

Room For All in the Education Space

by Jeff Olson, David Shefrin and Associates

In order to meet the goal for a better-educated America as espoused by President Obama, all sectors of education will need to be at their best. In order to be at their best, each sector needs to play to its strength. Fortunately, there is room for all.

As a graduate of a public university, I wouldn't trade my education for anything. I am grateful that the opportunity was provided to me as a citizen of this great country. However, I recognize that not all American citizens are interested in continuing a public education, especially if it involves heavy doses of general education. Also, there are those who were more motivated than I and earned a scholarship to a private college, or those who came from families that could afford expensive private universities. Good for them—it only helps America to be stronger.

The problem with the arguments presented in the February 2010 *Career Education Review*, specifically those by Stephen Burd and CCA, is that they never admit the strengths of the "other" sector.

My professional life has been almost entirely in the career college sector—from placement officer to president of a five-campus system. The work that is done in these schools is invaluable to hundreds of thousands of graduates across the country. A large number of jobs are best filled by graduates of these institutions. The money

spent by the American public on Pell Grants and student loans is a bargain when viewed in terms of the number of taxpaying graduates employed in good paying jobs.

Career colleges, regardless of credentialing level, should continue to do what they do best: provide job-specific training in a short but appropriate amount of time. They do it better than the community colleges and universities, and are held accountable by their peers.

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Community colleges should continue to provide a bridge between high school and universities. If the outcome becomes an end in itself, so be it. An American citizen can be trained for a good paying job at these facilities, and also have a direct bridge to continue their education at the university level should that be their choice.

Universities should continue to provide a well-rounded education and focus on research where appropriate. I have read that 70 percent of innovations have been a result, at least in part, of work completed at a publicly funded

university. These are innovations that are then taken to market by private entrepreneurs with jobs created and taxes paid. On the other end, the universities also train social workers and community aides, etc.—areas that will never pay a great deal, but still provide an invaluable service and rewarding career.

When CCA and others push for equal reform that jeopardizes the great work done at universities, they are not acknowledging the contribution of the universities. As the House and Senate are not packed with graduates of career colleges, these arguments are never going to take hold, thank goodness.

Universities and community colleges should look to the career colleges for ways to better serve their students—there is much to learn.

Career colleges are not going to go away either, regardless of how many articles Stephen Burd writes. There are simply too many students who support these schools with their feet and dollars. I feel confident that the schools will continue to



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provide job-specific training, and that there will always be thousands of students who are attracted to these exact offerings. Universities and community colleges should look to the career colleges for ways to better serve their students—there is much to learn. The career colleges will continue to be hounded by the media, measured, debated, scrutinized, etc., but they will remain and they will be integral to meeting the mandate proposed by President Obama.

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