Moving into Town—and Beyond

A different take on community college students

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Settlements, settlement behaviors, environ. design--the institution as "town"

- The literature for this scaffolding comes from Kevin Lynch (*Growing Up in Cities, Managing the Sense of a Region*),
- Lawrence Halprin (*The RSVP Cycles*, design for the FDR Memorial),
- J.B. Jackson (*The Stranger's Path*),
- David Ward (*Cities and Immigrants*), Jane Jacobs, and others

Town economy, academic processes, and settlement behaviors

- Community college as a complex infrastructure with a core commerce—delivery of knowledge
- Every element and dynamic of the infrastructure has an analogue in an academic or academic service process
- Students come as immigrants along different paths, establish residence of different intensities, and engage in a series of accommodations—some of which are successful

Human activity reshapes community

- If they watch what students do in town, the governing authorities would be advised, for example:

Where to strengthen public utilities

Where street signs need clarification

How to change the traffic patterns

What students do tells us where the institutional environment is functioning as intended.

We get at this through 3 overlapping portraits

- First Institution—an event portrait. Who starts out in community colleges? “Moving Into Town.”
- Residence history—a chronicle. Who continues in substantial ways—and how?
- Attainment—for those who earn credentials from the community colleges, what happens next—principally in the labor market? “Moving On.”

Two types of data sources

Grade-cohort studies (HS Class of 1992)
- deal with traditional-age students only
- are based in transcript records
- open the doors on secondary/postsec transitions

Event-cohort studies (Beginning Postsec)
- deal with students of all ages
- no transcript records, little pre-college history
- superior financial aid data (if that's your topic)

The juxtaposition of these sources makes it clear

- There is no way that traditional-age and older students behave in a similar manner
- No matter how you slice the age distribution of beginning students, those who start <24 and those who start later come from different planets
- Even more so with 350k active duty military and another 1 million recent veterans now enrolled somewhere in higher education.

For example…

Of community college beginners in 2003/04	<24	24& UP
Principally employee	17%	37%
Had children	7	65
3-Yr retention/attainment	64	51
Transferred by 2006	28	11
Always part-time	23	45
Minority	37	33

Our subjects are traditional-age. Why?

- They are 42% of community college enrollments, up from 32% a decade ago
- They are 74% of beginning community college students
- The median age of CC students has dropped from 26.5 to 23.5 in a decade. This trend is dependent on both the economic environment and demographics, particularly of recent immigrant populations.

Why? Part 2

- Because we are closer to the point of their pre-college preparation, and can do something about it
- Their patterns of attendance and course-taking dominate enrollment management in community colleges
- The metrics of their attainment are those of standard accountability judgments

40% of traditional-age students start in CCs

So who is above/below 40%??

Men, but not women

Latinos, but not African-Americans

Both 1st generation and parents with "some" postsecondary ed

Lowest 60% of SES scale

NNSEs but not English-dominant

40% of traditional-age students start in CCs (continued)

From where is it above/below?

Pacific and West South Central Census divisions are high

New England, Mid-Atlantic, West North Central and East North Central are low

Students from rural high schools above; from urban schools, below

Temporary and reverse transfers

26% of traditional age community college students started somewhere else. Of this group:

42% were 4-year drop-ins

28% were in alternating patterns

25% were true undergraduate reverse transfers

Why mention them?

- Each of those groups presents a different challenge to enrollment management
- E.g. the 4-year drop-ins are summer term folks—and you have to know what they study in the summer
- E.g. half the ‘swirlers’ (nomads) earn 30+ credits from community colleges—any pattern or sequence?

Why mention them, II?

- They lead, by contrast, to consideration of those who start in and establish long-term residence in community colleges. These are the most stable reference groups for enrollment management, as well as for understanding what community colleges really do.

Residence in town: Homeowners and Tenants, I

- Homeowners: earned 30+ credits from community colleges and 60+% of their credits from community colls
- Tenants: earned 30+ credits from community colleges but less than 60% of their credits came from community colleges

Homeowners and Tenants, II

More than half of traditional-age students who start in CCs will write a substantial history in community colleges:

Homeowners: ave. 65 credits

Tenants: ave. 57 credits

The content of their time bears close attention.

Homeowners, Tenants, and Visitors Compared

	Homeowners	Tenants	Visitors
HS Math >Alg 2	17%	35%	11%
Consist Expect BA	39	54	32
No delayed entry	79	92	64
No remed in 1st Yr	54	56	46
C-level Math 1st Yr	23	43	7
STEM creds 1st Yr	1.97	3.65	0.81
Mean GPA 1st Yr	2.62	2.76	2.21

The keys to differential histories lie in the 1st calendar year at the community college

- Timing of entry from high school
- Additive credits
- Number of non-penalty withdrawals and no-credit repeats
- Credits in truly college-level math, but
- The fact of any remediation and
- 1st year GPA are NOT part of the differential

The other key differentiating engine lies in the course-taking, which reflects. . .

- the knowledge-delivery infrastructure of the town, including
  - Instructional staff
  - Academic management staff
  - Classroom & laboratory space
  - Location and calendar scheduling
  - On-line resources

  If we seek to clarify strategic paths to transfer or to AAS completion, we cannot ignore any of this

Attainment of Homeowners and Tenants

	Home	Ten
Transferred to 4-year	23%	96%
Associate from CC	42	36
Associate was highest	37	4
Earned Bachelor's	7	77
At end, still going for BA	6	11
At end, still going for AA	9	1

No story is complete with a logistic—and even then we're not done

- No demographic variable makes a difference in either transfer or (for those who did not transfer) associate degree attainment logistics
- This is both good—and challenging—news: for the variables that do make a difference are largely within the control of community colleges

The logistic model for transfer

	p	Odds ratio	Delta-p
Crds college-level math	.01	2.45	0.227
Summer term credits	.01	2.40	0.191
>20% Ws and NCRs	.02	0.17	-0.387
Continuously Enrolled	.05	2.80	0.224
Attended in >1 state	.05	3.53	0.275
No delay of entry	.10	3.50	0.273
Educ expectations	.10	1.61	0.104

The logistic model for associate degree completion

	p	Odds ratio	Delta-p
Continuously enrolled	.01	4.93	0.205
Occup credit ratio	.01	1.68	0.066
Crds college-level math	.01	2.44	0.115
>20% Ws and NCRs	.01	0.17	-0.227
Campus job in 1st 2 yrs	.05	3.65	0.166
No delay of entry	.05	2.60	0.123
Summer term credits	.05	1.56	0.057

So what does this mean for practice?

- Grading policy: limits on Ws and NCRs
- Summer offerings
- Real-time student tracking, frequent contact, reduced credit loads but continuous enrollment
- Creative cooperative math acceleration with high schools

And what else for associate degree completion?

- When the occupational credits ratio exceeds 65%, degree completion plummets, so. . .
- Through monitoring 1st year course work, advisement and program requirements, add 9 or more credits of arts & sciences

What happens next?—Moving On. . .

- The labor market requires a different shuffling of the population
- So, we take the highest credential earned at a community college or (if no degree) curricular concentration, and characterize it as

Academic	43%
Occupational	22
Unclassifiable	35

P.S. Threshold for inclusion is >10 credits

Some markers for these 3 groups

	Academic	Occupational	Unclassi-fiable
Mean credits from CCs	59	66	14
>2 remedial courses	20%	24%	32%
Occup creds ratio <10%	42%	6%	78%

The content of credentials

	Percent Transfer	Earned bachelor	% of assoc
General studies	72	54	42
Business support	35	3	10
Health occupats.	15	14	8
Technology	17	13	8
Business	41	32	7
Protective servs	56	39	6

Why raise this issue?

- To connect education histories to labor market histories you need content, not years of schooling
- For community college “graduates” that means identifying fields and whether transfer was part of the story-line
- It also means analysis of discrete course work by proximate occupation

Example: CC “grads” in computer-related & technical occupations at age 25/26

Percent of credits:

Written/oral comm.	19%
College-level math	14
CS & engineering	9
Chemistry & biology	9
Drawing/drafting/film	8
Psychology	6

And what do mid-level technicians do?

- ". . .work at the empirical interface between a world of physical objects and a world of symbolic representations. . ." and
- "transform aspects of the material world into symbolic representations which can be used for other purposes."

Whalley & Barley, *Between Craft and Science: Technical Work in U.S.* Settings.1997.

Evaluating labor market outcomes

- You can’t use earnings at age 25/26, so we use:
- Continuity of employment—and credentials count !!!
- Congruence between occupation and course of study

And what do we see?

Percent employed full-time
in at least 2 yrs of 1997-1999

Academic AA	71%
Occupational AAS	79%
No degree, but 60+ creds	58%

And as for congruence…

	Congru-ent	Not Cong	N.A.
Occupational AAS	61%	28%	11%
Occupational Cert	35	57	8
Occupat >30 cred	31	44	26
Academic AA/AS	29	28	43
Academic >30 creds	23	27	50

So what do we learn about ‘moving on’ from the town?

- CCs need alumni surveys from which to build empirical profiles of congruent curricula, then
- Rearrange the pathways, signs (advisement), transport (course scheduling in place & time), and utility systems of the town, and
- Find the program dissonances.

Messages, I

- Accountability: focus on what you can control—environmental design and communication
- Disaggregate reporting by age: at entry, at transfer, at exit
- Secondary-to-postsec paths are the most malleable, so work on them!

Messages, II

- Treat the year as a *calendar year* not an academic year. Successful students do that, so rearrange your temporal furniture!
- Higher transfer rates mean more care to credit-transfer issues.

Messages, III: Attention to Academic Processes

- Prematriculation boot camps
- Flexible scheduling of gateways
- Monitoring of credit loads
- Ensuring sufficient A&S portions of occupational progams
- Tracking 1st yr additive credits

Communication lines follow radar-screens

- Environmental scanning—high schools and regional labor markets
- The phone lines to 4-year schools are 2-way
- Website design has to be a clear scenic highway
- Listen to your IR people!

Without these connections you are isolated from the work that makes a difference!