

# point of view

## Colleges Must Not Lose Sight of General Education Role

Many professionals in the community college sector are talking about a new normal. It is a realization that the model that has prevailed for over fifty years – providing prosperity to generations of middle class Americans along the way – will struggle to sustain itself in its current format given the emerging social and economic realities. That narrative has taken on numerous meanings. Sometimes it refers to the budget realities; and, sometimes it refers to the expanded academic role needed to meet the challenges of a growing heterogeneous society. Both are equally important, but the expanded academic role warrants special consideration.

President Obama called upon community colleges to lead the way in increasing the number of college graduates by 2020. Everyone agrees the effort will place the nation on par with developing nations who continue to pose a threat to America's economic hegemony. But with a focus on workforce preparation, community colleges should not lose sight of their broader mission to prepare the whole student for enlightened citizenship. This is achieved when the students are given an educational experience that blends the vocational and technical skill areas with their general education abilities and knowledge. The challenge for community colleges is to prevent the general education curriculum from being marginalized or becoming routine at the expense of the national push to produce technicians, clinicians and other job-ready citizens.



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Central to the concept of the new normal is the understanding that community college enrollees are not merely passing through on their way to a bachelor's degree; nor are they simply trainees seeking entry into the world of business and industry. In fact, they are a sizeable portion of the American population entering the job market and assuming positions of authority and civic responsibilities. They are school board members of local cities and towns; they are the coaches for little league and high school athletic teams; and, they are the community activists who will organize voter registration drives and

petitions on behalf of their communities' interests. Of all the students currently enrolled in higher education in America, nearly half are community college students (approximately 8.2 million). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a significant part of the nation's future leaders to be educated, in part or in whole, by a community college. Many will graduate and continue their education at the next level; many more will come and go as their lives permit. Similar to the transformative role played by the comprehensive high school at the beginning of the 20th century, the community college has become the institution best positioned to respond to the emerging needs represented by a landscape of economic and demographic changes. Community colleges are charged with preparing the next generation with the vocational and technical skills necessary for the nation's economic success; but equally important, they should prepare that generation to assume their civic responsibilities as participants in a modern democratic society. ▲

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**Q** How does your college strike a balance between vocational training and general education?

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ALL THINGS  
COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE

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## Guns, *from page 3, col. 1*

The National Conference of State Legislatures says 22 states ban carrying a concealed weapon on higher-education campuses and 25 leave the decision of whether to ban or allow carrying concealed weapons on campuses up to individual institutions.

In a front of a packed Senate hearing room, about 15 people, including student leaders, professors and police officers, testified against the bill.

Jennifer Longdon, a gun owner and Phoenix resident, testified against the measure, describing how random gunfire seven years ago severed her spinal cord and left her paralyzed. Her then-fiance was with her and carrying a gun, but he was unable to respond because he was struck as well, she said.

Likewise, if college students are armed, they won't necessarily make anyone safer, said Longdon, who is the mother of an Arizona State University student.

"To know that there's a possibility that his roommate might be a binge drinker and a gun owner at the same time brings a chill to what's left of my spine," she said.

Paige Scalf, a University of Arizona psychology professor, also testified against

the bill, saying it would put weapons in the hands of the same young people that car insurance companies and car rental companies don't recognize as fully responsible adults.

"This is not a population of people who are fully capable of making adult decisions," Scalf said.

Two people spoke in favor of the bill, including Brent Gardner, a lobbyist for the National Rifle Association who challenged the idea that allowing concealed weapons on campus would be more dangerous than any other part of the state where they're permitted.

### TREND

**The National Conference of State Legislatures says 22 states ban carrying concealed weapons on college campuses.**

"Suddenly when they step foot across an imaginary boundary onto a college campus they become homicidal maniacs," Gardner said.

The bill passed 5-3, with one Republican, Sen. Steve Yarbrough of Chandler joining Democrats to vote against it.

The bill is ensuring students have the constitutional right to defend themselves, said Sen. Rick Murphy, R-Glendale, so it doesn't matter whether people like or don't like the legislation.

The committee also passed a bill sponsored by Rep. Steve Smith, R-Maricopa, that allows someone carry a gun into a public building unless armed security is controlling all the entrances.

Lawmakers supporting the bill said it will simply apply the same policy to government buildings as any other.

"I can go into Wal-Mart and pay a utility bill, and I can carry a gun," Gould said. "But if I go into Lake Havasu City Hall to pay my water bill, they disarm me."

The two bills advance to the Senate Rules Committee. If approved, they go for a vote before the full Senate. ▲

Comments: [ccweekblog.wordpress.com](http://ccweekblog.wordpress.com)

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