

# The Benefits of Community Colleges

With globalization, our economy is changing, and our need for an educated workforce is increasing. The fastest-growing and best-paying jobs are those that require at least some college. Today, nearly six in 10 jobs are held by workers with at least some postsecondary education or training.<sup>1</sup> Jobs that require postsecondary education account for 42 percent of projected new job growth from 2000 to 2010.<sup>2</sup>

We rely on community colleges to help prepare these workers. Community colleges are the places where *everyone* gets educational opportunity. Community colleges also must be the places where *everyone* can find *educational success*. If students aren't well served by their community colleges, many of them won't have other opportunities for education — and are more likely to be a drain on society rather than contribute to it.

When community colleges serve their students well, their students succeed and the nation thrives.

### Community colleges benefit individuals

- Higher levels of education lead to higher earnings for all racial and ethnic groups and for both men and women. People with associate degrees generally earn 20 to 30 percent more than people with only high school diplomas.<sup>3</sup>

- Higher education brings all of the benefits that higher income brings, including health care, better opportunities for the next generation and more leisure time.
- College graduates have lower incarceration rates than individuals who have not graduated from college.

### Community colleges benefit communities, states and the nation

- Each taxpayer dollar invested in a community college yields \$3 in benefits in regional economic development and growth that lead to increased state and local tax receipts.<sup>4</sup>
- A community college education also leads to improved lifestyles, including lower poverty rates, reduced crime and incarceration rates, improved health habits, reduced unemployment, and reduced dependence on welfare and other social safety-net programs. The result is a decreased demand on public budgets — and a 17 percent return on investment to state and local governments.<sup>5</sup>
- Increasing a state's or country's average level of schooling by one year can increase economic growth by 5 to 15 percent.<sup>6</sup>
- Higher levels of education correlate positively with higher levels of civic participation, including community service, voting and charitable giving.

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1. Carnevale, Anthony P., and Desrochers, Donna M. (July 2004). "Why Learning? The Value of Higher Education to Society and the Individual," *Keeping America's Promise*, p. 39. Education Commission of the States and the League for Innovation in the Community College.

2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000–2010 Employment Projections.

3. Bailey, T., Kienzl, G., and Marcotte, D. (August 2004). "Who Benefits from Postsecondary Occupational Education?" Findings from the 1980s and 1990s

(CCRC Brief No. 23). New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

4. Association of Community College Trustees, press release, September 18, 2003.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Carnevale and Desrochers, *op. cit.*, p. 39.