

A quiet revolution has been developing in the community college that has dramatic implications for the community college of the future. Incrementally, and with little fanfare, community colleges have been redefining what "community to be served" means.

For the last eighty years the community to be served by a community college has been defined as a geographic area—the metropolitan center of a city, a single county, or several counties or parts of counties. These geographical areas have been sacrosanct territories, off limits to community colleges on the borders. State agencies often monitor these territories to insure that community colleges stay inside their assigned areas. Presidents and staff of neighboring colleges sometimes work out compacts to insure peace and cooperation.

In retrospect, it is surprising that these innovative, entrepreneurial colleges have stayed within their boundaries so long. The nature of the community college is to reach out and serve; and in the last decade a number have quietly expanded their services beyond their geographic areas and have quietly redefined their communities to be served.

There have been societal forces at work that encourage this expansion.

The Linking Technologies

Technology has been a boundary breaker. Television has made the world a global village. Satellites, computers, telephones, and telefax machines have

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The Quiet Revolution

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made new communities possible. Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland coordinates a statewide electronic communications network for Ohio community colleges. It also serves as a satellite link for teleconferencing activities for a consortium of Great Lakes states. Cuyahoga's community has grown beyond Cleveland, and its impact extends considerably beyond the service area it was originally established to serve.

The Business and Industry Connection

In the last decade the community college has developed a creative alliance with major companies to train and retrain workers. The major companies have branches across a region or across the nation, and when they work with an outstanding community college that delivers, they want that college to work with them regardless of the territory the college is legally designed to serve. Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, Nebraska, coordinates a special career development and retraining program designed for laid-off employees of Northwestern Bell. The project involves 42 postsecondary institutions in five states.

The New Federalism

Under the Reagan Administration, the responsibility to operate most programs

and services from economic development to prisons was returned to the states. The states in turn have contracted with other agencies, including community colleges, to provide needed services. Lane Community College, Eugene, Oregon, coordinates a statewide project for the Small Business Administration that involves Oregon community colleges and several state universities. Greenville Technical College in Greenville, South Carolina, coordinates a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to introduce South Carolina business and industry to international markets. Both of these colleges are serving their states in ways that could not have been imagined fifteen years ago.

The International Dimension

Hundreds of community colleges regularly send faculty and students to foreign countries and encourage exchanges. Several community colleges play major leadership roles in coordinating consortia committed to international education. A few community colleges have established educational centers in other countries for their students and students from other community colleges. In the early 1980s, the League for Innovation in the Community College coordinated an international project with the Republic of Mexico to train over 250 students from Mexico in League colleges. The opportunity to develop programs in international education has had tremendous impact in helping community colleges extend their programs beyond their districts.

Professional Development

Some community colleges have the resources to provide state and national leadership for professional development for their colleagues, and this service extends their reach beyond their legal "community to be served." De Anza Col-

lege, Cupertino, California, is sponsoring in the spring of 1989, a national teleconference on aging with Claude Pepper and other nationally known advocates of the aging as participants.

Johnson County Community College provided leadership to develop a national statement for student personnel workers in community colleges and sponsored a national conference to bring these professionals together from across the nation. The Board of Trustees at JCCC has approved a significant addition to the college's mission statement. While retaining a focus on serving its geographic region, JCCC will also provide "support and leadership to various local, state, and national organizations to assist in the promotion and development of the community college movement."

Community colleges will probably always be local institutions, grounded in the culture and reflecting the challenges and opportunities of a specific geographic region. But more and more, community colleges will become state and regional institutions providing leadership for a number of community colleges and other social agencies through their special programs. A few community colleges will become national institutions, much in the same way a major state university serves a specific state but also because of the quality of its programs and leadership, serves the nation. A handful of world class community colleges will extend their reach beyond the nation to provide services to other countries.

This quiet revolution is redefining one aspect of "community" in the community college. As community colleges come of age and develop a vision for a new century, they will continue to reach out beyond their current "community to be served." In the coming decade, the quiet revolution will explode, releasing new energy and innovations in this ever-evolving American social invention. ■

"Commentary" is a regular feature of the Trustee Quarterly in which noted observers of the community colleges share their special perspective on issues of importance to lay education board members.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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nerable to fraud, unwise investments—even financial disaster.

"The old view of consumer education as just home economics and balancing your checkbook is gone forever," said Robert J. Kopecky, president of Educational Administrative Services, Inc., and one of the study's researchers. "Consumer education today means learning and developing all the personal and professional skills necessary to understand, function, cope, and survive in an emerging global marketplace—one that is moving swiftly towards the dawn of the 21st century."

Consumer Education's "Orphan" Status

The finding that consumer education courses are taught under 81 different disciplines or departments suggests an "orphan" status—no one really owns or is accountable for their content. The study recommends that these courses be placed under a single department and become part of the required course of study for every student.

Study respondents also suggested developing a core curriculum to add cohesiveness and consistency to consumer education programs throughout the community college system. In addition, courses should be expanded to address more of the issues facing today's consumer, such as changing tax laws, reverse mortgages, and electronic banking.

Other findings and recommendations include:

- About half of all community colleges have satellite downlink capability, while 44 percent access satellite networks. The use of these information/media networks should be expanded.
- The ability of students to transfer credits earned for consumer courses from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities must be improved.
- Opportunities for internships with local businesses or consumer agencies as part of consumer coursework are not prevalent, and should be encouraged.
- Less than half the respondents indicated that their teaching resources were adequate. Suggestions for new materials included individual computerized instructional modules, interactive video, and videotaped courses and programs.
- Partnerships in the consumer arena should be formed between community colleges and businesses to enhance work force productivity.
- Only 25 percent of the respondents indicated that their institution provides consumer-related courses to adults through partnerships with other organizations. However, respondents did indicate considerable use of various community organizations to assist classroom or community outreach efforts under less formal arrangements. ■