

# Maximizing Student Success

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**Finding:**                    **Shaking Up the Community College Concept**

- The City University of New York is considering the creation of a new type of community college to complement its six existing two-year institutions. The vision is consistent with national calls by many educators to look for new ways to get more community college students to complete programs speedily. The plan proposes stricter requirements and a narrower curriculum than many community colleges currently offer. All first-year students would be required to take a predetermined core curriculum and would then be limited to their choice of roughly 12 majors—each with a prominent focus on internships and other on-the-job educational opportunities. The proposed majors are mostly in pre-career fields of study such as nursing, surgical technology and energy services management.

**Implications:**        Streamlining community college degree offerings has gained popularity in recent years as one strategy to improve transfer and graduation rates. Some suggest that expanding the career and workforce development curricula is the most proficient use of limited funds. Federal and state government support often cites the workforce development features of the community college as the more efficient method of training “work ready” completers. MCCCDC may better serve students and potential workers by modeling this strategy and expanding workforce development offerings.

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**Finding:**                    **Regents to Look at ASU Proposal to Cut AIMS Awards**

- Arizona State University has proposed suspending its scholarship program for high school students who pass the state AIMS test because of severe budget cuts. The proposal would require the approval of state board of regents and could affect hundreds of students entering the university next fall. Currently, 5,785 freshmen through juniors attending ASU, UA and NAU receive AIMS scholarships, with a total value of \$25.5 million. ASU has 2,509 current recipients of AIMS scholarships totaling \$12.5 million, UA has 2,265 students receiving tuition waivers worth \$10.6 million, and NAU has 1,011 with scholarships valued at \$2.4million.

**Implications:**        The reduction in the number of AIMS scholarship recipients may cause financial shortcomings for some students who, subsequently, may decide to enroll in the lower cost community colleges.

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**Finding:**                    **Plan Aims to Add Graduates**

- The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) is studying a plan to nearly double the college and university student enrollment by 2020. This process would involve funneling more high school students to the universities and transferring more students from the community colleges. The proposal also involves growing online programs.

**Implications:**        The potential impact of the ABOR plan could result in a greater number of students enrolling in community colleges and transferring to the university. The increased enrollment could require more faculty, program resources, and classroom space.

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**Finding: ASU Plans to Lay Off Faculty to Save Cash**

- Arizona State University is preparing to lay off an estimated 200 faculty associates and dramatically boost some class sizes beginning this spring as it braces for more state budget cuts.

**Implications:** Dramatically increasing class sizes can negatively impact student success. The increase in class size may also detour students from enrolling at ASU, which may have additional growth opportunities for Maricopa.

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**Finding: Enrollment Down in Arizona's Public Schools**

- The Arizona Republic conducted a study of Maricopa County public school district enrollment. School districts in the outlying valley area are showing increases (e.g., Dysart, Chandler & Higley) while districts in established older areas (e.g., Mesa Public Schools) are experiencing enrollment declines. Even minor enrollment declines result in significant budget cuts (\$6,000 per student) and have resulted in Districts considering closing some schools and cutting specialty employees (e.g., librarians, nurses).

**Implications:** As Maricopa enrollment continues to become more youth based, public school enrollment trends could provide insightful information on which community colleges will continue to grow or decline. It appears that colleges located in the "fringe" areas of Maricopa County will continue to enroll more recent high school graduates over the next several years. In addition, reductions in per student spending could also limit the overall preparedness of students enrolling in Arizona's postsecondary institutions.

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**Finding: Hispanic Student Enrollment Continues to Grow at Public Schools**

- Strong growth in Hispanic public school enrollment is expected to continue for decades, according to a recently released U.S. Census Bureau population projection. The number of Hispanic students in the nation's public school nearly doubled from 1990 to 2006, accounting for 60% of the total growth in public school enrollments over that period. There are now approximately 10 million Hispanic students in the nation's public kindergartens, elementary and high schools; making up about one-in-five public school students in the United States. The bureau also reports that Hispanic school-age population will increase 166%, from 11 million in 2006 to 28 million by 2050. The non-Hispanic school-age population is estimated to grow by just 4%; from 43 million to 45 million over this same period. Hispanic school-age students represent more than 40% of enrollments in three states (Arizona, New Mexico and Texas).

**Implications:** Demographic trends throughout MCCCDC correspond with the U.S. Census Bureau data. The MCCCDC campuses could benefit by continuing their efforts in preparing for the needs of an expanding Hispanic student population. Maricopa may also expect larger numbers of non-English speaking students as well.

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**Finding: Advanced Placement Enrollment on the Rise**

- More Arizona students are taking Advance Placement (AP) courses and exams as a way to cut college costs and become more prepared for higher education. In 2008, 10,573 public high school students took at least one AP exam compared with 5,720 students five years ago. A majority of students took AP courses in science, math, English and history.

**Implications:** Trends indicate that many students opting to take AP exams hold aspirations of immediate enrollment in four-year colleges and universities. MCCCDC may consider tapping the potential higher education seeker to consider transfer to college and universities with AP credits, after initially attending the more cost efficient community college.

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**Finding: Community Colleges Seen as Source of Engineers**

- Currently, only 12 percent of baccalaureate engineering degrees are awarded to African-American, Hispanic, or American Indian students. Recent data shows that across all disciplines, approximately one-third of students who enroll in public, two-year colleges eventually transfer. Opportunities for improving the number of students choosing and completing baccalaureate degrees in engineering fields are numerous for community colleges. Suggestions for smooth pipeline transfer include: state-wide agreement governing articulation, clean credit transfer, promoting engineering as community college major, selecting specific offerings in community college engineering sub-disciplines, qualified faculty, appropriate laboratory equipment, adequate financial aid, effective mentors, program specific academic advisors, and external grants.

**Implications:** MCCCCD can serve an important role in improving transfer and baccalaureate achievement in the engineering field. Arizona Board of Regents and the Governor have endorsed efforts (i.e., 2020 Vision) designed to better educate the state's workforce, improve state's research base, and increase bachelor degree completion to serve the state's growing educational and workforce needs.

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**Finding: Studies Focus on Factors That Influence Freshmen Success**

- Three new studies of college freshmen suggest that even the most promising students can run into academic difficulties as a long-term consequence of experiences like attending a violent or run-down high school or being raised by parents who never went to college. One study indicated that students who enter college with comparable academic records and family backgrounds can have different levels of success in their freshman year, depending on their high-school environment. Another study found that low-income freshmen tended to post lower grades if their high school had high levels of violence or disorder, had enrollments that were heavily black or Hispanic, or had a high percentage of students with limited proficiency in English.

**Implications:** Many students who enter MCCCCD from county feeder high schools may have experienced similar family, educational, and/or social environments as described. An awareness of these individual student factors may provide valuable information to colleges hoping to positively address student success behaviors.

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**Finding: Community-College Students Need Better Financial Advising, Survey Finds**

- In the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, known as CCSSE, nearly half (45 percent) of respondents cited a lack of finances as a hardship that would likely cause them to withdraw from classes or leave college – more than twice as many (19 percent) as those who cited a lack of academic preparation. Those findings suggest that institutions must do more to familiarize prospective students with financial aid and to steer enrolled students through the complex application process. There are very large numbers of community-college students who are eligible for federal financial aid, but who do not apply for it.

**Implications:** MCCCCD college financial aid staffs are currently expanding efforts to engage more students in the financial aid process and ease the confusion over money available for financing college. The Obama administration's stimulus money (increased Pell grant awards) may also play a significant role in improving access and availability of much needed grant and student loan sources.

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**Finding: 4-Day School Week Gains Momentum**

- A shorter week (4-days) is seen as one way for many school districts to adapt to shrinking funding support. Many U.S. school districts are experiencing tight budget constraints, which is one reason why more are considering a schedule that delights students and makes working parents cringe.

**Implications:** Extending school hours and eliminating one day of classes each week, could save resources currently used to support transportation, utilities, and other operational expenses. Although a condensed school week may save financial resources, this strategy must also consider the implications to student success. In particular, student academic performance in Arizona is considerably low, and strategies designed to save money must not negatively impact student academic achievement.

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**Finding: New Fees Could Put Tuition at ASU, UA Above U.S. Average**

- Arizona's two biggest state universities are proposing tuition surcharges of more than \$1,000 that could push them past the national average in college costs for the first time. To make up for cuts in state funding, Arizona State University is proposing a \$1,200-a-year "economic recovery surcharge" for all students while the University of Arizona wants a \$1,100 per-year surcharge. Northern Arizona University is seeking \$350 more. The surcharges could move ASU and UA above the national average for college costs. Last academic year, 53 percent of undergraduate students at Arizona's three state universities graduated with debt, up from 47 percent four years earlier. The Arizona Board of Regents reports average debt roughly \$17,500.

**Implications:** Surcharges at the three universities could send entering students to community colleges rather than pay the additional fees.

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**Finding: New Way Urged for Gauging Schools**

- Half of Maricopa County's high-school graduates who enter Arizona universities or colleges must take a remedial math class, and just under a quarter must take a remedial English class. Some Arizona State House leaders are proposing a pilot program that could lead to making the percentage of students who graduate "college-ready" the prime indicator of how well a high school performs. The study tracked students from 115 Maricopa County districts or charter high schools that entered one of the three state universities or Maricopa Community Colleges, accounting for 55 percent of the county's 2006 graduates, or about 17,400 students. Study results indicate: seventy-seven percent were prepared to enter a college-level English course without extra help; half were ready for college algebra. The legislature will also examine the future of AIMS, possibly eliminating it as a graduation requirement, or replacing it with a college entrance (ACT, SAT) type exam.

**Implications:** Underprepared Arizona high school graduates, make-up of a good proportion of MCCCCD entering students. The importance of this proposed task force, and resulting exit exam alternatives, hold a high level of interest for tax payers, K-12 curriculum, funding levels and sources, dual enrollment options, and intended competencies. The impact of remedial math and English courses raise concerns for current MCCCCD programming, faculty hiring, and student success efforts.