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# Research Supports Work of Community Colleges

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When I was writing my book, *The Community College Career Track: How to Achieve the American Dream without a Mountain of Debt*, I came across the research of Dr. Anthony Carnevale, Director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. The Center's research focuses on the link between education, career qualifications, and workforce demands.

Dr. Carnevale's research confirms what community colleges have known for years. There are well-paying jobs available for applicants with an associate's degree or perhaps even completion of a certificate program. With student loan debt rising and unemployment high for recent graduates, students, parents, teachers, and guidance counselors should look to their local community college before enrolling in an expensive four year school.

The Center's latest report, "<http://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020/>," notes that the U.S. employment market will grow from 140 million to 165 million jobs by 2020. There will be 55 million job openings, of which 24 million will be newly created positions and 31 million will be the result of the retirement of baby boomers.

The study also projects that 65 percent of job vacancies will require some post -secondary education and training. But not all of these positions will demand a bachelor's degree. Seven million jobs will only require an associate's degree and five million more will be filled by those with postsecondary certificate.

This is good news for community colleges. Many community colleges around the country are already working with local businesses to meet future workforce needs. Dr. Carnevale's research indicates that these jobs will be concentrated in healthcare, community services, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineer and Mathematics) and information technology -- all areas where community colleges excel offering either associate's degrees or certificate programs.

In a separate report, "[Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees](#)," Dr. Carnevale's team of economists pointed out the value of certificates, which have skyrocketed more than 800 percent over the past 30 years. Community colleges have always

recognized the value of such programs, which can include certification in auto mechanics, drafting, electronics, police and protective services, healthcare, information services, transportation and agriculture.

The report also noted that high school graduates receive a 20 percent wage premium from a certificate. A median worker with a high school diploma earns slightly more than \$29,000 while certificate holders earn slightly less than \$35,000. This can mean the difference between living at the poverty level and a middle class life for a family. Over the past couple of years, certificate programs have become very popular with displaced workers. It enables them to be on the fast track in obtaining new skills and getting back into the workforce.

Perhaps best thing about certificate programs is that a student can usually go through a community college program spending less than \$6,000 for coursework that is often covered by a Pell Grant.

Community college presidents around the country are following Dr. Carnevale's research closely in order to be better prepared to serve the future workforce. He estimates that the United States will fall short by 5 million workers with post-secondary education -- at the current production rate -- by 2020.

We need to recognize that not everyone should attend a four-year institution. There are good jobs available for those with a community college degree or graduates of a certificate program.

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