

# Community College Systems Across the 50 States

Background Information for the  
Nevada Legislative Committee to Conduct an Interim Study Concerning Community Colleges  
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## Differences among states

The governance of community colleges across the 50 states defies easy description or classification. Each state's community colleges evolved from unique state circumstances. Nevada is among several states in which a state-level consolidated *governing* board with responsibility for *governing* universities and community colleges and/or two-year campuses. Other states with similar structures include Alaska, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New York (CUNY), North Dakota, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin (UW Colleges))<sup>1</sup>. Other states' community college systems developed in other ways, for example:

- Colleges that evolved, often as junior colleges, primarily through local initiative on the basis of school districts and the K-12 system with limited state oversight.
- Colleges that developed through state law that established a framework for both local governance and a statewide structure.
- Colleges that evolved from postsecondary vocational/technical systems—usually linked to the state board for vocational education (usually the state board of education).
- Colleges evolving from branch campuses linked to state universities

Some states experienced the proliferation of two or more of these developments resulting in highly fragmented networks of less-than-baccalaureate-level institutions. Many of the governance controversies in the 1970s through the 1990s revolved around rationalizing these networks.

As a result of the unique state evolution, community colleges vary widely in the forms of local governance:

- Colleges in several states do not have local governing boards (except perhaps local advisory boards) (Alaska, Connecticut, Minnesota, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, and South Carolina, as examples).
- A limited number of states have locally elected boards (California, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio and Texas).

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<sup>1</sup> There are nuances reflecting unique conditions in each of these states. In Alaska, the community colleges are organized as branches of one the three UA campuses and one college (Valdez) retains its own board but is within the UA System. In Georgia, one- and two-year postsecondary institutions exist in both the technical college system as well as within the University System of Georgia. In Idaho, the Idaho Board of Education is the overall policy body for all levels of education. The Idaho board governs all the public universities and coordinates two locally governed community colleges. The Massachusetts community colleges are under the statewide governing authority of the Board of Education and their local boards have specifically definitely governing authority delegated by the Board of Higher Education.

- Some or all of the members of local boards in other states are appointed (usually by local governments and/or the governor) (Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia). The Montana Board of Regents is the governing body for the state universities and coordinates three locally governed community colleges.

The state-level structures vary as widely as the origins and governing arrangements for community colleges.<sup>2</sup> (See Attachment A)

Other main types of state structures are as follows:

- A unit under the State board of education that is responsible primarily for K-12 (Alabama, Florida, Iowa, and Pennsylvania) *regulates* community colleges.
- A state-level governing board for state universities is also responsible for coordinating locally governed community colleges (Kansas, New York (SUNY)).
- A state-level higher education coordinating board or agency coordinates/regulates locally governed community colleges—no independent state-level board for community colleges (Oregon, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Texas).
- An independent state board *governs* community and/or technical colleges (Colorado, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, West Virginia).
- An independent state board *coordinates* locally governed community colleges (California, Illinois, Mississippi, Washington State, and Wisconsin).
- The state has no state-level board or entity with authority over locally governed community colleges (Arizona, Michigan)

States with independent state boards that either govern or coordinate community colleges differ in whether the community college board functions under the oversight of a state board/agency for coordinating all higher education

- States in which a state community college board functions with an overall coordinating agency for higher education include: Colorado, Oregon, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana and Washington.
- States with state community college boards that do not have a state higher education coordinating entity over both the community college and university sectors include California, Georgia, Maine, New Hampshire, West Virginia and Wisconsin (between the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System).

### **Financing and structure**

Patterns of financing (in addition to funds raised through student tuitions) also vary. Attached B shows the funding for community colleges in each state from state appropriations, tuition and local appropriations. States are listed according to the level of local funding starting with those states in which community colleges receive no local funding. While there are a few exceptions,

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<sup>2</sup> This list makes a careful distinction between three types of state function: *governing boards* have centralized control of appointing presidents and other governing functions and delegate powers to local colleges; *coordinating boards* have planning, budget and oversight responsibilities but governance of colleges is the responsibility of local college boards; *regulating agencies* carry out basic oversight functions but the governance of colleges is the responsibility of local college boards.

most states that fund community colleges primarily through state appropriations organize their community colleges systems under statewide governing boards. These boards are either statewide boards for higher education systems such as Alaska, Connecticut, Minnesota, Nevada, or Tennessee or statewide governing systems for community colleges such as Kentucky or Louisiana. If local boards exist, they are only advisory and function within the legal authority of the statewide board. Washington State is an exception to this pattern in that the community colleges have local governing boards appointed by the governor and are within the oversight authority of a statewide coordinating board for community and technical colleges.

Generally, community colleges with local boards are in states in which these institutions are funded primarily from local appropriations have local governing boards. Arizona is perhaps the clearest example of such a state. Arizona community colleges receive 70% of their funding from local sources and there is no statewide coordinating entity for community colleges. All other states with high levels of local funding have statewide boards that coordinate the community college system.

### **Trends in community college governance**

Just as governance structures are unique to each state, the major changes in state-level community college governance over the past fifty years have taken place because of unique state circumstances.

The major governance changes, clustered according to common themes, were:

- **Consolidating two-year institutions under a single community and technical college board.** North Carolina (1979), Kentucky (1997), Louisiana (1998) and West Virginia (2000) established consolidated state community (and technical) college systems under statewide governing boards. In each of these cases, the states consolidated highly fragmented networks of two-year university campuses, community colleges and postsecondary technical institutions to form statewide systems. In contrast to Texas community colleges, the colleges in these states are funded primarily by state appropriations and tuition with no local support and function under the governing authority of the state-level board. There are no college-level boards in Louisiana, and college-level boards in the other states operate under authority delegated by the central board or are only advisory.
- **Expanding the mission of an existing technical college system.** Indiana (2005), Maine (2003) and New Hampshire (1999) reconfigured technical college systems to ensure the full range of community college services (including transfer programs) available in every region of the state.
- **Consolidating of community and technical colleges and access-oriented state universities under a single governing board.** Minnesota (1995) and Connecticut (2011) consolidated previously independent state community and technical college boards under a state-wide board also responsible for governing state universities (but not the states' major flagship university). In neither of these states are there local college boards.
- **Consolidating oversight of locally governed community colleges under a statewide university governing board.** Kansas (1999) moved the statewide oversight of the locally governed community colleges from the State Board of Education to the Board of Regents, the statewide governing board for universities. The community colleges retained their local governing authority, however.
- **Eliminating a state-level coordinating board for locally governed community colleges.** Arizona (2003), a state with local elected boards and financing that includes local tax support,

state appropriations and tuition, abolished the state-level coordinating board for community colleges. Efforts to re-establish this entity have been rejected.

- **Strengthening a community college system to align with statewide goals for college completion.** Tennessee (2010) enacted the Complete College Tennessee Act which strengthened the existing community colleges as a “system” within the governing authority of the Tennessee Board of Regents (the state board which also governs the Tennessee state universities other than the University of Tennessee).

### **Mission distinction between community colleges and universities**

A perennial issue faced by many states is the need to maintain mission differentiation between community colleges and universities while at the same time developing a set of policies that require consistency and commonalities between the two sectors to ensure seamless progression of students through the education pipeline. The tension tends to be around these two dimensions

1. Policies to reinforce the distinctive mission of community colleges are critical to ensure:
  - The focus of the mission of open access, affordability, ensuring the success of students with diverse levels of preparation, links with regional K-12 systems and responsiveness to workforce needs
  - Finance, faculty reward systems (workloads, etc.) and other policies aligned with mission
2. Policies to ensure seamless student progress through the educational pipeline especially links with the K-12 system, adult education, and transfer to four-year institutions: these policies inevitably require statewide implementation and a degree of consistency and alignment between community college and universities on key academic policies, such as:
  - Statewide expectations for college and career readiness
  - P-16 relationships, including consistent dual credit policies
  - Common placement assessments and policies on cut-off scores
  - Core curricula
  - Common course numbering systems
  - Transfer agreements in selected majors

The effort to achieve a balance between these two perspectives can be seen clearly in the structure of large university systems that also include community colleges:

- The University of Hawaii organizes the community colleges under a Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges to ensure full attention to the unique mission of these campuses. While this differentiation is important, effective transfer and articulation remain a continuing challenge—in part because of the resistance from the main university campus, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- The City University of New York (CUNY) has maintained a position of Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges. In contrast to Hawaii, this is not a “line” position but the position is intended to ensure clear communication between the community college units and the system’s central university administration and the integration of the colleges within the system’s overall policies to ensure student progression through the system.
- The State University of New York (SUNY) has established a position of Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges and the Educational Pipeline. This position combines attention to both the priorities noted above: the unique community college mission and the need for a seamless

educational pipeline. The role is one of leading the resolution of issues that cut across the main units of the system (Academic Affairs, Budget and Finance), not to duplicate these functions. The thirty SUNY community colleges are far more diverse than the colleges within CUNY and are deeply intertwined with the political and finance of county government. The governance of the colleges differs significantly from that of the system's universities. For this reason, the position of Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges is a critical means to ensure sensitivity to the community college mission in a system that would otherwise be dominated by a university perspective.

- The reforms enacted in Tennessee in 2012 strengthened the community college system *within* the Board of Regents which also governs state universities. Following up on these reforms, the Board of Regents established a position of Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges. The role and responsibilities are similar to those of the vice chancellors in SUNY and CUNY: to ensure focus on the community college mission as well as the educational pipeline in a system that could be dominated by a university perspective and to lead cross-function resolution of issues.
- The governing structure of California community colleges has been debated for more than a decade and remains an active issue in the state. The California institutions are governed by district-level elected boards, some for single colleges and others for multiple colleges. The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges sets policy and provides guidance for the 72 districts and 112 colleges which constitute the system, and the Chancellor is the chief executive officer of the system. As a consequence of Proposition 13, enacted in 1978, the local taxing authority of community college districts was severely limited with the result that the most of the colleges' funding now comes from the state and from fees authorized by state law. Despite the appearance of local control through elected boards, the colleges are now tightly controlled by exceptionally prescriptive state laws. The actual power of the Board of Governors and Chancellor over the system is limited. Through the influence of faculty unions, requirements were enacted in 1988 that mandate extensive consultative processes at the level of the Chancellor and each level of the system that are widely seen as paralyzing effective governance of the system. Repeated studies and special commissions (the most recent in 2012 by the Little Hoover Commission) have called for fundamental reform of the governance structure including strengthening the powers and capacity of the Board of Governors and Chancellor. None of the proposed changes have been enacted and the prospects for reforms in the near future are limited. Meanwhile, the state eliminated the state's higher education coordinating body, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, so the state now has no statewide entity charged with coordinating the whole system to achieve long-term state goals.

## Attachment A - Patterns of State Coordination and Governance of Community Colleges and Other Two-Year Institutions

State	State Board of Education <i>Coordinates and Regulates</i> Community Colleges  States=5	Consolidated Governing Board for Both Two- and Four-year institutions <i>Governs</i> Community Colleges  States = 17	Coordinating Board for All Higher Education <i>Coordinates</i> Locally Governed Community Colleges  States = 11	Independent State Board <i>Coordinates</i> Community Colleges and/or Technical Institutions  States = 7	Independent State Board <i>Governs</i> Community Colleges and/or Technical Institutions  States = 15	Four-year Institutions have Two-year Branches  States = 11	Postsecondary Technical Institutes Organized Separately From Community Colleges  States = 12	Some Four-year Institutions Offer Associate Degree Programs  States = 19
Alabama	X (1)						X (1)	X
Alaska		X (2)				X (2)		X (2)
Arizona								
Arkansas			X			X		X
California				X				
Colorado				X (3)	X (3)			
Connecticut					X			
Delaware					X			
Florida	X (4)			X (4)			X (4)	
Georgia		X			X(5)			
Hawaii		X						
Idaho	X (6)	X (6)					X (6)	X (6)
Illinois				X				
Indiana					X (7)	X (16)		X
Iowa	X							
Kansas		X (17)						X
Kentucky					X			X
Louisiana					X	X		X
Maine					X			X
Maryland			X					
Massachusetts		X						
Michigan	X (18)							X
Minnesota		X						

Mississippi				X				
Missouri			X				X	X
Montana		X (11)						
Nebraska			X (12)					
Nevada		X						
New Hampshire					X			
New Jersey			X				X (13)	
New Mexico			X (19)			X	X	X
New York		X (14)						
North Carolina					X			
North Dakota		X						X
Ohio			X			X	X	X
Oklahoma			X		X	X	X	
Oregon			X					
Pennsylvania			X			X	X	X
Rhode Island		X						
South Carolina					X (15)	X		X
South Dakota							X	X
Tennessee		X						
Texas			X			X	X	X
Utah		X (21)					X (21)	
Vermont		X						
Virginia					X			
Washington				X				
West Virginia					X			X
Wisconsin					X	X		
Wyoming				X				
Puerto Rico		X						
District of Columbia		X						

- (1) Community Colleges and technical institutions are both under jurisdiction of the State Board of Education, but organized separately.
- (2) Only one campus functions as a community college, other former community colleges have been integrated with regional UA institutions.
- (3) Colorado Board is a governing board for state-operated community colleges and coordinating board for locally governed colleges.

- (4) State Board of Education's jurisdiction includes both the coordinating board for community colleges and the administrative entity for technical institutions but these units function separately.
- (5) Technical College System of Georgia.
- (6) Idaho State Board is responsible for all levels of education, including coordinating two local governed community colleges, governing universities that have community college missions and the technical colleges.
- (7) Ivy Tech Community College Board of Trustees.
- (8) State Department of Education coordinates locally governed community colleges and administers the state operated technical institutions
- (11) Board of Regents has a coordinating responsibility for local community colleges. Former vocational/technical centers are now linked to one of the two universities.
- (12) In addition to the formal role of the coordinating board, a state association performs a voluntary coordinating role for the locally governed community colleges.
- (13) Vocational-technical institutions are under the authority of the Department of Education.
- (14) SUNY includes both community colleges that are partially financed at the county level, as well as five state-funded colleges of technology. CUNY includes several community colleges.
- (15) State Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education.
- (16) Indiana University branches transitioning to four-year campuses.
- (17) Kansas Board of Regents governs four-year institutions but coordinates locally governed community colleges.
- (18) Michigan Department of Education has limited authority to only approve certain career and technical programs as recommended by local community colleges
- (19) Statewide coordination by New Mexico Department of Higher Education
- (20) Community colleges and technical institutes/colleges are both under the state Board of Regents but function separately.
- (21) Utah College of Applied Technology and community colleges are both under the State Board of Regents but function separately.



**Attachment B – Funding of Community Colleges by State, Sorted by Percentage of Local funding**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	<b>Revenues by State for Public CC (Tribal excluded), 2011-12</b>							
2	<b>Data Source: NCHEMS NCES IPEDS Finance Survey, Part A, 2011-12</b>							
3	<b>Prepared by: Linda Leyba on 1/8/2014 (303) 497-0314</b>							
4	<b>Sorted by Percentage of Funding from Local Tax Support</b>							
5						%	%	%
6		<b>Tuition</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Local</b>		<b>Tuition</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Local</b>
7	<b>State</b>	<b>and Fees</b>	<b>Approp</b>	<b>Approp</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>and Fees</b>	<b>Approp</b>	<b>Approp</b>
8								
9	Alaska	925,614	3,676,202	-	4,601,816	20.1	79.9	0.0
10	Connecticut	96,074,051	203,920,277	-	299,994,328	32.0	68.0	0.0
11	Delaware	45,194,202	66,651,403	-	111,845,605	40.4	59.6	0.0
12	Hawaii	45,402,301	93,260,345	-	138,662,646	32.7	67.3	0.0
13	Indiana	141,758,041	216,235,174	-	357,993,215	39.6	60.4	0.0
14	Louisiana	102,236,462	142,468,082	-	244,704,544	41.8	58.2	0.0
15	Maine	14,281,727	49,250,213	-	63,531,940	22.5	77.5	0.0
16	Massachusetts	223,999,828	277,887,197	-	501,887,025	44.6	55.4	0.0
17	Minnesota	284,092,000	310,801,000	-	594,893,000	47.8	52.2	0.0
18	Nevada	13,166,000	30,590,000	-	43,756,000	30.1	69.9	0.0
19	New Hampshire	63,752,632	29,242,036	-	92,994,668	68.6	31.4	0.0
20	North Dakota	15,090,700	29,758,227	-	44,848,927	33.6	66.4	0.0
21	Rhode Island	32,018,883	44,482,657	-	76,501,540	41.9	58.1	0.0
22	South Dakota	26,712,273	12,652,383	-	39,364,656	67.9	32.1	0.0
23	Tennessee	186,218,702	239,790,133	-	426,008,835	43.7	56.3	0.0
24	Utah	65,778,533	93,531,318	-	159,309,851	41.3	58.7	0.0
25	Vermont	18,721,731	4,705,161	-	23,426,892	79.9	20.1	0.0
26	Washington	263,977,664	432,899,798	-	696,877,462	37.9	62.1	0.0
27	Georgia	235,612,743	374,300,402	44,213	609,957,358	38.6	61.4	0.0
28	Kentucky	105,487,000	156,762,740	44,130	262,293,870	40.2	59.8	0.0

29	Alabama	146,332,813	289,657,493	1,277,347	437,267,653	33.5	66.2	0.3
30	Virginia	362,647,259	310,998,596	2,139,793	675,785,648	53.7	46.0	0.3
31	West Virginia	26,213,024	52,327,312	874,326	79,414,662	33.0	65.9	1.1
32	Florida	146,860,206	265,855,479	27,266,902	439,982,587	33.4	60.4	6.2
33	Arkansas	60,668,353	173,322,047	25,472,442	259,462,842	23.4	66.8	9.8
34	Colorado	248,243,097	8,795,134	30,461,548	287,499,779	86.3	3.1	10.6

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	<b>Revenues by State for Public CC (Tribal excluded), 2011-12</b>							
2	<b>Data Source: NCHEMS NCES IPEDS Finance Survey, Part A, 2011-12</b>							
3	<b>Prepared by: Linda Leyba on 1/8/2014 (303) 497-0314</b>							
4	<b>Sorted by Percentage of Funding from Local Tax Support</b>							
5						%	%	%
6		<b>Tuition</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Local</b>		<b>Tuition</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Local</b>
7	<b>State</b>	<b>and Fees</b>	<b>Approp</b>	<b>Approp</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>and Fees</b>	<b>Approp</b>	<b>Approp</b>
8								
35	Pennsylvania	371,434,286	234,971,159	111,523,772	717,929,217	51.7	32.7	15.5
36	North Carolina	215,859,437	872,165,420	200,979,897	1,289,004,754	16.7	67.7	15.6
37	Mississippi	90,225,633	226,937,870	59,716,232	376,879,735	23.9	60.2	15.8
38	South Carolina	221,132,643	104,848,881	61,813,259	387,794,783	57.0	27.0	15.9
39	Ohio	385,828,680	404,430,712	158,682,407	948,941,799	40.7	42.6	16.7
40	Montana	18,100,627	21,860,577	8,403,967	48,365,171	37.4	45.2	17.4
41	Idaho	48,618,664	46,971,693	20,558,592	116,148,949	41.9	40.4	17.7
42	Wyoming	31,011,019	115,085,633	45,274,256	191,370,908	16.2	60.1	23.7
43	Iowa	170,790,524	188,359,250	114,880,209	474,029,983	36.0	39.7	24.2
44	New Jersey	424,582,972	135,743,630	194,451,798	754,778,400	56.3	18.0	25.8
45	Oregon	271,677,898	255,171,240	203,406,849	730,255,987	37.2	34.9	27.9
46	Oklahoma	71,241,372	173,305,070	117,103,528	361,649,970	19.7	47.9	32.4
47	New York	618,326,971	599,927,697	623,874,352	1,842,129,020	33.6	32.6	33.9
48	Missouri	116,436,527	108,849,214	115,447,235	340,732,976	34.2	31.9	33.9
49	Maryland	318,278,227	257,411,136	310,463,216	886,152,579	35.9	29.0	35.0
50	New Mexico	55,720,846	168,607,999	126,889,521	351,218,366	15.9	48.0	36.1
51	California	691,182,474	2,945,547,973	2,249,116,664	5,885,847,111	11.7	50.0	38.2
52	Texas	810,620,748	1,071,307,007	1,298,984,124	3,180,911,879	25.5	33.7	40.8
53	Michigan	400,411,775	283,506,318	523,243,064	1,207,161,157	33.2	23.5	43.3
54	Kansas	128,864,015	136,834,491	209,844,975	475,543,481	27.1	28.8	44.1

55	Nebraska	58,845,685	89,367,892	127,736,654	275,950,231	21.3	32.4	46.3
56	Illinois	534,752,380	329,038,170	924,855,114	1,788,645,664	29.9	18.4	51.7
57	Wisconsin	190,552,418	113,244,957	651,569,601	955,366,976	19.9	11.9	68.2
58	Arizona	219,752,787	69,742,030	659,982,442	949,477,259	23.1	7.3	69.5