Assessing Community College of Philadelphia

Student outcomes and improvement strategies

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About this report

This report was researched and written by Thomas Ginsberg, project manager of the Philadelphia research initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts. It was edited by Larry Eichel, project director of the initiative, along with Elizabeth Lowe, Daniel LeDuc, and Bernard Ohanian, and designed by Bailey Farnsworth. Frazierita Klasen and May Pritchard of the Pew Fund for Health and Human Services and Jennifer Thornton of Pew's government performance group provided important insight.

About The Pew Charitable Trusts

The Pew Charitable Trusts is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public, and invigorate civic life. Pew's Philadelphia research initiative provides timely, impartial research and analysis on key issues facing Philadelphia for the benefit of the city's residents and leaders.

Overview

Across the country, publicly funded community colleges are facing heightened pressure to produce graduates and skilled workers. The federal government has called for 30 percent more associate-degree holders by 2020, and extensive research has linked these credentials to better job prospects and enhanced quality of life, particularly for low-income individuals.

Community College of Philadelphia, known as CCP, shoulders this challenge in Philadelphia, a city with one of the highest poverty rates and lowest educational attainment levels among major U.S. cities. Founded in 1964 with the mission of making higher education affordable and accessible to all Philadelphia residents, CCP is the city's only public college offering associate degrees—designed to be completed in two years by full-time students—and transfer paths to four-year institutions leading to bachelor's degrees. It also provides technical education and training. Each year, it has the city's highest number of incoming enrollees, most of them Philadelphians, many low-income and the first in their families to attend college. More than 685,000 individuals have attended CCP; graduates include Charles P. Pizzi, former CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce; Philadelphia Fire Commissioner Derrick J.V. Sawyer; Pennsylvania state Rep. Dwight Evans; and Kathleen Hetherington, president of Howard Community College in Columbia, Maryland.

This report by The Pew Charitable Trusts seeks to show how well CCP is responding to the call to produce more graduates and fulfilling its stated mission of providing college access "for all who may benefit" and preparing students to "meet the changing needs of business, industry, and the professions." Our focus is the institution's effectiveness in helping Philadelphia residents obtain college credentials and marketable job skills.

For this study, we compared CCP with three groups of community colleges nationwide that share key characteristics with the school: one group consisting of colleges that serve large cities, the second made up of institutions with substantial numbers of minority students receiving financial aid, and the third located in regions with a high concentration of colleges and universities.

Relative to these comparable institutions, our analysis found that CCP has had mixed success in recent years. It produced 1,993 graduates in the 2013-14 academic year, the highest number since its founding 50 years ago. Overall, however, CCP students earned associate degrees and bachelor's degrees (from other institutions) at rates that were about average or below average. At the same time, the college's tuition was far above the median price of similar schools and was higher than every other community college in the Philadelphia region.

The vast majority of CCP's degree-seeking students are enrolled in liberal arts and other programs intended for transfer for bachelor's degrees, as opposed to technical and career-specific majors that lead to jobs. In addition, CCP has struggled to provide the job training that some employers require.

Other key findings of this report include:

- The six-year graduation rate for associate degrees at CCP, 17.5 percent, is slightly below the average of the comparable schools. But African-American and Asian students are slightly more likely to graduate from CCP than from similar institutions.
- CCP students are less likely than those at comparable schools to earn bachelor's degrees at other institutions, with a transfer success rate of just over 10 percent within six years of starting at the college.

- Like other public colleges, CCP has faced flat or declining taxpayer support in recent years. Its students, on top of paying relatively high tuition and fees, are more likely than others to get federal Pell Grants. But they are also more likely to take out loans and face debt.

- Nearly 70 percent of new CCP students must take remedial courses, a percentage not uncommon at comparable colleges. But students at CCP are more likely to finish their remedial coursework than their counterparts at other institutions, although they are less likely to graduate than their better-prepared classmates.

- The college has a mixed record on workforce development and training for local workers and employers. Since the Great Recession, Philadelphia firms reduced their use of CCP's corporate and contract training offerings to a larger extent than did firms at other Pennsylvania colleges.

Over the years, CCP has undertaken a variety of improvement initiatives, most of them targeted in nature or small in scale. Around the country, other colleges have reported progress through broader, more expensive efforts— such as Washington state's integration of remedial education and technical training, Chicago's doubling of its student advisers, and Tennessee's statewide "free college" program. CCP is launching its own program in fall 2015 to make college free for hundreds of Philadelphia high school graduates every year. The college also says it is now focused on hiring more advisers, lessening the choice of electives in its academic curricula, and making workforce development a top priority.

The president of Community College of Philadelphia, Donald "Guy" Generals, who took office in July 2014, said that CCP needs to make "significant change" and that the change relies, at least in part, on better relations between administrators and the union representing college faculty. All of Philadelphia has a stake in their success.

Why community college matters to Philadelphia

For Philadelphia, like most places, studies consistently find that a higher college-attainment rate leads to lower unemployment, higher personal incomes, better physical health, and greater civic engagement.[1]

Public, open-access community colleges have long positioned themselves to make higher education accessible, especially for middle- and lower-income residents, primarily by charging lower tuition than four-year universities and by waiving the test scores and admissions requirements that selective institutions demand. Community colleges offer associate degrees, designed to be completed in two years of full-time coursework, and a path to four-year bachelor's degrees via the transfer process. Many cities have publicly funded vocational or technical schools to provide training and certifications for immediate jobs. In Philadelphia, the community college fills some of this role, too. A growing number of private, for-profit colleges also compete for some of the same students in either academic or technical-education programs.

Community College of Philadelphia is the city's only community college. It admits any applicant with a high school degree or GED certificate and basic college-level competency, regardless of grades, test scores, or extracurricular achievements. The Philadelphia metropolitan region is home to some 100 other higher education institutions and many technical schools, including suburban community colleges. Some of them compete with CCP for tuition-paying students. Many others rely on CCP to turn often underprepared city residents into college-level students capable of attaining bachelor's degrees.

For CCP and other community colleges, the challenge is figuring out how to increase the number of graduates while still providing quality education and marketable skills as an open-access institution at a time of limited

financial support from government at all levels. Reflecting the growing national appreciation of the role of community colleges, the federal government has launched a broad effort to improve their outcomes. President Barack Obama has called for making two years of community college free for millions of students and expanding technical training programs, funded by the federal and state governments and contingent on efforts to improve outcomes. Several private funders, including the Lumina Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Aspen Institute, have underwritten or promoted reforms at community colleges, including CCP.[2]

Philadelphia residents, despite living in a region with an abundance of colleges and universities, have the lowest college attainment rate among the 15 biggest U.S. cities. In 2013, just 30 percent of adults 25 and older had an associate degree or higher, and 52 percent had no more than a high school diploma.[3] (See Figure 1.) Many of the region's postsecondary institutions cater to students who come from elsewhere and leave after graduation.[4] In contrast, CCP and Temple University—the city's leading public institutions—have served large numbers of students who hail from and remain in Philadelphia. In the mid-2000s, one-third of public high school seniors attended CCP as their first or only college, and 95 percent of students stayed in the city after leaving CCP.[5]

Figure 1
Educational Attainment in Philadelphia and Elsewhere
Percentage of adults 25 and older by highest degree attained
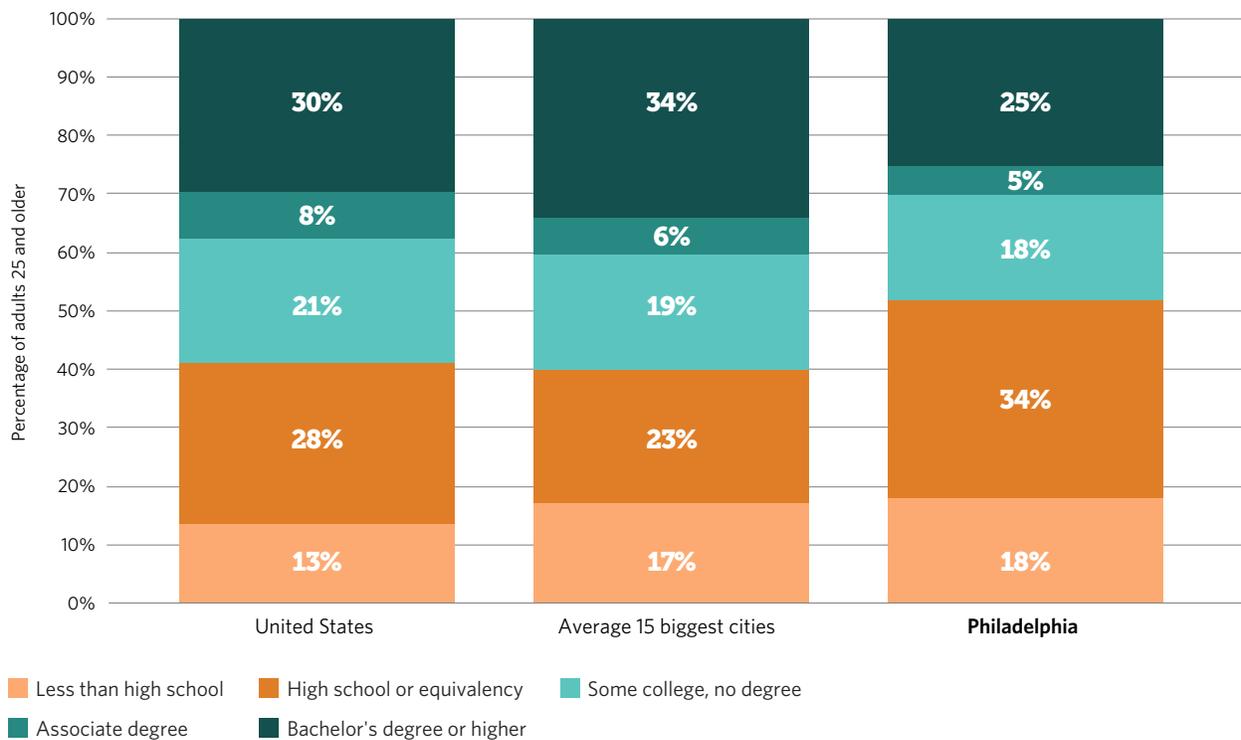
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, One-Year Estimate, 2013

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Key Facts About CCP

Structure: Community College of Philadelphia is a nonprofit, tax-supported, associate degree-granting college founded in 1964 by the city and governed by trustees appointed by the mayor. CCP operates independently of other Pennsylvania community colleges, all of which operate autonomously from the state's public university system.

Mission: CCP's official mission statement says, among other things, that the college "provides access to higher education for all who may benefit. Its programs of study in the liberal arts and sciences, career technologies, and basic academic skills provide a coherent foundation for college transfer, employment, and lifelong learning. The college serves Philadelphia by preparing its students to be informed and concerned citizens, active participants in the cultural life of the city, and enabled to meet the changing needs of business, industry and the professions." *

Location: The main campus is at 17th and Spring Garden streets, with three smaller campuses and a dozen neighborhood and corporate-client sites in other parts of the city.

Enrollment: In the past decade, the yearly average has been 36,000 students. About 95 percent were residents of Philadelphia.

Programs: Credit programs offer certificates, associate degrees, transfers, and education for careers and professional licensure. Noncredit programs include some workforce training programs, developmental (remedial) education, English as a second language, and basic literacy. The college has transfer agreements with most major universities in the region.

Accreditation: The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education set and review the college's educational standards. Other organizations and licensing authorities, such as the state Board of Nursing and the American Culinary Federation, certify some occupational programs.

Employees: In fiscal year 2014, CCP had 457 administrative staff and 1,050 full- and part-time faculty members, the latter represented by the American Federation of Teachers Local 2026.

Operating budget: $124.7 million in fiscal 2014.

Strategy: Every five years, CCP produces a strategic plan laying out specific targets for improvement and achievements. Once a decade, the college reviews all its operations, as required for reaccreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Community service: Major offerings include classes for soon-to-be-released prison inmates, legal-document assistance for emergency personnel, and dental-hygiene care for low-income residents.

* The CCP mission statement can be found at http://ccp.edu/about-us/mission-and-goals.

Intertwined with Philadelphia's low educational attainment is its high poverty rate of 26.3 percent and low median household income of $35,800. The city also suffers from gaps between available jobs and the skills of its workforce, such as its undersupply of information-technical workers and abundance of teachers. Without more college-educated residents and appropriately skilled workers, Philadelphia is likely to remain an economic laggard among big cities. The CEO Council for Growth, a business advocacy and research organization, has estimated that a 1 percentage point increase in college attainment could raise the regional total income by $4.4 billion.[6]

Over the past decade, Philadelphia government, civic, and education-sector leaders have worked to raise college graduation rates, encourage more students to stay in the city after graduation, and persuade more graduates to move to Philadelphia from elsewhere. Between 2008 and 2013, the last year for which U.S. Census Bureau estimates are available, the percentage of Philadelphians with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 21 percent to 25 percent. But the percentage of residents with associate degrees did not change, hovering around 5 percent. The annual number of CCP graduates rose from 1,602 in academic year 2007-08 to a record 1,993 in academic year 2013-14, a notable increase but not enough to change the citywide percentage.

"We have a lot of good things which we can build on. We need to leverage our strengths," Generals, the college's new president, said in an interview. "My goal is that we are a go-to institution for people looking for a quality education and for workforce development."

Accreditation Under Review

In 2014, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which bestows CCP's accreditation and was making its decennial review, warned the college that its reaccreditation "may be in jeopardy." The commission said CCP had fallen short in documenting how it conducts assessments of student learning and how it makes those assessments available to interested faculty and staff.

The college, which had never before received such a warning, obtained approval on every other measure and remains accredited pending a final review. CCP has given the commission more information and is making changes in its assessment system. The commission is expected to make its reaccreditation decision by summer 2015.

In an interview, the commission's communications director, Richard J. Pokrass, said such warnings are somewhat common, but loss of accreditation is rare. He added, "Students, faculty, staff, and supporters of CCP should not be alarmed by this [warning], as the college is very capable of addressing the commission's concerns about assessment and returning to compliance."

CCP's leaders also expressed confidence that the college will meet this challenge, along with others.

Assessing Community College of Philadelphia

Much of the analysis of CCP in the pages that follow is based on comparisons with three sets of other community colleges nationwide, as measured by the aggregated outcomes of their students. These peer groups were created in consultation with higher education data experts, and each is composed of schools that share particular characteristics with CCP:

- **Urban peers:** Publicly funded, associate degree-granting colleges in large cities with at least 10,000 credit-enrolled students (with some exceptions, explained in the Methodology section). This is our baseline group.

- **Pell/minority peers:** A subset of urban peers, those in which at least 60 percent of students receive federal Pell Grants and at least 40 percent of students are African-American or Hispanic. This takes into account CCP's large number of low-income and minority students.

- **Transfer peers:** Schools in metropolitan regions, such as Philadelphia, that have at least 1 million adults and at least 10 degree-granting colleges for every 50,000 college students. In these regions, students have a lot of choices—other than the local community college—about where to enroll, where to transfer, and how much to pay.

Who attends community college

During the 2013-14 academic year, 28,099 people took one or more credit courses at CCP. That was higher than average over the past several decades. (See Figure 2.) Since 2011, however, credit enrollment has fallen slightly at the college and about 10 percent nationally, as employment conditions improved and people opted for jobs over college.[7] At the same time, enrollment in CCP's noncredit programs—such as literacy and workforce development—hit its lowest point in three decades in academic year 2013-14, reflecting reduced budgets and other issues.

The college's total enrollment of 34,337 made CCP one of the biggest colleges in Philadelphia in academic year 2013-14 and the largest community college in the region and state. The federal Center for Education Statistics considers CCP a big community college, although not on the scale of the multicollege systems in Chicago and New York City, which have upwards of 100,000 students.

Among CCP students taking credit or noncredit courses in the 2013-14 academic year, about 53 percent were African-American, 24 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, and 10 percent Asian. (See Figure 3.) Most of the students came from neighborhoods with moderately high poverty and relatively low educational attainment, such as Germantown and the Lower Northeast. (See Figure 4.) More than a third hailed from neighborhoods with the city's highest concentrations of poverty and lowest levels of education. Eight in 10 received some form of financial aid, including about 6 in 10 who secured federal Pell Grants.[8]

The median age of CCP students was 25. Many had children, and a majority held jobs outside of class. Sixty percent were part-time students, and 62 percent were women. Eight percent were veterans, 11 percent took classes online, and 32 percent took evening or weekend classes. About 400 were high school students taking college courses, about 150 were foreign students, and 25 had been homeless at some point.

Figure 2

Enrollment at Community College of Philadelphia

Head count of students in credit or noncredit programs during an academic year

Credit
Noncredit
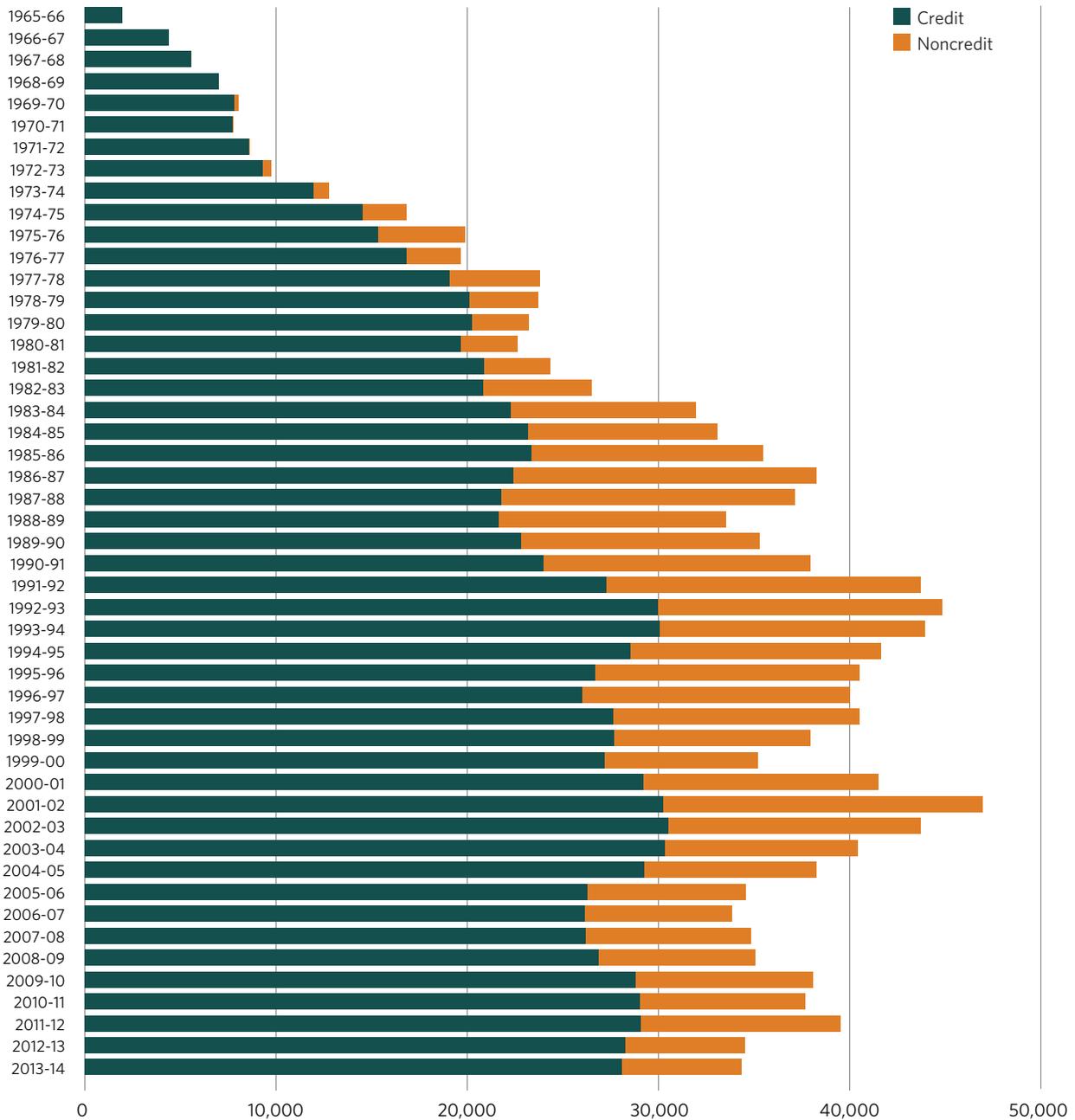
Note: An academic year includes four terms: late summer (July-August), fall (September-December), spring (January-May), and early summer (May-July). Head count figures are unduplicated; each student is counted once a year regardless of the number of terms in which he or she has enrolled. Students were counted only if they were still enrolled after 20 percent of a semester was complete.

Source: Community College of Philadelphia

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Figure 3

Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Students at Community College of Philadelphia

Compared with overall city population

Philadelphia

CCP

- Hispanic
- Asian
- White
- African-American
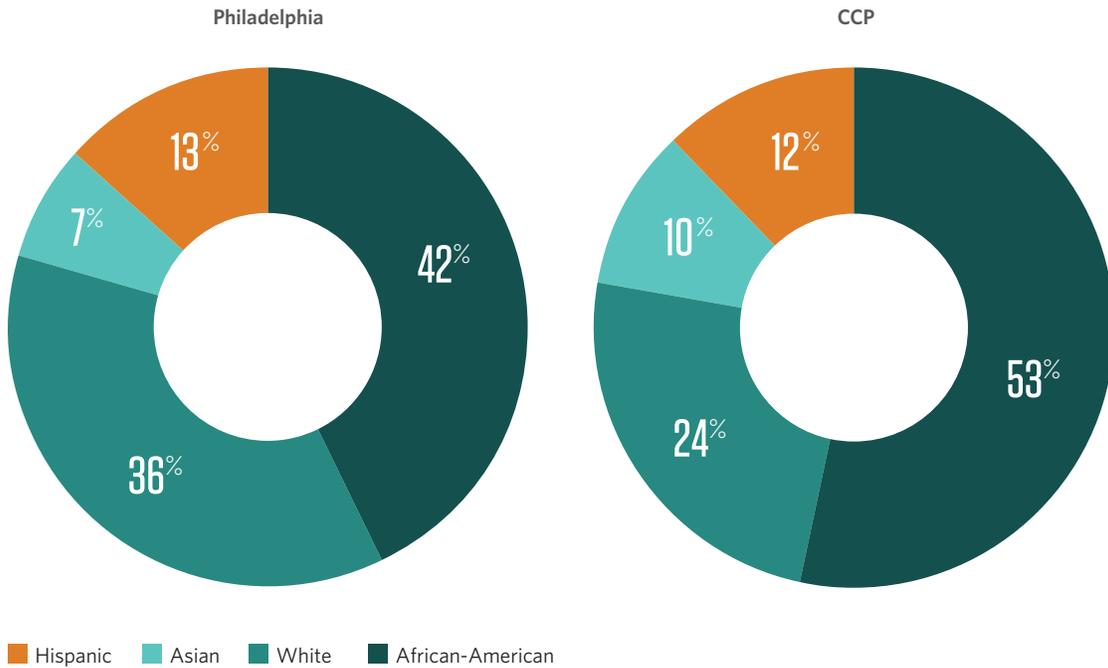
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, One-Year Estimate, 2013; Community College of Philadelphia, 2013-14 academic year

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The college's market penetration—measured by dividing its number of students by the area's entire adult population—has been relatively low. In the 2012-13 academic year, for instance, CCP's total enrollment of 34,506 students—which included credit and noncredit, full and part time, online and on campus—equaled 2.9 percent of the city's 18-and-older population. The median market penetration of the transfer-peer colleges—those located in other college-saturated regions—was 6.1 percent of their service areas' adult populations.[9]

St. Louis Community College, also located in a region with a high concentration of colleges, enrolled about 6 percent of its area's adults. So did Allegheny County Community College, which is surrounded by many other schools in Pittsburgh. The seven City Colleges of Chicago collectively reached 5.5 percent of Chicago's adults, and the City College of San Francisco enrolled 12.5 percent of that city's adults. In the Philadelphia suburbs, community colleges in Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Camden counties enrolled a median 6.2 percent of adults in their respective service areas.[10]

Officials from CCP, the School District of Philadelphia, and city government explain the college's relatively low market penetration by saying that some low-income Philadelphians—one of the college's target groups—are unaware of the options open to them at CCP and elsewhere, and do not get sufficient encouragement or help pursuing those options. Local colleges and universities, including CCP and Temple, have joined with nonprofits, the city of Philadelphia, and the School District of Philadelphia to try to spark interest in college attendance and to help former students return.

Thomas Hawk, a longtime CCP administrator who retired as chief financial officer in 2013, said figuring out how to get more Philadelphians to pursue college has long been a goal for CCP and is a pivotal question for the city overall: "If you could answer that question, it would go a long way to solving the economic development problems facing Philadelphia."

It is not clear whether CCP's campuses and neighborhood sites are in the best locations to encourage enrollment. All of CCP's four permanent campuses are located near major transit lines, but only one is in a section of the city that has extremely low college attainment and high poverty, West Philadelphia. The college has offered classes at temporary sites in other high-poverty areas, as part of its network of remote sites with partners and corporate clients.

Strategic Challenge From For-Profit Competitors

Community colleges have new sources of competition. For-profit institutions, such as the University of Phoenix and Strayer University, have expanded significantly, in part by using online learning options to target the same students traditionally served by community colleges. The competition is reflected in CCP's own surveys of graduates: Only 29 percent described the college as their only higher education option in 2013, down from 46 percent in 1994.*

This change poses major strategic questions for CCP and the taxpayers who support it. To what extent is the 50-year-old college currently filling an educational void or simply competing on quality, cost, and benefits with other institutions? Our research stopped short of addressing these questions.

"Community colleges are being disrupted now, and we must adapt to the highly competitive environment," said Generals, CCP's president. "If we don't find a way to reposition ourselves, private colleges and for-profits will continue to gain market share."

* Community College of Philadelphia, "An Assessment of Community College of Philadelphia's Effectiveness in Preparing Students for Transfer and Employment," December 1996; and "Survey of 2013 Graduates," May 2014, http://path.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/gradsurv/2013gradsurvey.pdf.

Another point of access for potential students is online or distance learning. According to a marketing survey commissioned by CCP, a majority of Philadelphians who were considering an associate degree said they wanted to be able to take courses online.[11] In the fall of 2013, CCP had 4 percent of its program majors available via the Internet. That figure was slightly higher than the Pell/minority peers' median of 3 percent and the urban peers' 2 percent. At the same time, CCP had 11 percent of its full-time credit students enrolled in at least some online
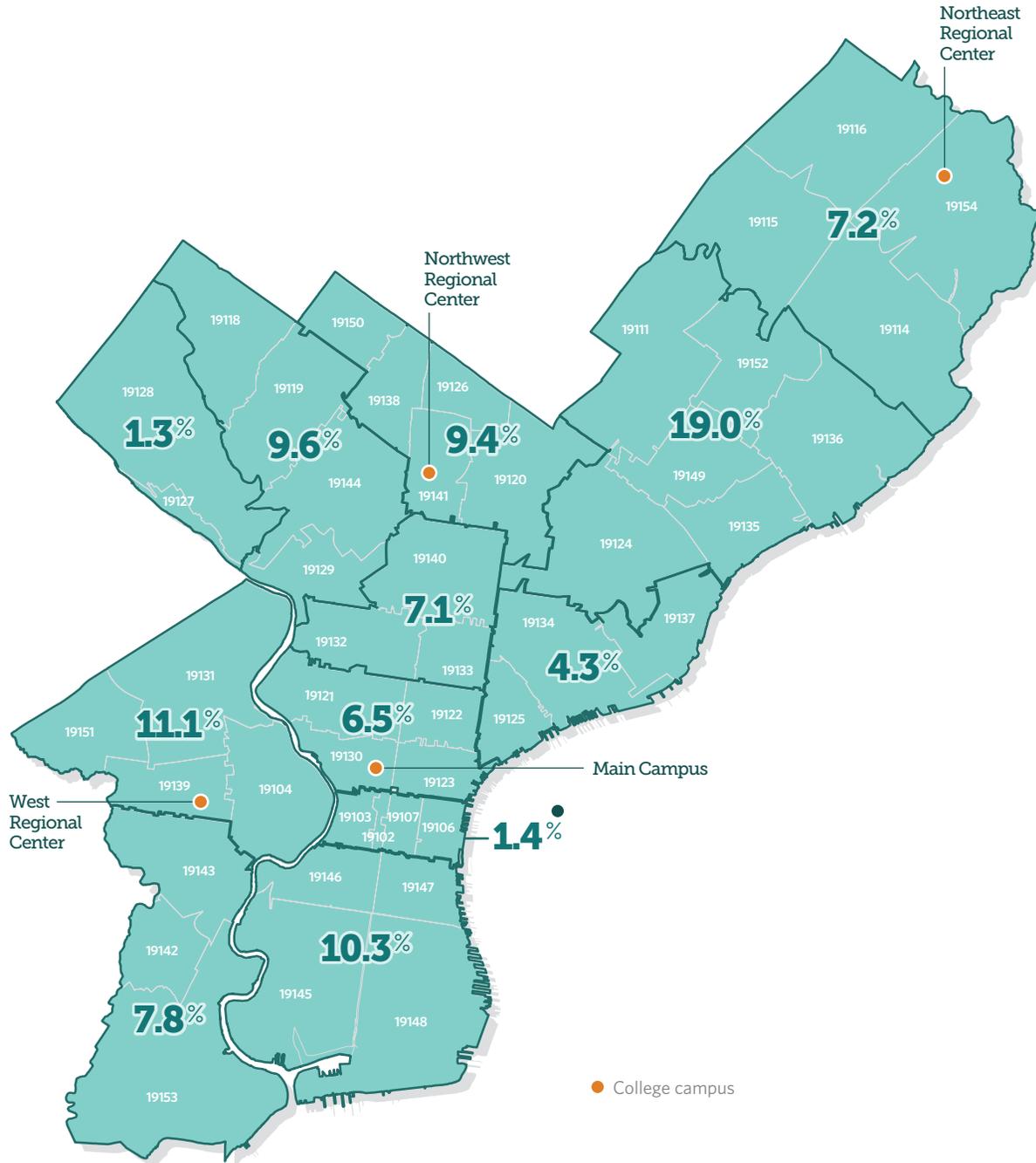
Note: The geographic divisions shown here were created and provided by the college; 5 percent of students live outside the city.

Source: Community College of Philadelphia

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courses, about the same as the peer colleges. In its five-year strategic plan, adopted in 2013, CCP pledges to roll out Massive Open Online Courses, also known as MOOCs, by 2017 and increase the number of credit hours that its students take online.

In the strategic plan, the college sets a variety of goals related to enrollment, including marketing initiatives to boost applications from high school seniors by 10 percent, new adult students by 5 percent, and international students by 10 percent. The college estimates that its free-tuition program, once launched in fall 2015, will raise enrollment by about 100 students initially and more in the future.

Tuition and public support

Compared with other institutions offering higher education, community college is a bargain. But it is not as affordable as it once was. Public funding levels have held steady or fallen, and colleges have leaned more heavily on student tuition and fees. CCP and other Pennsylvania community colleges rely more on students and financial aid, and less on state and local taxpayers, to cover their budgets than do the other groups of community colleges studied for this report.[12]

From the 1960s through the 1980s, CCP and other community colleges in Pennsylvania got roughly one-third of their revenue from the commonwealth, one-third from local governments or school districts, and one-third from students and financial-aid providers. By the early 2000s, the state's share had fallen below one-third of CCP's revenue, and the local share, which in Philadelphia comes from city government, had dropped to about 19 percent. In 2005, the state created a new funding formula based on enrollment trends and labor needs in the city. But officials never fully implemented the formula and later capped the funding.

In 2013, the state share had dropped to 23 percent and the city share to 15 percent. As a result, CCP relied on student tuition, fees, and financial aid for about 61 percent of its operating revenue. (Federally funded financial aid accounted for more than half of the student share).[13] (See Figure 5.)

In fiscal 2014, the college's operating budget was nearly $125 million. Excluding capital funds, the commonwealth provided $28.2 million, down from $37.7 million in inflation-adjusted dollars in fiscal 2003. City government provided about $18.8 million, down from an inflation-adjusted $25 million.[14] (For fiscal 2016, Governor Tom Wolf has proposed raising Pennsylvania's operating subsidies for the college by $1.9 million, and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter would raise the city's contribution toward operating funds by $2 million. CCP said it would use those funds, if they materialize, to hold tuition and fees flat for the coming academic year.)

In the past as government funding declined, CCP raised its sticker price—tuition and fees, not counting grants, loans, or scholarship discounts. From 2003 to 2013, the amount went up 56 percent, adjusted for inflation, or 5 percent per year on average. In the 2012-13 academic year, the last year for which all peer-college data were available, the full-year price was $4,800 for a Philadelphia resident for full-time enrollment. (It rose to $4,920 for academic year 2013-14 and $5,550 for 2014-15. Non-Philadelphia state residents are charged about double that amount, and non-Pennsylvania residents triple.)

Across the country, tuition and fees also have gone up as public support has fallen. Since 2008, Los Angeles City College has more than doubled its sticker price, adjusted for inflation, as have most California community colleges; Detroit's Wayne County Community College's price went up 48 percent; and Delgado Community College in New Orleans rose 41 percent. Only a handful of institutions reviewed for this study reduced their student sticker prices, including Baltimore City Community College, which cut tuition and fees by 27 percent.[15]

Figure 5

Revenue Sources for Community College of Philadelphia

Fiscal year 2004

5%
19%
31%
45%

Fiscal year 2014

1%
15%
23%
61%

■ City   ■ State   ■ Student   ■ Other
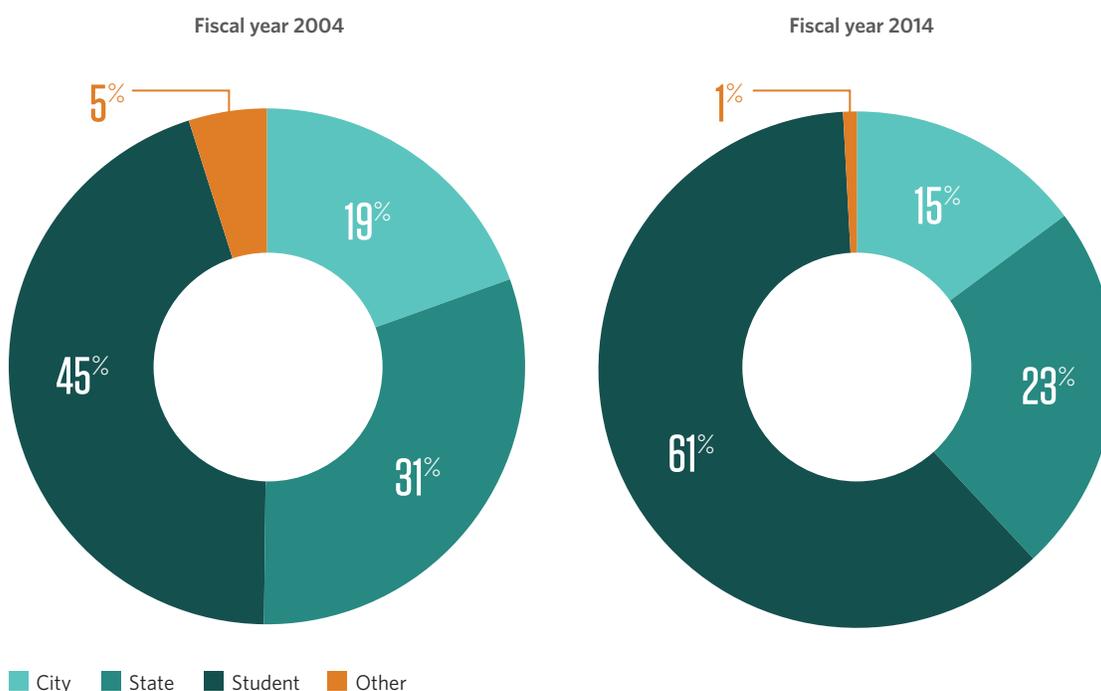
Note: Amounts exclude capital funds from government sources.

Source: Community College of Philadelphia

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In every year studied for this report, CCP was the most expensive among eight public community colleges in southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. In academic year 2012-13, Delaware County Community College's tuition was second-highest at $4,660 and Burlington County Community College's the lowest at $3,615. CCP also charged more than the transfer peers ($3,232 median) located in regions with considerable price competition. CCP's price was higher than colleges in two of the nation's most expensive cities: The City University of New York's community colleges ($4,218) and the Community College of San Francisco ($1,238). All figures include fees and are for local residents for a full year. (See Figure 6.)

CCP officials said the higher cost is due to Pennsylvania's lack of an effective funding formula for community colleges and Philadelphia's higher costs vis-à-vis the suburbs. They also said their suburban competitors are better able to hold down their in-district tuitions by attracting students from other suburban counties who pay the higher out-of-district tuition.

Figure 6

Annual Tuition and Fees for Community College Students
For in-district residents with full-time, full-year enrollment (excluding grants and aid)

■ 2012-13   ■ 2010-11*   ■ 2008-09*
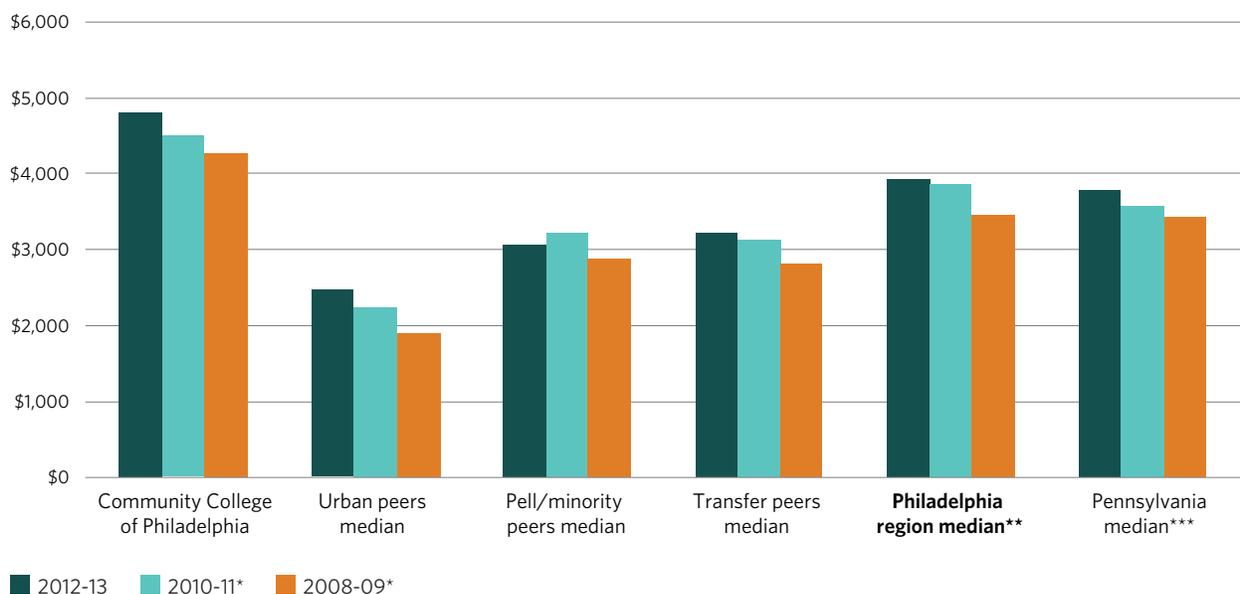
* Inflation-adjusted to 2013 dollars.

** Includes eight public community colleges in the Philadelphia metropolitan statistical area, excluding CCP.

*** Includes 13 public community colleges in Pennsylvania, excluding CCP.

Sources: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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Many CCP students do not pay the sticker price. In 2013, about 65 percent of students received federal Pell Grants, the eligibility rules for which have since been changed. The college's Pell Grant percentage was higher than any other community college's in the region and one of the highest in the urban peer group. Also, its percentage of full-time students with loans—46 percent in academic year 2011-12, the last comparison year available—was greater than at most other community colleges, although the average loan amount per student was smaller.[16] Student-loan default was not part of this study, but other research suggests that it is most common among students who do not graduate, a big group at CCP.[17]

Using this financial aid and other philanthropic support, CCP to some extent mitigates its upfront tuition burden on students, although many may wind up with loan debt. In recent years, CCP has added financial aid advisers and taken other steps to increase student aid, including collaborating with the Mayor's Office of Education's Financing College Campaign.[18] Results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, an annual project run by researchers at the University of Texas, Austin, showed that CCP students have been slightly more likely than a national sample to say they used aid advisers and were satisfied with them.

Starting in fall 2015, the college and its fundraising arm, the Community College of Philadelphia Foundation, will launch a program to cover any tuition-and-fees gap for certain students enrolled full time in credit-bearing majors on track to a degree. (Details in the last section of this report.)

Money Is a Hurdle, Not a Barrier

Quaris Carter, 39, had no money, no job, and no regular place to live in 2011 when he walked into CCP hoping to leave behind a drug-ridden past and fulfill a dream of college. "I went to the Homeless Student Support Project and told them what was wrong," he said. "They told me to stop complaining and work on solutions."

To pay for his studies in criminal justice, Carter obtained financial aid, received assistance from college-run support projects, took odd jobs, and sold his blood every three months. He moved between shelters, keeping his belongings in a CCP locker, and could be seen doing homework on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. CCP faculty did not let him slip or give up. Last spring, Carter received his Associate in Arts degree and planned to attend La Salle University to major in sociology.

His recommendation to others: "You need to find out who you are, be honest with yourself, and seek help and advice. I may know what I want, but not how to get it."

In recent years, the college and foundation have stepped up efforts to raise philanthropic support to offset tuition. The foundation conducted a major fundraising campaign in 2011 that netted $4.1 million. In fiscal 2013, it raised $2.6 million, above the median of comparable colleges, as tracked by the Council for Aid to Education.[19]

In its strategic plan, CCP said it is committed to "developing new and innovative sources of revenue, and eliminating the overreliance on city and state resources, and on tuition." Generals, the college's new president, who was not involved in drafting the strategic plan, said: "The current business model is not sustainable. There needs to be a significant change. We need to identify alternative funding models, and we need to consider ways to increase enrollment."

Student educational outcomes

Community colleges serve a variety of needs for students, employers, and communities: degree-seekers need credits for graduation or transfer; workers enroll to obtain or upgrade skills; adults are fulfilling personal interests or needs, such as learning English as a second language or basic skills they missed in high school. For degree-seeking students, success can be measured by the rate at which students catch up to college-level proficiency (developmental or remedial education), stay in college (retention), graduate with certificates or degrees (completion), and perhaps go on to other institutions and earn higher degrees (transfer and transfer success).

"CCP does serve the needs of a part of the population. They have been an incredibly good partner in a lot of our work, particularly in thinking about how to encourage student persistence and completion," said Claire Greenwood, director of the CEO Council for Growth, part of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and an organizer of Talent Greater Philly, a collaborative campaign to boost educational attainment.

Developmental education

CCP and most community colleges are "open" admission institutions, meaning they admit any service-area resident with a high school diploma or GED certificate and basic college-level competency. This admission model is the root of community colleges' diversity as well as one of their toughest challenges: how to assess and serve academically unprepared students.

Every year, about 7 in 10 incoming students—around 4,000 people—fall below CCP's academic standards for its first-year credit courses. They include former Philadelphia high school students with degrees or GED certificates, as well as other adult learners, immigrants, and ex-offenders. By not demonstrating college-level proficiency in math, reading, or writing (English) on a standardized assessment, the ACT Compass, they are steered to one or more remedial classes, known as developmental or "gatekeeper" courses. These are noncredit programs designed to prepare students for freshman courses.

Nationwide, remedial or developmental students accounted for an estimated 68 percent of enrollment at community colleges in recent years, and many peer colleges in this study reported a similar percentage. At four-year universities, the average was 40 percent.[20]

In moving its students through remedial to college-level courses, CCP has performed much better than the average. In developmental mathematics, about 43 percent of the college's students finished the remedial coursework after two years, compared with roughly 25 percent for the urban peers, according to Achieving the Dream Inc., a network of colleges that compiles data and performed analyses for this study. About 59 percent of CCP students completed developmental English writing courses within two years. That was about 20 percentage points above the urban peers. (The Pell/minority peers did not have enough data for comparison.)

A Remedial Success Story

Abraham Boakai, 22, did a poor job on the ACT Compass college placement exam in 2013 and found himself taking developmental courses. They were different than he expected: "You just need to devote more time. There is a lot of reading and writing. But once you have the time, you can do it."

Finally, two years after finishing World Communications Charter School, and three years after arriving from Liberia, Boakai completed CCP's remedial program. In the fall of 2014, he was preparing to major in liberal arts at the college.

It might not have happened without CCP's Center for Male Engagement, which provided a summer study program, tutoring, a safe place to study, help finding a job, and intervention in a dispute with a teacher. "CME was really helpful." He said CCP's relatively low cost will enable him to afford a bachelor's degree, too.

"My advice: It does not matter where you start your college experience. Going to a bigger university and graduating from a bigger university are two different things. … Just be determined and know that you can make it, because once you drop out, it is hard to come back. You have to push yourself to the limit in order to succeed."

Analysis also found that African-American students—male and female—did much better at CCP than at comparison colleges in completing developmental courses. Even so, African-Americans at CCP tended to lag behind Asians, Hispanics, and whites in developmental-course completion, and men tended to lag behind women.[21] (See Figures 7 and 8.)

CCP's strong remedial-completion rates may be due in part to its considerable efforts that have included greater assistance and encouragement for students in preparing for the ACT Compass, support programs for certain at-risk students, and the merging of some remedial courses to help students finish them. The nonprofit organization Achieving the Dream (which assisted with this study) has designated CCP a "Leader College" among its participating colleges partly for its developmental-completion rates.[22]

The college has set a goal of further boosting remedial-completion rates by 8 percentage points and reducing the incoming remedial need by 10 points through programs with local schools.[23]

However, CCP has had much less success with its developmental students ultimately earning degrees. The four-year graduation rate for students who started in CCP's remedial courses was about 8 percent, on par with peer colleges but far below the 14 percent for students who started in CCP college-level courses. (Completion rates are shown in detail later in this report.) CCP officials said they are taking steps recommended by another reform organization, Complete College America, which are reviewed later in this report.

Retention

Using data from Achieving the Dream, we compared CCP with peer colleges on their percentages of all credit students—full and part time—who came back to school each year unless they had graduated or transferred right away to another college.

Overall, CCP's retention rates improved in recent years from mostly below average to generally near the average, according to the analysis by Achieving the Dream. Three periods were examined: academic years 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10. On average over those periods, about 50 percent of CCP students who started in the fall of one year came back in the fall of the subsequent year, compared with about 48 percent for the urban peers.[24] (See Figure 9.)

There were notable differences between CCP and the other colleges when compared by race, ethnicity, sex, and remedial status. African-American, white, and nonremedial students had higher retention rates at CCP than at the urban peers. Hispanic students, however, had a lower year-to-year retention rate.

At CCP, as with other community colleges, men came back to school at lower rates than women, and Hispanics and African-Americans at lower rates than whites and Asians. Students who had started in developmental courses and went on to college-level courses had similar retention rates to students who had gone straight into college-level programs.

CCP's own data show that a variety of factors affect retention: more than a third of departing students had relatively low GPAs or never attempted a college-level course.[25] Many reported financial difficulties or family obligations.[26] Some "stopped out" with hopes of returning; others left without degrees but went on to other colleges anyway.

Figure 7

Percentage of Students Completing Developmental Math Courses
Within two years of starting in 2007, 2008, and 2009 (average)
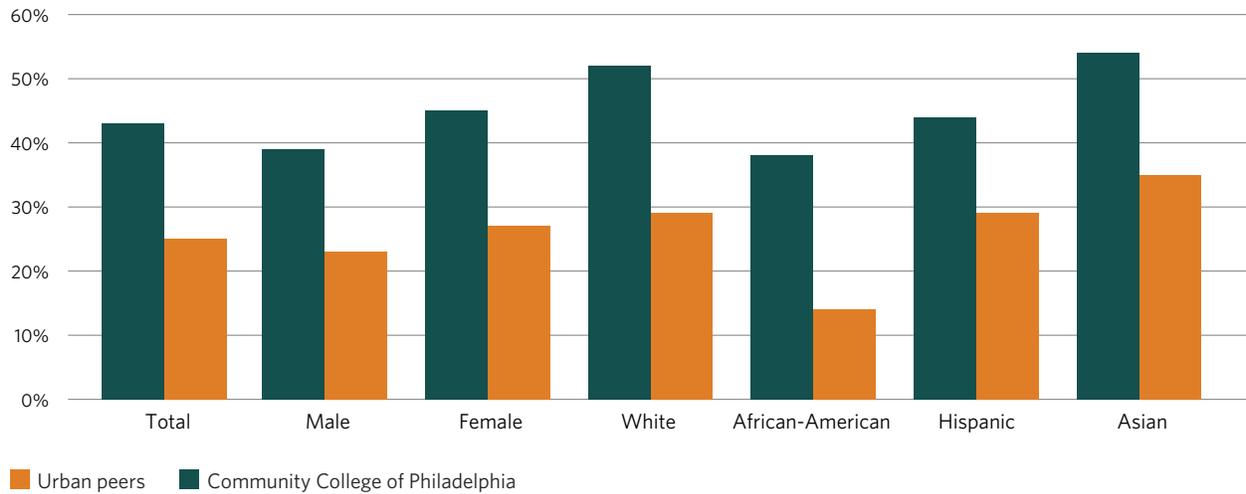
Note: Pell/minority peers lacked data for analysis; transfer peers not relevant for this measure.

Source: Achieving the Dream Inc.

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Figure 8

Percentage of Students Completing Developmental English Courses
Within two years of starting in 2007, 2008, and 2009 (average)
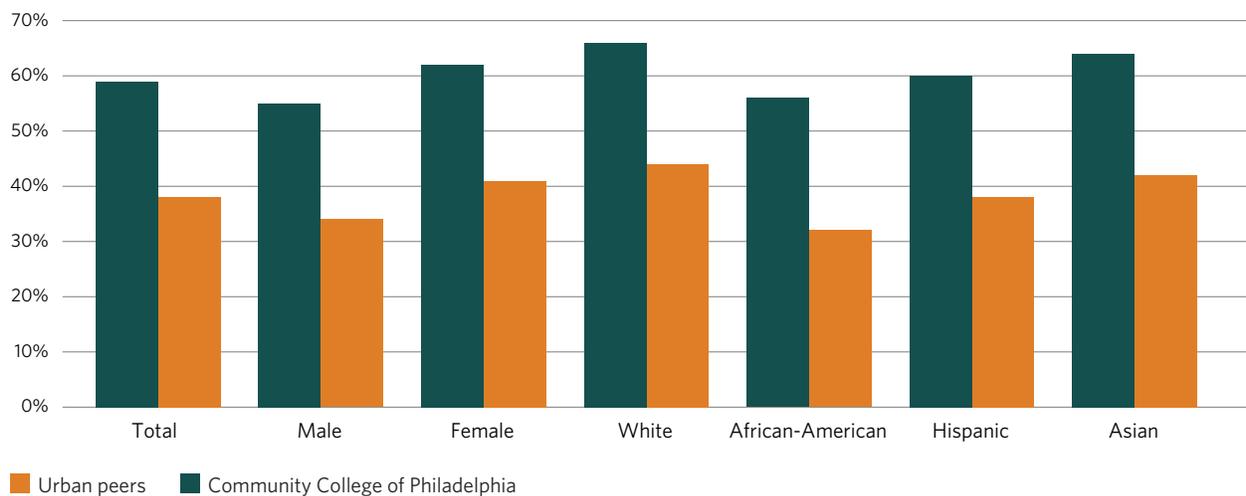
Note: Pell/minority peers lacked data for analysis; transfer peers not relevant for this measure.

Source: Achieving the Dream Inc.

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Figure 9

Student Retention

Percentage returning the following fall after starting in 2007, 2008, and 2009 (average)
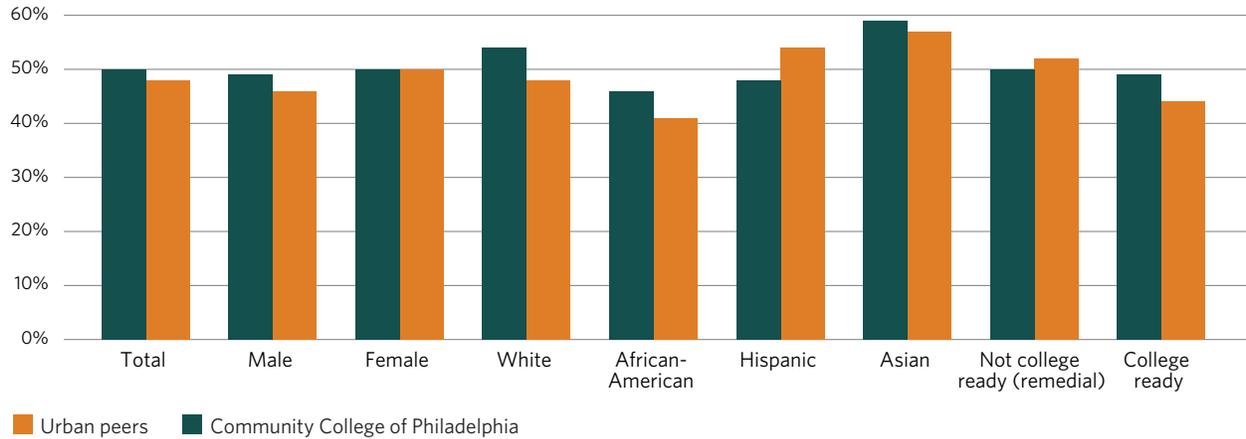
Urban peers ■ Community College of Philadelphia

Note: Pell/minority peers lacked data for analysis; transfer peers not relevant for this measure.

Source: Achieving the Dream Inc.

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Persistence Pays Off

John Wilcox, 49, had quit CCP once and was determined to correct his mistake. His first attempt was in 1996 after stints in reform school and jail, where he had earned his GED certificate. College was much harder than he anticipated. "At college, they expect you to study," he said. "I was blown out of the water."

A dozen years later, the single father with no career prospects landed in the now-defunct College Without Walls program at Harcum College in Bryn Mawr. "It just opened up my eyes. It gave me a boost of confidence and self-esteem." Then, with three classes to finish, Wilcox transferred back to CCP with the help of Graduate! Philadelphia. "I was determined to see if I could rectify my bad performance the first time. And I did it!"

Now with an associate degree in behavioral health, Wilcox is looking for a job while he figures out how to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology. Two decades after leaving CCP, nothing was sweeter than stepping onto the street in his cap and gown. "People shouted, 'Where'd you graduate from?' and I said, 'Community!' and they said, 'Hey!' and it was just a natural high, better than any of the drugs that had messed me up. I will never forget it."

Separate data from the Research Center of the National Student Clearinghouse, a nonprofit that compiles student outcomes across many colleges, showed that a relatively high proportion of individuals who started at CCP in 2007 did not have degrees six years later and were not enrolled anywhere. The figure was 52 percent, compared with 45 percent at the urban peers and 49 percent at the Pell/minority peers. The remainder had completed a degree or were still enrolled and pursuing a first degree. (See Figure 10.)

These figures mean that CCP's students are more likely than their peers to earn some college credits but not get degrees. The city and the nonprofit Graduate! Network have mounted campaigns and offered assistance to Philadelphians to help them finish their degrees.

In their strategic plan for the coming five years, college officials said CCP intends to undertake a variety of retention initiatives and set a goal of raising the rate by 8 percentage points by 2017.

Figure 10
Enrollment and Degree Status, 2007-13
Percentage of students still in college or out of college with or without a degree after six years
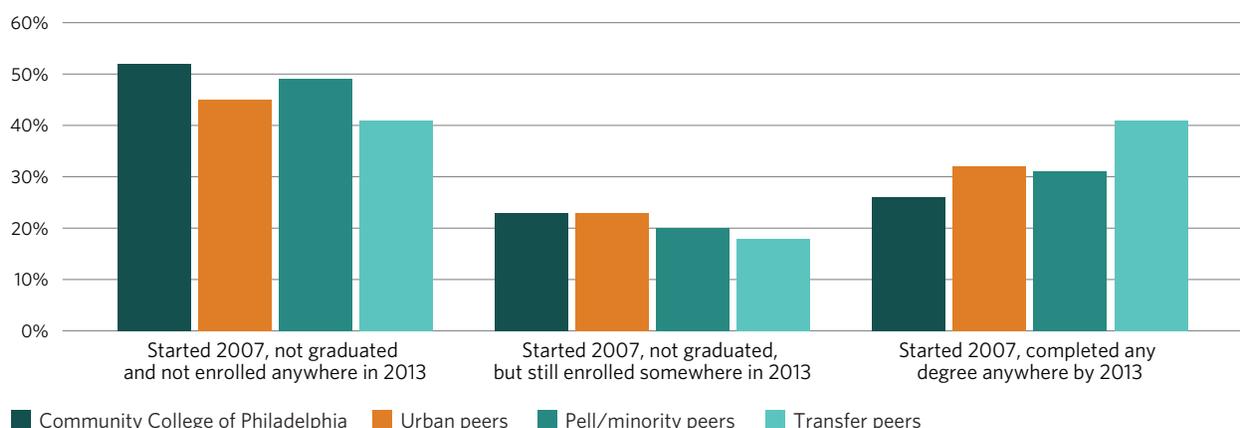
Note: Base cohort is students without a prior completion and who were actively seeking degrees, defined as those taking at least 12-15 credits during most of the 2007-2013 study period. See methodology for full description.

Source: Achieving the Dream Inc.

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Completion

For students at a community college, degree completion can be daunting. Personal situations and financial challenges often get in the way. Students who are low-income, first-generation in college, or ill-prepared academically have a particularly tough time getting to the finish line.

Completing a degree program at CCP requires 60 credits, which traditionally takes two years of full-time coursework; most degree-seeking students take longer due to stops, starts, reduced schedules, and do-overs. CCP has three types of associate degrees: Associate in Applied Science for students usually heading straight into careers or the job market, Associate in Arts for students studying liberal arts and intending to go on to other

colleges, and Associate in Science for students from the college's business and technology majors also aiming for four-year degrees. Also counted in the completion rate are "proficiency" certificates linked to career-oriented majors taking less than a year to earn, and "academic" certificates linked to transfer majors usually taking more than a year to earn. Some of the certificates can be "stacked" toward a degree, and some graduates earn both certificates and degrees.

The college differentiates between credit-program students who seek CCP degrees or certificates and those who do not, based mostly on their credit loads each semester. Of all credit-course students in a given year, about 40 percent took more than 12 credits per semester—giving them full-time status—and were considered to be degree- or certificate-seekers for purposes of this study. The completion rates used in this study capture only students deemed to be degree-seekers. (See the Methodology section for a full definition.)

As of 2013, 26.5 percent of degree-seeking students—full and part time—at all public community colleges nationwide earned associate degrees or certificates at their first college within six years of starting, according to the National Student Clearinghouse.[27]

At CCP, the six-year completion rate was 17.5 percent. That was lower than the urban peers (20 percent) and the Pell/minority peers (21 percent), according to National Student Clearinghouse figures.[28] (See Figure 11.) In its plan for the coming five years, CCP set itself a goal of boosting six-year completion rates by 4 percentage points by 2017.

Figure 11

Student Completion

Percentage earning degree or certificate after four or six years
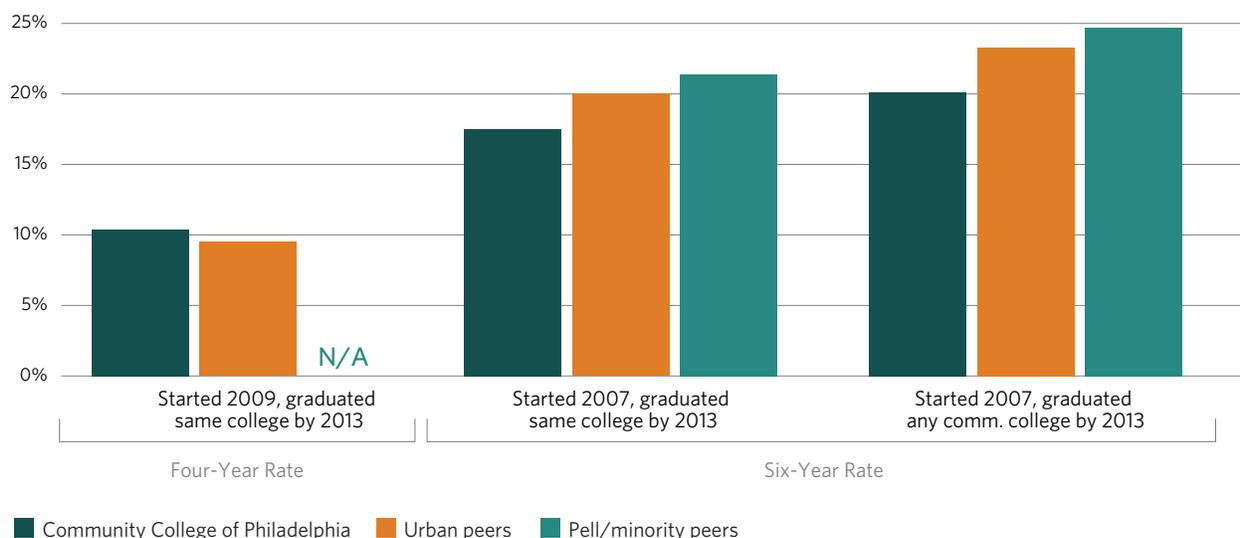
Note: Base cohort is students without a prior completion and who were actively seeking degrees, defined as those taking at least 12-15 credits during most of the 2007-2013 study period. Four-year rate not available for Pell/minority peer group. Transfer peer group not relevant for this comparison. See methodology for full description.

Sources: Achieving the Dream Inc., National Student Clearinghouse

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The odds of graduating from CCP have shown some improvement in recent years. Separate data from Achieving the Dream show that CCP's four-year completion rate rose from 9.2 percent to 10.4 percent from 2011 to 2013. The urban peer average stayed relatively constant over the period, moving from 9.3 percent to 9.5 percent.[29]

According to this four-year graduation data, CCP also rated slightly higher than average for some subgroups. In particular, Asian and African-American students graduated at higher rates from CCP than from the peer colleges; Hispanic and female students mostly matched the average.

Developmental students graduated from CCP at roughly the same rate as they did elsewhere, even after completing their remedial courses at higher rates than at peer colleges. Nonremedial students had higher four-year completion rates at CCP than at the other institutions. (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12
Student Completion by Groups
Percentage earning degree or certificate four years after starting in 2007, 2008, and 2009 (average)
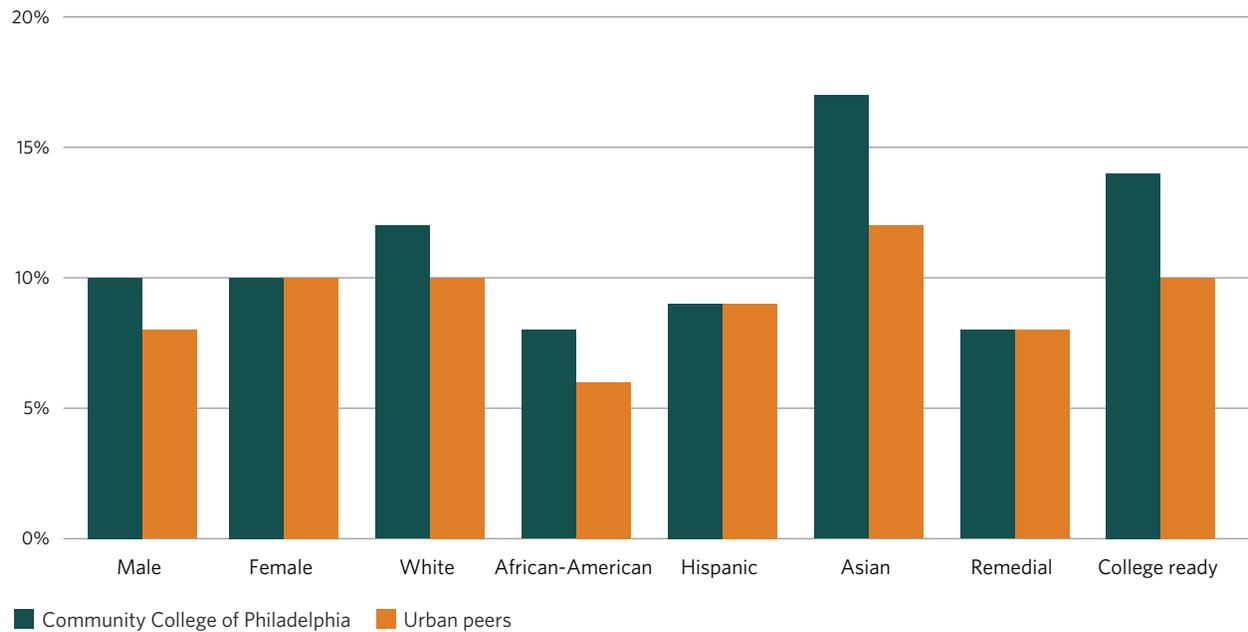
■ Community College of Philadelphia   ■ Urban peers

Note: Pell/minority peers lacked data for analysis; transfer peers not relevant for this measure.

Source: Achieving the Dream Inc.

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The college attributed its improvement in four-year completion rates to a variety of targeted initiatives, including its "early alert" advising system (explained below) and its expanded, personalized orientation programs aimed at teaching incoming students what to expect in college.

Transfer

Many community colleges promise students a pathway to higher degrees at other colleges or universities, armed either with an associate degree or simply with college credits. Some community colleges see such transfers as their primary role. Others focus instead on teaching skills for jobs and serving employers.

CCP is predominantly a transfer college; a survey of community college students nationwide found that CCP students were more likely than those at other colleges to say they intend to transfer for a bachelor's degree. Typically about 60 percent of CCP graduates with associate degrees went on to other colleges within five years.[30] That was a higher graduate transfer rate than at comparison schools. Another 35 percent of the much larger group of nongraduating students, who left CCP without degrees, also enrolled in other institutions within five years.[31] The rest either never intended to transfer or changed their plans.

Comparing all degree-seeking students regardless of their transfer goals, our analysis found that CCP students ultimately earned bachelor's degrees at rates that were average or below those of peer colleges. Just over 10 percent of students who started at CCP in 2007 had earned bachelor's degrees by 2013. Their six-year success rate was close to the Pell/minority peers (nearly 11 percent). It was lower than both the urban peers (about 14 percent) and transfer peers (about 18 percent).[32] (See Figure 13.) Full-time CCP students had greater ultimate success than part-time students, and those with associate degrees did better than those without degrees, as was the case at peer institutions. This study generally found that CCP's transfer and retention rates were closest to the Pell/minority peers.

Student Transfer Success, 2007-13
Percentage earning bachelor's degrees at any institution over six years
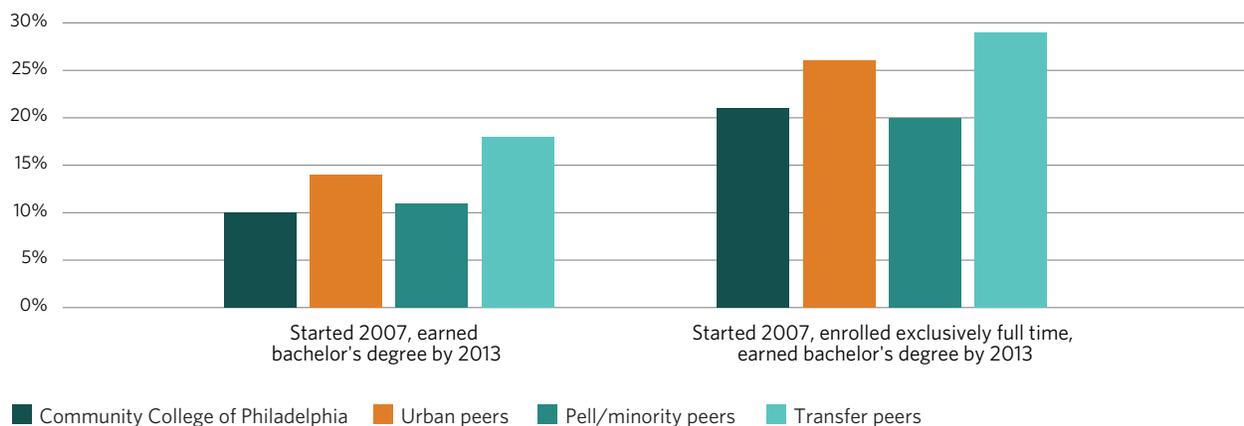
Note: Base cohort is students without a prior completion and who were actively seeking degrees, defined as those taking at least 12-15 credits during most of the 2007-2013 study period. See methodology for full description.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse

The conditions hampering completion at four-year institutions include money, family, and academic performance. Additionally, some experts said Pennsylvania's decentralized public higher education system may make transfers harder in that state than in some others.[33] Pennsylvania mostly relies on its public colleges to make their own "articulation" agreements with each other to define the credits that can be transferred. In 2006, the commonwealth started requiring the 14 universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and the state's 14 community colleges to admit each other's graduates and accept at least some credits, although not all.[34] CCP has doubled its number of agreements over the past decade.

For CCP transfer students, the top destination is Temple University. In the fall of 2014, Temple accepted 561 former CCP students—some had associate degrees, others did not—out of 721 applicants, its highest fall acceptance rate in a decade, according to Temple data.[35]

Temple officials said they are committed to helping CCP students succeed. They singled out CCP's faculty for pushing course- and program-level transfer agreements with Temple and for getting students who need remedial work ready to seek four-year degrees at the city's universities.

CCP's transfer and transfer-success rates suggest that the college's challenge is not just creating transfer pathways but improving students' chances of finishing at the other institutions. As other studies have found, students of color from disadvantaged backgrounds—the predominant group at CCP and the Pell/minority peers in this report—face a range of obstacles to educational success that other students do not face.

In its strategic plan, CCP has set a goal of boosting the percentage of all students who transfer—with or without degrees—by 5 percentage points and helping raise the attainment of bachelor's degrees by 4 percentage points.

Transfer Path to the Ivy League

Kerry Walters, 25, enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 2014, making him one of a small but growing number of CCP graduates who transfer to a top-tier private university. "My advice: Community college can be a good place to start if you come from an unusual academic background or you're a nontraditional student," Walters said. "It offers a lot of transfer opportunities."

Even before going to UPenn, Walters was not a typical CCP student. He landed in Philadelphia after being home-schooled in Minnesota. He completed his Associate in Science degree in mathematics in just two years. He mixed his praise of CCP and its faculty with a lament over the college's money struggles.

"All the issues I encountered stemmed from their lack of funding," he said. "They had trouble with very old equipment, it was all pretty outdated. They were doing some renovations just as I was leaving. … To get through in that situation, it does take some motivation."

Majors and employment

The specific majors and skills taught at CCP are integral to the college's value and function in Philadelphia. Are students majoring in fields that will benefit them? Are courses aligned with what local employers need? Do majors attract enough students to justify the college's costs? While hardly the only ways to gauge the college's offerings, these are core questions from the city's perspective.

Skills gap

Like many cities, Philadelphia has gaps between the skills that its residents possess and those its employers say they need. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and the city's workforce-investment board, Philadelphia Works Inc., identify "high-priority" jobs each year for which there is or will be unmet demand for workers. The high-priority associate degree-level jobs currently are deemed to be in health care, early education, legal support, and some technical fields.[36]

In a separate analysis for this study, the private econometrics firm EMSI looked at the demand for associate degree-level skills in the city. According to EMSI, Philadelphia employers have unmet demand for holders of associate degrees or certificates in fields including sales and marketing, child care, social services, and health care.[37]

CCP has program majors in many of those fields, including allied health and early childhood education. But a majority of the college's students are in liberal arts majors, which were not in demand at the associate degree level, according to the labor market analysis. The college points out that its liberal arts programs are intended for transfer, and that job prospects hinge on proceeding to a bachelor's degree.

Reshaping programs and majors based on projected skills gaps can be tricky. The college must predict industry trends and student interests, balanced against its own costs in hiring faculty within union rules, acquiring training equipment, and making the course credits transferrable. To help make decisions, CCP uses labor market information and surveys its former students. Deans of career-focused programs are expected to form and consult regularly with committees of advisers from private industry. In academic year 2010-11, for example, CCP used industry input to create a major in the fast-growing field of electronic medical records, only to cancel it after learning that few of its students were getting jobs, according to former CFO Thomas Hawk. On the other hand, the college appears to have done well with a business major in culinary arts; its enrollment has soared over four years, reaching 238 students.

Health Care Program

Health care is one of CCP's strongest career programs, thanks to the large number of jobs in the region's health care industry. Since 1967, more than 7,200 students have earned allied-health degrees. The college estimates that its graduates filled about 13 percent of the open health care jobs in the region from 1994 to 2007.[*]

As of the fall of 2014, CCP offered seven associate degrees and four certificates in health care careers. Registered Nurse is the most popular, with 100 to 130 students earning associate degrees in the program each year.

The nursing program is facing a new challenge: In 2010, the Pennsylvania Board of Nursing began raising the average pass rate that nursing school students must attain on their certification exam. The rate now stands at 80 percent. In 2011 and 2013, CCP came in below the threshold and has been dropped to "provisional" approval status. The college must raise its pass rate in 2015 or face losing state approval to train nurses.[†]

In a statement, the college said it has been reviewing its curriculum and offering graduates additional exam preparation to help them vault into "a profession with changing expectations."

Still, the program enjoys a solid reputation. "They put a lot of energy into their nursing program," said Cheryl Feldman, director of the 1199c Training and Upgrading Fund, a workforce-development agency for unionized health care institutions in the region. "Our students who go to CCP do fine there, and they do get jobs. … They are competitive with their colleagues in other schools."

[*] Community College of Philadelphia, "Impact of Community College of Philadelphia Health Care Programs on the Philadelphia Region" (August 2007), http://path.ccp.edu/vpfin-pl/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_165.pdf.

[†] Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing, "Approved Nursing Programs," http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_159698_742032_0_0_18/RN_Programs.pdf.

Career vs. transfer programs

Of all students taking credit courses at CCP in recent years, about 71 percent were enrolled in "transfer" programs in liberal arts, business administration, a multidisciplinary culture and science major, and other academic majors meant for further study towards bachelor's degrees. About 24 percent were in "career" programs such as nursing, paralegal studies, and accounting, which are meant for immediate employment and often include preparation for licensing exams. (The remaining 5 percent were "nonmatriculating" students taking classes on either track just for personal enrichment, not for a degree).[38]

The career-vs.-academic choice has shifted in recent years. In the fall of 2008, about 75 percent of CCP students were enrolled in majors classified as transfer programs, and about 21 percent were in career programs. Over the

past decade, students in CCP's career programs had graduation rates about 2 percentage points higher, on average, than students in transfer programs.[39] Nationwide, studies have found that low-income students tend to have higher graduation rates in occupational majors than in academic ones.[40]

In career programs, there is sometimes a tug-of-war between staying until graduation and leaving for a job. For example, CCP's automotive technology program, based in its West Regional Center, sees some of its students leave to take jobs before finishing their degrees or certificates. That lowers the program's completion rate, even though its students arguably are succeeding, said William March, a teacher. "Sometimes we see them come back years later to complete their degree, usually because they have an opportunity to go into management," March said, adding that the college is planning to invest in more offerings to encourage students to return.

The employment rate of former CCP students is a key measure of the college's effectiveness, but the school only recently began trying to use state labor records to capture this information, as other colleges have done. Results were not available for this study. In CCP's 2013 survey of graduates (a self-selected group responding voluntarily), about half of those from career programs said they had gotten jobs related to their majors, up from the recent low point of 34 percent in 2012.[41]

In its strategic plan, CCP's goal for its voluntary survey was to show a 10-point increase in the percentage of students who secured jobs in their majors. The college also said it is revising coursework in its most popular transfer majors—liberal arts and a multidisciplinary major called culture, science, and technology—to teach basic workplace skills, all described further below.

Workforce development and contract training

Adults without degrees who are jobless often rely on publicly funded workforce-development programs to get training or education needed for work. Community colleges are key providers of this training. Looking at CCP's outcomes in this area sheds some light on how well it is performing one of its core missions of preparing the city's workforce to meet the needs of its employers.

The college's Corporate Solutions division is the main coordinator of its workforce training for private-sector firms in the city. Measured against other Pennsylvania public colleges—the best data available—the division has faltered in recent years: In fiscal 2013, for instance, it signed up just 1 percent of all manufacturing-sector trainees statewide through the Workforce and Economic Development Network of Pennsylvania. That was down from 2 percent four years earlier and was third-lowest among 33 participating schools.[42] Overall, Corporate Solutions reported 36 corporate clients in fiscal 2013, down from 47 in fiscal 2010.[43] There also was a reduction in the number of employees earning college credits through the division's Corporate College program. The division, which was designed to generate extra revenue for CCP, also reported steeply falling revenue over the period. (The division has participated in a major federally funded retraining program, but its data have not yet been released.[44])

In interviews, some private employers attributed their reduced usage of Corporate Solutions both to the recession and the college's shortage of appropriate or convenient programs. On the latter point, the Mayor's Manufacturing Task Force reported in 2013 that CCP's engineering program lacked suitable equipment for training in advanced manufacturing, awarded fewer certificates than other schools, and offered "coursework of limited applicability to manufacturing."[45]

Advanced Manufacturing

Decades after big manufacturers left Philadelphia, local officials are hoping for a surge in high-tech advanced manufacturing that would require information technology technicians, designers, and precision welders with industry certification and, sometimes, associate degrees.

Believing the sector can grow in the city as it has statewide, the School District of Philadelphia, with support from the John S. and Leigh Middleton family, is planning a Center for Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing at Benjamin Franklin High School near CCP's main campus. The center would be modeled on the Lehigh Career & Technical Institute in Schnecksville, Pennsylvania.

Clyde Hornberger, a former institute administrator now employed by the Philadelphia school district, said CCP has not been offering the skills, certifications, or experience with particular equipment that employers need. He called on the college to create new pathways for high school students. "We cannot do this without … a strong, seamless partnership" with CCP, Hornberger said.

Generals said he hopes to collaborate with the district on a "comprehensive career technical program" that offers students a clear path from high school through college, along with "internships and cooperative education" at advanced manufacturing firms.

Waverly Coleman, assistant dean for CCP's Business and Technology division, which oversees Corporate Solutions, acknowledged the challenges. "We are mainly a transfer institution, and we have not had the capability of doing the technical skills training that manufacturers want," he said. "We have focused on soft skills. So, we're now working on upgrading [the equipment, facilities and curriculum]. We hired a full-time business developer to create training opportunities for us. The need has to match our capability and experience."

The college's record on publicly funded workforce programs for low-income residents is mixed. Consider the Perkins program, which uses federal funds to provide technical education and job placement. In fiscal 2013, the last year with data available, 77 percent of CCP's Perkins students graduated and 76 percent landed jobs or enrolled somewhere else; the statewide averages were 88 percent and 90 percent, respectively. CCP's rate had improved slightly from previous years but not as much as other colleges'.[46]

In a different federal-state program, one for welfare recipients with children, 7 percent of those enrolled at CCP got associate degrees and found jobs, compared with 16 percent at the other colleges in fiscal 2014. In this case, CCP's rate had risen faster than the others'.[47] One caveat on both comparisons: CCP serves an urbanized population with higher unemployment and more college options than populations served by most Pennsylvania community colleges.

In a different economic development strategy, CCP was accepted in 2012 into the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, a privately funded national project that offers select small-business owners customized

business courses and financing opportunities. Corporate Solutions has provided classrooms and teachers, who must undergo training from Goldman and use Goldman's curriculum. "Classes" of small-business owners have completed the program at CCP to rave reviews. "It forces you to take time to think about things, which is the main problem with running a small business. And the networking was phenomenal," said E. David Kramer, a participant and owner of Domain Implementation Services Inc.

But on workforce-development programs overall, Generals acknowledged that CCP has been weak and promised changes. In 2015, the college is creating a new, high-level position—vice president for workforce and economic innovation—to oversee training programs and coordinate with academic departments. In its strategic plan, CCP set a goal of tripling the number of Corporate Solutions client companies to 100 each year and increasing the number of workforce development trainees. "In a climate of reduced state and federal funding, we plan to intensify efforts to reach out to business and industry and collaborate on objectives that support workforce stability and close the widening opportunity gaps," the college said in its plan.

Improvement strategies

Boosting student completion and employability has become the goal at many community colleges. Federal, state, and local officials, along with philanthropies and education experts, have responded with many strategies to get there. As a signal of his desire to improve CCP's performance, Mayor Nutter appointed himself to the college's board in 2012, a rare move for a local government leader. Last July, Generals took the helm as president, replacing Stephen Curtis, who had held the office since 2001.

Before Generals' appointment, CCP already had been making changes, including participating in Achieving the Dream, which analyzes community colleges' data for reform efforts. Most of the changes have been relatively small-scale efforts aimed at particular groups of students, such as veterans or African-American men.

Thomas Bailey, director of Columbia University's Community College Research Center, said small-scale programs were "the dominant model in the mid-2000s. We and others have done rigorous evaluations of them. They have modest short-term effect but not strong enough to change institutional performance. ... They might get completion rates from 15 percent to 16 percent, but not to 50 percent."

David Thomas, CCP's dean of adult and community education, said the college's administrators have been looking for ways to expand the scope and impact of reform. "It's all about taking more of these things to scale," Thomas said.

What follows are examples of strategies adopted by other community colleges that education researchers have held up as promising.

Management-Faculty Relations

Experts both inside and outside the college said CCP's faculty members and the union that represents them often play a decisive role in designing and executing any improvement strategies.

Research by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program has found that colleges with trusting union-management relationships tend to incorporate faculty members into decision-making, a key to successful implementation of those decisions. Those with "an atmosphere of mistrust" lack that route for improvement.*

In recent years, CCP's administration and the American Federation of Teachers Local 2026, also known as the Faculty and Staff Federation of the Community College of Philadelphia, have had a tense relationship; it took them two years to agree on the current contract, and the union opposed the hiring of Generals, saying he lacked experience.

Asked about Generals since his hiring, union co-president Stephen Jones said: "We've gotten off to a positive start. I think both the union and the president have made an effort to keep open minds about each other. We've agreed that … when we deal with issues, we're going to apply a value system of student needs first."

The new president said his reception from the union "has been positive. Faculty have been welcoming and open to my ideas. The relationship is new, but I am committed to working on a strong and productive relationship for the benefit of our students."

* Aspen Institute, "Defining Excellence: Lessons From the 2013 Aspen Prize Finalists" (2013), http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/DefiningExcellence_2.pdf.

Focus on employment

One of the most comprehensive sets of reforms at any urban community college was undertaken by the City Colleges of Chicago, a system with seven institutions and nearly 115,000 students. The system has long struggled with low completion rates—lower than CCP's—in a city with a large number of disadvantaged and minority students. In 2010, Mayor Rahm Emanuel appointed a new system president from private industry, and she launched a reform plan entitled "Reinvention," focused on preparing students for jobs and coordinating with local employers.

The plan called for greater specialization of each college in focusing on certain local industrial sectors; renegotiation of union contracts; reorientation of most majors and curricula toward employment and careers; an increase in the number of advisers and cutting its student-adviser ratio in half; and the launch of a new marketing campaign.

According to federal data, the Chicago system's four-year graduation rate for full-time credit students rose from 10.3 percent in 2010 to 14.9 percent in 2012, the last year for which numbers were available. One of the schools, Kennedy-King College, had the biggest increase in graduation rates among the Pell/minority peer colleges in this study.[48]

Paul Harrington, director of the Center for Labor Markets and Policy at Drexel University, said that an employment focus is a main reason that technical colleges have higher completion rates for associate degrees than community colleges with similar types of students, citing the public Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Such colleges, he said, "really reduce dropout rates; they are better attended, particularly for young men; and job placement is strong. The integrated academic-occupational model is best."

Sallie Glickman, a onetime CCP trustee and former head of the city's workforce-development board, said academic-oriented institutions have a hard time staying attuned to job skills: "The challenge that community colleges, and CCP in particular, have is that the culture of having bodies in a classroom does not really align fundamentally with what employers need."

The opening lines of CCP's five-year strategic plan state the importance of employment and workforce development, although the plan contains few concrete or large-scale initiatives to better link faculty, employers, and curricula. The plan promises improvements to career-placement services and a new business model for the Corporate Solutions division.

The new college president said: "There is a growing recognition that even liberal arts schools need to prepare students for work and employment. … I'm talking about contextualized learning; it requires a comprehensive approach to education, and it's not unique to CCP. Many faculty members are focused on higher learning rather than practical learning. We need to prepare students for a global economy, and our programs and curricula should reflect that reality."

Curriculum redesign

Some colleges are removing electives and prescribing more courses. The Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) at CUNY's community colleges puts students into a progression of required courses with few electives. Various studies have linked the strategy to higher graduation rates, including a 66 percent jump at CUNY.[49]

CCP is applying elements of this approach in its most popular majors. In liberal arts, the college is removing some electives, adding some required courses, and changing the learning milestones for progressing to the next level. Other changes are being considered for the culture, science and technology major. The college has gotten help from Complete College America, an organization funded by the Lumina Foundation that has advised the City Colleges of Chicago and others.[50]

"If a student chooses to go off the path, we will not be requiring them to get back on. But we are lessening the choices, and strongly encourage them to stay on the path," said Sharon Thompson, CCP's associate vice president for academic affairs.

Finding a Goal and Sticking to It

Fannetta Sanders, 34, started and stopped three times as a part-time CCP student and still has not graduated. "I have trouble finishing things. I get distracted," she said. "Even after picking a major, I'm still not sure what I want to do."

The daughter of college graduates, Sanders went to a university in Virginia after high school but came home to Philadelphia after her sophomore year. "I was unsure what I wanted to do." In 2003, she transferred to CCP to study communications and theater arts. She stopped later that year, resumed in 2010, stopped again in 2011, and resumed again in 2013, always part time and in different majors while holding a full-time job.

In the fall of 2014, Sanders stopped again, 16 credits shy of graduating. Single with no children, she vowed: "I will go back someday, because I just want to finish. Finishing is a personal goal. … My mom had a similar situation. She didn't finish college, then went back, to CCP, then Arcadia University, and now has a master's. She is very inspirational for me. If my mom can be a wife and mother and do it, then so can I."

Developmental education

The strategies used at top-performing colleges to boost remedial completions, and ultimately graduation rates of onetime developmental students, involve bringing more students straight into college-level courses, accelerating their developmental course loads, providing intensive tutoring, and combining remedial courses with job training.

CCP has adopted some of these approaches to improve its completion rates, which were higher than average for its peers. In academic year 2013-14, it compressed two courses of developmental reading and writing into one for certain students, based on evidence that accelerated courses can boost completion rates. For students most in need of remedial support in writing, the college has begun offering a shorter and free workshop in place of the lowest-level developmental class. It is considering a similar change for lowest-level math. So far, the college reports that workshop completion rates have failed to meet expectations. It is exploring additional strategies, such as peer mentoring and specialized counseling, saying improvement is of "paramount importance."[51]

The college also has been offering students with very low ACT Compass scores an automatic retest and says the results have been encouraging. In addition, the school has been expanding its assessment criteria. "We are looking at life experience and grit. We're not doing away with the Compass yet, but we are looking at different ways to measure" student skills, said Joan Bush, CCP's dean of educational support services.

College officials have been pushing incoming students to take a more serious approach to the ACT Compass, in hopes they will do better on it. "Now we are highlighting the seriousness of the test and trying to get more information about the test to our prospective students," said Samuel Hirsch, CCP's vice president for student affairs.

Trying to reduce the need for remedial education, CCP has partnered with the School District of Philadelphia and some charter schools. In the mid-2000s, the district administered the ACT Compass to select 10th-graders to try to accustom them to college-level work. In 2013, English teachers at CCP and the district held a summit to align curricula, with the goal of increasing seniors' odds of avoiding CCP's developmental writing courses. But many efforts, whether successful or not, have been stopped or limited due to state or city budget cuts, according to CCP and district officials.

Student support and advising

Community college students face many academic, personal, social, and economic issues. Picking a major, navigating financial aid, mastering a tough class, and lining up a transfer are just a few. Personal problems and money woes also can derail an education.

Some colleges have begun requiring students to meet regularly with advisers or counselors to discuss career plans or find support beyond classes, if necessary. CCP requires counselors to meet students when they start at CCP, and it has orientation courses and services for certain first-year students. It also has a staff of counselors just for students' personal issues. However, it has not required regular advising meetings about academic issues or career plans, and has not used a caseload system in which students are assigned to a particular adviser on an ongoing basis. Instead, like some other colleges, CCP relies on faculty members to devote some of their time to academic advising.

Dissatisfied with CCP's advising and counseling system, two external student support organizations said they have had to cultivate their own unofficial contacts at the college to ensure help for particular students.

"We found that our students who attend CCP are often the most vulnerable, on a number of levels, and need more individualized advising and support than CCP had been providing," said Joan Mazzotti, executive director of Philadelphia Futures, an independent provider of financial, social, and academic support services for public college students.[52]

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, former director of outreach at the nonprofit Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, whose immigrant clients take English as a second language and other courses at the college, said that individual CCP staff often do not have information pertinent to immigrants and that the institution has been unresponsive to the center's inquiries. "We have [worked] with Delaware County Community College and Montgomery County Community College, and neither has ignored us like this. They respond to us."

CCP administrators and faculty-union leaders have acknowledged shortcomings in the system of academic advising for students, but have disagreed over compensation and other issues for faculty who do double duty as advisers. Generals said he plans to create five full-time adviser positions starting in the 2015-16 academic year, a first for the college.

CCP also emphasized that it has made improvements in other ways—by adjusting deadlines for financial aid applications, relocating counseling offices into a central building, and deploying "coaches" from its Office of Student Success Initiatives to help at-risk students. In the future, CCP said, it will provide financial planning tools to help students find and secure more private grants and aid.[53]

In a version of "learning communities" found at other colleges, CCP said it tries to put certain at-risk students with similar backgrounds, assessment levels, or class schedules into the same tutoring sessions so they can support one another. For developmental education students, CCP has "learning labs" with tutors available to help individuals or groups, though not necessarily to provide career or other advice.

The college said its Center for Male Engagement, which brings together African-American men for study and support, has helped boost retention and completion rates among black men. Other support programs target veterans, women, and homeless students.

CCP and many institutions use early alert or early intervention systems to collect behavioral information about students, flag those who appear to be at risk of failing courses or leaving college, and alert staff for intervention. CCP calls its system "an excellent predictor of risk," while acknowledging that only about half of its faculty members contribute information to it.[54]

To address students' personal financial needs, CCP in 2013 joined with the private Greenlight Fund to install Single Stop, an online portal and advisory system that connects students to the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), income-tax filing assistance, and other nonacademic support.

New offerings, more financial support

Twenty-one states now let community colleges bestow four-year degrees in career programs, in an effort to give more students a shot at bachelor's degrees that employers demand, without having to transfer. The impact on completion and transfer rates is not clear, although some institutions report that enrollments have risen.[55] CCP is exploring this option for some of its career programs, in conjunction with the independent Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges. Typically such a change requires approval by state officials and accrediting organizations and coordination with employers, and may affect four-year institutions in the region.

Taking a different tack, New York City has launched a six-year college program starting in ninth grade and extending through the second year of community college. While not going as far, CCP said it was considering expanding its Middle College program, under which certain teachers and seniors from Mastery Charter High School have held classes at CCP for credit at both institutions, known as dual enrollment. (The program is separate from CCP's Advance program, through which top-performing high school students take CCP courses for college credits.)

"That is an ideal model, where you have rigor, accessibility, affordability, and a strong understanding of what it's like to be a college student and to walk the campus with other students," said Karyn Lynch, the Philadelphia school district's chief of student support services.

Another way to reach more students is to go after young and middle-age adults who lack degrees, such as people who started and never finished college or those who never received high school diplomas. Philadelphia has been a leader in such efforts through the Graduate! Network. CCP officials said one of their most promising but underfunded programs has been Gateway to College, in which residents ages 16 to 21 without a high school diploma can get one and then continue in college.

In a costlier and broader strategy to reach more students and improve completion rates, Tennessee community colleges became tuition-free in fall 2014 for graduates of local high schools in return for their community service. Initial applications were more than double the number projected.[56] Chicago's community college system and school district will offer free tuition for high-GPA high school graduates. The Obama administration has proposed a joint federal-state program to make the first two years of community college free nationwide.

Emulating those approaches, CCP and its fundraising arm, the CCP foundation, are launching a program in fall 2015 to cover any tuition gap for graduates of city high schools who qualify for a Pell Grant, enroll full time in credit (nonremedial) courses, and maintain a 2.5 GPA in a degree major, among other requirements. CCP expects that about 440 students next year and 850 in subsequent years will qualify for this "50th Anniversary Scholarship," which will be good for three years or until graduation. Funding will come primarily from donors and the foundation, which estimates the cost at $200,000 the first year and $350,000 by year three.[57]

Another strategy—boosting the number of international students—has been adopted by some other community colleges. These students typically pay higher out-of-district tuition, which helps offset in-district tuition. Generals said he plans to pursue this avenue at CCP.

Coordinated action

Our study found that strategies and actions with the greatest impact on student outcomes tended to be coordinated at the system level, often statewide, and not at the individual college level.

This approach would be difficult to pursue in Pennsylvania, because it does not have a state-run, centralized system of public two-year colleges. And none of the Philadelphia-area college officials interviewed for this study supported the idea of centralization under a state-run system.

College leaders said their schools already cooperate through their voluntary, independent association, the Pennsylvania Commission on Community Colleges. Working together, the 14 colleges have won federal workforce-development grants. Some share administrative and research capabilities, although CCP is not part of such an arrangement. In its strategic plan, CCP pledged to continue participating with the commission "to increase the number of collaborative initiatives."

Coordinated strategy and action are also key for workforce development and job training, including partnering with employers. The North Carolina Community College System has created Align4NCWorks, a statewide campaign to integrate and implement workforce-development strategies at all of its 58 public colleges and local workforce agencies. The Massachusetts public college system joined with the state's workforce-development system and Gaming Commission to create a program to train and certify hundreds of casino workers, funded partly by a casino license fee.[58]

CCP has worked with Philadelphia's workforce-development agency on specific projects and grants, but less on coordinated strategies or integrated services recently. Their biggest collaboration, the Collegiate Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development, focused on the Navy Yard, was created in 1994 but has reduced its scope and has not been replicated, according to its former director, Joseph P. Welsh. The workforce system director, Mark Edwards, who is also a CCP board member, called for "better institutional coordination" between the college and his agency, Philadelphia Works.

Taking a step in this direction, CCP is planning to appoint a new senior-level official in charge of workforce development. Asked about collaboration generally with workforce agencies and business organizations, Generals said: "We need to be at the table with the city and the [Greater Philadelphia] Chamber of Commerce whenever they are trying to attract a company to the city. We need to show them the opportunities available to them. ... We need to be part of the conversation."

Performance-based funding

States and localities traditionally helped finance their community colleges with funds based on enrollment: Sign up more students, get more money. In recent years, many states have begun pegging funds to more specific metrics and outcomes, such as higher graduation or retention rates.

Tennessee bases its funding for community colleges on their retention and graduation rates, rather than enrollment. Florida uses graduation rates and the percentage of students who are minorities, among other criteria, to determine funding levels. Studies have differed on whether the formulas improve rates or may be leading colleges to change their admissions and graduation standards.[59]

In 2005, Pennsylvania enacted a community college funding formula with a variety of changes, including extra money for higher enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and math majors. However, the state has not fully implemented the formula, and it capped the annual allocation in recent years.

Pennsylvania's community colleges are considering making a push again for changes in the funding system. That might include rewards for improved graduation rates and other outcomes. Such a system would require state, local, and college officials to agree on the exact performance measures. It also would hinge on the total appropriation each year—the size of the whole pie, not just how it is sliced.

Saying performance-based funding in Pennsylvania may be "inevitable," Generals added: "We should not allow, or wait, for performance indicators to be defined and established by external entities and then used as the basis for funding decisions."

A Call for Collaboration

James Clark, training manager at the Aker Philadelphia Shipyard, said his company has used Delaware County Community College to train workers. Community College of Philadelphia, he said, does not have the right faculty or facilities for his needs.

What he would like to see happen, he said, is for CCP and other area colleges to collaborate or coordinate with each other to jointly meet employers' needs.

"If you drive up to Bucks County Community College, they're turning to tech skills like precision welding and HVAC," Clark said. "Then go down to Delaware County, where they have an excellent technical facility with robotics. And Camden County in Blackwood has excellent programming in machine tools. … But there is not a concerted, coordinated effort on how to serve the needs of employers. They are offering skills that are needed mostly for entry-level or some incumbent workers," Clark said, and not for advanced workers.

"Manufacturing is nowhere where it used to be," he added. "But there are still needs. We don't need a world of college grads. We do need people who have technical capacity and basic competency. … CCP is an academic institution, and their Corporate Solutions building is beautiful. But we have to be careful about replicating efforts. More of a consolidated effort would really help" in serving employers.

Conclusion

Philadelphia, which suffers from high poverty and has endured years of little employment growth, needs more of its residents to obtain marketable job skills and college degrees. One of the city's largest higher education institutions, Community College of Philadelphia, is in a key position to help meet those needs.

Marking its 50th birthday in 2015, CCP provides many residents with access to college and opportunities for transfers. But in recent years, it has reached a lower share of the adult population, charged a higher tuition, and had a bigger share of students still lacking any degree after six years than many comparable community colleges did. CCP has increased its number of graduates in recent years, but more growth is needed to meet the goals set by Mayor Nutter and President Obama—growth that may not come without new strategies or expanded initiatives.

Compared with students at similar colleges serving large numbers of low-income and minority students, the graduation rate of CCP students improved in recent years but was still about average in 2013. The students were below average in terms of earning degrees from four-year universities as transfer students. On both measures, CCP was even further below average when compared with a broader group that includes most big-city community colleges. On the other hand, African-American and remedial students generally did better at CCP than at peer schools, especially on completing developmental education courses. But within CCP, they did not do as well as other groups of students.

Focused on programs for students transferring to other institutions for higher degrees, CCP has had a mixed record on career education and workforce development for city residents seeking immediate jobs. The college was weak on training workers for private-sector manufacturing firms during and after the recession, although officials say its performance has improved since then. The college has been using voluntary surveys to track job-placement outcomes of former students, rather than official and comprehensive state-level labor data, as other colleges have done. Low-income adults in publicly funded workforce-development programs have been graduating from CCP and securing jobs at rising rates in recent years, although those rates were still below the average of graduates from other institutions in the state.

A college-accrediting organization has faulted the institution on its student-learning assessments and is weighing the college's response before approving reaccreditation. In addition, the Pennsylvania Board of Nursing has put CCP on notice that its nursing students must improve their board-exam pass rates this year or the school could lose its approval to train them.

The college's ambitions for improvement are high, but the school in past years has not undertaken the kind of sweeping changes that some other community colleges have mounted. Achieving significant gains also may require greater coordination among public institutions of higher learning statewide and perhaps a new funding formula in Pennsylvania, both of which are formidable challenges.

Aspiring college students in Philadelphia have more options now than in the past, meaning CCP faces tough questions about its long-term strategy. Its new president, Donald Generals, is calling for "significant change" in strategies and improved relations with the faculty union. He is seeking a greater focus on job skills for students, better coordination with employers, and stronger outcomes for students.

"We will be much more attuned and sensitive to the city, and we will not be an island to employers," he said. "We will be *the* community college."

The city's residents, workers, and employers have a lot riding on the college's success.

Methodology

This study measures the effectiveness of Community College of Philadelphia by comparing its student educational outcomes to those of other community colleges that serve similar populations. We began by identifying groups of peer colleges, then defined the student outcomes to be measured. Next, we obtained each college's outcomes from third-party databases (which were assembled in a uniform and impartial manner), and finally aggregated the data into rates for each peer group.

Peer groups

The categories of peer colleges used for this report are based on certain fundamental characteristics of CCP. We obtained information about these characteristics from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, accessed through the center's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds. Each peer group is defined as follows:

Urban peers: Like CCP, these colleges are public, two-year colleges that grant associate degrees and certificates, are located in large cities, and have enrollments of at least 5,000. Although CCP's enrollment is substantially larger than 5,000, we used the lower threshold to capture smaller colleges within large cities, namely New York, Chicago, Baltimore, and Los Angeles. This is our baseline peer group.

Pell/minority peers: These schools are a subset of the urban peers. What distinguishes them is that, like CCP, at least 60 percent of their full-time students receive federal Pell Grants, and at least 40 percent of students are classified as Hispanic or African-American. These characteristics take into account the challenges in serving a large number of disadvantaged, minority students.

Transfer peers: These are two-year, public, degree-granting colleges in metropolitan areas that have at least 1 million adults and at least 10 postsecondary degree-granting institutions for every 50,000 college-enrolled residents, a threshold chosen after consultation with experts about community colleges. There are 24 such regions in the country, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2010-12 three-year estimate. In these college-rich areas, like Philadelphia, students have a lot of choices, and therefore local community colleges face substantial competition for students.

Two additional groups of colleges were used as benchmarks for CCP's tuition levels and the college's performance on workforce-development programs. They are not considered peers of CCP for the purposes of other comparisons in this report:

Pennsylvania colleges: The 13 other public community colleges in the state.

Metro-area colleges: The eight other public community colleges in the nine-county Philadelphia metropolitan area.

A list of all colleges within each peer group is provided at the end of this methodology under "Peer group membership."

Student outcomes

We selected three basic measures of student outcomes: retention, completion, and transfer success. The federal IPEDS database omits part-time students and lacks transfer success data, making it problematic for such analysis. Instead, we used two proprietary databases run by two private, nonprofit organizations: the National Student Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) and Achieving the Dream Inc. The Clearinghouse collects data on

95 percent of students—full and part time—at degree-granting U.S. postsecondary institutions as students move between colleges, making it the most thorough way to track completions at the initial and transfer institutions. Achieving the Dream collects detailed outcomes data on both full- and part-time students.

The colleges comprising the peer groups that were analyzed with Clearinghouse data differ slightly from those studied with Achieving the Dream data, because the organizations do not have identical sets of colleges in their databases. In addition, Achieving the Dream's database did not include most of the colleges that we selected for the Pell/minority peer group, and it did not contain students' transfer information for the transfer peer group. Therefore, we omitted those two groups and left just the urban peer group in the Achieving the Dream analysis. Details on the final peer-group memberships are below.

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

Using Clearinghouse data, we adopted a methodology that the Clearinghouse's internal research center applied in its report "Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates—Fall 2007 Cohort," found at http://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport6. This analysis focused primarily on degree and certificate completion by first-time-in-college, degree-seeking students who started their postsecondary education at U.S. colleges in fall 2007. It follows this group through May 31, 2013, a span of six academic years. We asked the Clearinghouse to apply its formula to our peer groups. Using data on each student, known as student-level data, the Clearinghouse aggregated the outcomes for students across all colleges within each of the three peer groups, producing a single percentage for each outcome by peer group.

The Clearinghouse analysis includes each student's first completion of a degree program, wherever it happened, as well as subsequent completions, typically a bachelor's degree after an associate degree. The analysis includes students who were reported by their colleges to be exclusively full time (usually at least 12 credits) through the entire period; exclusively part time through most of the period; and mixed-time (switched between full and part time). But it excludes those who were exclusively part time through the entire period, as explained below.

The resulting queries on the Clearinghouse database were as follows, all for students who started at any community college within a peer group in 2007:

1. Percent of students who had a first completion (associate degree) within six years at that institution.

2. Percent of students who had a first completion within six years at a different two-year institution.

3. Percent of students who had a first completion (typically a bachelor's degree) within six years at a four-year institution.

4. Percent of students who had a subsequent completion (typically a bachelor's degree after an associate degree) within six years at a four-year institution.

5. Percent of students who did not have a first completion but were still enrolled at any institution in 2013.

6. Percent of students who did not have a first completion and were not enrolled at any institution in 2013.

Clearinghouse: Cohort Identification and Definitions

Students enrolled for the first time in any credit-granting program in fall 2007 were counted for this analysis, except for those meeting the following conditions: enrolled in more than one institution simultaneously for at least one day during the fall 2007 term; enrolled for less than one day in the fall 2007 term; enrolled previously at another postsecondary institution; withdrew from college before the 21st day of the fall term; enrolled in an institution outside the United States or its territories (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands); enrolled

at an institution not listed in the federal IPEDS database. In addition, all data was excluded from summer terms (defined as those with both the start date and end date falling between May 1 and Aug. 31 in any given year) and short terms (those lasting less than 21 days).

The analysis attempts to focus on degree-seeking students; degree-seekers were generally defined as those who first enrolled in credit programs at two-year institutions in fall 2007 and carried at least 12 credits for most terms until completing the program or not by May 2013. Non-degree-seeking students were defined as those enrolled during the same period at exclusively fewer than 12 to 15 credits per term, which typically meant just one- or two-credit classes. Students also were considered non-degree-seekers and were excluded if they were (1) not enrolled full time for one or more terms before Aug. 15, 2008, or (2) were not enrolled at least part time for two or more terms before Dec. 31, 2008.

Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream (ATD) designed an analysis of the peer groups to our specifications. Its data holdings and number of participating colleges vary over time. So we decided on three time periods that would enable us to see a trend series while having maximum coverage and timeliness within the data. Like the Clearinghouse, ATD used student-level data. It calculated rates for each college separately and then computed a weighted average of those colleges' rates for each peer group. The weighting was based on the number of students at each college within each peer group.

These were our final queries using ATD data:

1. Weighted average percentage of students who completed developmental math within two years in each of three periods: fall 2007 to spring 2009; fall 2008 to spring 2010; and fall 2009 to spring 2011. Rates were disaggregated as follows:
   a. Total
   b. Male
   c. Female
   d. Hispanic
   e. White non-Hispanic
   f. Black non-Hispanic
   g. Asian non-Hispanic

2. Weighted average percentage of students who completed developmental writing (English) within two years in each of three periods: fall 2007 to spring 2009; fall 2008 to spring 2010; and fall 2009 to spring 2011. Rates were disaggregated as follows:
   a. Total
   b. Male
   c. Female
   d. Hispanic
   e. White non-Hispanic
   f. Black non-Hispanic
   g. Asian non-Hispanic

3. Weighted average percentage of students who returned to school in the next term for each time period. The three periods are fall 2007 to spring 2008; fall 2008 to spring 2009; and fall 2009 to spring 2010. These rates were disaggregated as follows:

   a. Total

   b. Male

   c. Female

   d. Hispanic

   e. White non-Hispanic

   f. Black non-Hispanic

   g. Asian non-Hispanic

   h. College-ready

   i. Not college-ready (developmental education)

4. Weighted average percentage of students who returned to school in the next year for each time period. The three periods are fall 2007 to fall 2008; fall 2008 to fall 2009; and fall 2009 to fall 2010. These rates were disaggregated as follows:

   a. Total

   b. Male

   c. Female

   d. Hispanic

   e. White non-Hispanic

   f. Black non-Hispanic

   g. Asian non-Hispanic

   h. College-ready

   i. Not college-ready (developmental education)

5. Weighted average percentage of students who completed a degree or certificate within four years for each time period. The three time periods are fall 2007 to spring 2011; fall 2008 to spring 2012; and fall 2009 to spring 2013. These rates were disaggregated as follows:

   a. Total

   b. Male

   c. Female

   d. Hispanic

   e. White non-Hispanic

   f. Black non-Hispanic

   g. Asian non-Hispanic

   h. College-ready

   i. Not college-ready (developmental education)

ATD: Cohort Identification and Definitions

Individuals were included in the ATD cohorts listed below if they were degree- or certificate-seeking students enrolled in any credit-bearing program during a given term for the first time. ATD defines "first time" as new enrollment at the postsecondary college in question, not at any previous institution. (In contrast, the Clearinghouse defines it as first time at any institution).

Developmental education: ATD defined this cohort as students who tested into developmental education or were referred to developmental education in at least one area: reading, math, or writing (English). All data are reported by colleges themselves, and their definitions of developmental referral, developmental enrollment, and developmental completion may vary. Generally speaking, if the college scored a student below "college level" in placement tests, ATD presumed this student to be "referred" to developmental education and placed the student into the developmental cohort. On developmental reading, ATD cautioned that its data set for the periods studied was incomplete. For this reason, we did not include developmental reading outcomes in our report.

Retention: This group includes all students who returned to college in the given periods, unless their college recorded them as graduating or transferring to another institution within the same or following academic year. When the college did not record the reason for the students' departures, ATD retained the students in the cohort.

Completion: This cohort counts students who received at least one degree or certificate during a given period, as reported and defined by the college.

ATD focuses on degree-seeking students and relies on institutions to set their own definitions of such individuals. For schools that do not have their own definitions, or for student-level data where degree-seeking intention is not known, ATD considers all students to be degree-seeking.

Peer group membership

Pell/minority peers (15 institutions)

Baltimore City Community College, Baltimore

City Colleges of Chicago-Harold Washington College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Kennedy-King College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Olive-Harvey College, Chicago

CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York

CUNY Bronx Community College, Bronx, New York

CUNY Hostos Community College, Bronx, New York

Delgado Community College, New Orleans

Hudson County Community College, Jersey City, New Jersey

Metropolitan Community College-Kansas City, Missouri

Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley, Missouri

Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minneapolis

St. Paul College, St. Paul, Minnesota

Southwest Tennessee Community College, Memphis

Wayne County Community College District, Detroit

Clearinghouse urban peers (65 institutions)

Bakersfield College, Bakersfield, California

Baltimore City Community College, Baltimore

Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cincinnati

City College of San Francisco, San Francisco

City Colleges of Chicago-Harold Washington College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Harry S Truman College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Kennedy-King College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Malcolm X College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Olive-Harvey College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Richard J Daley College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Wilbur Wright College, Chicago

Columbus State Community College, Columbus, Ohio

Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh

Community College of Denver, Denver

Cosumnes River College, Sacramento, California

CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York

CUNY Bronx Community College, Bronx, New York

CUNY Hostos Community College, Bronx, New York

CUNY Kingsborough Community College, Brooklyn, New York

CUNY LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, New York

CUNY Queensborough Community College, Bayside, New York

Cuyahoga Community College District, Cleveland

Delgado Community College, New Orleans

El Centro College, Dallas

Erie Community College, Buffalo, New York

Essex County College, Newark, New Jersey

Evergreen Valley College, San Jose, California

Hillsborough Community College, Tampa, Florida

Houston Community College, Houston

Hudson County Community College, Jersey City, New Jersey

Ivy Tech Community College, Indianapolis

Jefferson Community and Technical College, Louisville, Kentucky

Laney College, Oakland, California

Long Beach City College, Long Beach, California

Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles Harbor College, Wilmington, California

Los Angeles Mission College, Sylmar, California

Los Angeles Pierce College, Woodland Hills, California

Los Angeles Trade Technical College, Los Angeles

Los Angeles Valley College, Valley Glen, California

Merritt College, Oakland, California

Metropolitan Community College Area, Omaha

Metropolitan Community College-Kansas City, Missouri

Milwaukee Area Technical College, Milwaukee

Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minneapolis

Mountain View College, Dallas

Nashville State Community College, Nashville

Northwest Vista College, San Antonio

Palo Alto College, San Antonio

Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon

Richland College, Dallas

Riverside City College, Riverside, California

Sacramento City College, Sacramento, California

St. Louis Community College, St. Louis

St. Paul College, St. Paul, Minnesota

San Antonio College, San Antonio

San Diego City College, San Diego

San Diego Mesa College, San Diego

San Diego Miramar College, San Diego

San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, California

San Jose City College, San Jose, California

Seattle Community College-North Campus, Seattle

Southwest Tennessee Community College, Memphis

St. Philip's College, San Antonio

Wayne County Community College District, Detroit

ATD urban peers (19 institutions)

Austin Community College District, Austin, Texas

Bakersfield College, Bakersfield, California

Bunker Hill Community College, Boston

Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, North Carolina

Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh

CUNY Kingsborough Community College, Brooklyn, New York

Cuyahoga Community College District, Cleveland

Delgado Community College, New Orleans

El Centro College, Dallas

Hillsborough Community College, Tampa, Florian

Houston Community College, Houston

Jefferson Community and Technical College, Louisville, Kentucky

Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles

Los Angeles Harbor College, Wilmington, California

Los Angeles Mission College, Sylmar, California

Los Angeles Pierce College, Woodland Hills, California

Los Angeles Trade Technical College

Los Angeles Valley College, Valley Glen, California

Richland College, Dallas

Transfer peers (124 institutions in 21 regions, listed and grouped by region)

Boston

Massachusetts Bay Community College, Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts

Massasoit Community College, Brockton, Massachusetts

Middlesex Community College, Bedford, Massachusetts

North Shore Community College, Danvers, Massachusetts

Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, Massachusetts

Quincy College, Quincy, Massachusetts

Roxbury Community College, Roxbury Crossing, Massachusetts

Charlotte

Gaston College, Dallas, North Carolina

Mitchell Community College, Statesville, North Carolina

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, Salisbury, North Carolina

University of South Carolina-Lancaster, Lancaster, South Carolina

York Technical College, Rock Hill, South Carolina

Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Harold Washington College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Kennedy-King College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Olive-Harvey College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Harry S Truman College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Malcolm X College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Richard J Daley College, Chicago

City Colleges of Chicago-Wilbur Wright College, Chicago

College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

College of Lake County, Grayslake, Illinois

Elgin Community College, Elgin, Illinois

Harper College, Palatine, Illinois

Joliet Junior College, Joliet, Illinois

Kishwaukee College, Malta, Illinois

McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, Illinois

Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Illinois

Morton College, Cicero, Illinois

Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, Illinois

Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, Illinois

South Suburban College, South Holland, Illinois

Triton College, River Grove, Illinois

Waubonsee Community College, Sugar Grove, Illinois

Cincinnati

Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cincinnati

Gateway Community and Technical College, Florence, Kentucky

Cleveland

Cuyahoga Community College District, Cleveland

Lakeland Community College, Kirtland, Ohio

Lorain County Community College, Elyria, Ohio

Columbus

Columbus State Community College, Columbus, Ohio

Central Ohio Technical College, Newark, Ohio

Denver

Community College of Denver, Denver

Arapahoe Community College, Littleton, Colorado

Community College of Aurora, Colorado

Front Range Community College, Westminster, Colorado

Red Rocks Community College, Lakewood, Colorado

Indianapolis

Ivy Tech Community College, Indianapolis

Kansas City, Missouri

Metropolitan Community College-Kansas City

Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley, Missouri

Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas

Kansas City Kansas Community College, Kansas City, Kansas

Metropolitan Community College-Blue River, Missouri

Metropolitan Community College-Business & Technology, Missouri

Metropolitan Community College-Maple Woods, Missouri

Milwaukee

Milwaukee Area Technical College, Milwaukee

Waukesha County Technical College, Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Minneapolis-St. Paul

Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minneapolis

St. Paul College, St. Paul

Anoka Technical College, Anoka, Minnesota

Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids, Minnesota

Century College, White Bear Lake, Minnesota

Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, Minnesota

Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Inver Hills Community College, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

Normandale Community College, Bloomington, Minnesota

North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Nashville

Nashville State Community College, Nashville

Columbia State Community College, Columbia, Tennessee

Volunteer State Community College, Gallatin, Tennessee

Oklahoma City

Redlands Community College, El Reno, Oklahoma

Rose State College, Midwest City, Oklahoma

Philadelphia (this is also the Metro College group)

Bucks County Community College, Newtown, Pennsylvania

Delaware County Community College, Media, Pennsylvania

Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

Montgomery County Community College-West Campus, Pottstown, Pennsylvania

Burlington County College, Pemberton, New Jersey

Camden County College, Blackwood, New Jersey

Gloucester County College, Sewell, New Jersey

Salem Community College, Carneys Point, New Jersey

Pittsburgh

Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh

Butler County Community College, Butler, Pennsylvania

Community College of Beaver County, Monaca, Pennsylvania

Westmoreland County Community College, Youngwood, Pennsylvania

Portland

Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon

Clackamas Community College, Oregon City, Oregon

Clark College, Vancouver, Washington

St. Louis

St. Louis Community College,

East Central College, Union, Missouri

Jefferson College, Hillsboro, Missouri

Kaskaskia College, Centralia, Illinois

Lewis and Clark Community College, Godfrey, Illinois

Southwestern Illinois College, Belleville, Illinois

San Francisco

City College of San Francisco

Laney College, Oakland, California

Merritt College, Oakland, California

Berkeley City College, Berkeley, California

Canada College, Redwood City, California

Chabot College, Hayward, California

College of Alameda, Alameda, California

College of Marin, Kentfield, California

College of San Mateo, San Mateo, California

Contra Costa College, San Pablo, California

Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, California

Las Positas College, Livermore, California

Los Medanos College, Pittsburg, California

Ohlone Community College, Fremont, California

Skyline College, San Bruno, California

Seattle

Seattle Community College-North Campus

Bates Technical College, Tacoma, Washington

Cascadia Community College, Bothell, Washington

Clover Park Technical College, Lakewood, Washington

Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, Washington

Everett Community College, Everett, Washington

Green River Community College, Auburn, Washington

Highline Community College, Des Moines, Washington

Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom, Lakewood, Washington

Pierce College at Puyallup, Puyallup, Washington

Renton Technical College, Renton, Washington

Shoreline Community College, Shoreline, Washington

Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, Washington

Tampa

Hillsborough Community College, Tampa, Florida

Pasco-Hernando Community College, New Port Richey, Florida

Tidewater Area, Virginia

Rappahannock Community College, Glenns, Virginia

Thomas Nelson Community College, Hampton, Virginia

Tidewater Community College, Norfolk, Virginia

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9   Most community colleges define their service areas in line with local sponsoring jurisdiction. CCP's service area is the city of Philadelphia. Other service area definitions obtained from individual colleges. Population figures obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey three-year sample 2010-12 or from individual colleges for irregular areas. Total unduplicated credit and noncredit student head count obtained from each college for last year available, in most cases 2012.

10 A different measure is regionwide market share, as opposed to citywide market penetration. Among all degree-granting institutions awarding associate's degrees in the metropolitan area, CCP awarded 13.5 percent of degrees in academic year 2011-12, according to IPEDS data. That was down slightly over the past five years. CCP was still the top awarder of associate degrees but has been losing ground to Camden County Community College, Montgomery County Community College, and Burlington County Community College.

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