

LETTERS

Better links between community colleges and adult education programs needed

Growing attention is being focused on a set of problems found in most states, particularly those with large urban centers and poor rural areas. The problems can be expressed by the following observations: Too many adults lack a high school credential; too few ABE/ESL/GED students make the transition to college; too many students who enter the ninth grade do not graduate four years later; and efforts to solve the problems are fragmented.

Compounding the difficulty is the common understanding that a high school credential, while necessary, is not sufficient for the future. Our nation needs to create pathways for undereducated adults to successfully complete the equivalent of two years of education beyond high school competency.

Community colleges, possibly the leading providers of adult education, are not the only providers. The K-12 systems in many states are major providers, and a wide range of community-based organizations fill the need in many communities. What is missing in many instances is an appropriate link to college credit programs. Community colleges, even if they offer ABE/ESL/

GED programs, often do not create the most effective links to the credit programs of the institution. It is in the national interest, however, for all such efforts to create smooth transitions for students into the primary pathway to a college degree, which will be the local community college. We must not be distracted by the wonderful anecdotal report of the disadvantaged student who gets into Harvard.

Many organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education, Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation and the National Governors Association and Manpower Development Research Corporation are mounting efforts to enhance the role of community colleges as the major way we will provide a pathway for millions of people we must prepare for a productive life and a healthy society. Joining the lineup is the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL), with a task force to examine the emerging role of community colleges.

It is my privilege, as the representative of the American Association of Community Colleges, to chair this CAAL group of dedicated professionals. State directors of Adult Basic Education (Oregon, Illinois and Massa-

chusetts) join community college educators and researchers in an effort to make sense of the fragmented picture around the country. Case studies and benchmarking reports are being developed to inform the national discussion.

Workforce investment boards, family literacy efforts, workplace education, GED preparation, ABE/ESL programs, adult secondary education and developmental education in community colleges all have a stake in strengthening links between colleges and other adult education programs.

Research findings from this effort will be published on the CAAL Web site (www.call.org) beginning this fall. Major conclusions and recommendations will be available as early as spring 2004. Questions, comments and recommendations can be forwarded to Forrest Chisman at forrest@crosslink.net.

The stakes are high and community college leaders need to be in the forefront of the discussion.

Byron McClenney
President,
Kingsborough Community College
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Letters to the Editor

The *Community College Times* is always looking for letters to the editor on subjects relevant to community colleges and higher education. Feedback on articles also is welcome.

Send your letters of 350 words or less to:
mlarose@aacc.nche.edu
or
Mike Larose
Editor, Community College Times
One Dupont Circle, NW
Suite 410
Washington, D.C. 20036-1176

CORRECTIONS

In the Sept. 30 issue of the *Community College Times*, the death notice for Patricia Nichols on page 10 incorrectly identifies Illinois as the location of St. Louis Community College at Forest Park. St. Louis Community College at Forest Park is located in Missouri.