



**American College Counseling Association  
Community College Task Force**

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For Immediate Release

**Community Colleges Play a Vital Role in American Higher Education**

Enrollment in community and 2 year college is at an all time high. According to the US Labor department (2009) about 48% of high school graduates went to college in the early 2000's. Today 70% of high school graduates attend college after graduation. Community college attendance accounts for the majority of this increase. Enrollment in four year colleges has stayed steady since the economic down turn in 2008. The reasons for the increase in community/2year enrollment are multifaceted; student's hoping to defray the increasing cost of higher education attend community/2year colleges in preparation for transferring to a four year college, the unemployed return to college to develop career skills while others enter 2 year colleges to improve job skills to retain employment.

The majority of the individuals entering community/2 year colleges are minority women, specifically Hispanic women. One out of six community college students will consider dropping out of college in the first semester. Of those that do leave college, 74% did not seek out guidance from faculty or staff (Pearson, 2010). Students entering community colleges, like all students, need services to support their success in academia. Individuals entering a traditional four year institution will most likely have access to psychological services and will be connected to an advisor who knows the services available on campus. Students at a community/2 year colleges are often unaware of the services available on campus. Many very qualified mental health professionals working in the community/2year campus are an untapped resource for the community college student.

The American College Counseling Association's (ACCA) Community College Task Force (CCTF) has conducted a survey to gather benchmark data about common practices for personal/mental health counseling in Community/2 Year colleges. The survey also explored how many Community/2 Year colleges have trained counselors providing career counseling. It was distributed to a compiled list of Community Colleges around the United States and the list serves of the American College Counseling Association, National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, and Magna Publications. Two hundred and ninety four (294) professional counselors providing personal counseling in a community college setting were invited to respond to the survey.

In response to the needs of students 68% of community/2 year colleges provide mental health counseling services, of those providers 78% hold a graduate degree but only 37% hold LMCH/LPC licenses (35% hold no license). Despite national data that reveals an increasing need for psychiatric services few than 13% of community/2 year colleges have psychiatric services available on campus. Other tasks are often assigned to mental health providers, 71% sit on behavioral intervention teams and 65% conduct suicide prevention efforts on campus. Often (97% of the time) other services are being provided with mental health counseling, 78% participate in campus committees, 70% conduct academic advising and 68% career counseling.

It is critical to point out that the majority of the providers time is being spent in academic and career counseling, despite reporting increasing psychological need. Similar to their four year college/university peers 60% of mental health providers on community/2 year colleges report experiencing an increase in the intensity of clinical issues. The same percentage, about 47%, of community/2 year college and four year college therapists report having no session limits for students seeking services. With the financial realities of today's economy it is not unusual for staff on any campus to be asked to do more with less. Unfortunately for community/2 year colleges the demands will continue to increase as the population utilizing community colleges raises, historically a trend we can anticipate during times of recession.

The American College Counseling Association will continue to support the Community College Task Force annual survey of community and 2 year colleges. We hope to support the efforts of our colleagues in all academic settings through increasing awareness of the needs and services on campus.

#### References:

U.S Labor Department (2009): <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgsec.nr0.htm>, retrieved November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

CCTF survey (2010), Community College Task Force, ACCA: Alexandria, VA.

Pearson Foundation Community College Survey (2010): <http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/education-leadership/research/community-college-survey.html> , retrieved November 20th, 2011.