

# Community Colleges

## Places So Close Can Take You So Far...

Community colleges constitute one of the largest sectors of American higher education. Today more than 6 million students attend approximately 1,200 public and independent community colleges throughout the United States. Since their inception 100 years ago, community colleges have offered a unique educational opportunity for vocational training and community service. The principles of access and equity are at the core of their mission. Here are some reasons why students select community colleges:

### Transfer to Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Many students begin their undergraduate studies at community colleges then transfer to four-year colleges. Studies indicate that students who spend their first two years at a community college and then go on to graduate from four-year colleges are as well prepared academically as those who go directly to four-year colleges. Community colleges and four-year colleges have formed partnerships to accelerate the transfer process, and counselors are available to assist with transfer procedures.

### Cutting-Edge Technology

Community colleges and technology play a critical role in one another's growth and development. The colleges incorporate technology into their assessment and instruction. Their computer labs are plentiful and accessible, and many labs offer state-of-the-art equipment and programs. Training for high-tech workers is often available at community colleges that offer majors in telecommunications, digital systems, robotics, laser optics, Web design, and interactive media.

### Lower Cost

Lower tuition is one of the major benefits of attending a community college. The lower cost makes a quality education available to many students who may not have had access to higher education in the past. At community colleges tuition is often less than the price of a computer. And financial aid programs are available at community colleges too!

### Accessible Faculty

At a community college, the primary responsibility of the faculty is teaching, not research and publishing. Many professors have extensive practical experience in their subjects. They are accessible to students during their office hours and often act as sponsors to clubs and organizations.

### Small Classes

Small classes are an important attribute of community colleges. They are great places for students who like small classes and individualized attention. Students won't be numbers or get lost in the crowd.

### Variety of Courses and Majors

Community colleges offer a wide choice of courses and majors. Students can prepare for an immediate career or pursue the first two years of general academic course work required for a bachelor's degree. They can also work toward degrees that they started elsewhere. Community colleges have taken a leadership role in occupational programs. They prepare students for careers in both existing and emerging technologies. They offer honors programs that allow students to take rigorous courses supplemented by special opportunities.

### Flexible Schedules

Most community colleges offer course schedules that allow students to fit their studies around work or home commitments. Community colleges are usually within easy commuting distance by car or by public transportation. They also are on the forefront of distance learning and extension programs that enable students to complete their studies off campus.

## Commitment to Diversity

College is about learning new ideas, meeting new people, and having varied experiences. At community colleges, students are introduced to a diverse group of students in terms of age, experience, ethnicity, and goals. Community colleges offer a wide spectrum of clubs and activities that celebrate and support the diversity of their campuses. Athletics, student government, campus publications, and cultural events all thrive on student involvement.

## Support Services

Community colleges are committed to student success. They offer a comprehensive array of support services that include counseling, tutoring, advising, and career planning. Through developmental courses students can improve skills in math, reading, and writing.

## Community Service

Community colleges are committed to serving the needs of their communities. They often offer recreational, social, and cultural programs in addition to credit and noncredit courses and technical training. Some community colleges have developed partnership programs with businesses and serve as learning centers for local business people. Some work collaboratively with elementary or secondary schools and civic or government groups. Community colleges continually strive to meet the wants and needs of their specific communities, giving many community colleges their own unique local focus.

## Student Success

Many people who began their higher educations at community colleges have achieved recognition in a variety of fields, including communications, government, entertainment, business, and science. Their educations prepared them for the changing world in which they live today.

### Need a few tips on what to consider in selecting a college?

[www.collegeboard.com/collegematch](http://www.collegeboard.com/collegematch)

### Is a community college right for you?

[www.collegeboard.com/communitycollege/students/benefits](http://www.collegeboard.com/communitycollege/students/benefits)

### Would you like information about specific community colleges in America?

[www.collegeboard.com/csearch](http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch)

### What is the right community college for you?

[www.collegeboard.com/collegesearch](http://www.collegeboard.com/collegesearch)

### Need advice about paying for college?

[www.collegeboard.com/pay/](http://www.collegeboard.com/pay/)

### Would you like more information?

The College Board: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

American Association of Community Colleges: [www.aacc.nche.edu/](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/)