



Contact: Anne Landis Williams
(615) 399.3763
annelandis.williams@taics.org

NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION URGES STATES TO FOLLOW LEAD OF PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Community Colleges "Have a Lot to Learn from Private Two-Year Colleges"

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (December 14, 2009) — The National Governors Association (NGA) is praising the success of America's private career colleges and urges state-run community colleges to follow their lead in several specific areas, including graduation rates and support programs.

In a new report issued December 9, 2009, the NGA recommends that state-run community colleges use private career colleges as a model for how to successfully engage low-income students, keep students on a path towards their educational goals, and maintain high graduation rates. The report is titled "Increasing College Success: A Road Map for Governors."

The report notes that within five years 74 percent of jobs will require a postsecondary education or industry certification, and "most of these job openings" will require "more than high school but less than a four-year college degree." The good news is that, on average, workers with a two-year associate degree earn 25 percent more than workers with only a high school education.

However, the report raises several concerns. First, the United States lags far behind other nations in the attainment of degrees from two-year colleges. Second, "barely half" of first-time community college students continue into a second year. Third, only 30 percent of these students achieve a degree within three years. The failure of students—especially low-income students—to complete a college degree is repeatedly cited in the report as a shortcoming of state-run community colleges.

To address these issues, the NGA believes that community colleges "have a lot to learn from private two-year colleges." According to the report (page 1):

Private two-year colleges have much higher graduation rates than public two-year colleges, even though they enroll similar students. The private colleges recognize they have nontraditional students who need different types of support.

Also according to the report (page 9):

What do these colleges, which tend to have an occupational focus, do differently?
The private two-year colleges recognize they have nontraditional students who

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may not always have well-developed plans and who may lack the motivation and organizational skills to earn a degree. As a result, these institutions structure their support for students differently than public two-year colleges by providing:

- A clear pathway to each program's goal and a clear timeframe;
- Information systems to track progress closely, which then is used to guide students' choices;
- Mandatory advising and peer cohorts that meet regularly;
- And active job placement assistance.

"The secret of our success has never really been a secret," said Frank Longaker, president of National College of Business & Technology, a member of TAICS. "The students' best interest always comes first. We are proud of the superior support programs that we are able to provide our students, and we have long recognized that these services contribute directly to our exceptionally high graduation rates. We are gratified by the praise of the NGA and encouraged by their new report."

The NGA notes that higher graduation rates among private career colleges hold especially true for African-American and Hispanic students. The report urges states to initiate performance-based funding for community colleges so that schools are rewarded for graduating students and not just enrolling them. The report acknowledges that such a structure is already in place at private career colleges, stating: "private two-year colleges rely on...evidence of degree completion to remain profitable, so it is in their interest financially to provide these supports and ensure their students attain degrees." Again this is an area where the NGA indicates that publicly funded schools should be following in the footsteps of privately owned colleges.

To view the full report, please visit www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0912INCREASINGCOLLEGESUCCESS.PDF.

About TAICS

The Tennessee Association of Independent Colleges and Schools (TAICS) and the Tennessee Proprietary Business School Association (TPBSA) are sister agencies representing Tennessee's schools with the legislature and regulatory entities critical to their success including the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, the state legislature, and accrediting commissions. TAICS facilitates professional growth and development for private career colleges and schools and their students, faculty, and staff.

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