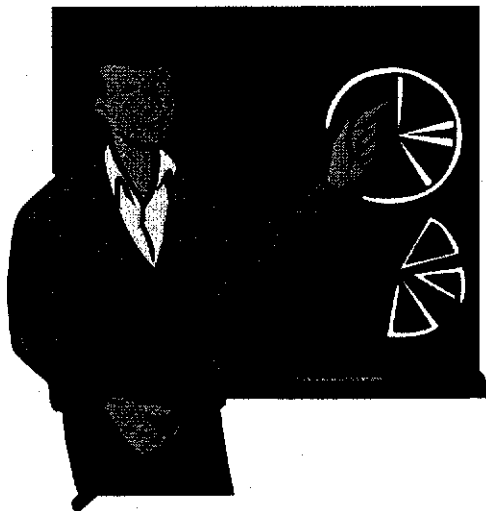


# Rx For Solving Nation's Teacher Shortage



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### **Rx for Solving Nation's Teacher Shortage:**

*Community Colleges Educate One in Five U.S. Teachers; Can Help Cut Shortage of 2.4 Million Teachers by One Quarter, Says New Report*

More Than 600,000 K-12 Teachers Begin Careers in Community College; Model Programs Address Issues of Quality and Quantity, Research Shows

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**— October 23, 2002 – The nation's 1,100 community colleges, which now educate more than one of every five public school teachers, remain an untapped resource in addressing the nation's most severe teacher shortage in more than 40 years. With additional support and better links to four-year colleges and careers in the classroom, emerging programs to prepare teachers at these institutions can be the key to finding hundreds of thousands of new, highly qualified teachers in the next decade, according to a new report released today by the Belmont, Mass.-based nonprofit Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.

Today, 20 percent – or roughly 600,000 teachers – currently begin their careers in community college. If this trend continues, and additional resources are set aside to strengthen teacher preparation programs at the community college level, America could cut its shortage of 2.4 million teachers by one quarter or more.

Yet, while interest in teaching at the K-12 level is high among community college students, there is no infrastructure currently in place to advance more students to four-year education programs and the teaching profession. According to the study, which was supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, teacher preparation programs now operating at a growing number of community colleges nationwide can be expanded to capitalize on student interest and could supply many of the total number of teachers needed in the next ten years.

Because nearly half of all minority college students – 46 percent of African Americans and 55 percent of Hispanics – attend community colleges, strengthened teacher education programs at these institutions will also address another crucial issue in schools: the lack of diversity among the nation's teaching force. Today, schools make up approximately 56 percent of students of color and only 14 percent teachers of color. This gap is even more pronounced in urban schools where minorities make up 69 percent of the student body but only 35 percent of the teaching staff.

"Strengthening and expanding teacher education programs on community college campuses not only offer the best hope we have to overcome the teacher shortage in this country, it is a powerful solution to improving teacher quality at the same time," says Mildred Hudson, CEO of Recruiting New Teachers. "Community college programs can develop a larger, better prepared, and more ethnically diverse pool of teacher candidates in communities across the nation."

According to the RNT study, students who transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions perform at about the same level as students who began at the four-year campuses. Many admissions programs ensure that only the highest achieving students transfer from two-year schools to four-year education programs. Faculty at four-year schools report that education transfer students often are better prepared than those who started there as freshmen, in part because their community college preparation gave them direct experience in the schools.

"Rather than hoping that those who drift into teaching without adequate training will succeed in our most challenging classrooms, we need to actively recruit prospective teachers who understand our students' cultural backgrounds, and teachers that have the maturity, skills, knowledge and attitudes to build upon students' strengths," says actor Edward James Olmos, a longtime member of the RNT board of directors. "Community college programs can then provide these students with a strong liberal arts content and launch them on a course to be outstanding teachers."

Equally significant, many teachers educated at community colleges are older adults who tend to do better at maintaining discipline, come from nontraditional backgrounds, and are residents of the local community who are more likely to prefer teaching in urban schools, the report says. For instance, at a Lehman College program in the Bronx, about 80 percent of graduates, two thirds of whom began at community colleges, elect to teach in Bronx schools.

**Tapping Potential: Community Colleges and America's Teacher Recruitment Challenge** profiles six model programs and examines policies and practices in all 50 states. Programs profiled in the report include Bronx Community College in New York, El Paso Community College in Tex., Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Mich., Miami-Dade Community College in Florida, Community College of Philadelphia, and Phoenix College in Arizona.

According to the report, these six programs hold students to high standards and offer high-quality, relevant teacher training preparation. Students who graduate from these programs emerge well grounded in an introduction to teaching and learning, have experience in schools, are more mature, and are committed, in an informed way, to pursuing teaching careers. The report notes that successful community college teacher education programs:

- Set clear goals to focus their program and encourage shared purpose and the effective use of resources.
- Demonstrate leadership to marshal the support needed to ensure that the program becomes well established.
- Hire dedicated and demanding faculty who serve as model classroom practitioners, mentors, counselors, and friends.
- Design well-planned and consistent recruitment efforts to help identify

promising teaching candidates and help start them on the pathway to careers.

- Maintain a well-designed, relevant, and coherent curriculum with high standards to ensure effective teaching and positive, relevant, and stimulating experiences.
- Create partnerships with four-year institutions to smooth and strengthen the transfer process and ensure that prospective teachers continue on the path to the classroom.
- Provide support, counseling, and mentoring to help guide students through the transfer process, and ensure flexible schedules, organized study, support groups, tutoring, financial aid, and other assistance.
- Ensure adequate funding and provide for sustainability to avoid spending valuable time and resources seeking external grants or advocating for the program's survival.
- Assess and monitor students regularly to determine whether programs are preparing them for rigorous academic work and field experiences in schools, and ensuring smooth transfer of academic credits.

Currently, 20 states are working in some capacity to identify and train prospective educators at community colleges. While all of the programs are fairly easy to enter, reflecting the open-door policy of community colleges, they are difficult to complete due to high standards required of students. Despite their rigor, most of the programs boast higher transfer rates than the national average.

### **Tapping Potential: Recommendations**

Despite their demonstrated success, only a few states provide specific funding for community college teacher preparation programs, and few colleges or universities have adequate programs aimed at supporting potential teachers through the transition from community college to a baccalaureate program and on to a teaching career.

The report also found that few community colleges recruit potential teachers and provide them with faculty and programs that offer sufficient preparation for transferring to a four-year college or university teacher preparation program. "We're well past the 'pilot stage' of assessing how and whether teacher education programs on two-year campuses work. The challenge now lies with state and federal lawmakers to ensure wider availability and long-term viability of these programs," says Hudson.

The report urges lawmakers to work collaboratively with community colleges and four-year institutions to create a more seamless transfer process from the community colleges to four-year programs. State policymakers can authorize more community college campuses to offer education coursework and classroom experience, and to offer associate degrees in education.

In addition, the report calls on policymakers to facilitate the development of models to encourage the recruitment and guidance of community college education students and to ensure that scholarships and loan forgiveness opportunities include this population.

The report calls for more community colleges to design teacher preparation programs that provide students with relevant, demanding course work and exposure to teaching. In addition, two-year schools are asked to strengthen interinstitutional collaborations through articulation agreements, and to provide consistent funding to teacher preparation programs. For their part, four-year colleges and universities are charged with developing long-term collaborations with community colleges, creating seamless transfer opportunities for community college students interested in pursuing teaching careers including the full acceptance of credits accumulated at two-year schools, and providing incentives for community college education students such as reduced tuition, scholarships, dual enrollment programs, and support systems.

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization based in Belmont, Massachusetts. It was formed in 1986 to raise esteem for teaching, expand the pool of prospective teachers, and improve the nation's teacher recruitment and development policies and practices. RNT is committed to this goal and pursues it through innovative public service outreach; action-oriented research; local, state, and national advocacy; networking; technical assistance; and by convening national conferences.