

Adults and Community College Degrees

Posted on 10/27/2017

INSIDE HIGHER ED

Adults are coming to community colleges seeking a different approach to education, says Jim Jacobs, and that will require institutions to pay attention to a few important design features.

Most community colleges have adopted the mission of serving low-income, underprepared students who are in need of postsecondary education for any success in employment and earnings. There is growing consensus that this approach should encourage students to define a specific program of study at the outset of their college experience, with the college promoting strategic interventions to keep them on track to completing their program. But most of those initiatives are directed to students making the transition from high school to college, and little attention has been paid to applying this approach to the needs of working adults.

Public Agenda conducted a survey on perceptions regarding higher education in September 2016 and found public confidence waning, with just 42 percent of Americans believing that college is necessary for work-force success. That is a 13 percent drop in affirmative responses to the same question posed in 2009. And while a more recent poll conducted in February and March by New America found greater support for the potential of postsecondary education, only one-quarter of the respondents thought higher education was doing an adequate job.

These adults have come to college to build skills to seek better jobs. The majority have families who depend on them. As a result, they want effective and efficient education -- to take a few courses and then get back in the work force as quickly as possible. While this will present some challenges to the pathway efforts of colleges, any obstacles can be overcome with attention to a few important design features.

Source: [Inside Higher Ed](#) by Jim Jacobs, October 2017