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E&I Cooperative Services
Leading your institutions into the future

Former prime minister of the United Kingdom Margaret Thatcher once wisely stated, “New technology is... the indispensable ally of progress and the surest guarantee of prosperity.” These omniscient words remain true today; if modern community colleges seek to progress and prosper, it is our duty to our students to not only embrace technology, but provide an exceptional experience with regards to connectivity and innovation on our campuses.

Technology is intertwined in almost every facet of education. During the 20th century, amenities such as electricity and air conditioning became expected constants and not luxuries. Similarly, students no longer consider PowerPoint, Wi-Fi and learning management systems (LMS) to be special technology, it is simply the platform upon which education is delivered. Students assume that those basic technologies work, and those basic technologies are only noticed when they do not work, similar to air conditioning or electricity.

Because of the marriage between technology and education, dramatic improvements in effectiveness and efficiency can only be realized when colleges move beyond the maintenance of expected technology and toward the next big disruptive innovation in the field.

To hold this position and serve its students, the two-year institution must develop strategies that command success in all facets of institutional technology integration. At a minimum, those strategies must fortify the underlying structures supporting technology, such as networks and devices; adopt a strategic goal of entrepreneurial adoption of technology when seeking out new applications and modifying processes; provide the student body a foundation in technology through core curricula and applied methods; and progressively drive outside partnerships to resource all technology endeavors.

By way of example, when Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College was developing its current strategic plan, we put a lot of thought into predicting the needs of our students and our communities over a decade. What we discovered was that technology was becoming an ever larger, more important factor to meeting the needs of our stakeholders over time. We also realized that our outdated IT infrastructure could not effectively meet those needs.

After research and review, we decided to transition our internal technology division to a third-party company with an expertise in educational technology. Our new partner was interested in discovering "how can we make innovation happen" vs. "why can’t make things happen," as our previous department had done. This was a major change in our technology efforts. With a knowledgeable partner in technology, we can now look to the future knowing we will be well-equipped to educate our students.

As you continue to lead your institutions into the future, I encourage you to look critically at your current processes and make sure your efforts in technology are aligned with your institutional mission. We have a great resource in the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) allowing us to connect with sister institutions to discover best practices in technology. Together, our institutions are able to remain at the cutting edge of education and provide our students with the tools they need to progress and prosper in all of their endeavors. (Contributions by MGCCC Executive Council)

Mary S. Graham is president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and chair of the AACC Board of Directors.
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Joint AACC-ACCT FY 2018 Funding Request

AACC and the Association of Community College Trustees sent a joint letter to congressional committee leaders requesting their continued funding support for key community college federal programs. Read the letter: http://bit.ly/2vlj8QE

AACC ONLINE THIS MONTH

- Using 3-D printers for a good cause.
- Not your typical day at the zoo.
- Finding skilled workers for 6 million available jobs.

- Helping refugee youth gain skills for the workforce.
- Connecting STEM students with industry partners.
- VFA helps colleges account for all students.
One of President Donald Trump’s touts priorities is to get more Americans in high-paying jobs. He signed an executive order in mid-June that would expand apprenticeship programs, which allow people to earn money while they learn a skill.

“In today’s rapidly changing economy, it is more important than ever to prepare workers to fill both existing and newly created jobs and to prepare workers for the jobs of the future,” the executive order says.

The order calls to nearly double the $95 million in federal funding for apprenticeship programs by tapping existing job-training funds.

In the U.S., there are currently about 500,000 apprenticeship positions. The president aims to create 5 million new apprenticeships over five years.

Trump, his daughter Ivanka, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta visited Wisconsin’s Waukesha County Technical College prior to signing the order. They toured the college and visited an apprenticeship program.

“Programs like this are critical to bridging our nation’s skill gap and to ensuring that there is a great and ready talent pool to meet the in-demand jobs that are currently available and continue to come online,” Ivanka Trump said during a roundtable at the college.

THIRD-PARTY ROLE
The executive order eases federal restrictions that some proponents say have prevented businesses from creating more apprenticeship programs. Proposed regulations would allow third-party organizations—including trade and industry organizations, companies, unions and others—to develop apprenticeships, outside of the registered apprenticeship system. The new regulations would govern how these groups would recognize and oversee industry-recognized apprenticeships.

“So we’re empowering these companies, these unions, industry groups, federal agencies to go out and create new apprenticeships for millions of our citizens,” Trump said in remarks at the White House.

The order also calls on the Education Department (ED) to support two- and four-year colleges and universities in their efforts to incorporate apprenticeship programs into courses of study.

ED and other departments, such as Labor and Defense, also will help to promote apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs to high school students, veterans and incarcerated individuals, among others.

EXAMINING WORKFORCE PROGRAMS
In addition to expanding apprenticeships, the Trump administration wants to examine current workforce development programs.

Under Trump’s proposed budget for next year, Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs would receive about $949.5 million—$166 million less than under current funding. The budget also proposes a cut of 39 percent, or $1.3 billion, for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) job training and employment services formula programs.

In addition, adult education states grants would be cut by about $95 million, to $485 million.

However, Congress has its own plans. In July, the House Appropriations Committee passed a funding bill that would retain current spending levels for Perkins CTE programs. The Senate has yet to tackle appropriations.

At AACC’s Advocates in Action meeting in June, Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-Alabama), who serves on the House Education and the Workforce Committee and is a former chancellor of the Alabama Community College System, said CTE programs are proven to work, but current funding for the programs is not enough.

Byrne said he supports trimming federal spending, but it should be done with purpose.

“Let’s use a scalpel and not a butcher knife,” he said.
Imagine this scenario: Three years ago, you started in a leadership position at a large multi-campus community college recently placed on probation by its accrediting agency. You have several issues to address, but there’s a central challenge. In the last 10 years, there has not been a comprehensive review of the mission and you have no key performance indicators through which you can monitor progress on institutional priorities.

While you have a strategic plan, it is not data-informed and lacks structures for accountability. Further, while the strategic plan sets relatively high-level goals, there’s no operational planning process to support success. And for data? Reports run against your operational database and you are lagging behind best practices in business intelligence. You participate in national benchmarking efforts such as the American Association of Community Colleges’ Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, but those data are not embedded into college effectiveness systems. What do you do?

This was the challenge facing Arizona’s Pima Community College in 2014. We needed to carry out a comprehensive review of the mission, establish meaningful mission key performance indicators (KPIs), establish a strategic and operational planning process, use national benchmarking data to drive improvement, and update data and analytic approaches to meet leading practices in the country. Today, we have completed these items, and our mission and planning landscape looks very different.

ENGAGING EVERYONE
As a college emerging from a challenging period, aligning institutional efforts with the mission of the college was a critical first step. Therefore, starting in summer 2014, we embarked on a comprehensive review of the mission. We took multiple steps to ensure engagement of internal and external stakeholders. The process included multiple open discussions across each major college site, public events to gather input from the community and review and approval by our governing board. It was a long and detailed process. There were challenges along the way and setbacks were encountered. Ultimately, however, the process yielded a comprehensively reviewed mission fulfillment framework that included KPIs from both national systems and local measures.

At the same time, we initiated two other key activities. Pima established an operational effectiveness and planning process, use national benchmarking data to drive improvement, and update data and analytic approaches to meet leading practices in the country. Today, we have completed these items, and our mission and planning landscape looks very different.

Incorporating success measures everywhere
by Nicola C. Richmond
Within the business intelligence initiative, using an external consultant enabled the college to progress to a fully functioning student success warehouse, including interactive reports providing enrollment and outcomes data accessible through a secure report platform, all within 18 months. A central focus in the warehouse development was the VFA metrics. Through the interactive reports, different academic divisions can drill down into the VFA data from the overarching mission level to metrics by program. This ensures the mission KPIs are meaningful, relate to individual programs, and are easily accessible to all employees.

MOVING FORWARD
With these steps complete, the college was ready in fall 2016 to embark on a comprehensive strategic planning process, using the Society of College and University Planning’s planning model. Pima convened a team of internal and external stakeholders, which through the year reviewed background documents, including a competitor analysis and environmental scan. Perhaps most importantly, they reviewed the new mission KPIs and compared the college’s performance to other institutions, where possible.

Informed by input from the community, the planning team finalized three overarching strategic directions with associated measurable goals with embedded targets. Where benchmark data were available, we established goals to reach national averages and, as an optimal goal, reach the performance level of the top 10 percent of colleges. For example, within Strategic Direction 1: Improve Student Success is the goal to “identify the barriers that prevent students from continuing semester-to-semester and implement strategies to support student progress.” In terms of numbers, our goal was to increase fall-to-next-term retention from 62.7 percent for the fall 2013 VFA main cohort to 69 percent for fall 2020. These data are included in our warehouse, so each academic program can see what its current performance is on the metric.

Pima’s journey to become a data-informed institution, where a focus on the mission drives strategic and operational planning, is in many respects still just beginning. Over three years, we have successfully undergone significant changes to establish this new direction. Careful analysis and a focus on the purpose and future of the college has helped realign the institution. Now, we are well placed to move into the future.

Nicola C. Richmond is assistant vice chancellor of institutional research, planning and effectiveness at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona.

Wallace State Community College announces the following open position: DEAN OF STUDENTS

DESCRIPTION: The Dean of Students is the chief student affairs officer of the college, reporting directly to the President. The Dean of Students is responsible for planning, implementing, administering, and evaluating a comprehensive program of student affairs including admissions and records, financial aid, academic advising, enrollment management, disability compliance, career services, testing services, academic support services, Talent Search, Student Support Services, judicial affairs, recruitment, and student activities.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS: Required minimum qualifications for the Dean of Students are:
1. Master’s required, doctorate preferred in Student Personnel Services, Administration of Higher Education or related field from a regionally accredited institution
2. Five years progressively responsible administrative experience in the community or technical college or other higher education setting
3. Commitment to the community college teaching and learning process, mission, and open door
4. Excellent oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills
5. Demonstrated evidence of innovative practices
6. Proficient in the use of technology such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Internet and Banner or other administrative software

SALARY: Appropriate placement on State Salary Schedule B ($85,794-$118,483) of the Alabama Community College System Salary Schedule

APPLICATION PROCEDURE: A complete application packet must be received in the Human Resources Office no later than 1 p.m., Friday, June 23, 2017.
A complete application packet consists of:
- Completed Wallace State Community College employment application with three work references
- Résumé
- Cover letter describing specifically how your experience and qualifications meet the qualifications outlined for the position
- Letter(s) from current and/or former employers, verifying employment experience to meet minimum required qualifications. Letter(s) must include employment dates and job title and be on official letterhead with an authorized personnel signature
- Separate transcripts from each college attended (photocopies will suffice until employed)

Remember that the work experience verification completion is your responsibility and must be demonstrated by you in your application materials.
Using technology to carry out our mission

By John T. Dever

Thomas Nelson Community College (Virginia) is proud to have been recognized by the Center for Digital Education as the first-place awardee in the large college category for the 2016-2017 Digital Community Colleges Survey. Key to earning this recognition is not only the successful implementation of a number of digital applications, but also the way in which we have intentionally used these applications to advance our strategic goals for improving the overall success of our students and enhancing the college’s capacity for excellence. We’re successful, in part, because of the strong communication and collaboration that occurs on a daily basis between our dedicated information technology staff and the students, faculty and staff who use the tools that the IT unit delivers and supports.

Fostering systematic feedback from end users is essential if technologies are going to be truly embraced for enhancing the overall collegiate experience and the core activities of teaching and learning. Equally important on the part of the technology team is responding to identified issues, as well as communicating back to the stakeholders the corrective actions taken. We have learned that when the team pays close attention to relatively minor inconveniences that invariably occur (e.g., a spot on campus where Wi-Fi is not working or inconsistencies in logging on to computers in different classrooms), the college community is more likely to be enthusiastic and supportive of major technological initiatives.

ALWAYS LISTENING

In line with this, the Student Experience Survey that we administer online each year has a series of questions about students’ preferred means for receiving college information and their satisfaction with various technology resources. The results, both the quantitative ratings and the comments, are reviewed carefully by the IT staff and the college administration. They’re taken into account during the annual planning process, where expected outcomes for the coming year are set for continuous improvement at both the unit and college-wide levels.

More anecdotal feedback comes to our attention through presidential forums held with students each semester. Reports on progress about items of concern or new technology initiatives are shared monthly through the online Student Navigator newsletter.

On the instructional side, faculty leadership let us know several years ago that they were not always sure that their concerns and ideas were being heard. That told us we needed to do more than just rely on the work of our governance committees for technology and distance education. As a result, the director of information technology began meeting directly with faculty and deans on their home turf in division meetings, listening attentively and providing written responses about follow-up actions taken.

Also, when a specific need is identified for IT support, subject-matter experts are available to interact directly with the faculty. They answer questions, provide clarification, participate in open discussions and simply listen to ideas. The faculty’s satisfaction with instructional technology is now much better. Likewise with staff, when new applications are introduced, there is not just training but genuine consultation between IT and end users about how the products can best be used to improve college processes.

TECHNOLOGY FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

In seeking to provide strong support for students—from the moment of initial interest or inquiry, through admissions, orientation, progression and program completion, and finally transfer to universities or entry into employment and careers—Thomas Nelson has successfully implemented a number of technological applications. These include a Customer Relations Management (CRM) program that allows us to maintain systematic contact with prospective students before they are entered into our student information system.

To help with onboarding and academic advising that streamlines the enrollment process and creates personalized pathways in alignment with students’ goals—processes that students repeatedly told us needed improvement—we piloted a well-received application for an integrated planning and advising for student success (iPASS) process.

To keep abreast of individual student performance and any needed interventions, the college implemented an early alert application. It’s been heavily used by faculty because they know there will be prompt follow-up by student services staff for those needing attention. To much student acclaim, we have automated processes for applying for scholarships and graduation. We continue to revise the website and mobile environments to improve communication and “nudge” students to complete necessary actions related to enrollment, financial aid and payment. Behind-the-scenes work in analytics is helping us produce an enhanced schedule of classes that responds to student demand and supports program completion.

Technology has been an enabler for Thomas Nelson to carry out its mission and achieve its strategic goals. By working in a genuinely collegial way across functional lines, the college community has discovered the true power and significant progress that comes with effective use of digital platforms that promote and empower student success.

John T. Dever is president of Thomas Nelson Community College in Hampton, Virginia.
It's an all too common decision for some students at the beginning of each semester: whether to buy expensive textbooks or pay their rent. According to the College Board, the annual cost for books and supplies makes up nearly a third of the expense of attending a community college. This is a significant barrier to entry for many would-be students and also a reason some students don't finish or take longer to complete their degrees. Using open educational resources (OER)—free, openly licensed materials that can be adapted as needed—is one way to lessen that burden.

Last year, Achieving the Dream (ATD) launched its Open Educational Resources Degree Initiative, which aims to expand the use of OER in community colleges across the country. The $9.8-million program provides grants to 38 colleges in 13 states—the largest OER initiative to date. By the end of the three-year grant period, the initiative is expected to make more than 50 OER degree programs available to 76,000 students.

"It's really trying to make education equitable to students," says Richard Sebastian, director of the initiative at ATD. "One of the goals is to build that foundation of enough vetted, high-quality courses to lower the bar for other community colleges to adopt them." The initiative is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, the Shelter Hill Foundation and the Speedwell Foundation.

A study of the initiative, released in June, found that 84 percent of faculty surveyed said their students were as engaged or more engaged in their OER courses as compared to courses taught with traditional materials. Early research shows students are saving an average of $134 per course at the colleges participating in the initiative.

Bay College in Escanaba, Michigan, is using the grant to expand upon the OER work it had already started. Since the fall 2015 semester, the college estimates that it's saved students more than $200,000 in textbook costs.

"It's really been a team effort throughout the whole campus," says Joseph Mold, director of online learning and instructional design. The college held a Free the Textbooks rally, where students learned about OER, found out which courses were available, and discussed their experiences with paying for textbooks.

Bay College is focusing its grant work on an associate in arts OER degree, which will be complete...
in July, and will have several classes that can be applied to a business degree. They had hoped to expand into other degrees, but found that there isn’t much OER material available yet in some fields, such as robotics. “As time goes on and more people contribute to the open initiative, there’s going to be more and more resources out there. And this grant is really helping with that,” Mold says. “The faculty are inspired about re-creating their content and reenergizing it. OERs give them an excellent opportunity to put their voice into their content.”

The faculty at Santa Ana College in Santa Ana, California, has been using OER since 2011. “We started working on OER in little bits,” distance education coordinator Cherylee Kushida says. “The idea was for it to spread to other sections.” They moved from that seedling approach to pointedly asking faculty in specific disciplines if they would develop or adopt OER in order to affect the most students. The college even has a librarian who specializes in helping faculty find OER materials for their courses.

Santa Ana has developed two OER degrees as part of the ATD initiative: business administration for transfer and a liberal arts associate in arts degree. They are laid out in a pathway format so that students can graduate in two years. Twenty-seven courses for these degrees will be offered starting this fall.

Often faculty see students drop out of their classes at the point in the semester when the textbook is required, Kushida says. Faculty want to make sure that all students can have their materials on day one. “They don’t want their students to drop because they couldn’t afford the textbook,” she says.

Clinton Community College in Plattsburgh, New York, will offer its first OER courses under the grant this fall. It’s focusing the work one semester at a time so that an entire OER degree—health services management—will be in place by the end of 2019.

“We’re probably the smallest college out of the 38 colleges involved in the grant across the country, so the grant will have a huge impact on our campus,” says Vicky Sloan, online learning coordinator at Clinton. “We live in a rural area and about 80-85 percent of our students are eligible for federal financial aid. We watch them all the time struggle to get the textbooks.”

As one of five State University of New York consortium colleges to receive the grant, Clinton is working with the other colleges regularly. Monroe Community College hosts biweekly meetings where the grant leads from each campus get together to discuss progress. They share their materials as courses are completed, as well as professional development opportunities for faculty who are just getting started with OER.

The grant requires that courses use open license materials that can be, revised and redistributed freely. These guidelines ensure that all courses created under this initiative can be used by other institutions in the future, helping to expand the availability of OER materials long-term. “The faculty who are working on the ATD grant have to be sure that they are Creative Commons-licensed so that any part of their course can be used by anybody else in the world. So that’s a challenge,” Sloan says. “We’re working really hard to meet their guidelines.”

The June study acknowledged the faculty commitment required for the initiative to work. Of the faculty surveyed, 63 percent said that creating a course with OER takes one-and-a-half times as long to develop as a course with traditional materials. Clinton started its OER work two years ago with a much smaller grant, but the ATD grant has greatly expanded it. “Like many new initiatives, you start with early adopters who are eager to do something new. You want to get those faculty members with their energy and enthusiasm onboard first, then they bring the others in. Then you can start thinking about whole degrees,” Sloan says. “Achieving the Dream has just made this so possible. This is the direction we need to go, and they recognize that. This is the best way to get the whole thing started across the country.”

Emily Shenk Flory is a writer based in Washington, D.C.
Read the magazine from **where you are** and share content with your board and staff.

The digital magazine can be found here: [www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/CCJ/Pages/digitaljournal.aspx](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/CCJ/Pages/digitaljournal.aspx)

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Q&A with Ralph Nader

Ralph Nader has dedicated his life to activism and advocacy and is known for his involvement in consumer protection, environmentalism, and government reform causes. He founded several organizations, including the Center for Study of Responsive Law, the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), the Center for Auto Safety, Public Citizen, Clean Water Action Project, the Disability Rights Center, the Pension Rights Center and the Project for Corporate Responsibility.

In a discussion with Community College Journal, Nader discusses the need for civic engagement on community college campuses. He also talks about his brother Shaf Nader’s struggle to start Northwestern Connecticut Community College. The story is told in the book Democratizing America: Shaf Nader and the Founding of the Impossible College.

CC Journal The 2017 book Democratizing America talks about your brother’s work starting Northwestern Connecticut Community College. Why did he take on that responsibility?

Ralph Nader Winsted was a multiple factory town that was losing almost all its factories. He believed community involvement would turn his hometown around. A community college was the most constructive response, though, to reviving the town both in an economic sense—worker skills—and in a democratic sense—enabling civic skills and experience through a well-rounded curriculum helpful to Winsted and the surrounding region of small towns.

CCJ Eventually, the community rallied behind the creation of the college. How did Shaf help end their resistance and get their support?

Nader How he overcame the town’s self-deprecation, its lack of self-confidence and its collective depression—following a devastatingly destructive flood in 1955, and most young people leaving for the “big city,” could become a course in leadership training for students today.

He started with extensive research, building relentless optimism. He found a small, committed core of like-minded believers, enlisted the local media, business community, especially the local Jaycees, and methodically outlined all the steps needed, local and state, to establish this institution. It helped mightily that the building housing the Gilbert High School was available for a campus after a new high school was built on the other side of town.

CCJ What can current college and community leaders learn from your brother’s experience?

Nader That a great deal of creative energy and political support can spring from tapping into local initiatives and local knowledge to strengthen the community college’s foundations, especially in an era of budget cuts, as is the case in Connecticut today.

That it is imperative to continue dreaming about the many ways the community college can educate students for the practice of democracy and the way it can anticipate and better resolve societal problems.

That in the words of author Dimitra Doukas, they “can never know too well that disappointment is part of the journey—not a roadblock.”
In your opinion, how have college campuses changed since the opening of Northwestern Connecticut Community College?

Nader College campuses have changed since 1965. They are more open to minorities and women. There are more community colleges for students to attend without long travel time. However, there are far more distractions for students, limiting meeting and doing more together in person, including the ever-present cell phone and text-messaging. There are more course offerings. But low graduation rates persist.

But the intervening decades generally have not worked to reduce the “town/gown” gaps, especially in the civic sphere where knowledge nourishes action.

Beyond academics, what do you see as the role of community colleges?

Nader In an era of community breakdowns—signaled by too few people showing up at town meetings, at the polls or running for or monitoring their own governments—the community college is a natural institution to reverse this slide. It can provide a critical convocation function regarding recurring injustices or inadequate services. It can publicize best practices from other colleges and communities for local governments and the citizenry. It can contribute to community well-being with its students learning by doing under faculty supervision.

As this book describes, that was a key role my brother, Shaf, envisioned and he saw it as a constant work in progress inviting many minds, backgrounds, experiences and enthusiasms. Importantly, he saw critical civil motivation as an attitude that could be developed through experiential learning.

How can community colleges better incorporate civic engagement and service learning into their curricula?

Nader This is my favorite subject whenever I speak at community colleges around the country or to conferences of community college students.

First, the administration and its board of trustees must establish clearly the dual purpose of community colleges to be vocational training and civic training. This balanced education provides students with a greater chance for both making a better living and assuming their civic responsibilities, so crucial to a just, democratic society. Not knowing about the history of institution-building arising from struggles for a just society leaves a hollowness in their education that spells powerlessness. This gap will harm them in the years ahead as evidenced by today’s plight of so many Americans suffering from a weakening democratic society.

Second, the dual policy leads to a required first-year orientation about basic citizen skills and engagements. For example, all students should learn the simple task of using the state and federal freedom of information acts. Information is the currency of democracy.

Third, civic advocacy should be a major. The nonprofit/civil society sector is enormous and provides millions of jobs in the areas of charitable and justice activities. Tens of thousands of civic organizations would welcome students who have been taught and have experienced civic advocacy. Isn’t that type of practical experience what community colleges sometimes offer their business majors?

Fourth, existing courses can include civic skills. For example, in their chemistry, physics
and biology labs, students could learn how to test the local drinking water, soil samplings and other evaluations leading to online public reports that benefit the community. The lead calamity in Flint, Michigan, could have been flagged earlier under this kind of functional education.

Within social science courses, congressional lawmakers could have their real-time performance analyzed for the benefit of the students’ civic maturity and that of the citizenry. Call it Congress 101—a recurring report to the people. Similar evaluations could be made of important executive branch agencies at the local or state levels. Traditional course work can be greatly enriched, at little or no cost, with experiential learning that makes these students wiser consumers, and more knowledgeable about their roles as stronger workers, taxpayers and voters.

Our casebook, Civics for Democracy: A Journey for Teachers and Students (1992), demonstrates that there is no incompatibility between this knowledge and traditional pedagogy. My urgings regarding dual purpose were well received at community colleges, but bureaucratic rigidities prevailed. My brother’s belief as a small businessman was that such knowledge is a seamless web and that a good democracy and good economy go hand in hand.

The western campus of Cuyahoga Community College in Ohio did adopt this course for civic skills. The instructor was the prime mover. He motivated greatly the students and took them on a field trip to Washington. Alas, the course lapsed when the teacher left to take another position.

As Democratizing America narrates, Shaf Nader, while serving in the late 1960s as the American Association of Junior Colleges’ associate director of developing institutions, envisioned broad extensions of community colleges, including evening adult civic education courses and using new technology with old democratic values. He saw the college as both a stabilizing presence and a source of self-renewal for the community, including constant feedback between the two arenas. He wanted more of these colleges to have their own media—then radio, television and cable stations.

He even foresaw the internet’s possibilities and broadband access being a public utility linked to every home like the telephone and electric circuits. All these and other innovations he knew required far-seeing planning by college leaders, faculty and outstanding students. He wanted them to insist on academic freedom from any pressing interests compromising the best of education.

A confident community college contributes to a receptive community and receives benefits and support in return. Such an educational climate brings out the best from more people as forthright conversations replace self-censorship.

Shaf Nader practiced what he preached and for that the larger community in northwest Connecticut continues to receive the benefits of an expanding campus. Northwestern Connecticut Community College is rated number one among that state’s community colleges. Another example in American history of how one visionary person can make a lasting practical difference.

Democratizing America is available at www.interlinkbooks.com. Frank Mensel of the Education Policy Center at the University of Alabama Tuscaloosa says, "The book is prime reading for every community college professional and every graduate student in higher education and a must for all pursuing community college careers."
Understanding the
INTERNET OF THINGS

The universe of networked devices is growing exponentially—and this trend has big implications for community colleges.

By Dennis Pierce

In managing the wide-area networks for 13 colleges in northeast Texas, Mickey Slimp has seen campus network usage rise sharply in recent years—and the biggest spike is yet to come.

“We’re seeing exponential growth in bandwidth demands at our institutions,” says Slimp, who is executive director of the Northeast Texas Consortium of Colleges and Universities. Students used to come to campus with a single Internet-connected device, he says. Now, they arrive with multiple devices that access the network, including laptops, cell phones and wearable devices such as FitBits.

In 2008, the average number of connected devices per student was 0.8, according to a Pearson survey. By 2020, Slimp estimates, each college student could arrive on campus with at least four—and perhaps as many as eight—networked devices.
It’s not just student devices that are putting a strain on campus networks. A growing number of security cameras, door locks, light switches, thermostats and other building components contain networked sensors that allow campus administrators to control and monitor their functions remotely. And the number of networked devices will continue to explode in the coming years.

The universe of objects containing microprocessors or embedded sensors capable of communicating and transmitting information across networks is called the Internet of Things, and it has enormous implications for community colleges. Already, many colleges are saving time and money by monitoring and controlling “smart building” features online, and the Internet of Things is shaping the curriculum at community colleges as well.

But there is a downside to this burgeoning technology trend. For instance, campus leaders will have to consider its impact on student and data privacy, as well as network security. Then, too, there’s the issue of bandwidth.

Adding connectivity to everyday objects “really taxes the network capacity of colleges,” Slimp says, “and it’s only going to grow from here.”

**20 BILLION DEVICES**

Technology analyst Gartner estimates that 8.4 billion connected devices will be in use worldwide by the end of the year, up 31 percent from just a year ago. The company expects that figure to exceed 20 billion in the year 2020.

The New Media Consortium follows technology trends that are likely to affect colleges. The organization’s 2017 Horizon Report pegged the Internet of Things as a significant development that will have a big impact on higher education in the next two to three years. Already, 51 percent of community colleges say they are actively considering the potential of the Internet of Things in their strategic planning, the Center for Digital Education says—up nine percentage points from the prior year.

Besides smart building and security systems, here are some other applications of the Internet of Things that exist today or are in development, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project:

- Devices that monitor patients’ vital signs or other biomedical information in real time and provide this information to medical providers.
- Sensors in parking lots and on street curbs that provide real-time information to commuters about the location of available parking spaces.
- Roadways, bridges and other pieces of infrastructure that give regular readings on the state of wear and tear and provide alerts when repairs are needed.
- Paper towel dispensers in restrooms that signal when they need to be refilled. Trash cans that signal when they need to be emptied.

“Securing the growing number of networked devices on campus is going to be a constant challenge.”

ROY BARTELS, chief technology and information security officer, Western Texas College
The Internet of Things could help simplify campus and facilities management. “The quality of real-time information that becomes available will take the guesswork out of much of capacity planning and decision-making,” J.P. Rangaswami, chief scientist for Salesforce.com, predicts in a Pew survey. The net effect will be to reduce waste and improve efficiency in the movement of people and goods.

However, the technology also creates new challenges for campus leaders. “Our notions of privacy and sharing will continue to evolve as a result,” Pew notes, “with new tradeoffs needing to be understood and dealt with.”

PRIVACY AND SECURITY
Community college leaders will have to consider the privacy implications of all of this data sharing.

For instance: Who “owns” the data generated by networked sensors? How will this information be stored so that it remains secure? What are the expectations for privacy among students, staff, patients, and others whose movements or performance may be tracked and monitored? Will campus leaders have to draft new policies to fill gaps where laws such as FERPA and HIPAA now fall short?

Adding more networked devices also gives hackers more opportunities to infiltrate campus networks.

Recently, so-called Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks have begun targeting the Internet of Things. These attacks involve using a network of computers to overwhelm a website or server with so many messages that it can’t handle the load and is incapacitated.

In the past, DDoS attacks were accomplished by hijacking computers with malicious software and turning them into a robot network, or botnet, to send the messages. Now, there is software available on the Deep Web that compromises Internet-connected devices that people typically don’t think of as computers, such as networked security cameras, and uses them as botnets instead.

“There are a large number of people in the world whose main goal is to upset everybody else,” says Roy Bartels, chief technology and information security officer for Western Texas College, who has presented with Slimp about the Internet of Things and its implications for colleges. “Securing the growing number of networked devices on campus is going to be a constant challenge.”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTRUCTION
But where there’s a challenge, “there’s also a workforce development opportunity for colleges,” Slimp says.

Because other organizations will face the same challenges, there will be a growing need for network and information security specialists, he noted. Community colleges also will play a key role in training students for new jobs created by the Internet of Things, such as designers of wearable technology or grid modernization engineers.

Some colleges already have developed new programs to meet these workforce demands. For instance, Springfield Technical Community College in Massachusetts has added courses and labs in its electronic systems engineering technology program that teach students how to program and connect sensors to send data across wired and wireless data networks.
THE TOP NINE INTERNET OF THINGS APPLICATIONS, BY MARKET

IoT Analytics, which provides market insights about the Internet of Things, has compiled a list of the top applications of IoT technologies, based on an analysis of 640 actual enterprise projects around the globe. (The company did not include consumer applications of the technology, such as wearable devices.) The percentages indicate the global share of IoT projects currently under way:

Connected industry: 22%
Smart city: 20%
Smart energy: 13%
Connected car: 13%
Smart agriculture: 6%
Connected building: 5%
Connected health: 5%
Smart retail: 4%
Smart supply chain: 4%

Connected industry covers a wide range of networked machinery and equipment, mostly for asset control. For example, German food producer Seeberger knows exactly where specific goods are at any stage of the production process, thanks to its smart manufacturing process, IoT Analytics says—allowing for complete food traceability.

Smart city spans a variety of use cases, from traffic management and water distribution to waste management, security, and environmental monitoring. These technologies aim to solve problems such as congestion, noise, crime, and pollution.

Smart energy involves developing “smart grid” solutions that use information about the behaviors of electricity suppliers and consumers to improve energy efficiency and reliability.

Connected car includes vehicle diagnostics and monitoring capabilities, as well as solutions for fleet management.

Smart agriculture. Sensors placed in fields allow farmers to determine variables such as acidity and soil temperature, Business Insider reports. Farmers also can remotely monitor equipment and livestock—and drones help them survey their lands and generate crop data.

Connected buildings includes solutions for monitoring and controlling temperature, lighting, security, and other building infrastructure.

Connected health includes devices for monitoring patients’ health in real time.

Smart retail includes solutions that help companies understand their customers’ buying habits and market to consumers more effectively, such as through proximity-based advertising.

Smart supply chain involves solutions for tracking goods while they are on the road, or helping suppliers exchange inventory information.

(Source: IoT Analytics, 2016)
Campus leaders also should bolster the security of their networks and wireless devices. Networks should be segmented so that critical student and financial information cannot be accessed if a smart device is hacked. IT staff should reconfigure passwords on smart devices instead of relying on factory or default settings—and they should build redundancy into their networks. “This is almost a necessity now,” Slimp says.

Of course, network and security enhancements will require a significant financial investment—and campus leaders may have to be creative in supporting them. One way to approach this challenge is to “band together into consortium agreements with other colleges for better buying power,” Bartels says. That’s what the 13 colleges in the Northeast Texas Consortium have done, including sites such as Angelina College, Northeast Texas Community College, Panola College, Paris Junior College, Texarkana College, Tyler Junior College and more.

“We’re trying to make our students as competitive and valuable in the workplace as we can.”

CAROL SPALDING, president, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

Among large community colleges, Rowan-Cabarrus was named the fourth most digital in the nation by the Center for Digital Education this year. The college has made significant investments in its network over the last several years, Spalding says. To afford these improvements, it has raised more than $1 million from various foundations and has added a modest technology fee of $25 per student, per semester. Campus leaders also look for ways to save money in other areas, so they can invest more in their network infrastructure.

Spalding, who is on the board of directors for the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges, urges college leaders to become familiar with the Internet of Things and its many possibilities. Learning about emerging technologies “should be part of a president’s portfolio,” she says—and resources such as the ITC can help.

“Presidents have to push their college to be prepared for emerging developments,” she concludes, “because community colleges are at the forefront of training the next generation of technicians and practitioners.”

Dennis Pierce is an education writer based in Boston.
As technology changes, when is it wise to adapt and adopt?

BY MADELINE PATTON
As technology changes, when is it wise to adapt and adopt?

BY MADELINE PATTON
n the age of ubiquitous and constantly evolving technologies, decisions about what to buy, when and how to deploy digital innovations work best when community colleges use systematic, team approaches.

The digital education leaders of Walters State Community College, Kirkwood Community College and Delta College offer insights about their colleges’ multi-faceted decision-making processes. They also share effective implementation practices.

WOVEN INTO THE GOVERNANCE PROCESS

Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, posts its IT strategic plan on its website with notations about the status of action items. The plan is updated every six months when Jon Neff, vice president of information technologies, reports to the college’s trustees and gains approval for the next six months. “They give great input,” Neff says.

The content of the strategic plan is shaped by faculty representatives of every academic department who serve on the Learning Technology Advisory Committee, chaired by a tenured faculty member, a resource users group that is a subset of the cabinet led by the chief financial officer, and students.

The technology department uses surveys and roundtable discussions with students to identify their unmet needs, nuances with the technologies and problems. When it comes to gathering feedback from various campus constituencies, Neff says, “a single method is typically not adequate enough.”

Delta College, located in University Center, Michigan, serves more than 13,000 students. Technology considerations are linked through the institution’s strategic plan, IT strategic plan and its budget cabinet, which filters requests for technology and equipment.

Delta’s formal governance structure includes an IT council with 22 members who represent key areas of the college. The council develops tactical plans, shapes policies and reports information back its constituencies.

“They just really do a great job of making sure that we’re getting the input we need from all the areas of the college,” says Barbara R. Webb, Delta’s director of business services. With a $100,000 threshold for expenditures that require board approval, Webb frequently interacts with the board regarding technology purchases.

TWO-WAY STREET

Joe Sargent, assistant vice president of information and educational technologies at Walters State Community College in Morristown, Tennessee, describes IT decisions primarily as a ‘two-way street’ between faculty and the IT department. Faculty make IT suggestions to deans who prioritize the purchase requests sent to the IT department. IT staffers also work directly with faculty who serve on pilot groups that test new software and hardware. More than once, recommendations from pilot groups have prompted the IT department to change purchase plans and to research other options.

“Our faculty are pretty astute and technology minded,” Sargent says. Years ago, there were times when the IT department was pulling the faculty along. Now, he says, it is often faculty members who are pushing the IT staffers to add a particular technology.

This yin-and-yang approach has helped the college keep its systems updated and avoiding problems. Recently, faculty requested a cloud-based technology for students to use to submit forms. It would have included financial aid documents. It had to be reworked when IT personnel discovered gaps in the product’s security for personal data. Similarly, the planned update of the college’s video conferencing system was placed on hold when none of the tested options performed better than the current equipment.

GROUND RULES FOR PILOT TESTS

While all three colleges work with vendors to test new technologies before buying, the duration of pilot tests vary among them.
Neff describes a two-month software trial at Kirkwood as "a great way to ease into software acquisition."

Several years ago, Walters State ran pilot versions of two Wi-Fi systems simultaneously, sending IT staff members into classrooms during classes and other campus locales, before selecting one that continues to provide 100-percent coverage on all its campuses.

At Delta, technology pilot tests last at least one academic year and can stretch to two years.

"Sometimes it takes a while to work the kinks out," Webb says. In general, she says, "We don’t like to be an early adopter. We like to wait until things have been debugged a little bit."

Given the frequency of product revisions, Webb says Delta’s project plans stipulate whether the college will adopt the upgraded product or the tested version.

Whatever the duration of a pilot test, Webb recommends setting explicit evaluation parameters before tests begin. Delta leaders have learned from experience that introducing an innovation, technological or otherwise as an open-ended pilot test to gain grassroots support is counterproductive, according to Webb.

"Before you start a pilot, declare how the pilot is going to be evaluated. What are the goals and objectives, and outcomes you are hoping to achieve through the pilot? And set a timeline for evaluation either for termination or to be converted into a permanent, ongoing initiative," Webb says.

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Kirkwood Community College’s IT staff members are proud of the algorithms they crafted for an online financial aid checklist. The checklist has resolved hurdles for students and staff, and seems to have contributed to enrollment increases.

Before the checklist was implemented six years ago, student services and financial aid staff members knew first-generation college students were struggling with financial aid applications. But, the college’s traditional method for dealing with financial aid applicants did not readily identify who needed help with the process. So everyone was stacked up waiting to speak with staff members even for basic inquiries like whether students could access their financial aid to buy books.

For some first-generation college students and others daunted by the financial aid process, this was the last straw; they gave up, says Jon Neff, vice president of information technologies at Kirkwood.

By working together, IT and financial aid personnel combined a process change with innovative technology to come up with the Financial Aid Checklist. The algorithms are so effective that the IT staffers who developed them made a presentation at a national tech conference and the software company modified its product to include them.

Items on Kirkwood’s 10-point checklist—such as FAFSA submitted, Stafford loan approved, promissory note signed—change from red to green as they are done.

Aside from providing a very visual and straightforward method for students to keep track of what they need to do, Neff says it has been “a great tool” for financial aid advisors when they answer students’ questions in-person or on the phone. The checklist also helps identify which students need help to complete their applications on time.

"That definitely was one [IT innovation] that was super high valuable for the students, in their ability to come here, and feel comfortable and confident," Neff says.
Sargent likens technologies and the impact they make to rivers: “As the river flows, it changes.” Campus Wi-Fi networks and the proliferation of smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers are an obvious example of this phenomenon.

Walters State built out its Wi-Fi network in 2011 and 2012 as part of its iPad initiative, the first by a two-year college in the region. The college hired an educational technologist who had been a secondary school teacher and IT corporate trainer. He served as “a bridge between IT and the faculty,” facilitating use of the tablet computers for instruction, and identifying when instructors were overreaching the technology and when they were underusing it. The carts with 30 iPads, which were moved from classroom to classroom, became so popular that academic deans purchased additional carts and tablets with their departmental funds.

With the success of the iPad initiative, Walters State’s IT staff became accustomed to adjusting the bandwidth to handle the digital load of instructional activities that changed from class to class, and semester to semester. IT staffers continue to check functionality by visiting classrooms, but now they are configuring to accommodate up to four digital devices per person—that is staff, faculty, students, and visitors.

The fact that so many students have access to personal computing devices 24/7 has prompted Kirkwood personnel to analyze the use of classroom and lab desktop computers before deciding to order replacement computers.

EDUCATING THE COLLEGES’ MANY CONSTITUENTS

Robust methods for educating colleges’ diverse constituencies about technologies is essential for smooth operations.

Kirkwood IT staff members teach new students how to load and use the college’s apps during mandatory orientation sessions. They’ve created tutorial videos on the college’s website and provide faculty and students with detailed instructions about the college’s online learning system. And, each semester the department publishes an e-newsletter focused on particular digital technologies and brief feature articles.

“Kirkwood is a community of people,” Neff says. Sharing information about staff members, providing cybersecurity tips and explaining technologies like the customer relationship management product help people feel connected and informed in ways that benefit the overall college operations.

This summer, Delta began using multiple instructional formats to help administrative support staff fulfill professional development requirements. For the technology track, the clerical employees can attend face-to-face group sessions, watch YouTube videos, read hand-outs that use screenshots and text or attend open workshops where IT personnel are available to answer questions or provide one-on-one instruction.

“It isn’t always about buying more software; sometimes you’ve got to kind of look at your own internal processes and kind of look at the people in the process,” Webb says.

Madeline Patton is a writer located in Ohio.
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BEING GOOD NEIGH
Civic engagement and service learning programs combine community involvement, reflection

BY ED FINKEL
Community colleges traditionally have provided a combination of liberal arts education and/or career training, depending on a student’s goals and outlook.

But increasingly, two-year colleges are adding a third leg to their stools aimed at building more socially aware citizens through civic engagement programs that combine elements of community service and getting involved in the democratic process with classroom reflection that distills and solidifies the lessons learned.

Colleges cite similar reasons why they consider civic engagement programs important. At Salt Lake Community College in Salt Lake City, the Thayne Center for Service & Learning was founded in 1994 out of a belief that higher educational institutions had an obligation to create an actively engaged citizenry, says Sean Crossland, director of the center.

“I see it as a great necessity, and an obligation of higher ed, to not just churn out the next round of the workforce but to create an engaged citizenry that can make informed decisions and engage in democracy,” he says.

To that end, Salt Lake has inserted community as one of the values listed in its strategic plan and cited increasing the culture of community engagement as one of five strategies in a campus-wide civic action plan. Employees of the college receive 24 hours of paid leave to do service in the community, Crossland says.

“That can look however they want,” he says. “Their supervisors are not able to discriminate based on where they serve. It's meant to be their opportunity to get involved in the community in a way they care about. That's a commitment from the institution that we do believe we are very much part of our community.”

The Center for Service & Learning has become much more a part of the typical student’s experience at Salt Lake, and few people resist that concept anymore, Crossland says. “It no longer feels like it’s about the challenge of legitimizing our work, it’s the challenge of operationalizing it and seeing where it fits,” he says. “I don’t think there’s a whole lot of pushback against this work.”
Nassau Community College in Garden City, New York, formalized its Center for Service Learning in 2010 partly due to State University of New York requirements that all colleges do applied learning but also out of a belief that students learn better by doing, says Evangeline Manjares, dean of academic and student services.

“We believe that students will remember what they do in service learning, instead of thinking about what the lecture was in the classroom,” she says. “We also believe it helps with our retention, and it improves their graduation and employment outcomes. It can make our academics more relevant by connecting students with their work, and integrating work experience with the curriculum.”

Although not all faculty and students are on board, increasing numbers of them realize that civic engagement and service learning not only broadens opportunities for students but also improve community relationships, Manjares says. “Everyone is too involved with looking at our cell phones,” she says. “It’s time to maybe share some of their cell phone time with the community.”

Duane Oakes, faculty director at the Center for Community & Civic Engagement at Mesa Community College in Arizona, believes the civic engagement work at his campus, which dates to the early 1990s, is probably the most important function the college serves.

“That was based on the hope and belief that would give it more legitimacy,” he says. “We’re still very much learning what that change looks like, and how we interact with the service learning program.” That interaction will continue to include a community

BLEND OF COMMUNITY AND ACADEMICS
The Thayne Center at Salt Lake is named for local author, educator and activist Emma Lou Thayne, and until just a couple years ago it housed the campus service learning program, although that moved out of the center to the academic side, Crossland says.

“Students always tell Oakes, who is also campus coordinator for a national umbrella group called The Democracy Commitment, that they like to learn by doing, yet too many academic programs don’t take that into account and focus solely on more traditional lecture environments. “We need to change the way we teach, to make the things we teach relevant and alive,” he says. “They walk out of classes I’ve taught, and they’re engaged in things they know can make a difference.”

Besides, service learning can help further career exploration, Oakes says, which is why Mesa has placed civic engagement alongside communication, critical thinking and cultural engagement as its four key student learning outcomes. “It’s about understanding our society, and improving the quality of life through political and nonpolitical means,” he says. “We’re putting the ‘community’ back into community college.”

Students at Mesa Community College have many opportunities for service learning.
partnership database that the center still maintains, which has between 125 and 150 organizations that have signed a memorandum-of-understanding outlining the goals for an ongoing partnership.

These have varying levels of commitment based on each organization’s goals and desires, Crossland says. “We don’t want to force them into more obligations than they want,” he says. “One of the things we want from our partners is input into how we shape our programming and steer our efforts here ... For the most part, these partnerships are used in service learning classes although some faculty choose to use their own. We don’t want to limit who a faculty member can work with.” The partnership levels allow organizations to easily join, and faculty can request specific organizations be on-boarded year-round.

Perhaps the flagship offering of the Thayne Center is the Student Leaders in Civic Engagement (SLICE) program that involves a yearlong commitment to service on the student’s part and a tuition waiver that can include an Americorps award and a small living stipend. Students are expected to be involved at least 20 hours per week, meeting weekly as a group and also interacting with...
a staff supervisor who’s assigned to between one and four members, Crossland says. “It’s meant to be an immersive cohort experience where students are developing leadership skills,” he says. The three-part experience begins with internal community building, continues with academic content like social change models, and culminates in an individual or group project. “We’re trying to very much push them outside of their comfort zone, encouraging them to venture out and effect change,” Crossland adds. “It’s about helping them connect some of the things they’re learning in classes and opportunities to effect change in the community.”

Thayne and Salt Lake also offer the Civically Engaged Scholars program, which includes all SLICE students but is open to others who participate in civic engagement, that designates in a special notation on a student’s transcript that they graduated with distinction as a civically engaged scholar. “It’s a nod from the institution that they did something special,” Crossland says. “That’s open to any student.”

As the dean for applied learning at Nassau, Manjares sees her role as “acting like a GPS” for students and faculty to engage with community and civic projects. Nassau has considered making civic engagement a requirement for graduation but has decided not to do so based on the diverse needs of its 20,000 students, some of whom don’t have their own cars and need to rely on public transportation to get around, she says.

To help facilitate everyone’s involvement, “We encourage faculty to have their service learning projects on campus,” she says. “We have a lot of possibilities here... sustainable gardens, a day-care center, a ‘prom boutique’ where we invite junior and senior students from neighboring high schools to get free gowns for their prom.”

Campus Compact is currently facilitating a cohort of community colleges through a program called Bringing Theory to Practice, which involves engaging students, community partners, faculty and staff in structured dialogues aimed at thinking about how the community college can advance civic action plans. “We see evidence of the special position of community colleges to bring together students and community members,” Seligsohn says.

Another Campus Compact project is aimed at putting a focal point on civic and democratic learning in the curriculum. “We don’t have, collectively, the level of democratic capacity that we need,” he says. “We don’t have a citizenry with the critical analysis and thinking skills to engage in civic dialogue. Community colleges are rising to that challenge and contributing to the stronger citizenry we’re going need, if we’re going to make it.”

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Nassau’s Center for Service Learning works closely with the Long Island Volunteer Center to identify opportunities for students to civically engage, Manjares says. “Their website has a very rich resources for our students,” she says. “It has to be formally planned, and there has to be execution of the plan. Reflection is very important—students have to share what they have learned before their classmates and faculty.”

Projects have included collecting books, care kits for nursing home residents and cellphones for soldiers, as well as conversational English “partners” for those learning the language, blood pressure screening at nearby churches on the part of nursing students, and merchandising internships at local stores undertaken by art and marketing students, Manjares says.

“It’s beautiful because you see the engagement of students, and the value of doing something for their community.”

EVANGELINE MANJARES, dean, Nassau Community College

because of time constraints, but they will join us one day. We are not forcing them to do it right now.”

Mesa Community College has documented a collective total of more than 1.7 million hours of community service in the past 15 years, Oakes says, and that doesn’t include projects that faculty have commissioned on their own outside the aegis of the Center for Community & Civic Engagement. “I’ve watched students change their lives,” he says.

The center coordinates teams of students who take on issues like hunger, homelessness and poverty, projects related to literacy and autism, work with the Special Olympics and registering students to vote, Oakes says. “We coordinate a lot of student leadership aspects,” he says. “We’re preparing students to become engaged however they choose. They want to do this, but they don’t know how.”

Students have become involved through the campus Americorps program and some have received scholarships through “mini-grants” that Mesa has funded, Oakes says. “They go back to students who do awesome work in the community,” he says. “It’s so much better to prepare students to be better citizens. We just need to educate them. We need to be focused on providing opportunities.”

Ed Finkel is an education writer based in Illinois.
Research gets results

The 10 Community College Innovation Challenge (CCIC) finalist teams proudly displayed their projects at a Capitol Hill reception in Washington, D.C., in June. They also participated in a multi-day boot camp where, among other things, they learned how to pitch their products. The finalist teams spent months at their home colleges on projects focusing on three themes: Maker to Manufacturer, Energy and Environment and Security Technologies.

What they developed may end up changing the world. Del Mar College (Texas) was named the first-place winner in the competition. They created a spray that can slow antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Second-place winner Red Rocks Community College’s Cyber Lab Learning Environment demonstrates how students can learn in the safety of student-created cyber labs.

Other projects included inexpensive, easily fabricated tiny houses for the homeless from California’s Laney College, an alternative biofuel made from yard waste from students at Michigan’s Henry Ford College, and a water filtration device made from recycled plastics from Corning Community College in New York.

CCIC is presented by the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Science Foundation.

Big businesses partner with two-year colleges

Both Apple and IBM are bringing job training to community colleges.

Apple launched an app development curriculum for students interested in pursuing careers in the fast-growing app economy. The curriculum is available as a free download from Apple’s iBooks Store. Students at six community colleges will learn to code and design fully functional apps, gaining critical job skills in software development and information technology. At some of the campuses, local businesses will also offer students mentoring and internships. Learn more: apple.co/2qkWLEq

IBM, America's largest technology employer, will expand partnerships with numerous community colleges to better prepare more Americans for "new collar” career opportunities. In these well-paying roles, in-demand technology skills are valued more than credentials. IBM and community colleges will work together curricula design for next generation IT skills. Get the details: prn.to/2skGRT

Survey says: Associate-degree colleges have most diverse presidents

Public associate degree-granting institutions have the highest proportion of women and minority presidents of any type of higher education institution, according to a survey of U.S. college and university presidents by the American Council on Education (ACE). Thirty-six percent of associate college presidents are women and 20 percent are minorities, says the survey, which looks at presidential demographics, search and selection processes, career trajectories, and duties and responsibilities, among other topics. Among all public and private U.S. colleges and universities, three out of 10 college presidents are women, and fewer than one in five are racial/ethnic minorities.

The survey also revealed that funding remains a key issue for most college and university presidents.

All the findings are available online: bit.ly/1Sx9SJn

Help to navigate NSF-ATE Grant Proposal Process

Does your STEM faculty have an idea for improving technician education that needs funding? If you answered in the affirmative—and your college has never had a grant from the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program, or has not had a grant in seven years—Mentor-Connect can move that promising concept toward reality.

Mentor-Connect provides mentoring, in-person and virtual technical support and digital resources to prepare competitive ATE grant proposals. Forty-four colleges, 63 percent of the first four Mentor-Connect cohorts, have received grants for innovative programs that develop well-qualified technicians for high-tech fields. Administrators report other positive outcomes from the leadership skills that Mentor-Connect teaches faculty.

Applications for the 2018 cohort are due October 13, 2017. Learn more at http://www.mentor-connect.org and view the orientation webinar on September 13.
Still keeping it simple: Building student-centered websites

By George Lamelza

Higher education homepages have had a history of being cluttered. With every department vying for homepage placement, visitors were often left to fend for themselves. “Click here” was the mantra, often leading a visitor to the sea of “nowhere to be found.”

In 2012, Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) in Missouri launched the “Keep it Simple” project. The goal was to simplify the homepage as a student-centered doorway to the college. With analytical data providing the foundation, we removed everything from the homepage with exception of our wordmark and search box. The clutter was gone. This simple change allowed us to create an agile environment of web design and development encouraging rapid change without much planning or community discussion.

A culture of web decisions based on analytical data centered on students became the norm, and opinions and preferences became so yesterday.

Our second iteration in 2015 created the virtual feeling of being on campus with full-motion video behind the search bar and a design based on the “mobile first” platform. Again, we stuck to student-centeredness and agile development. We based every decision on analytics.

This year, we will launch our third iteration, where the focus is still on simplicity while providing students a clear path to their aspirational dreams. “You have a dream, we have a plan,” provides prospective students a clear path to enroll, plan and complete their dreams.

Here are five guidelines we use to build student-centered websites that are simple and relevant:

LEADERSHIP ESTABLISHED SWIM LANES. I began working at OTC in February 2008. I soon learned a great lesson in leadership. I watched as our chancellor, Hal Higdon, brought together the leaders of each department to discuss the website and its direction. He laid out the direction, the swim lanes, and then passed the baton to me. Because of that simple act of leadership transfer, we now have more than 150 editors and more than 100 live-chat operators. Higdon’s influence and leadership established the proper swim lanes, and continues to benefit the college’s online presence nearly a decade later.

CLEAR WEB GUIDELINES. Our web guidelines provide the framework to enable the college to give the same user experience to each visitor. While there is the occasional wonky page, in most cases, the website creates the same feeling whether you are on the technical education page or the chancellor’s website.

CONSISTENCY = SIMPLICITY. From processes for updating, training, content layout and global website changes, everything follows a consistent path. You may get sick of our blue boxes or search platform, but at least you understand how to find the information you are seeking. After nearly 20 years, Google and Craigslist are still wildly popular based on their simplistic approach to providing information visitors want. It has been a good formula for the college, too.

CONTENT IS STILL KING, BUT MAKE IT READABLE. Visitors are coming to the website for information. While photos are great, the content is the most important part of the website. From proper style, to a simplistic approach to writing, the content should be the centerpiece. When developing content, we evaluate all writing based on the Flesch Reading Ease test to make sure that the college’s information is accessible to all readers. We also “chunk” our content, which means we leave more white space and give preferential treatment to the mobile-first platform. Content chunking is the strategy of breaking up content into shorter, more manageable pieces.

COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY. Over the last decade, I have had the opportunity to create and lead the web services department at OTC. A former CEO of a web-hosting company, I left the C-suite for the aspirational environment of higher education, but had little experience in the education vertical. I found great partners in the HighEdWeb community and higher education partners. Colleagues from across the country have been valuable resources and have answered those tough questions.

The web is a moving target. It changes daily. At OTC, we strive to keep it simple and agile. With clear paths and guidelines, consistency, a focus on easy-to-read content and a connection to a community of talented web people, we continue to move forward in our efforts to connect with our website visitors in a manner that is student-centered and data-driven.

George Lamelza is the college director of web services at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Missouri.
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Leadership is a topic that I think about every day. Good leadership is vital to the success of our students and is a popular topic in conversations with college presidents. Leadership is not just about college administration—it is a topic as diverse as our community college students.

Previously, I have focused this column on the need for current CEOs to ensure they are empowering the next generation of leaders. That generation, in my opinion, is one of the most connected and resource-rich that we may ever have.

If you consider the options for leadership development today, you may be overwhelmed. From rigorous doctoral programs to informal networking and everything in-between, today’s community college leader is better connected than I ever was.

My first foray into leadership happened because I was in the right place at the right time. I did not have formal training until well into my career in education. I’m sure many of you were a little nervous when tapped to step up and fill the need for a leader.

While I had excellent mentors and opportunities, I wish I was able to take advantage of the vast resources available today. Technology has made it easier than ever to stay connected. Utilizing the power of technology, it is easy to maintain connections made with colleagues, communicate with each other, and share best practices to a broader audience. To the next generation of leaders, technology has always allowed them to connect, multitask and to give (and receive) instant feedback. Today’s leader uses technology to build relationships and social media to communicate a vision.

The next generation of leaders also has the advantage of more formal leadership and professional development programs. I was honored to work with aspiring leaders recently at the American Association of Community Colleges’ (AACC) Future Leaders Institute and Future Presidents Institute. These two programs bring together seasoned veterans, experts in the field and our AACC staff to cover topics like advocacy, fundraising, and media relations. Participants also have access to community college leaders who have been successful presidents. Both retired legends and sitting presidents spent time discussing current issues as well as more personal topics including board relations, CEO contracts, and presidential interviews. Most importantly, the participants formed bonds within their respective cohorts that I know will serve them well as they navigate their own careers.

I believe strongly in the power of mentoring and professional development. I know it works. But, I am also learning from these future presidents that there are new and exciting ways to gather knowledge, connect with others and build a network of relationships. I am confident that the next era for community colleges is in good hands.

Walter G. Bumphus is president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges.
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