

Community colleges transform lives and open doors to new possibilities. As open access institutions, we educate for the thirty percent of jobs that are middle skill careers and provide an affordable pathway to the forty percent of careers that require a bachelor's degree or beyond. Our campuses provide students with a sense of belonging and high-quality learning experiences, no matter where they are on their education or career continuum.

Our students are diverse and represent the beautiful mosaic of our local communities. Many are first generation. Some are culturally and linguistically diverse. Some are neurodivergent. Others balance their studies with parenthood, work, or caretaking responsibilities. Some struggle financially, are food insecure, or coping with physical or mental health issues. Yet, what they all have in common is the ability to succeed. Students range in age from a dual enrolled student looking for a jump start on their higher education journey to a senior citizen looking to fulfill a lifelong dream of achieving a college degree and everything in between.

Our classrooms engage students in hands-on and interactive experiences that offer avenues to economic mobility leading to family sustaining wages. We educate our local communities' and state's workforce with programmatic expertise in healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, and early childhood education, and foster the development of entrepreneurs and small business owners. We have world class venues in the liberal arts. Four of ten undergraduate students start their post-secondary education journey at a community college.

School districts partner with us to build early college options. We customize and tailor curriculum for and with our industry partners to ensure students have the competencies and skill sets needed to be competitive in today's workforce. We partner with non-profit organizations and state agencies to expand access to vital resources our students need and locally rely on our strong foundations to provide student scholarships and philanthropic support aligned to our strategic priorities and mission.

With input from our Workforce Investment Boards (WIBS), chambers, and local business and industries, we also offer a range of short-term workforce certificates and credentials aligned to our labor market, providing mechanisms for entry into and options to stay current in students' chosen fields. We provide personal enrichment courses to keep learning fun and to meet the needs of all demographics of our service area. We educate for the public good.

Our faculty and staff are second-to-none, most having earned advanced or terminal degrees in field and all are experts in their respective fields. We offer small class sizes with

state-of-the-art equipment, wrap-around student support services, and co-curricular programming, where students can thrive, close to home at an affordable cost.

Rural colleges are their community's educational hub. Like Berkshire Community College, most experience upwards of 90% of students come from their county, resulting in enrollment and programming being deeply dependent on our changing county demographics. Our alumni remain in our region upon graduation and become part of the county's taxbase and foster regional economic development. Catchment areas often have disproportionate rates of poverty, limited public transportation, and infrastructure challenges related to technology; yet the citizenry is resilient and understands how to weave partnerships across private and public sectors to provide the resources for the local needs of our communities.

As Berkshire Community College charts its future with development of its next strategic plan, we will need to adapt to changing demographics and higher education policy, the impact of free community college, Workforce Pell, emergence of artificial intelligence, position the college for growth within our academic portfolio while strengthening wrap around services to ensure continuous improvement with student outcomes in retention, graduation, and economic mobility.