body—approximately 87% of the students are classified as white, non-Hispanic.

Students identified as needing developmental courses by an assessment tool are eligible for all of the college's programs and have the same opportunities for study at the institution as do other students. However, developmental students are directed to take their developmental coursework before enrolling in college level courses regardless of their choice in program, although some end up taking developmental courses at a later point in time. In this study, *later participants* were those students who were found to have taken the developmental writing course during a semester other than the one in which they initially enrolled.

The developmental writing course is a five credit hour course. It is offered five days a week for one hour each day. In addition, the course is offered two nights a week for two and one-half hours. The overall design of the developmental education writing course involves four major segments: (a) essay writing, (b) sentence structure, (c) grammar and word usage, and (d) punctuation, diction, and spelling. Specifically, the research sought to determine whether grade point average (GPA), course completion rates, or total semesters enrolled were different for those students who had participated in this course.

The study involved secondary analysis of data that were available from the student records database at the college where the study was conducted. The sample ($n = 669$) was drawn from the population ($N = 1269$) of first time degree-seeking, certificate-seeking, or transfer intent students who enrolled at the college and were identified as needing the developmental education writing course during their first semester. The sample was further divided into two groups based on first-semester participation ($n = 384$) or nonparticipation ($n = 285$) in the course. These two groups were then compared with the later participants ($n = 80$).

Findings

Students: The initial developmental writing course participants did not differ from nonparticipants at a statistically significant level with regard to age, gender, ethnicity, high school experience, writing test score, initial enrollment status, degree/certificate intent, or transfer intent. The later developmental writing

course participants did not differ from nonparticipants at a statistically significant level according to the variables of age, gender, high school experience, writing test score, initial enrollment status, degree/certificate intent, or transfer intent. However, they did differ significantly according to ethnicity. Thirty-nine percent of the later participants were nonwhite compared to 24% of the nonparticipants.

Academic performance: Initial participants were found to have higher mean grade point averages in comparison to nonparticipants and later participants. Nonparticipants, on the other hand, were found to have higher mean grade point averages than later participants.

Table 1
Multiple Comparisons of Cumulative Grade Point Average

Participation	Mean GPA	Mean Difference	SE	Significance
Initial Participants	3.08	.56	.12	.000
Nonparticipants	2.51			
Initial Participants	3.08	1.39	.16	.000
Later Participants	1.68			
Nonparticipants	2.51	.83	.18	.000
Later Participants	1.68			

Credit hour completion percentage. A *t* test was conducted to compare the percentage of cumulative credit hours completed by initial participants and nonparticipants in a developmental writing course. A significant difference was found between participants ($M = .85$, $SD = .26$) and nonparticipants ($M = .63$, $SD = .69$), $t(343.551) = 4.97$, $p = .01$ at the end of the three-year period. Initial participants completed more of the credit hours they attempted than did nonparticipants. There was no significant difference between the percentage of credit hours completed by later participants and nonparticipants.

Total semesters enrolled. A *t* test was conducted to compare the mean total number of semesters enrolled of initial participants and nonparticipants in a developmental education writing course. No significant difference was found between initial participants ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 2.15$) and nonparticipants ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.97$), $t(638.484) = -.13$, $p = .90$ at the end of the three-year period.

Another *t* test was conducted to compare the total mean semesters enrolled between later participants ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.18$) and nonparticipants ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 2.19$), $t(256.218) = 2.27$, $p = .02$ at the end of the three-year period. This did show a significant difference. Later participants enrolled for more semesters than did nonparticipants, on the average.

Conclusions

The developmental writing course appeared to launch the developmental students with short-term momentum, i.e., higher grade point averages and passing more of their credit hours;

however, that momentum appeared to be short lived in that initial participants did not persist for more semesters than the nonparticipants. The later participants showed significantly lower mean cumulative grade point averages, yet persisted for more semesters than did students who never engaged in the course.

This study suggests that community college students benefit from institutional placement policies that require students to complete their developmental writing course before engaging in college level coursework. This study confirms the conclusions of Roueche and Roueche, (1999) that students need to complete developmental courses before being allowed to enroll in college level courses. Community college advisors can utilize this information regarding the effectiveness of developmental education writing courses as they advise students in course selection. Perhaps the evidence provided by this study will aid in convincing students that the course is worth their investment of money and time. ♦

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Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success

by Eunyong Kim and Christopher V. Evans

College Is Beneficial, But Who Attends?

According to the United States Department of Education's National Educational Longitudinal Study (1993), over 95% of high school seniors plan to attend college, but only about 62% actually enroll. In particular, low-income, minority, or first-generation college students are much less likely to fulfill their dream of attaining a higher education degree. This gap between aspirations and reality is alarming especially when we consider income differences between those who graduate from college and those who do not. Studies reveal that college graduates earn about \$20,000 more annually than high school graduates, who in turn earn about \$8,000 per more per year than high school dropouts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In addition, higher education has become all the more important with the advent of a knowledge-based, global economy. It is also seen as a requirement for advancement in employment and as an indicator of social status.

New Initiative: Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success

Traditional high school academic pathways have not successfully promoted access to college for all students. Too many leave high school inadequately prepared for college or careers. A common response to this problem has been to raise academic performance through the establishment of clear high school graduation standards or through secondary/postsecondary curriculum alignment. However, Robert B. Schwartz (2003) argues that setting more rigorous standards and pushing more students through the same old channel is not a solution to this high school crisis. He notes that higher expectations and more challenging curricula are not adequate to engage many students by the time they reach high school. Instead, he calls for a "clearly demarcated set of new pathways from the early high school years to a postsecondary credential that have 'built-in supports' for young people" (p. 12). This entails constructing individual education and training programs rather than the typical one-size-fits-all high school model. Such efforts provide the groundwork for developing a system of learning alternatives that assumes that all students will master a set of commonly agreed upon high standards, but uses diverse pedagogical approaches, assorted institutional arrangements, and varying amounts of time to achieve this end.

Beginning in January 2004, the *Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success* (APASS) project, funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, was launched with collaboration from faculty, staff, and graduate students affiliated with the Higher Education program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of the study is to identify, examine,

classify, and disseminate information about new pathways that promote access to college and student success while in college for traditionally underrepresented students.

Academic pathways, as we define them, straddle secondary and postsecondary education levels and include institutional structures that enhance students' transition to higher education. The initial study will document the goals, characteristics, practices, and key policies related to promising or emerging academic pathways. The aim is to look at how these pathways facilitate linkages between secondary and postsecondary institutions, and promote the successful enrollment and persistence of underserved students in college. Although these academic pathways primarily use a boundary spanning approach, attention will be given to college preparation and access issues at the secondary and postsecondary educational levels.

The major goals of the APASS study are four-fold: a) to conduct a comprehensive search of all 50 states to inventory academic pathways and curriculum models; b) to describe academic pathways and curriculum models that appear to be particularly effective in improving students' access to college and their subsequent success; c) to describe the federal, state, and local policy environments, including legislation and regulations, that enhance or inhibit the development of these academic pathways; and d) to widely disseminate the results of this project utilizing a variety of media and methods.

The Role of the Community College In Promoting Access And Success

In many of these academic pathways, community colleges play a critical role in enhancing students' transition to college from secondary education by preparing them to do college level work. For example, the Portland Community College Preparatory College Bound Program offers students the opportunity to work towards: a) a high school diploma in a career area, b) a Certificate of Advanced Mastery, and c) an associate's degree in a career area of the student's interest and ability. The targeted students are those who have left high school before graduation, are behind in high school credits, have at least an eighth grade reading level, live in a participating school district, or are willing to participate in a comprehensive high school completion program, which could potentially last for two or more years.

As another example, Middle College Charter High School at LaGuardia Community College opened in 1974 as an alternative high school under the auspices of the New York City Board of Education and LaGuardia Community College. The design for the school developed from the belief that a joint high school/college program could nurture the academic and psychosocial needs of at-risk urban youth with college potential. This

collaborative model encourages at-risk students to succeed, buoyed by three major supports: (a) visible peer role models, namely students enrolled at the college, (b) small classes, and (c) superior academic and support services.

After identifying and examining the many exciting and innovative academic pathways that have recently emerged around the country, the findings will be widely disseminated. Many of them have great promise as models for replication and will be brought to the attention of various stakeholders, including educators, researchers, administrators, and policy makers. The project aspires to share information that can be used to enable educational opportunities within the U.S. educational system, with special attention to meeting the needs of underrepresented students. ♦

More information on the APASS project may be found at <http://occr.ed.uiuc.edu> or by calling 217-244-9390.

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