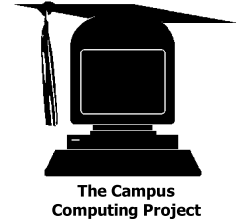




COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE ECONOMY



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The Winter 2009 Survey of Community College Presidents

Enrollments Are Up, Budgets Are Down As Community Colleges Respond to the Economic Downturn

Enrollments are way up, budgets are down, mid-year budget cuts are common, online courses and programs are growing, and community college presidents are optimistic that the economic stimulus package passed by the Congress in February will benefit their campuses and communities. These are the key findings from a new national survey of 120 community college presidents and district chancellors conducted in February and March 2009 by the League for Innovation in the Community College and The Campus Computing Project, in partnership with the education business of Pearson.

More than 9 in 10 (92 percent) of the presidents and chancellors participating in the winter 2009 survey report that headcount enrollment in their districts and on their campuses has increased compared to one year ago. Moreover, almost three-fourths of the presidents (71 percent) indicate headcount enrollment is up by 5 percent or more compared to winter 2008.

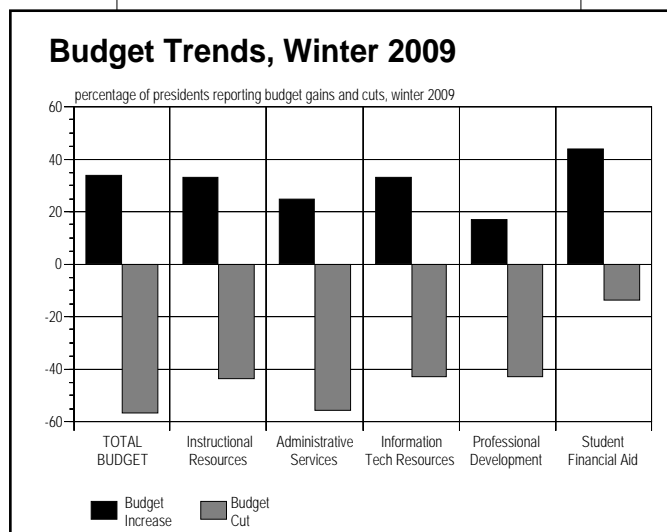
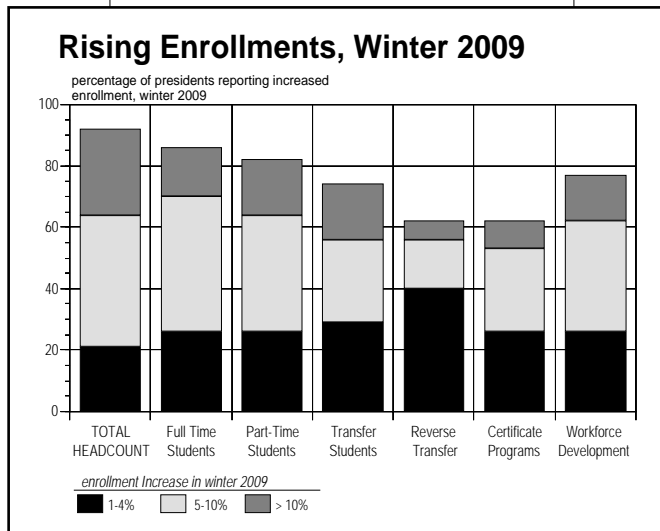
Additionally, large numbers of presidents and chancellors report year-to-

year enrollment gains across key categories of their student population: full-time students (up at 86 percent of the campuses participating in the survey), part-time students (82 percent),

transfer oriented students (74 percent), reverse transfer students coming back from four-year colleges (62 percent), certificate programs (72 percent), and enrollment in workforce development programs (77 percent).

The data also point to dramatic enrollment growth in key program offerings and service areas as the economy has soured over the past 12 months. For example, more than three-fourths (77 percent) of the community college presidents participating in the survey report enrollment gains in core academic and degree transfer programs: moreover, almost half (46 percent) of the presidents report enrollment gains of 5 percent or better in core academic programs. Similarly, large numbers of presidents report growing enrollments in remedial/developmental education programs (82 percent), and student success/freshman development programs (59 percent).

These gains parallel the percentage of presidents and chancellors reporting rising enrollments in career enhancement or refresher courses (58 percent), business and accounting courses and programs (59 percent), health care courses and pro-



grams (78 percent), information technology courses and programs (67 percent), and vocational training programs (79 percent).

The rising enrollment numbers stand in stark contrast to the budget cuts imposed on community colleges over the past year. Almost three-fifths (57 percent) of the presidents and chancellors participating in the survey report budget cuts at their institutions. Moreover, 70 percent of the campuses experiencing budget cuts had their budgets reduced by 5 percent or more compared to the previous academic year. Additionally, three-fifths (61 percent) of the presidents report that their institutions also experienced mid-year budget recissions, averaging about 5 percent. These mid-year budget cuts compound the financial challenges confronting the nation's two-year colleges. However, despite the budget cuts only 14 percent of presidents report reductions in student financial aid programs funded by their campus or district, while 44 percent report increased student aid supported by institutional (as opposed to federal or state) dollars.

“The dramatic enrollment gains over the past 12 months confirm that the nation's community colleges are at the forefront of both individual efforts and community responses to the economic downturn,” says Gerardo E. de los Santos, president and CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College. “In contrast, the data about budget cuts and institutional employment also confirm that the community colleges are on the receiving end of the ‘do more with less and do it better’ mantra that typically accompanies budget cuts and economic upheaval.”

The survey reveals dramatic enrollment growth in online courses and programs in community colleges

over the past year. More than 9 in 10 of the surveyed presidents (93 percent) report rising enrollment in online courses: two-fifths (40 percent) report online course enrollments increased by 5-10 percent, while a third (31 percent) report a gain of 10 percent or more in the number of students enrolled in online courses over the past 12 months. Although the numbers are not as dramatic, half the presidents (50 percent) report enrollment gains in online certificate programs, while more than half (55 percent) report rising enrollment in online degree programs.

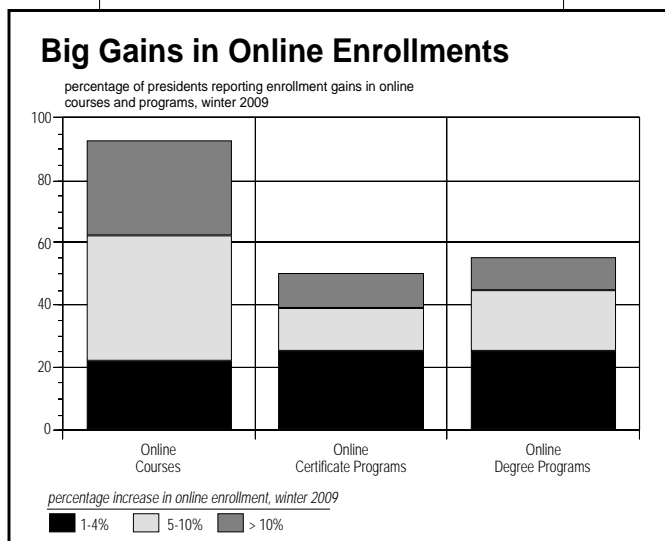
tutional cost of instruction.” Green notes that online courses may actually involve higher instructional costs because of the need for additional training and technical support for both students and faculty, plus costs of converting curricula for online instruction. In contrast, says Green, “online courses typically provide students with on-demand convenience - anytime, anywhere learning - and may save students time and money because they are not commuting to a campus.”

Even as enrollments rise, almost three-fifths (57 percent) of the surveyed presidents report increased competition from for-profit colleges. Fully three-fourths (73 percent) report pressure from state authorities to develop collaborative programs with other institutions and third (33 percent) report state pressure to consolidate current programs.

Community college presidents seem optimistic that the economic stimulus plan passed by the Congress in February will benefit their institutions and communities. Two-thirds (68 percent) agree that the stimulus plan

“will benefit enrollment and programs” at their institutions; a slightly larger number (72 percent) agree that the stimulus plan will “benefit employment in [my] community.”

The 2009 League for Innovation/Campus Computing Project survey of community college presidents was conducted in partnership with Pearson. A total of 120 community college presidents and campus chancellors participated in the online survey that was conducted from February 24 to March 12, 2009. The survey report is available online from the League and Campus Computing.



Nine in 10 (89 percent) of the presidents report their campuses are offering more online courses and programs in response to student interest and demand. In contrast, only two-fifths (39 percent) agree that their institutions are moving to expand online programs “as a way to reduce the cost of instruction.”

“The data about online courses and programs confirm what we see in other contexts,” says Kenneth C. Green, founding director of The Campus Computing Project, the organization that designed and managed the survey. “The growth in online courses and programs is fostered by student demand rather than an assumption that online courses reduce the insti-