THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN VOCATIONAL AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

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The community college is a two-year college and is now an integral part of the American system of higher education, having its origins in this country. It subscribes to an open-door policy of admitting any high school graduate or any adult who is capable of profiting from continuing instruction. The approach of the community college is comprehensive and its objective is to provide a wide range of programs to meet the needs of all the people in the community.

The philosophy of an open-door community college means that the college should have available to the communities it serves, within the limitations of its physical and fiscal resources, educational opportunities as extensive and as broad as may be needed to serve the people. An open-door philosophy does not mean that any individual can have an unlimited educational access to all courses and programs within the college. There may be some requirements and limitations set by individual courses and programs, such as nursing. However, the college will make every opportunity to provide services to all people. The open-door philosophy means access to educational opportunity for any citizen within the community, 16 years of age or over. Often the open-door philosophy provides a second chance opportunity for many people. It is an opportunity for citizens of the community to receive post secondary education that may not have been available to them previously. The community colleges that have been established in the state of Nevada will remain two-year colleges and never become four-year colleges. They are collegiate institutions of their own right and have a most important role to play in higher education. That role includes both vocational and liberal education.

The mission of our comprehensive community colleges is basically four-fold. It is the purpose of the colleges to provide first and foremost vocational or occupational education, but to also provide university parallel,
developmental and community service programs. There must of necessity then be a strong emphasis upon counseling and guidance if the open-door philosophy and these four broad types of programs are going to be able to succeed in the community.

More specifically, the occupational programs are those designed to provide the student with vocational or technical skills so that he may enter the labor force upon completion of the program. These programs are designed primarily to educate students for semi-skilled jobs, skilled jobs, and semi-professional technical jobs. It is not necessary for these programs to follow the normal collegiate semester or quarter pattern. Many of these programs will only be four weeks or six weeks in length. The intent is to provide the student with the skills so that he can enter that particular occupation.

The rapid change in American society has come primarily from the tremendous advances in new and varied technologies. Many people in today's labor market owe their employment opportunities to occupational opportunities that did not exist many years ago. Occupational programs in the comprehensive community college provide the basic employment skills and knowledge for students in these programs. It is the intent to have the programs designed in such a way that faculty are in constant contact with the needs of each industrial area that is being served. The skill requirements for job entry must always be known by the college. That is why community colleges are serving all of these areas primarily through advisory committees, formed from people representing these different occupational programs within the community. The college relies heavily upon the experience of people within these particular occupations. It is necessary, then, to constantly change these programs in order to make them more effective. The occupational programs not only provide theory but practical laboratory experience for the students so that the student will have the opportunity to learn actually how to do the job.
The goal of the community colleges in the state of Nevada is to have 60% of the students enrolled in our community colleges in these occupational programs. So far we have been able to exceed this as a total division within the state. It is our intent to try to continue in this vein.

A second major role of the community colleges is to provide university parallel courses and programs designed to enable students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. This is the liberal education role of the community college. The courses, therefore, are designed to be taught at the same level as those taught at the more traditional senior institutions. Completion of the two-year program in the liberal arts area leads to an associate degree of arts, a degree that should be acceptable at all four-year colleges and universities.

Many students need this kind of an education in a community college. There are some students who cannot afford to go to universities or four-year colleges, especially when one considers the cost of education and leaving home. There are many adults in the community who for various reasons cannot qualify for the universities and since the community colleges provide open-door education this gives many of them another opportunity. There are many students who have not done very well in high school who cannot meet the qualifications for entering a four-year college or university and these students can get a second chance in a community college. There are some students, particularly older students who are fearful of entering the four-year colleges and universities and through a strong program of counseling and guidance can enter a community college and perhaps succeed eventually in getting a four-year baccalaureate degree. There are even some students who prefer a community college atmosphere. It is for these reasons that the community college engages in liberal education too.
Another reason for offering liberal arts and science courses in the community college is to provide this type of education for those students enrolled in occupational programs. It is our philosophy that a student even in the occupational programs in the community college must not only know how to make a living, but must also know how to live. We require for completion of our associate in applied science degrees which apply to our occupational courses, that one third of their courses be in the liberal arts area because it is these courses that will enable the student to learn how to live. Placing the occupational students and the liberal arts students who wish to transfer in the same classes fuses the community college together as one college. If one did not have these kinds of courses, then the community college would cease to become a college and be only a technical institute. I believe that this is the primary reason that across the country many of the technical institutes have been phased into community colleges and have become much more successful in attracting students and in meeting the needs and wishes of the community. Placing all the students in the same classes represents a savings of educational dollars. It was a hard struggle in many states to convince people that occupational students and university parallel students could compete in the same classes. Experience has shown us that they can do so and very well.

A third major kind of program in the community colleges is what we call the community service function and this is the function where the college contributes to the community and the community to the college. It is the responsibility of a comprehensive community college to provide these kinds of services whether they be labeled continuing education, community service education, or adult education. It is here that the faculty and staff should identify with the community and not wait for the citizenry to pass through their portals of knowledge.
Workshops, short courses, seminars and conferences should be provided as well as adult education courses to enable adults to upgrade and update skills in their occupations, to learn recreational skills or to learn new skills to enter different occupations. One of the most important of these functions is to provide individuals and groups in the community with opportunities to learn recreational skills and to participate in recreational programs. These courses can serve as a catalyst for the conscience of the community.

A fourth kind of function for the community colleges is a developmental education function. This is necessary because of the open-door philosophy. Formerly these programs were called remedial programs but the term remedial had such a bad connotation that few students wished to enter the program. There are many students, however, particularly in the fields of mathematics and English who wish to develop their skills to the point where they can pursue the other kinds of courses. Each particular program in the comprehensive community college maintains an entry level that reflects the goals of employment entry skill development. Not all people who register for classes will be qualified to enter these programs. Those persons who possess ability, but do not have the depth of background preparation will be given an opportunity to build their educational deficiencies to the required levels.

In so doing, the community college wishes to employ less traditional methods to remedial education that have been developed in the past. It is our intention to provide individualized instruction so that the student can move as fast as he can in order to pursue his goals. Upon completion of those particular aspects of the program, if he feels and his faculty feels that he is qualified to enter the other program, then he may do so.

In order for these four broad types of programs to succeed, the community college must have a strong counseling and guidance function. Trained professional counselors must work with each student in order to assist him to achieve his
educational goals. The staff should form a testing program which will assist each student in measuring his individual potential against his goals. Interview sessions are designed to assist the student to better understand himself and his potential. Counselors also assist in developing the role of the faculty advisor in helping students to get proper course and program planning. It is the function of the counselors to move into the community to tell high school students the kinds of programs that can be planned.

To go into more detail about the occupational programs in our community colleges, we have divided our occupational programs into five broad categories. These are: agriculture, business, health, industrial and public service. In the agricultural cluster we have developed programs in agricultural mechanics, agricultural management, farm and ranch management. The business programs are probably the largest group of programs within the community colleges. We have developed programs in areas such as bookkeeping, all types of secretaries, insurance, data processing, retailing, office administration, business management, real estate, etc. In the health occupations groups, are the practical nursing program, the registered nursing program, medical technicians, nurses aides, radiologic technicians, surgical technicians, dental assistants, dental hygienists, mental health technicians, inhalation therapy, etc. In industrial programs, we have programs in electronics, mechanical design, air transportation, appliance repair, automotive repair, refrigeration, all types of building trades, apprenticeship programs, radio and television repair, slot machine repair, heavy equipment repair. In the public service area, there are programs such as law enforcement, fire science, cosmetology, culinary arts, food management, teacher aides, etc.

It is our hope that we can eventually develop two or more levels of programs in most of these occupational fields in order to better serve the adult population. We also hope to provide a job cluster, a job-family approach to curriculum organization. The graduates then are field oriented rather than job oriented and
will have greater occupational mobility and a lower rate of unemployment caused by technological change. A course curriculum approach has been used in planning associate degree and curriculum within the colleges. I cannot emphasize enough the continuous contact that must be made within the state with the number of active advisory curricular committees.

Our community colleges seek to have quality programs. We desire to have diversified programs and to maintain flexibility in order to do these. Many times it is felt in the discussion of vocational liberal education that only the liberal educators can provide quality education. We strongly support John Gardner's commitment to excellence in higher education. He has stated, "As things now stand, the word excellence is all too often reserved for the dozen institutions which stand at the very zenith of our higher education in terms of faculty distinction, selectivity of students and difficulty of curriculum." In these terms it is simply impossible to speak of a community college, for example, as excellent. Yet sensible men can easily conceive of excellence in the community college.

The traditionalists might say, of course, let Princeton create a community college. One would have an institution of unquestionable excellence. That may be correct but it leads us down precisely the wrong path. If Princeton Junior College were excellent in the same sense that Princeton University is excellent, might not be excellent in the most important way that a community college can be excellent. It would simply be a truncated version of Princeton. A completely meaningless result would be achieved if General Motors tried to add to its line of low-priced cars by marketing the front half of a Cadillac.

We shall have to be more flexible than that in our conception of excellence. We must develop a point of view that permits each kind of institution to achieve excellence in terms of its own objectives.
We must recognize that there may be excellence or shoddiness in every line of human endeavor. We must learn to honor excellence, indeed to demand it, in every socially accepted human activity, however humble the activity, and to scorn shoddiness, however exalted the activity. There may be excellent plumbers and incompetent plumbers, excellent philosophers and incompetent philosophers. An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. Society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.

Nowhere in our comprehensive community college are the terms flexibility and diversity needed more than in our community service programs. Our objectives in our community service programs are to assist in the solution of community problems by making staff resources and physical facilities available to the community; to assist individuals to assume responsibility for their own continuing education; to provide programs of instruction beyond the classroom and laboratory, seminars, workshops and conferences; to assist all adults in the community to upgrade and update their skills in a variety of vocational technical programs; to assist in raising the cultural level of the community by offering opportunities for participation in programs of a cultural nature; to provide individuals and groups in the community with opportunities to learn recreational skills; and to participate in recreational programs and to enhance the public community to the college in a service area by attempting to serve the educational, cultural and recreational needs of the community. These programs must be made a vital part of our total comprehensive community college. Each one of the programs, courses, workshops, that are somehow developed for continuing educational programs should be totally incorporated with the other programs of the colleges and treated exactly the same way. We must continue
to give community college credit for any program that we offer. If it is worthy of being offered, it is worthy of being given credit. We must also not restrict these kinds of programs to adults in the evening programs. The same kind of program must be offered throughout our total fourteen hour day with no differentiation between day and evening classes. All of the services of the college must be made available, including strong counseling and guidance service for all students. If we are to continue to serve all segments of the community, including the poor and the disadvantaged, we must move even closer and deeper into the community. Our central campus must be extended into all geographic areas of the community. Close cooperation with existing community agencies and the federal programs must exist. It is in this manner that our colleges have been able to reach out into the community. We can never be all things to all people but we must work in harmony with all existing agencies in the society we serve.

Ed Gleazer, President of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, put it this way, "Community colleges now exist in a far more competitive environment than that of the sixties; developmental education, occupational education and other services considered by the community colleges to be among their distinctive offerings are found in a growing number of institutions that have a new awareness of the educational market." He warned that community colleges could suffer the fate of other growth industries that have failed to adopt to changing conditions in the market, citing the railroad industry as an example. If community colleges define their market too narrowly and seek only the kinds of students who came to us in the sixties, they too could suffer reduction in size and importance. He has proposed that community colleges redefine their role to become community based colleges that offer not only college transfer courses and vocational-technical training, but also a wide range of community services, educational experiences for virtually any and all groups that need them within the community.
Community colleges have evolved over a period of years in stages into the concepts that we follow today. Community colleges originally were started in this country as junior colleges offering the first two years of a four-year college program. From the time of the first colleges in the early part of this century until the end of World War II, this is what our junior colleges were. In the 1950's and 1960's they expanded to become more comprehensive and offering a wide range of courses for credit. Particular emphasis in the 50's was on vocational education, and in the 60's upon developmental education with a strong emphasis on student personnel services. It is in the 70's that community colleges are now broadening their concept to include a large community service program.

Fortunately, when we started the community colleges in Nevada in 1970, we had this concept. It was in 1970 that the Carnegie Report on open-door colleges was published and it consisted of several major themes. I would like to summarize them briefly here to show how consistently the community colleges in Nevada follow these themes. 1) The community college has proved its worth to American society. Community colleges should be available within convenient distance to all persons throughout their lives except in sparsely populated areas which should be served by residential colleges. Prospectively more than 95% of all Americans should be within commuting distance of the community college.

2) The Carnegie Commission favors a comprehensive community college with academic, occupational and general education programs as against more specialized two-year colleges.

3) Community colleges should remain two-year institutions and not expect to become four-year graduate institutions. They have an important role to play and should not abandon it.

4) Full transfer rights should be provided qualified graduates of community colleges by comprehensive state colleges and universities.

5) Occupational programs should be given the fullest support and status within community colleges. These programs need to be flexibly geared to the
changing requirements of society.

6) The Carnegie Commission supports open access to the open-door college for all high school graduates and otherwise qualified individuals. The community colleges have a particular role to play in assuring equality of opportunity to all Americans. The Commission while supporting open access does not believe that all young people either want higher education or can benefit from it. Many of those who can benefit from higher education and want it would be better off in other endeavors for a time after high school before entering higher education. For this latter group, the community college can stand as a continuing open opportunity over a period of years.

7) The community college should charge no tuition or low tuition.

8) Guidance, occupational and personal, is a particularly important function for the community college which serves so many students who are in the process of choosing their lifetime occupations and their life styles. It is an excellent place for those who are uncertain about their careers, about their right to canvass the opportunities and make their choices.

9) The community college has a special responsibility to enrich the cultural life of its neighborhood and to be an active center for art, music and drama in all natural discussions.

10) The Carnegie Commission believes that the ultimate size of a community college is 2,000 to 5,000 students.

11) The community college by the nature of its purposes should relate to its local community, be governed by a local board, or at least have a local advisory board.

12) Financing should be increased and equitably served by federal, state and local governments. In particular, the federal government should provide start-up grants for the additional community colleges needed to provide nationwide coverage.
Our community colleges in Nevada strongly support most of these themes and follow them.

We have a number of policies and procedures which affect our role both in terms of vocational and liberal education. We hope to continue these policies such as an open-door admission, relatively low admission fees, a wide range of programs for a student's individualized remedial programs, a no-failure grading system, alternate semesters and flexible scheduling, all with a high emphasis on guidance and counseling. One of the problems that occurs periodically in terms of the role of a community college in regard to liberal education is how well do community college graduates do when they transfer to four-year colleges. National studies show that community college graduates do as well at the four-year colleges as they've done at the community colleges. In general, their grade decline during the first semester but by the time they have graduated, they come and are almost identical with what they were at the community colleges. The studies show that our community college students are successful after transferring to four-year colleges even though as a rule the students are less academically able than their university counterparts. Two possible answers are given for these: 1) The community college is able because of the distinctive nature of its mission and program to upgrade and salvage students whose high school preparation was initially inadequate to pursue college work. This salvage function affords the student an opportunity to complete required courses not taken in high school to earn grade-point averages sufficiently high to demonstrate competence to do college work and to increase basic skills in the fundamental subjects. 2) The community college transfer programs serve as a filter-through process which the proficient student passes on his way to the four-year college program but which prevents the unqualified from continuing. The filter hypothesis suggests that the community college graduates only those students who would have
been successful had they attended a four-year college in the first place. This process operates because although it is possible to predict that only fifty out of every one hundred C students will be successful, there is no way to predict which fifty of these students they will be.

I would be remiss in talking about the role of community college vocational education if I did not mention career education. We do subscribe to the concept of career education -- the fundamental concept is that all educational experience curriculum, instruction and counseling should be geared to preparation for economic independence and appreciation for the dignity of work. The main thrust of career education is to prepare all students for a successful life of work by increasing their options for occupational choice by eliminating barriers, real and imagined, to attaining job skills and by enhancing learning achievement in all subject areas and at all levels of education. Career education recognizes critical decision points at which students must be prepared and equipped to decide whether to pursue a job, take further education, or choose some combination of both. Career education prepares the individual for employment, and later in his career upgrades his skills, updates his knowledge, and retrains him for a new job. Career education, in the words of former Commissioner of Education Marland, would eliminate the artificial separation between things academic or liberal and things vocational. He has observed that educators must be bent on preparing students either to become usefully employed immediately upon graduation from high school or to go on to further formal education. The student should be equipped occupationally, academically, and emotionally to spin off from the system at whatever point he chooses whether at age 16 as a craftsman apprentice or age 30 as a surgeon or age 60 as a newly trained practical nurse. One of the goals towards which this education system must direct itself is provision for every student to acquire the skills which will allow him to make a livelihood for himself and for his family no matter what level of educational system he leaves. Such skills are not confined
to the manipulative skills — there are all those with which one can use his capabilities and activities which contribute both to individual fulfillment and society's maintenance and progress. Career education not only provides job information and skill development but also helps students to develop attitudes about the personal, psychological, social, and economic significance of work. These are learned from studying academic subjects. Extensive counseling and guidance activities assist the student in developing self-awareness and in matching his interests and abilities against potential careers. Finally, placement into an entry level job or further education is guaranteed for every student in an effective career education program.

Occupational choice, job placement and occupational adjustment may be delayed for an extended period of time even into graduate school but they are inevitable for all and not just a problem for those who face them before or immediately following high school graduation. And, of course, here is where the community college fits in best.

Leonard Woodcock, President of International United Auto Workers, spoke earlier this year in Seattle to the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges about the role of community colleges in our present society.

He stated that: "We in the UAW believe that workers have many needs and require a range of opportunities, many of which the community colleges can and should satisfy. We are convinced that it will be a scandal and perhaps a calamity if the community colleges and American labor movement fail to enter into a broad, cooperative partnership to provide American workers a relevant education not only for the world of work but to deliver as well the knowledge and insight essential in broadening life's horizons and in improving the quality of citizens. We believe that there is a common core of interest between the unions and the community colleges — labor likes your open admissions policy — we certainly favor low tuition. The geographical accessibility of your colleges is an obvious asset."
"Certainly we both recognize the social value of an educated citizenry and the worth of the individual. We both favor equality of opportunity and social and economic mobility. From our own experience, we know you have a very flexible curriculum — an obvious essential for lifelong learning in a rapidly changing society and economy and training for new careers. We must beware of falling into the career education trap — we cannot afford the luxury of training our youth to already obsolete jobs in an economy where skills become rapidly outmoded. Career options moreover are very bad bets in a society shot through with unemployment. We must go back to the general intelligence that Horace Mann said was the life an heart of a free society. Community colleges can teach leadership skills to people in the community and offer tools for participation in community life. They can give to all groups understanding of how our economy functions or fails to function and sharpen the citizen's insight into the values or strengths and weaknesses of the country in which we live. This is where our concept of liberal education in the community colleges comes in so strongly.

Progress in reaching out, of course, has been made but not enough. In years ahead, the public colleges of this nation will have to undertake a great gathering in of citizens who will need to think new, know new, and act new. It is doubtful that we can dominate and direct the forces of change for the better if we merely rely upon old methods, old values and old priorities.

Even Dr. Marland suggests that some people are not necessarily impressed with economic advantages implicit in work. Those young people who march to a drum beat different from the economic rhythm of their fathers often possess a deep commitment to the service of their fellow man. They, too, are the concern of career education for the essential message of this program — the useful and fulfilling life. They will be better able to serve their fellow man if qualified as skilled artisans, health technicians, accountants, social work aides, environmental technicians, to mention a few fields of usefulness and fulfillment. The essential need is that every student be equipped to live
his life as a fulfilled human being. Robert Frost has expressed it well in his poem TWO TRAMPS IN MUDTIME: "But yield who will to their separation; my object in living is to unite my avocation and my vocation as my two eyes make one in sight; only where love and need are one and the workers play for mortal stakes is a deed ever really done for heaven and the future's sake."

Grant Venn has suggested that we have learned that simply providing a man with job skills is not enough; we must accept that belief that a responsibility education is to help young people and old as well to find a meaningful role in society in which they can make increasing contributions and accept increasing responsibilities.

Career education must be concerned with the problems of our times such as the decay of cities, the pollution of our environment, the disrespect for law and order, and the imposing prospect of more federal controls. This is where it seems to me that academic or liberal subjects relate to the world of work. It is in the study of these subjects that career education can come to grips with the problem of our times. As we look into the future for our programs, our community colleges must tune in the shifting job opportunities evolving as a direct result of changing focus in the energy field. Our community colleges must continue to stress environmental career education and pollution control with assorted types of ecological programs.

If we can continue to glorify work as well as recognizing the dignity of every human being then our community colleges can offer a great deal to the success of career education. Without these -- without the recognition of the importance of work and the dignity of man, then career education in our community colleges will most surely fail. Career education must depend upon relating academic subjects to the world of work, else how can we solve our problems? Again, that is why we feel it is necessary to have one third of the courses
offered in an occupational program in community colleges and general education or in liberal education. It is here where such remedial and developmental programs, early admission policies, establishment and development of specialized missions can best grow. It is here that we can keep the flexibility that we have in the length of our programs and courses and our enrollment dates in order to solve these problems. If career education in our community colleges follows these things so carefully taught by the academicians, then I am sure it will be successful.