



Jan 14, 2015 / Nancy Zimpher

Three Transformational Ways Universities Can Support the Success of Every Student

Share

To achieve dramatically better results for low-income people faster, colleges and universities must broaden college access like never before and speed degree completion.

Living Cities is open sourcing our 2014 annual report, asking folks to respond to the question: “What will it take to achieve dramatically better results for low-income people faster?” This blog is a response to that question. In the coming weeks, we will showcase a diversity of points of view around this question. [Learn more about the event](#) and follow the conversation on social media with [#NewUrbanPractice](#).

It remains a too-common phenomenon, encountering articles and blog posts arguing that college isn’t “worth it,” that the investment of money and time doesn’t reliably enough pay off for students.

I find it confounding that this question persists. All evidence supports that higher education is instrumental in the betterment of individuals and society as a whole. And in today’s innovation-driven economy, education is, increasingly, more than a worthwhile investment in one’s future—it is a necessary one.

We know that college graduates overwhelmingly earn higher incomes than those who

end their education at high school or do not complete a college degree...

We know that an educated citizenry is a healthier citizenry. We know that an educated citizenry is an engaged citizenry. We know the connections, the causations, between higher education and better physical and mental health, lower crime, higher voter turnout and more volunteerism in communities. We know that college graduates overwhelmingly earn higher incomes than those who end their education at high school or do not complete a college degree, and then they put more back into local economies, stoking the vibrancy that is the hallmark of successful cities.

Pursuing a higher degree, investing in education, is, no doubt, a long game. But just because it takes time to build education systems that truly deliver for students and because it takes time for students to develop the skills and knowledge base needed to build successful careers, doesn't mean there's time to spare.

Universities have the responsibility to meet students, and particularly students from low-income families, where they are in a changing world, right now. This means devising strategies and tools that broaden college access and push completion levels to new heights.

Early college high schools, applied learning opportunities, digital access—these are just a few examples of the kinds of transformational changes that our sector must implement at scale in order to expand access, ensure timely completion and support the success of every student.

Earning college credit in high school

In addition to advanced placement courses that have long allowed students to earn college credit while still in high school, newer options like Early College High Schools allow students to earn credit and gain experience, not only making them better ready to succeed in college, but saving time in college and therefore cutting cost.

For example, the [23 Early College High Schools in New York that the State University of New York helps](#) administer enroll low-income, traditionally under-represented and under-prepared students. Since 2010, more than 5,000 students have enrolled in ECHSs in New York State, and 98% of those at-risk students are on track not only to graduate from high school but to do so with significant college credit already earned. Eleven of New York's ECHSs offer a curriculum focused on STEM, helping to prepare students for high-demand 21st-century careers.

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

5,000 STUDENTS

The number of students who have enrolled in New York State Early College High Schools since 2010 - 98% of whom were considered

SUNY also administers what we call a [P-TECH program](#), short for [Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools](#). This approach prepares students for high-skill jobs by bringing together public school districts, major employers, and institutions of higher education. Through P-TECH partnerships, high school students study under an industry-aligned curriculum in technology, manufacturing and health care fields earn an associate degree at no cost to their families, and are first in line for jobs with participating companies upon graduation. Modeled after the nationally recognized IBM partnership in New York City, the schools will supply regions with a robust talent pipeline driving local economic development.

Accruing applied learning experience

At SUNY, we believe in the power of learning by doing. Through innovative on-the-job training programs like apprenticeships, internships and co-ops across our system, faculty are working side-by-side with some of the biggest businesses in cutting edge fields across the state to craft new, engaging curricula that integrate classroom study and (often paid) work experience that often leads to job offers at the placement site after graduation.

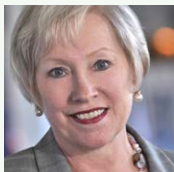
We are tailoring our applied learning offerings to meet the unique community and workforce needs of regions throughout New York State so our graduates have a significant advantage as they enter the workforce. We are also expanding our prior learning assessments so incoming students don't have to spend time and money on classes in which they are re-learning what they already know.

Exploring online learning options

Technological advancement, of course, has been a significant boon to access and completion efforts as well. Online courses add an unprecedented level of flexibility that allows students to speed completion. We are on the cusp of implementing web-based degree planning and auditing software that will track classes and degree requirements for students, enabling them to quickly see what courses they still need to graduate and when and where they can take them, be it at their "home" campus, a potential transfer campus within the system, or through [our vast online learning platform, Open SUNY](#), which is on track to be the largest of its kind in the nation.

With tools and strategies like these, universities have the ability to offer students a

customizable experience that better meets their needs and the needs of the economy. These are things that universities and colleges must do now in order to extend access to more students and ensure that everyone who enrolls in college finishes that degree and that their degree has value out in the world.



CONTRIBUTOR Chancellor, The State University of New York

Nancy Zimpher □

Nancy L. Zimpher is the 12th chancellor of The State University of New York, the largest comprehensive system of public higher education in the nation.

MORE

Education

Economic Development

Mobility

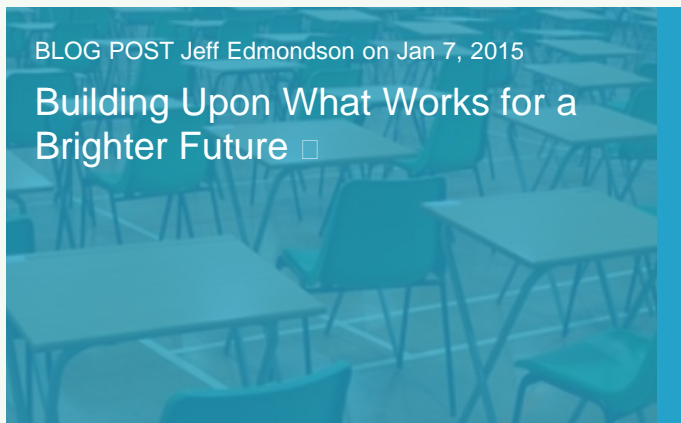
BLOG POST Paul Grogan on Jan 8, 2015

Coaching Students to Post-Secondary Success □



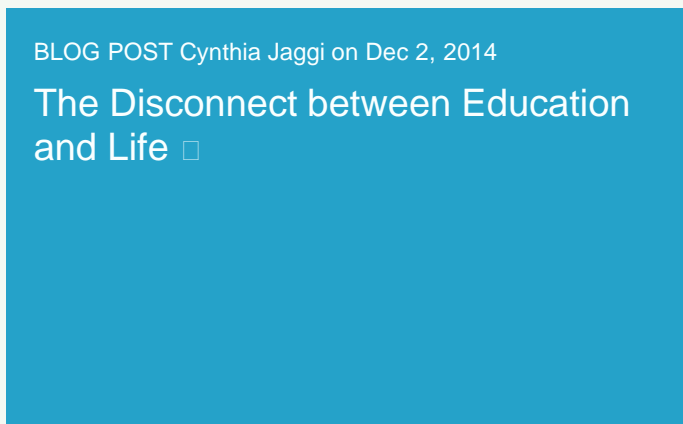
BLOG POST Jeff Edmondson on Jan 7, 2015

Building Upon What Works for a Brighter Future □



BLOG POST Cynthia Jaggi on Dec 2, 2014

The Disconnect between Education and Life □



[View more posts about Education](#) □