



# The Workforce Development Role of Community Colleges

Thomas Bailey, Director  
Community College Research Center  
Presented at the  
Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference  
ETA, USDOL  
Washington, DC  
September 15, 2009

# Workforce Development Potential

- Tradition of training—RN's, first responders, construction and manufacturing apprentices
- Local institutions with close ties to employers
  - Students and graduates more likely to stay
  - Advisory boards and joint planning
  - Frequent use of employees as part-time faculty
- Responsive to changing needs of those employers

# Workforce Development Credentials and Programs

- Occupational or technical AA degrees (two years)
- Occupational certificates (less than two years)
- Non-credit occupational programs
- Certifications

# Student Characteristics

Cert. > AA (Oc.) > AA (Ac.) > BA

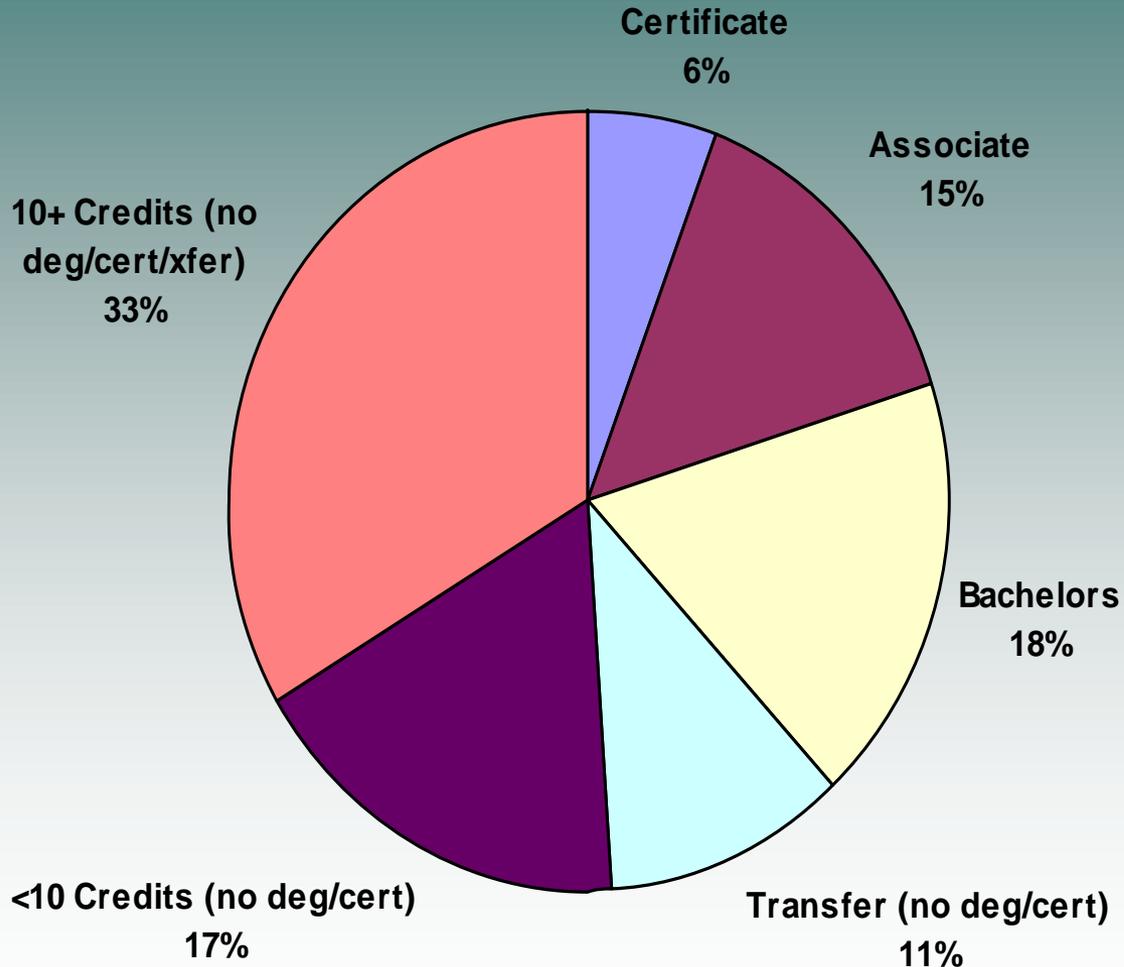
- Older
- More male
- More minority
- Lower income
- Lower test scores
- More part time
- More likely to delay
- More likely to seek “job skills”
- But still have high degree expectations

# Community College Occupational Programs Have Labor Market Value

Returns to:	Percent Diff. in Earnings compared to HS Grad	
	Male	Female
1 year of postsecondary:		
occupational courses	7.7*	5.3
academic courses	3.6	15.2*
Credential:		
Institutional certificate	6.5	16.3
Occupational AA	26.4*	38.5*
Academic AA	2.2	33.5*

Source: Author calculations from NELS

# CC First PSE Students Percent Distribution by Highest Outcome in All PSE Within Eight Years (NELS)



# Graduation—Students in AA Programs

- Traditional aged students
  - Occupational students have a 7 percent lower chance of achieving an AA or BA or of transferring, than academic students
- All first time students
  - Occupational students have about a 10 percent lower probability of achieving this “success”

# Barriers for Occupational Students

- Occupational students face more personal barriers and have fewer resources
- But supplemental academic and advising resources are either under funded or not effective
- Problem worsened by poorly structured and often bewildering programs

# Trends Reshaping CC Occupational Education

- 271K occupational associates degrees in 2007 (1/3 in health)—13% growth in 10 years
- 326K occupational certificates in 2007 (more than 1/3 in health)—32% growth in 10 years
- Faster growth of liberal arts (transfer oriented) degrees—32%
- Growing importance of transfer-oriented occupational associates degrees
- Transfer is still a difficult route to a BA
- Growth of non-credit programs

# Conclusion

- Occupational AAs have value but many students don't complete
- Growth of transfer oriented occupational degrees—need to improve the transfer function
- Growth of shorter term credentials—certificates, certifications, non-credit—these need more attention

# For more information:

tbailey@tc.edu

Please visit us on the web at

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>,

where you can download presentations, reports, *CCRC Briefs*, and sign-up for news announcements.

Community College Research Center

Institute on Education and the Economy, Teachers College, Columbia University

525 West 120th Street, Box 174, New York, NY 10027

E-mail: [ccrc@columbia.edu](mailto:ccrc@columbia.edu)

Telephone: 212.678.3091

*CCRC is funded in part by: Alfred P. Sloan foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, The Ford Foundation National Science Foundation (NSF),  
Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education*