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## **Arlene H. Parisot, Ed.D.**

Arlene Parisot received an Ed.D. in Adult, Community and Higher Education from Montana State University-Bozeman; an M.S. in Career Counseling and Guidance from Montana State University-Northern, and a B.A. with a major in English and a minor in History/Political Science from Idaho State University.

She recently retired as the Director of Workforce Development and Two-Year Education for the Montana University System under the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. She was responsible for administering federal funds allocated through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act as well as the U.S. Department of Labor's, Workforce Innovation for Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant. She represented the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education on the State Workforce Investment Board and chaired the Two-Year Education Council, a formally recognized body under the Montana Board of Regents.

During her tenure in this position, Parisot oversaw the writing of two Montana State Plans— the Carl D. Perkins Act of 1998 and the reauthorized Perkins Act of 2006. She also developed a State Leadership structure connecting the Office of Public Instruction and the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education to ensure coordination of the Carl D. Perkins federal grant activities across state educational systems.

Notably, she introduced the concept of Career Clusters to Montana's postsecondary education community by designing a competitive RFP (modeling the format of the League for Innovation in the Community College— *College and Career Transition Initiative* RFP) for two-year colleges to create Pathway Models in the cluster areas of manufacturing, health sciences, information technology, and arts and communications.

Additionally, she was an adjunct faculty member for the University of Oklahoma Advanced Programs and the University of Maryland University College with a focus on program planning for adult learners and educational philosophy.

Parisot has published articles in the *Adult Learning Journal* and *New Directions for Community Colleges* relating to teaching at a distance and developing institutional policy for distance education and use of technology. She was co-author of a

## **Elaine B. Johnson, Ph.D.**

Dr. Elaine Johnson, a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and Honorary Fellow of Huron College, Canada, is the recipient of many teaching awards, including the prestigious Outstanding Teaching Award from the University of Chicago. She holds a B.A. with high honors from Mills College, an M.A. from Indiana University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Oregon.

Dr. Johnson is the Executive Director of MBM Associates, a consulting group that links current brain research to education and business. She is also an adjunct English professor at Marylhurst University in Oregon. Johnson's teaching and consulting reflect her twenty-year study of how the human brain learns best.

In the books *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (Corwin Press, 2002), *The Dismantling of Public Education and How to Stop It* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), and *Literature for Life and Work* (McGraw Hill, 1997), a co-authored series of literature textbooks for grades 9-12, Dr. Johnson shows that the brain learns best when it sees meaning in material, connects learning with positive emotions, and forms supportive relationships with classmates and teachers.

As a tenured university professor, high school department chair, community college dean, and, most recently, as an adjunct professor, Dr. Johnson has had many opportunities to apply brain research to teaching. Her work shows that teachers can help students increase their brain's speed, power, and intelligence.





# The New Jersey Coastal Communiversality: Innovation Through Integration

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*Anita Vooght*

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## **Abstract**

*The New Jersey Coastal Communiversality, led by Brookdale Community College, is a partnership of colleges established to respond to a State need for expanded access to public post-associate degree education. The evolution of the Communiversality is examined from its innovative inception through integration as a vital component of the State's higher education system.*

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## **The Challenge**

**B**rookdale Community College, the number one associate degree college in New Jersey, is located in the coastal region of Monmouth County. Brookdale enrolls over 15,000 credit students a year, 75% of whom intend to transfer to pursue their baccalaureate degree. The 1998 Capacity Study conducted by the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education reported serious deficiencies in access to public baccalaureate education in the coastal region that were forcing local graduates to leave the State to further their education. Driven by its mission as a comprehensive community college committed to providing access to post-associate degree education, Brookdale responded to the challenge for increased access by establishing the New Jersey Coastal Communiversality, the State's first multi-institutional teaching center (MITC).

The Communiversality, led by Brookdale, is a partnership of colleges and universities from around the State whose mission is to provide local access to affordable, quality, associate, baccalaureate and master degree education for the residents of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Members of the partnership, in addition to Brookdale, include Georgian Court University, Montclair State University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, New Jersey City University, and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Similar to other MITCs and University Centers, Brookdale offers the first-and second-year courses required for the associate degrees each of which is articulated to a specific baccalaureate degree offered by a senior, four-year institution. The senior institutions offer on-site at the Communiversality the third- and fourth-year courses required to complete the baccalaureate.

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They also confer the degree. Unlike other MITCs and University Centers, the Community has a community college as its lead institution which promotes a student-centered learning environment and minimizes potential conflict among the senior institutions. In operation since 2001, the Community offers 35 undergraduate and graduate degrees in business administration, criminal justice, education, health sciences, information technology, and liberal arts, has over 5,000 enrollments a year, and has graduated over 500 students to date.

The Community received the 2004 Exemplary Leadership Award from The Chair Academy, an international organization that provides training for higher education leaders, and most recently, received the national 2008 Bellwether Award at the Community College Futures Assembly conference of the University of Florida, an award that recognizes innovative programs successfully leading community colleges into the future. The theme of the Bellwether Award conference, "Change or Die", featured Deutschman's research on organizational change that posits three factors, Relate, Repeat, and Reframe, can potentially transform a threatening "Change or Die" challenge into a flourishing "Change and Thrive" scenario. Deutschman (2007) defines those factors as:

**Relate:** A new, emotional relationship with a person or community that inspires and sustains hope;

**Repeat:** The new relationship helps one learn, practice and master habits and skills required to sustain change; and

**Reframe:** The new relationship helps one learn new ways of thinking about a situation.

Using Deutschman's framework, this article examines the evolution of the Community from its innovative inception through its integration as a vital component the State's higher education community, including outcomes in the areas of enrollment, curriculum and student satisfaction and lessons learned for others who may be contemplating similar ventures.

## Relate

Deutschman's first Relationship factor is most evident in the initial planning phase of the Community during which the vision for this innovative entity was conceptualized and the partnership of charter members was formed. A three-year planning period preceded the opening of the Community during which time Brookdale's Board of Trustees, President and college community explored several options for providing increased baccalaureate access. Those options included petitioning the State for a new local university, expanding Brookdale's mission to offer its own baccalaureate degrees, entering into a joint venture with a single four-year higher education partner, or creating a MITC with several college and university partners. Some of the policy issues considered in the assessment of each option were the:

- Ability of the potential partners to respond to program needs
- Student costs and financial aid considerations for public and private institutions
- Start-up and operational costs
- Potential influence on state and county support
- Issues crossing multiple institutional and programmatic accrediting bodies
- The potential partner's capacity, responsiveness, flexibility and commitment to the initiative
- Potential political implications and impact on the local higher education community

After a year-long, faculty-led study that explored the feasibility of Brookdale becoming a baccalaureate degree granting institution, a two-day Board of Trustees and Cabinet Retreat, visits to other MITCs and University Centers and several college-wide forums, the decision was made that a MITC would be the most effective means by which Brookdale could respond to the State-identified need for increased local access to post-associate level education.

The next phase of the planning process involved sharing the Community vision statewide of what would be New Jersey's first MITC and developing the partnership with

the senior institutions. The initial invitation to potential partners to join the Communiiversity began with president-to-president discussions during which Dr. Peter Burnham, President of Brookdale, articulated the goal for the Communiiversity to develop a partnership of higher education institutions with equal responsibility and commitment to serve the

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*Critical to the success of launching this new initiative were Dr. Burnham's strong relationships with government leaders on the federal, state and local levels and his leadership of the State's Council of Presidents.*

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coastal region of the State with currently unavailable educational opportunities. He stressed how the Communiiversity's collaborative structure would enable participating public higher education institutions to demonstrate their commitment to statewide outreach supported, in large part, by Brookdale's operational and financial support of the entity. An extensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailed expectations the partners would have of Brookdale as the lead educational agency and Brookdale would have of the partners in the areas of planning, governance, academic affairs, student services, operations and funding. At the end of the planning phase, seven of the ten invited institutions joined the Communiiversity with one additional partner joining a year later.

Critical to the success of launching this new initiative were Dr. Burnham's strong relationships with government leaders on the federal, state and local levels and his leadership of the State's Council of Presidents. It was those relationships that afforded him the entrée and credibility to persuade the presidents of the partner institutions to join Brookdale in this innovative venture. Within Brookdale, as the trusted and

respected leader of the College, Dr. Burnham introduced the vision of the Communiiversity formally through the College's collegial governance structure and informally through a series of open forums and discussions that allowed input and created buy-in from the whole College community.

### **Repeat**

Deutschman's second factor, "Repeat" is evident in the partnership-building phase on an operational level during which the charter members were challenged to create new collaborative, uniform procedures that would unify the member institutions to function as "one". This was an exciting process as Brookdale functional directors led teams of partner representatives in developing joint procedures for academic administration, recruitment, marketing, and student services. Once developed, these procedures were repeated and refined and became the operating norm for all partners. The processes were further substantiated and reinforced in the MOU and the Communiiversity's governance structure.

The Communiiversity's multi-level governance structure is the mechanism for integrated decision-making through which the partners influence and shape its continued development. Communication at the presidential level is made through individual outreach by the Brookdale President with links to Vice Presidents and Provosts at the partner institutions through the Liaison Committee led by Brookdale's Dean of the Communiiversity. The Liaison Committee is the vehicle for partnership discussions about policies, procedures, programs and services that provides direction to the functional teams that implement those services. The teams are comprised of representatives from each partner institution in the areas of academic affairs, student services, recruitment, and marketing. The teams are always cognizant of the need for conformity with the Communiiversity mission and brand while also maintaining the individuality and unique contribution of each member institution.

### **Reframe**

The Communiiversity started as a distinct initiative with a three-member staff

responsible for developing all operational aspects of this new entity. The initial perception of the Communiversity as an appendage to the College mainstream was physically and symbolically reinforced by being housed on a Brookdale site fifteen miles from the main campus. Enrollment quickly grew beyond what could be managed by the small staff prompting one of the most pivotal decisions in the Communiversity's development and illustrating the last of the three "Change or Die" factors, Reframe, in this case, reframing its organizational structure.

### **The Challenge**

In 2004, the organizational structure was significantly changed moving the Communiversity from the Outreach Division of the College to the Educational Services Division. This organizational change aligned the Communiversity with the academic and student services departments and established shared goals among multiple units to fully integrate the Communiversity into the core mission and operations of the College. The core function of the Communiversity to provide post-associate degree access was embellished to promote "Baccalaureates through Brookdale" with procedures such as Dual Admissions whereby students still enrolled at Brookdale are conditionally admitted to the Communiversity senior institutions upon completion of the their associate degree and the admission requirements stated in the agreement. The culture of Brookdale morphed beyond the boundaries of the traditional community college into one that now actively promotes and supports learning far beyond the associate degree. This "reframed" approach institutionalized the Communiversity, clearly affirmed to students and staff Brookdale as a pathway to the baccalaureate, and further substantiated the College's commitment to its continued growth.

### **Outcomes**

At the request of the Board of Trustees, a study was conducted in fall 2006 to assess the degree to which the Communiversity achieved its primary goal to expand access to baccalaureate degree education. The study also assessed the

Communiversity's impact and efficacy as a model for state-wide collaboration in the areas of enrollment, curriculum development, and student satisfaction.

### **Enrollment**

With a modest start in fall 2001 of 172 enrollments, the Communiversity has grown to over 5,000 enrollments in 2007-08. Enrollment in the partner programs has increased an average of 33% each fall semester with half of Brookdale's incoming fall semester students now expressing interest in transferring to the Communiversity. As of spring 2008, 509 students have graduated from Communiversity programs.

The Communiversity produced a significant increase in enrollment and tuition revenue at Brookdale from four sources:

- New students enrolling to complete their associate degree for seamless transfer to complete their baccalaureate degree locally at the Communiversity
- Increased retention from students completing their associate degree prior to transferring, as stipulated in the Communiversity articulation agreements
- Retention beyond the degree as the partners accepted additional credits beyond the associate degree to meet admission requirements
- Visiting students enrolling to complete admissions requirements prior to enrolling in the partner baccalaureate degree programs

### **Curriculum Development**

Since 2001, the number of bachelor degree offerings doubled from nine to 18, the number of master degree programs increased from seven to 13, and four certificate programs were added to total 35 programs offered by 2007. The course schedule that started with predominantly evening offerings has now expanded into daytime and weekend, on-site, blended, and on-line offerings. Meetings between the Brookdale and Communiversity faculty occur on a regular basis to discuss course scheduling that ensures pre-requisites are offered at appropriate times and seats are reserved

up to a certain point in the registration process for Communiiversity students.

### **Student Satisfaction**

The 2007 administration of the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory at Brookdale found that the Communiiversity experienced, by far, the greatest increase in satisfaction from 2003 to 2006 of any item within the top 25% in overall satisfaction measures. Additionally, the Brookdale New Student Survey that asks students why they chose Brookdale, showed students ranked third the “Availability of transfer programs and local access to Communiiversity bachelor degree programs” after the two most common reasons students attend community colleges, affordability and location.

### **Lessons Learned**

Institutions considering partnership ventures similar to the Communiiversity to expand local access to baccalaureate level education may benefit from these reflections and lessons learned:

- Leadership from the top is essential to launch the initiative and provide direction. The partnership is not a democracy.
- Partner motivation to join the initiative needs to be understood, which may include increasing political leverage, turf protection, acquiring new markets, and/or learning the ropes in preparation for their own such project.
- The development of the Articulation Agreements and regulations regarding acceptable partner course offerings is one of the most challenging yet fundamental aspects to the success of the partnership.
- The selection of the Partners and their ability and willingness to provide high-demand programs is a primary determining factor in the growth potential and scope of the initiative.
- Alignment with the academic side of the institution is essential for faculty buy-in and credibility.
- Assessment criteria determined early in the process ensures the collection of appropriate data. Third party data from nationally recognized surveys

such as Noel Levitz are priceless to substantiate the success of the initiative.

### **Change and Thrive**

Ten years after Brookdale faced a “Change or Die” challenge to expand local access to post-associate degree education, it is the proud leader of the New Jersey Coastal Communiiversity. As the first multi-institutional teaching center in the State, it has increased educational opportunities for students, enhanced workforce preparation, and addressed a significant State need through a collaborative and integrated response. The Communiiversity and Brookdale thrive from their increased enrollments, ability to leverage shared resources, service to students, affiliation with the senior four-year colleges and expanded leadership role in the local higher education community. By building relationships, repeating well-documented best practices, and reframing the organizational structure of the Communiiversity, the changes that were instituted have resulted in a thriving program of benefit to local residents and the broader higher education community.

### **Reference:**

Deutschman, A. (2007). *Change or die*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

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# Putting Students First: A Regional Strategy For Higher Education

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*David T. Harrison*

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## **Abstract**

*By most any measure, the Central Florida Higher Education Consortium is the most productive two-plus-two partnership in America. The Consortium is based on a shared belief that partner institutions can best serve students and families in central Florida by working together rather than in isolation or in competition.*

## **Background**

*Population growth, freshman enrollment caps, budget uncertainties, and other constraints have created a demand for baccalaureate access that institutions have found it difficult to meet. Recognizing this supply and demand imbalance, the University of Central Florida, Brevard, Lake Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community College formed a partnership called “The Central Florida Higher Education Consortium.” This consortium, one of the most productive higher education partnerships in American, has developed a regional strategy that guarantees access to the bachelor’s degree.*

*Higher education governance in Florida—focused on the central issue of baccalaureate access—has undergone considerable change in the past ten years. The uncertainties of governance of the state’s eleven universities and the growth in community college baccalaureates have been the subject of major policy debates. A brief summary of recent public policy issues follows.*

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## **Higher Education Governance**

**I**n 2000, a new K-20 model of educational governance was adopted by the Florida Legislature. This model established the State Board of Education as the leading entity for K-12 districts, community colleges, and universities. In 2002, however, a constitutional amendment was approved by Florida voters which established the Board of Governors to oversee the state university system. In 2006, the Board of Governors commissioned a study to prepare a strategy for higher education in Florida. The report offered several recommendations, including the establishment of a subsystem within the state university system focusing on baccalaureate degrees (Pappas Consulting Group, 2007).

## **Community College Baccalaureates**

In 1999, the Legislature provided the option for community colleges to seek approval to grant baccalaureate degrees when partnerships with state universities could not be established. By

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2005, six community colleges had received approval to offer bachelor's degrees (Florida Department of Education, 2005). In February of 2007, an agreement between the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education acknowledged that Florida ranked near the bottom of the country in bachelor's degree production. It recognized that community colleges could increase student access to bachelor's degrees in two ways. They could strengthen two-plus-two partnerships

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*The partnership between these institutions had been strong for decades, producing thousands of bachelor's degree graduates through the two-plus-two process, including some of the region's most prominent leaders.*

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with state universities and they could grant bachelor of arts, bachelor of science and bachelor of applied science degrees in the high-need and high-demand fields of teaching, nursing, and workforce-oriented programs. In 2008 legislation was passed establishing the Florida College System, enabling community colleges to transition to baccalaureate institutions independently from the state university system. The State Board of Education oversees the Florida College System (AGB, 2008).

### **Supply and Demand**

Demand for higher education in Florida has increased dramatically in recent years due to the convergence of a number of key drivers. The state has experienced tremendous population growth, adding over 3.7 million people from 1995-2007 (EDR, 2008). During this same period, high school graduation rates increased by over 10 percentage points, adding thousands of new candidates into the

higher education pool (FDOE, 2006). In 1997, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The program was designed to keep high-potential Florida high school graduates in-state by providing generous scholarship opportunities at state universities. It worked. With more and more students staying in-state, coupled with overall population growth and increased high school graduation rates, higher education enrollment in Florida exploded. Between 1995 and 2004, enrollment grew by 110,000 students. Florida community colleges grew by 17%, and the State University System grew by 33% (IPEDS, 2005).

In response to this increased demand for freshman seats, the state universities became much more selective. In 1995, 70% of all freshman applicants to the University of Central Florida, the University of Florida, and Florida State University were admitted with an average SAT of 1188. In 2007, these three universities admitted fewer than 50% of all freshmen applicants and the average SAT score of enrolled freshmen was 1237 (Florida Board of Governors, 2007).

This combination of factors caused students who would have been routinely admitted to a state university in the nineties to be denied admission in ten years later. It became clear that dramatic growth in demand for higher education could place serious restrictions on university access for local, academically qualified students, unless a new strategy was implemented.

### **A REGIONAL STRATEGY**

With this environment as a backdrop, the presidents and other leaders of Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community Colleges and the University of Central Florida started an exchange of ideas in 2005. They were concerned that the public policy debates in Tallahassee, although they centered on the growth in demand for higher education, failed to grasp the extraordinary increase in demand occurring in the counties around Orlando. Institutions in Central Florida, however, would be responsible for absorbing a disproportional share of Florida's growth in higher education. Although,

Florida's two-plus-two articulation agreement between community colleges and universities had been a national model, it was barely mentioned in the statewide dialogue.

### **Building on Strength**

The partnership between these institutions had been strong for decades, producing thousands of bachelor's degree graduates through the two-plus-two process, including some of the region's most prominent leaders. And the collective asset base of these partners had grown even stronger in recent years. UCF had grown to the sixth largest university in the country, and the second largest undergraduate institution. Valencia produced more associate's degree graduates than any community college in the United States. Brevard and Seminole were in the top 100 of 1200 community colleges nationally, and Lake-Sumter was one of Florida's fastest growing colleges. Through its Regional Campus System, UCF had shared facilities on the campuses of Brevard and Lake-Sumter community colleges, and a growing presence with Seminole and Valencia.

The leaders of these institutions concluded that they could best serve students and families in central Florida by working together rather than in isolation or in competition. They agreed that a collaborative regional strategy for higher education designed to expand access, meet the anticipated needs for growth, and provide for a world class workforce in central Florida was possible, and in fact preferred.

### **The Central Florida Higher Education Consortium**

The principles of the regional strategy were outlined in a joint resolution that was approved and signed by all five boards of trustees in September 2005, establishing the Central Florida Higher Education Consortium. Core principles of the Consortium include: guaranteed admission to UCF for graduates of Consortium community colleges, expansion of joint-use facilities on community college campuses, expansion of financial aid resources to support Consortium two-plus-two students through collaborative philanthropy, and development of a regional infrastructure for workforce development.

The Central Florida Higher Education Consortium was announced at a public event in April 2006. Faculty and staff at each of the five Consortium partners have since been working to expand access and increase baccalaureate productivity following these principles.

### **PRACTICES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES**

While the transfer relationship between UCF and Consortium partners had been strong for many years, the new strategy called for deeper collaboration and alignment of systems and business practices. Marketing, admissions, and advising were viewed as critical areas of focus, as was program expansion on community college campuses. Significant progress has been achieved in each of these areas.

### **Branding and Marketing**

An early test to the new strategy was how to market the Central Florida Higher Education Consortium. The Consortium was meaningful to the presidents and board members, but it meant nothing to students and families. Each institution already had an established brand identity, so finding an approach that complemented five existing marketing campaigns was a challenge. After considering several alternatives, the brand DirectConnect to UCF was agreed upon by all partners. The brand and accompanying campaign captured the value proposition of guaranteed admission and an early, ongoing relationship with UCF advising professionals for community college students choosing this path. In less than three years, DirectConnect to UCF has become a recognized brand among students, families, and the community at-large. An unplanned benefit of the DirectConnect to UCF brand is the internal recognition within each of the five partner institutions. Language is important, especially when implementing change, and a common understanding deep within UCF and the four community college partners has emerged around what it means to be a "DirectConnect student."

**Guaranteed Admission and Active Advising** Graduates of Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community Colleges earning A.A. and selected A.S. degrees are guaranteed admission to UCF. The term “guarantee” was controversial, but it was a critical aspect of the joint resolution. The basis of the Central Florida Higher Education Consortium is a sustained strategic commitment to the partnership. By guaranteeing admission to their graduates, UCF told its community college partners that their students were a priority, and would continue to be a priority in good budget times and bad. The deep budget cuts in 2007 and 2008 for Florida’s state universities proved to be an important test. Even as most universities in the state suspended or dramatically reduced the number of community college transfers, enrollment for new community college transfers at UCF grew by 12% in fall 2008 to over 4,000.

UCF admissions and enrollment services professionals are located on the campuses of Consortium community colleges, as are professional advisors. UCF and community college academic advisors collaborate to ensure the coursework that students take at the community college prepares them for their chosen course of study at UCF. DirectConnect coordinators on each partner campus do initial academic advising and assist students with admission and financial aid processes.

While the traditional two-plus-two articulation model focuses on admission to a state university, the policies and procedures surrounding DirectConnect to UCF are designed to increase the likelihood that students earn a bachelor’s degree. Two-plus-two may have gotten students admitted to a university in the past, but DirectConnect strives to ensure that students transfer to UCF as juniors in their chosen field of study, increasing their chances of earning the bachelor’s degree. For students at Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Seminole or Valencia who identify themselves as DirectConnect to UCF students, the community college partner sends UCF an electronic transcript once students have earned 30 hours of credit. A second transmission occurs at

45 hours. A UCF admissions record is established for these students, and a UCF transcript is initiated with the student’s community college academic record. This process streamlines the transfer process for these students, and helps ensure their success when they transfer.

#### **Facilities and Program Expansion**

UCF has had a long and successful history of collaborating with community colleges on shared campus projects, called

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*While the traditional two-plus-two articulation model focuses on admission to a state university, the policies and procedures surrounding DirectConnect to UCF are designed to increase the likelihood that students earn a bachelor’s degree.*

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joint-use facilities. Through its Regional Campus System, UCF brings junior and senior year coursework to community college campuses enabling students to earn a bachelor’s degree in their home town. Florida’s first full-service, joint use facility in Cocoa with Brevard Community College celebrated its 25th anniversary in fall 2008. A second Brevard campus in Palm Bay opened in 1999. In 2002, UCF and Lake-Sumter Community College partnered on a shared campus in Clermont.

Construction began in 2008 on two new joint-use facilities in UCF’s Regional Campus System. A new facility on Valencia’s West Campus is scheduled to open fall 2009 and a similar facility on Seminole’s Sanford/Lake Mary Campus will open soon thereafter. These facilities will enable significant expansion of bachelor’s and selected graduate programs in these communities.

## **RESULTS AND REGIONAL IMPACT**

The Central Florida Higher Education Consortium has been highly productive. In the fall of 2007, the Consortium institutions enrolled more than 105,500 undergraduates, more than the public higher education systems of 16 states (IPEDS, 2007). Of the more than 8,000 bachelor's degrees awarded by UCF in the 2006-07 academic year, over half went to community college transfer students. Two-thirds of UCF's education degrees were awarded to community college transfers, as were 60% of nursing degrees, almost half of business degrees, and nearly 40% of engineering degrees. Of the bachelor's degrees awarded to community college transfers, over two-thirds went to transfers from Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Seminole, or Valencia (Fu and Archer, 2007). Students who follow the DirectConnect path have successful academic careers at UCF. At the university's fall 2008 commencement ceremony, of the 11 students recognized as Honors Graduates (one from each academic college), ten were community college transfer students. Eight of these Honors Graduates transferred from Consortium colleges.

### **Workforce Development**

By integrating the talent, assets, and relationships of each of the five partners into a comprehensive regional strategy, the Central Florida Higher Education Consortium is positioned to provide leadership on the important regional issues and opportunities of the day, including workforce and economic development. The five Consortium institutions are working collaboratively on the most urgent workforce issues in the region. Their partnership provides an infrastructure that supports the needs of students, employees, and employers in the region's economic diversification efforts. For example, projects are now underway in digital media, biotechnology and life sciences, electrical engineering, engineering technology, and architecture and building construction.

Ongoing work in promoting higher education options to families and aligning the college curriculum seeks to expand access and ensure success for students in central Florida.

### **College Access Initiative**

In order to engage K-12 partners in the work In order to engage families and K-12 partners in the work of expanding access to college, Consortium partners initiated a series of regional summits. At the inaugural College Access Summit in November 2007, the Consortium engaged over 150 academic leaders from high schools and community colleges in a dialogue about the current and future state of college admissions, partnerships and alignment, and the case for change and improvement. This group reconvened in April 2008 to discuss the value, importance, and potential achievements in bridging the gap for college access. K-12 leaders expressed a strong desire to extend DirectConnect principles to the high school level. A regional steering committee has been appointed to guide the ongoing work of the group, which includes an emphasis on communication with families and students, and data sharing and process alignment among institutions.

### **Curriculum Alignment**

In an effort to increase community college transfer student success, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, Consortium partners have launched an aggressive curriculum alignment effort. Faculty teams from each of the community colleges and UCF have collaborated to identify courses in math, chemistry, physics, and digital media that are key to the success of all freshman and sophomore students in these fields. Faculty are developing common course outcomes, learning activities, and assessment techniques to ensure a consistent learning experience for students at any Consortium institution.

## **SUMMARY**

Partnerships are not easy, and are not always popular among all stakeholders. Politics, funding, narrow interests, and other distractions can persuade good people to make short-sighted decisions. By focusing on the needs of students, families, and the future prosperity of central Florida, Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community Colleges and the University of Central Florida have created a model that

guarantees access to the baccalaureate for any student in the region with the ability and desire to earn a degree. This approach has reduced uncertainty among families, utilized taxpayer and tuition dollars in a productive manner, and created a workforce development infrastructure that provides a competitive advantage for the central Florida region. Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community Colleges and the University of Central Florida have created a model that guarantees access to the baccalaureate for any student in the region with the ability and desire to earn a degree. This approach has reduced uncertainty among families, and created a workforce development infrastructure that is unsurpassed.

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# The Success Of The Community College Associate Degree In Registered Nursing

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*“In times of change, it is the learners who will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped for a world that no longer exists.”*

*- Eric Hoffer*

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**A**ssociate Degree Nursing education had its inception in 1952 as the result of a research project conducted by Mildred Montag. Dr. Montag, Ed. D. was vitally concerned with the critical shortage of nurses in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. As the developer of the nursing program at Adelphi, Dr. Montag drew on her experiential background to lobby for decreasing the length of the education process to two years and to provide a sound educational base for nursing instruction by placing the program in the nation’s community/junior colleges. In 1958, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded the implementation of the project at seven pilot sites in four states.<sup>i</sup> Since that time the number of ADRN programs has escalated from seven in 1958 to more than 904 today with over 600 of those in the nation’s community colleges.<sup>ii</sup> Associate degree educators rapidly identified the needs in their communities and offered learning experiences with individuals and families in community settings.<sup>iii</sup> The ADRN programs provide patient care economically and more rapidly at a time of mounting need, acute healthcare worker shortages and decreasing economic vitality. The success of the ADRN programs not only in New Jersey, but also in community colleges across the nation calls in question the wisdom of legislation now before the New Jersey Legislature. It also challenges community colleges to contemplate offering bachelor’s degrees in nursing.

## **A Bill Presuming The Associate Degree Is Inadequate**

Currently, there is a proposed bill before the New Jersey State Legislature that grew from a New Jersey State Nurses Association’s (NJSNA) resolution. Locally this legislation (S 2529) has become known as the “BSN in Ten”. The bill will require newly licensed registered professional nurses to attain baccalaureate degrees in nursing within ten years of initial licensure, and as such will have profound effect on nursing education throughout the community college sector

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in New Jersey and elsewhere. The “BS in Ten” proposal in New Jersey has generated a lively debate by our colleagues on both sides of the issue. The dialogue in New Jersey is particularly critical since the state already has the lowest ratio of employed nurses per 100,000 population (NJ 839 per 100,000) than any other state in the Mid-Atlantic area. Hospitals in the state are experiencing a 17.3 percent vacancy rate of registered nurses, according to the New Jersey Hospital Association. That figure outstrips the nationwide vacancy rate of just under 14 percent and it is even greater than the New York City vacancy rate, estimated at 15 percent.<sup>iv</sup> Moreover, the shortage of nurses in New Jersey is expected to climb from 26% in 2010 to 49% in 2020. This bill evidently reflects the legislature’s assumption that the performance of nurses educated in community colleges is somehow deficient and that the Bachelor of Science degree in nursing assures better patient care. The community college sector in New Jersey strongly challenges this assumption.

### The Bill’s Unsound Premise

There is no documentary evidence that validates such a premise. In fact, it can be argued that this bill is based solely upon one 2003 study [Linda H. Aiken, PhD, RN; Sean P. Clarke, PhD, RN; Robyn B. Cheung, PhD, RN; Douglas M. Sloane, PhD; Jeffrey H. Silber, MD, PhD, Educational Levels of Hospital Nurses and Surgical Patient Mortality in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 2003]. The premise of the study is challenged in Teaching and Learning (2006) 1, 2-3 titled “A Critique of Educational Levels of Hospital Nurses and Surgical Patient Mortality” by Arthur Viterito, PhD. In his rebuttal, Dr. Viterito notes a stronger causal relationship exists in the study between the age of the patient and the mortality rate rather than in the ADN vs. BSN credentials of the nurse caring for the patient.<sup>v</sup> The question we need to ask ourselves both as educators and as citizens is, do we set academic requirements for all RN’s on the perhaps flawed assumptions of one 2003 study? Additionally, not only Viterito, but also one of the principals in the 2003 study, Sean P. Clarke, RN, PhD,

points out many of the problems with the Aikens study. Dr. Clarke states that:

1. The best outcomes were found in hospitals with both high levels of BSN nurses and higher degrees and lower patient-to-nurse ratios (Aiken et al., 2003).
2. It was neither a study of the practice of individual nurses nor, a study that examined the initial preparation of RN’s.
3. The data used in the “Aiken’s” 2003 study did not allow the outcomes of particular patients to be linked to the educational backgrounds of the specific nurses who treated them.
4. The article never stated that the data proved that education leads to better outcomes.
5. Research data assembled to date have been unable to uncover any systemic patterns that BSN graduates and graduates of other types of basic education programs practice differently or obtain different patient outcomes (Blegen, Vaughn, & Goode, 2001; Johnson, 1088).
6. A number of noted scholars in nursing who support higher education believe that BSN entry may not be a desirable goal for the profession.<sup>vi</sup>

Reducing the number of, or perhaps even eliminating, ADRN’s from the nation’s workforce would be a great mistake for many reasons. Above all, it would prevent capable people seeking Associate Degrees in Nursing from receiving a first-rate education that prepares them well to be nurses. **It would leave states with a more expensive healthcare system than exists now; it would reduce the diversity of the workforce in a profession which is already largely white and female; and it would increase the shortage of RN’s in an already suffering employment sector.** In fact, the New Jersey Nursing Demand Forecasting Model which is able to produce county-by-county forecasts of demand for registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPN’s) reports that for the year 2006, the model forecasted a demand for 74,550 RNs. Supply data, however, shows the number of nursing graduates declining since that

time, and indicated that in 2006 the state had 60,000 RNs — a shortage of 14,000 or 18 percent (A shortage of 10 percent or greater is generally considered serious). These factors, when viewed against the current backdrop of declining nursing graduates, the advancing age of those currently within the nursing profession, and the widely known access and economic issues plaguing healthcare today, have resulted in a situation which will have broad national implications beyond the borders of New Jersey.

## THE SOLUTION AND NEXT STEP

### A Community College Bachelor Of Science In Nursing Degree

As this crisis develops, and becomes further exacerbated by the economic downturn, it seems a dubious time indeed to debate educational credentials for nurses. However, in the spirit of Dr. Mildred Montag, (“The Mother of Associate Degree Nursing”)<sup>viii</sup> and with confidence in the nursing education delivered by community colleges, we recognize that **this may be the best time for community colleges and advance the case for community colleges offering the BSN degree.**

As in 1952 with their advent, community colleges were uniquely poised to offer the associate degree in nursing. Now, in 2009, the community college is again positioned to contribute to the educational credentialing of nurses no matter which side of the debate is ultimately successful. Consider for example, that in the year 2000, 22% of hospital nurses with the BSN, began their career with the AD and then sought the further credential (BSN) while employed.<sup>ix</sup> This component must be considered in reviewing any study in which a hospital’s BSN statistic is released. It seems a reasonable assumption that some portions of current practitioners holding the AD degree have, in fact, attained the BSN degree or perhaps an MSN. Since reporting the number of BSN’s in any healthcare setting does not speak to the pathway to the degree, we have no way of easily determining what percentage of BSN’s in a particular market sector actually began their career via the AD portal.

Since community colleges have shown their collective ability to produce competent and safe practitioners, it seems reasonable that they be an important part of the credentialing dialogue going forward. For example, when

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*As this crisis develops, and becomes further exacerbated by the economic downturn, it seems a dubious time indeed to debate educational credentials for nurses.*

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reviewing the results of the 2006 National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN – the profession’s standardized entrance exam) in New Jersey, the first three quarters of 2006 showed that test candidates armed with the AD outperformed their BSN counterparts on the pass rate by a range of some 4 to 6 percentage points according to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)<sup>x</sup> .

No matter which side of the issue ultimately prevails, it will be incumbent upon us to examine the steps necessary to initiate the BSN degree in a community college environment. Vital components such as hiring faculty, seeking state and agency accreditation, facility needs analysis, etc. are all elements to be researched, discussed and decided. Moreover, organizationally creative possibilities such as a unique 2 + 2 approach that would offer the prospective nursing candidate a three-step approach to state licensure beginning with the AD at the community college, followed by sitting for the national exam (NCLEX), and then culminating in the BSN degree at the same community college, or a senior institution with whom the community college has partnered in an approximate student/teacher ratio of 20 to 1. The advantage to such an approach is that the student is able to complete two years of theory and clinical based curriculum, and can be awarded credit for practicum experiences. Students thus

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receive the best in nursing education with an emphasis on critical thinking, as well as informed and ethical decision making. The academic foundation of the 2+2 AD and the BSN curriculum prepare the student for the dynamic and challenging healthcare environment while creating innovative partnership potential with senior institutions that stress career paths and career mobility for the AD nurse.

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# Courting the Baccalaureate: A Primer

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*Scott Newman*

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## **Abstract**

*The process of researching, proposing, gaining approval for and implementing baccalaureate degrees at historically two-year colleges can be challenging. This article provides practical recommendations for individuals and organizations interested in or involved with the incorporation of baccalaureate degrees into associate degree-granting institutions. (41/50)*

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**D**uring summer 2003, the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Institute of Technology, an associate degree-granting branch within the OSU system, initiated a process to gain approval to offer a limited number of baccalaureate degrees in specific technical disciplines. By early 2004, the institution had been approved to deliver three specialized Bachelor of Technology degrees—two beginning that fall, one the following year. The practical lessons gained through that effort are provided below.

## **Understand supply and demand**

No academic programs—baccalaureate or otherwise—should ever be implemented without adequate research into student interest and employer demand for them. Unfortunately, these critical elements are rarely investigated and documented at an appropriate level, and sometimes overlooked altogether in two-year institutions' bids to pursue baccalaureate degrees for their campuses.

As illustrated below, the greater the student interest and employer demand for an academic program, the greater its likelihood for success. Obviously, programs with high student interest and employer demand are ideal, and those with neither should never be implemented.

However, a number of institutions continue to pursue and implement programs for which either employer or student demand is low or nonexistent. Though colleges may find such offerings attractive (because of, for example, their trendiness, prestige and/or potential financial yield), these programs generally result in high graduate or employer frustration, low stakeholder confidence and poor resource use—and therefore should be avoided as well.

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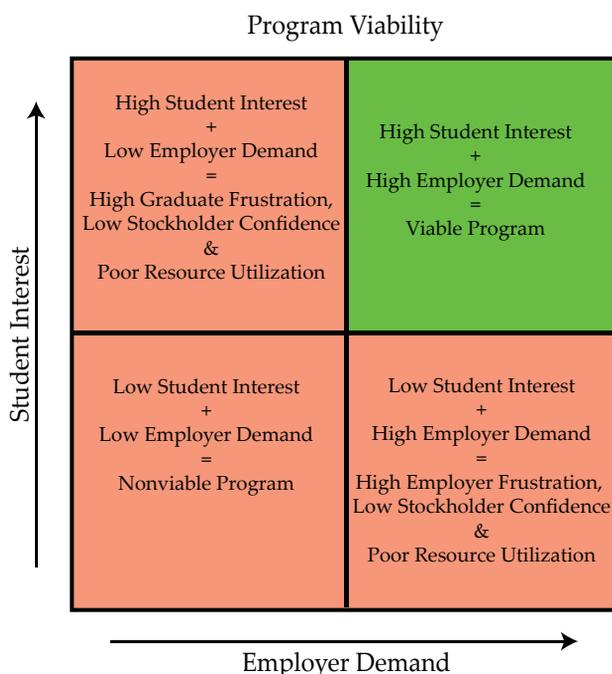
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### Leverage assets

Two-year institutions that seek to develop baccalaureate programs are strongly encouraged to build on existing organizational strengths. To this end, they should consider expansion of successful associate-degree programs in exploring potential offerings. Of course, two-year colleges typically bring a myriad of distinctive fortes to bear in the delivery of academic programs—particularly in comparison to more traditional postsecondary institutions. These commonly

as soon as curricula are finalized and programs have been approved (i.e., even before they are fully implemented). Articulation agreements with other two-year colleges can contribute significantly to the introduction and promotion of new baccalaureate offerings to other populations. The development of partnerships in the delivery of program components is also highly recommended. Not only will such collaborations be useful from marketing and resource utilization standpoints, but will likely generate goodwill and



include: shortened program completion time, excellence in delivery of applied, workforce-oriented learning experiences, alternate course delivery mechanisms (e.g., online and hybrid), and other special services that are attractive or necessary for a range of prospective student populations. Not surprisingly, such attributes can contribute significantly to an institution’s case that it is uniquely positioned to facilitate one or more particular baccalaureate offerings.

### Collaborate early and often

For many two-year institutions implementing baccalaureate degrees, the potential for collaborating with other associate degree-granting colleges will likely be even greater than in the past. Linkages can be established

support for the new offerings among other institutions and postsecondary leaders.

### Mind the ripple effect

In general, programs and institutions which offer baccalaureate degrees are viewed differently than associate degrees and two-year colleges. Accrediting agencies (both regional and specialized) and state higher education entities will expect clear change in key institutional areas, such as programmatic resources, academic rigor and faculty workload—especially with respect to professional activity. In addition, postsecondary organizations are often unsure about how to interact with two-year colleges with baccalaureate offerings—especially with respect to the transfer of coursework and degrees. As a result, associate degree-

granting institutions pursuing baccalaureate programs are advised to address such issues as early and explicitly as possible—ideally as part of the proposal process.

### **Promote reality**

Two-year colleges seeking to add baccalaureate degrees to their offerings are likely to encounter criticism or opposition from a range of individuals and agencies—including some higher education peers. Consequently, the leaders of any two-year institutions pursuing baccalaureate programs should communicate their intentions directly (and preferably face-to-face) to anyone interested in learning more about them—particularly the executive administrators of the colleges and universities in their service areas. Some may not be excited about, or supportive of, the change—and those involved in the process should be prepared to receive feedback to that extent. However, the rumor mill should not serve as the primary source of information for others. Instead, institutions and their leaders should take proactive roles in disseminating the most accurate information possible and addressing any misunderstandings.

### **Bring the team along, too**

Of course, not even all of an institution's primary stakeholders will be equally enthusiastic about the addition of baccalaureate degrees to their college's offerings. While most students will be excited (especially those whose areas will be impacted), many long-time faculty, staff and administrators may worry that the incorporation of baccalaureate degrees will divert important resources from the mission for which their two-year institution was founded. Others will be concerned with the manner and extent to which their organizational roles and units will be impacted. Alumni reactions will likely be mixed: some will be delighted by the development, while others will want the institution to remain as they remember it. Therefore, adequate time and attention must be allocated to ensure that those invested in the institution understand why it is pursuing baccalaureate-level programs, and that key stakeholders

remain a part of the process—whether they agree with the new direction or not.

### **Expect the unexpected**

Despite an institution's best intentions and greatest efforts, identifying and addressing all the issues and challenges which will arise with the addition of one or more baccalaureate degrees in advance will be virtually impossible. In most cases, countless organizational policies and procedures will require retooling, and innumerable institutional areas will be impacted. Admissions criteria, tuition and fees (e.g., to differentiate or not differentiate), residency requirements, an array of financial aid-related issues and library holdings, for example, will require considerable attention. Long-held organizational rituals, such as graduation, may also require rethinking.

Unfortunately, several issues won't surface until implementation is well under way, or new programs have even begun. Many will be unique to institutions and their idiosyncrasies. Not surprisingly, these can be the toughest. Consequently, institutions are urged to proactively review their policies, procedures and practices with the goal of addressing the greatest number of issues as possible before they surface unexpectedly. In general, taking a "we'll cross that bridge when we get there" position is ill-advised.

### **Plan, plan, plan**

The number of steps involved in implementing baccalaureate degrees into historically two-year colleges can be substantial. Researching and documenting demand, developing proposals, hiring and/or training faculty, revising policies and procedures, and acquiring approval from higher education boards and regional accreditation agencies can require significant amounts of time. Specialized accreditation—recommended for institutions which need or desire to establish program credibility quickly—often requires that programs have one or more graduates before they may be accredited, so such initiatives are not normally an early challenge. Nevertheless, two-year institutions seeking to implement baccalaureate degrees are advised to establish clear benchmarks and reasonable timelines

in order to facilitate the best chances for successful program approval, accreditation, implementation and advancement.

### **Watch that basket**

In *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Mark Twain writes that it is acceptable to place one's eggs in a single basket so long as it receives appropriate oversight. Given the increased attention and scrutiny two-year institutions with baccalaureate degrees garner, organizations pursuing such programs are, in essence, placing a significant component of their reputations (i.e., eggs) in the success or failure of their new offerings. Therefore, adequate attention and resources must be paid to ensure that programs are well conceived, and that they receive the levels of support necessary to be successful—particularly if the institutions wish to pursue additional baccalaureate offerings later.

### **Remember the reason**

The process of researching, proposing, gaining approval for and implementing baccalaureate degrees at historically two-year institutions can be arduous. Though associate degree-granting institutions may proffer a variety of justifications for seeking to implement baccalaureate programs, no one can fault colleges and postsecondary leaders who are motivated for the only truly legitimate reason: to better serve their constituents. Hopefully, this article makes a small contribution to those individuals and institutions who meet that criterion.

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## Notes

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