

# Why Community College

## *What students need to know about community colleges*

Community colleges offer students the opportunity to save money, prepare for transfer to a four-year college, get ready for a career, try out college and take advantage of a flexible schedule. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, 44 percent of all undergraduate college students are enrolled at a community college. Giving your students a reality check while still in high school will increase their chances of a successful outcome once they enroll in a community college. Here are some key counseling points.

## *Community college is not an extension of high school*

Obvious? Not too many high school seniors heading to a community college. A study conducted by James Rosenbaum, author of the book *Beyond College for All*, found that 44 percent of such students mistakenly believe that there is little connection between their high school work and college success. High school students who view their courses as unrelated to their future plans and who see community college as simply an extension of high school are far more likely to drop out after a semester or two.

**Students need to recognize that community college is college** and it requires prerequisite skills best gained in high school. While community colleges provide higher education for all, they nonetheless have standards that students must meet to advance academically.

You can help your students succeed by encouraging them to take rigorous course work and bring their skills — especially in English and math — up to the level expected for success in college.

## *Entrance requirements can vary*

Generally, community colleges are open enrollment, which means that any high school graduate is eligible to attend. But some programs are selective with limited enrollment. They usually have a separate application and specific admission requirements such as SAT® or ACT scores. Selective programs are primarily found in these fields:

- Nursing
- Allied health
- Law enforcement
- Engineering technology
- Computer technology

## *Students might have to take a placement test*

Even programs that are open enrollment do not automatically register students for college-level classes. In order to determine if remedial or developmental course work is necessary, **most community colleges require placement tests**, such as:

- The College Board's [ACCUPLACER®](#)
- ACT's COMPASS
- State-specific tests like Florida's College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST)
- The college's own tests

The [SAT](#) or ACT may also be used for placement purposes. At some community colleges, students who achieve certain SAT or ACT scores may be exempt from taking placement tests in reading, writing or math.

## *Course selection is crucial to transferring*

Nearly two-thirds of all students entering a community college plan to transfer to a four-year institution, according to the [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#). One of the students' biggest concerns is **whether the courses they take at the community college transfer to the four-year college they plan to attend**.

Most community colleges offer a transfer program designed to steer students toward an associate degree that will allow them to transfer to a college with junior status. But successful transfer ultimately depends on whether the courses taken meet the requirements of the particular major at the four-year college the student selects.

It's crucial that students understand at the outset why some community college courses transfer and others do not. Tell your graduating seniors to meet with their adviser at the community college before they register for their first-semester courses.

## *The best advice*

Michele Brown, director of student recruitment and outreach at Oakton Community College in Illinois, says, "The best advice I can provide for students who plan on attending a community college is to **take the same college-preparation courses in high school that they would take in preparation to attend any college.**"

That way, they will have done their best to prepare themselves to score well on whatever assessment tests they may be required to take, and they will be in a much better position to move forward and achieve success in their college careers.