

THE 2015 INSIDE HIGHER ED SURVEY OF
**Community College
Presidents**

A study by Gallup® and *Inside Higher Ed*

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A study by Gallup and *Inside Higher Ed*

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FOREWORD

Inside Higher Ed's first-ever Survey of Community College Presidents aims to understand how these leaders perceive and address the challenges facing two-year institutions in the United States.

Among the questions addressed in the study:

- Do community college presidents support the Obama administration's free community college tuition proposal?
- What effects are the focus on degree completion having on academically at-risk students?
- To what extent do faculty members support moving courses and instruction online?
- What impact are for-profit institutions having on enrollment at community colleges?
- How prevalent are stackable credentials at community colleges?
- Are students given too many choices academically?
- Is there a "skills gap" and is there funding in place to address it?

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

- Even if supported by federal funds, community college presidents are skeptical about the feasibility of free community college coming to their state.
- About 4 in 10 (41 percent) strongly disagree or disagree that increased degree completion rates nationally are attributable to the push by policy makers and foundation leaders to promote college completion.
- About two-thirds of community college presidents agree or strongly agree that their college has moved more courses and instruction online. Half believe moving courses online could be done without adverse effects on students.
- For-profit institutions are generally not viewed as a threat to enrollment at community colleges.
- The vast majority of leaders of two-year institutions say their colleges are offering stackable credentials.
- Over half of community college presidents say that having too many choices is an obstacle to degree completion.
- About three-quarters (77 percent) of community college presidents view the "skills gap" as a serious problem in their local community.

METHODOLOGY

The following report presents findings from a quantitative survey research study that Gallup conducted on behalf of *Inside Higher Ed*. The objective was to examine the practices and perceptions of college and university presidents from associate degree-granting institutions related to a set of timely and important issues facing the institutions.

To achieve these objectives, Gallup collected Web surveys from 213 presidents of associate degree-granting institutions.

Gallup Education researchers and consultants developed the questionnaire in collaboration with Scott Jaschik and Doug Lederman of *Inside Higher Ed*. Gallup conducted the surveys in English from January 21-February 4, 2015.

Gallup sent email invitations to 966 potential respondents from associate degree-granting institutions with valid email addresses. Up to four reminder emails were sent. The participation rate was 22 percent.

Each institution is represented only once in the sample.

The number of responses may fluctuate by item, since invalid (i.e., “Don’t know/Does not apply”) responses are not included in the results and findings. The data are not statistically adjusted (weighted).

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. In some cases, reported frequencies may not add up to 100 percent as a result of rounding.

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DETAILED FINDINGS

SUPPORT OF FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TUITION PROPOSAL

Generally, community college presidents are skeptical about the feasibility of free community college coming to their state.

Six in 10 community college presidents (61 percent) say it is not very likely or not at all likely that their legislature will support free community college tuition in their state even with the federal support proposed by President Obama.

Eighty-six percent of leaders of two-year colleges say that *without* the federal support it is not very likely or not at all likely that their state legislature would support free community college tuition. Nine in 10 (91 percent) say it is not very likely or not at all likely that four-year colleges in their state will support the free two-year community college proposal.

How likely is your legislature to support free community college tuition in your state WITH federal support, such as that proposed by President Obama?

%4 Very likely	12%
%3 Somewhat likely	27%
%2 Not very likely	32%
%1 Not at all likely	29%

How likely is your legislature to support free community college tuition in your state WITHOUT new federal support?

%4 Very likely	3%
%3 Somewhat likely	10%
%2 Not very likely	20%
%1 Not at all likely	66%

How likely are four-year colleges in your state to support free community college tuition?

%4 Very likely	2%
%3 Somewhat likely	7%
%2 Not very likely	48%
%1 Not at all likely	43%

DEGREE COMPLETION

Community college presidents are split on the role that policy makers and foundation leaders play in increasing the degree completion rate nationally. About 4 in 10 (41 percent) strongly disagree or disagree that increased degree completion rates nationally are attributable to the push by policy makers and foundation leaders to promote college completion. About three in 10 (28 percent) agree or strongly agree that policy makers and foundations have helped to drive increased degree completion rates nationally.

About half (47 percent) of the community college presidents surveyed strongly disagree or disagree that the so-called completion agenda has diverted attention from recruiting at-risk students. One-third (33 percent) agree or strongly agree that the degree completion agenda has discouraged the recruitment of at-risk students.

Where I see an increase in degree completion rates nationally, I attribute it to the efforts of policy makers and foundation leaders who are pushing the completion agenda.

%5 Strongly Agree	5%
%4	23%
%3	31%
%2	23%
%1 Strongly Disagree	18%

The degree completion agenda has diverted attention away from recruiting at-risk students.

%5 Strongly Agree	13%
%4	20%
%3	20%
%2	31%
%1 Strongly Disagree	16%

ONLINE EDUCATION

Fifty percent of community college presidents strongly agree or agree that more courses and instruction at their institution could be moved online without an adverse effect on students. About three in 10 (29 percent) disagree or strongly disagree with that view.

Slightly less than half (47 percent) strongly agree or agree that more courses and instruction at community colleges generally could be moved online without an adverse effect on students.

More than a third, 37 percent, disagree or strongly disagree with that view.

More courses and instruction at my institution could be moved online with no adverse effects on students.

%5 Strongly Agree	11%
%4	39%
%3	21%
%2	18%
%1 Strongly Disagree	11%

More courses and instruction at community colleges generally could be moved online with no adverse effects on students.

%5 Strongly Agree	11%
%4	36%
%3	16%
%2	24%
%1 Strongly Disagree	13%

About one-quarter of community college presidents (24 percent) agree or strongly agree that their faculty members oppose moving more courses and instruction online.

Almost two-thirds of community college presidents from colleges whose faculty members oppose the move online (64 percent) strongly agree or agree that their institutions have moved more courses and instruction online nonetheless. About half of all community college presidents (49 percent) say that online education provides less support than in-classroom education. Only about 1 in 10 community college presidents (11 percent) say online courses provide more support than an in-classroom education.

ONLINE EDUCATION (cont.)

Faculty at my college oppose moving more courses and instruction online.

%5 Strongly Agree	5%
%4	19%
%3	32%
%2	34%
%1 Strongly Disagree	10%

In spite of faculty opposition, my institution has moved more courses and instruction online.*

%5 Strongly Agree	22%
%4	42%
%3	18%
%2	13%
%1 Strongly Disagree	4%

*Only those who agree or strongly agree that their faculty oppose online courses are included in this item.

Does online education afford more support, less support, or does online education afford the same level of support as in-classroom education at community colleges for at-risk students?

%3 More support than in-classroom education	11%
%2 Same support as in-classroom education	39%
%1 Less support than in-classroom education	49%

ASSOCIATE DEGREE INSTITUTIONS AND FOR-PROFITS

Community college presidents seem unconcerned about the threat for-profit institutions may pose to their own institution's enrollment.

About 6 in 10 two-year-college leaders (62 percent) strongly disagree or disagree that they are losing potential students to for-profit institutions. No community college presidents agree or strongly agree that they are losing students to for-profit institutions.

Yet about 6 in 10 community college presidents (61 percent) strongly disagree or disagree that enrollment at their institution is growing.

Community college presidents generally do not believe that academic programs at their institutions are superior to like programs at for-profit colleges. About one in four two-year-college leaders disagree that their programs are superior to for-profit programs, and the rest are ambivalent. None agree that their programs are superior.

About half of the presidents (49 percent) strongly disagree or disagree that at-risk students are more likely to enroll in their institution than in a for-profit college.

My college loses potential students who enroll at for-profit institutions.

%5 Strongly Agree	0%
%4	0%
%3	38%
%2	45%
%1 Strongly Disagree	17%

My college is maintaining enrollment populations in spite of marketing efforts on behalf of for-profit institutions.

%5 Strongly Agree	0%
%4	0%
%3	43%
%2	43%
%1 Strongly Disagree	13%

ASSOCIATE DEGREE INSTITUTIONS AND FOR-PROFITS (cont.)

My college's programs are superior to like programs offered by for-profit institutions.

%5 Strongly Agree	0%
%4	0%
%3	76%
%2	19%
%1 Strongly Disagree	5%

At-risk students are more likely to enroll at my college than at for-profit institutions that recruit in my area.

%5 Strongly Agree	0%
%4	0%
%3	51%
%2	39%
%1 Strongly Disagree	10%

My institution's enrollment is increasing.

%5 Strongly Agree	7%
%4	12%
%3	20%
%2	33%
%1 Strongly Disagree	28%

STACKABLE CREDENTIALS

Almost 9 in 10 community college presidents say their college offers stackable credentials. Among presidents who said their institution does not now offer them, almost three-quarters (73 percent) say it is considering offering stackable credentials.

Almost all community college presidents (99 percent) say they have industry partners to help identify the right skills for each certificate and credential. Almost all leaders of two-year institutions (94 percent) also say their faculty is playing a significant role in developing offerings for stackable credentials.

Does your college offer stackable credentials?

%1 Yes	89%
%2 No	11%

Is your college considering offering stackable credentials?*

%1 Yes	73%
%2 No	27%

*Only those who are not offering stackable credits included in this item.

Does your college have industry partners to help identify the right skills for each certificate and credential?*

%1 Yes	99%
%2 No	1%

**Only those who are offering stackable credits included in this item.

Are faculty playing a significant role in developing offerings for stackable credentials?*

%1 Yes	94%
%2 No	6%

**Only those who are offering stackable credits included in this item.

STRUCTURED PATHWAYS

More than half (56 percent) of community college presidents strongly agree or agree that having too many choices is an obstacle to degree completion. Only 23 percent disagree or strongly disagree.

About four in 10 community college presidents (43 percent) strongly agree or agree that they are moving to limit student choices, while about one-third (32 percent) strongly disagree or disagree that their institution will be imposing such limits.

An obstacle to degree completion is that students have too many choices.

%5 Strongly Agree	24%
%4	32%
%3	21%
%2	16%
%1 Strongly Disagree	7%

My college is moving to limit students' choices

%5 Strongly Agree	12%
%4	31%
%3	25%
%2	25%
%1 Strongly Disagree	7%

SKILLS GAP

More than three-quarters (77 percent) of community college presidents strongly agree or agree that the “skills gap” is a serious problem in their local community.

Almost nine in 10 (89 percent) strongly agree or agree that their college is collaborating with local businesses to close the skills gap. One-quarter of community college presidents strongly agree or agree that businesses are taking the lead to close the skills gap in their community.

About a quarter of community college presidents (26 percent) strongly agree or agree that state and local governments are providing the funding needed to make progress in closing the skills gap.

The “skills gap” is a serious problem in my local community.

%5 Strongly Agree	30%
%4	47%
%3	16%
%2	5%
%1 Strongly Disagree	1%

My college is collaborating with local businesses to close the skills gap.

%5 Strongly Agree	51%
%4	38%
%3	9%
%2	2%
%1 Strongly Disagree	0%

Businesses are taking the lead in the effort to close the skills gap in our community.

%5 Strongly Agree	6%
%4	19%
%3	39%
%2	29%
%1 Strongly Disagree	8%

SKILLS GAP (cont.)

State and local governments are providing funds needed to make progress in closing the skills gap.

%5 Strongly Agree	7%
%4	19%
%3	19%
%2	28%
%1 Strongly Disagree	27%

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age?	Overall
Under 30	0%
30 to 39	1%
40 to 49	14%
50 to 59	38%
60 to 69	42%
70 and older	6%

What is your gender?	Overall
Male	69%
Female	31%

How many years have you served as the president at this institution?	Overall
Less than 6 months	1%
6 months to less than 3 years	31%
3 years to less than 5 years	20%
5 years to less than 10 years	25%
10 or more years	23%

How many years have you served as the president at any institution?	Overall
Less than 6 months	1%
6 months to less than 3 years	26%
3 years to less than 5 years	13%
5 years to less than 10 years	25%
10 or more years	35%

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