

What About Affordability? CCBs and Other Paths to Affordable Degrees

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This white paper examines strategies for maintaining affordability in community college baccalaureate (CCB) programs. It highlights how institutions can maximize revenue streams, optimize resource allocation, and reduce financial barriers for students. By employing a multi-pronged approach that integrates state, federal, and local funding sources, along with tuition strategies and external grants, community colleges can support affordable degree pathways and promote equitable access to higher education.

Funding Realities and Strategic Focus

Institutions must balance between funding sources they can influence and those they cannot control. Strategic focus should prioritize leveraging controllable factors, such as optimizing resource allocation, seeking external funding, and enhancing access to financial assistance. By articulating clear pathways and developing targeted support initiatives, colleges can sustain affordability while improving student outcomes.

Revenue Sources for CCB Programs

Community colleges rely on multiple funding sources to support their CCB programs. These revenue streams include:

1. **State Funding:** A large funding source for CCB-authorized states, providing substantial operational and programmatic support.
2. **Federal Funding:** Distributed either directly to colleges or through state-administered programs, federal funds play a crucial role in supporting financial aid and other student services.
3. **Local Funding:** In certain states, local funding contributes significantly to community college budgets.
4. **Other Sources:** Colleges also benefit from grants, donations, and other financial arrangements.
5. **Tuition and Fees:** Revenue generated from student tuition and fees is vital to sustaining program offerings and institutional operations.

Practical Strategies for Maintaining Affordability

➤ Grow CCBs in Existing Program Areas

To maximize resource efficiency, colleges should maximize CCB offerings in fields where they already have infrastructure, such as facilities, equipment, and faculty expertise.

- **Resource Optimization:** Utilize existing assets to minimize the need for new infrastructure investments.

- **Faculty Workload Management:** Develop overlapping courses that serve both existing and new programs.
- **Career Pathway Expansion:** Offer stackable credentials, dual pathways, or specialization options to provide students with greater flexibility and opportunity.
- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** Invest in facilities and equipment to support advanced learning opportunities.
- **Student Support Services:** Allocate grant funds to scholarships, tuition assistance, and emergency aid for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students.

Articulate Everything You Can

Establishing clear pathways and articulation agreements reduces the cost and time required for students to complete their degrees.

- **Credit for Prior Learning (CPL):** Implement policies that award credit for demonstrated competencies gained through work, training, or prior education.
- **Articulation Agreements:** Create formal agreements to grant credit for previously completed courses and certifications.

Leverage Student Financial Assistance and Fee Waivers

Expand awareness and access to financial aid programs, scholarships, and targeted fee waivers to reduce students' financial burden.

- **Financial Aid Guidance:** Proactively assist students in navigating the application processes for grants, scholarships, and work-study programs.
- **Last Mile Scholarships:** Provide scholarships to students nearing degree completion but facing financial challenges.
- **Fee Waivers:** Implement last-dollar tuition fee waivers for eligible students to close financial gaps.

Proactively Seek External Funding

Grant funding supports both operational and developmental needs for CCB programs.

- **Program Development:** Use grants to create new programs, update curricula, and train faculty.