

March 9, 2015

The South's community colleges are a crucial step on the path to more educated and prosperous states.

They are the most affordable, accessible way for young students to continue their education after high school. They are close at hand to help adults adapt to economic upheaval by retooling for careers available now — and tomorrow — in our communities. They are our states' best hope to close achievement and opportunity gaps for students from low-income families and for those who would be the first in their families to attend college.

Yet our community colleges lack the resources to serve these many roles as well as our states need them to. Too few students complete degrees, certificates or transfers, and these institutions by and large are invisible to policymakers.

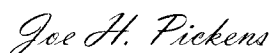
Until now, that is. Our states' ambitious goals for postsecondary completion and improving educational attainment levels demand that we take notice. *If states do not improve the performance of community colleges — which enroll almost half of undergraduate students and the vast majority of those least likely to earn a degree — we will miss the mark.*

In *Community Colleges in the South: Strengthening Readiness and Pathways*, SREB's Community College Commission addressed the two most critical areas to improve completion: readiness and pathways. Our readiness recommendations call for reforming placement, reconsidering math and literacy requirements, and carefully guiding students who need developmental courses. Pathway recommendations propose that states create structured pathways so students clearly see entry, exit and re-entry points — and that institutions guide students firmly along them. The report also asks states to commit increased funding and in return hold community colleges accountable for improving completion.

The members of the Commission debated these issues thoughtfully during 2013 and 2014, and for that we extend our gratitude. The Commission's intent is that this report offer relevant recommendations and serve as a resource to help you implement them. To help states chart their individual courses of action, we will convene teams from states later this spring.

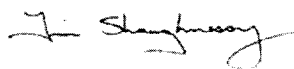
Meanwhile, we hope you will set aside time to read the report and let us know how we can help you share it with others.

Sincerely,



Joe Pickens
Commission Co-Chair

President, St. Johns River State
College, Florida



Tim Shaughnessy
Commission Co-Chair

Associate Provost for Academic
Affairs, Gateway Community &
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Dave Spence

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