

Thank you to the volunteers who put in the long hours and hard work to make this wonderful conference happen.

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Registration: Rebecca Adams, Ellie Bloom, Michelle Kocay, Susan Monroe, Rob Nelson, Rebecca Samberg

Program: Rick Mastronardi, Lauren O’Leary, Elizabeth Keefe, and Kate Babbitt

And give yourselves a well-deserved “ya hoo” for giving up a weekend with such stunning weather: you could be home commenting on student papers.

The theme of the conference: “Making Connections” speaks right to the heart of what keeps us coming back to conferences. “The Creative Collaboration” is the practical payoff: Who hasn’t returned to campus and implemented something just learned at a conference? That is real value for folks who care about student success.

In addition, coming to a regional conference gives us a broader view of what is happening outside our classrooms that impacts our students and our colleges.

On the national level, the focus of NCTE’s 2016 Advocacy Platform highlights the need for equitable access to literacy learning at all levels. This past week NPR’s special reports on education confirm the need for continue to seek solutions.

The work of equitable access is the work of social justice— it is familiar territory for those of us who teach at our open door institutions. Many community colleges have mission statements that give voice to the commitment we have to our students—regardless of their level of preparedness.

I’ll talk this morning about impacts of the Redesign of America’s Community colleges and revisit the growth of dual credit. Done well, these ideas could aid in creating a level playing field for all students. Done poorly, they are likely to disadvantage the already disadvantaged.

I’ll start with

Redesign of America’s Community Colleges

Even if you haven’t heard the whole story on your campus, you may have heard some buzz words surrounding the “Redesign”: a plan to implement Complete College America recommendations aimed at increasing completion rates.

Here are a few of the major themes involved in the redesign movement that will likely sound familiar:

- **clearing the “clutter”** out of our colleges’ “cafeteria-style course offerings” that confuse students into taking classes they don’t need for graduation

- providing more **robust advising** for students to help them identify their **guided pathway**
- Using **co-requisite classes** and **accelerated classes** to move people past hazardous “exit points” that students encounter when they place in to developmental coursework
- Creating an “**early warning**” **systems** to identify and support struggling students
- And ominously at many state levels: **performance-based funding**

When I first heard about “Redesign,” my concern was that colleges would immediately embrace the least expensive ideas and balk at the pricy student support services such as expanded tutoring and advising and costly but successful low student-to teacher ratios in co-requisite support courses.

It is well-intentioned and cheap to implement “guided pathways” and eliminate the supposed peril of “unnecessary” classes, but you are right to wonder what will happen to literature, film, and creative writing in a trimmed curriculum. We are in that process of pruning on my campus: my dean challenged our English program to reduce our literature offerings by 50%.

Eliminating what are often under-enrolled courses can be easily defended by considerations of budget. However, (and this won’t surprise any of you) that the move to reduce, or in some cases eliminate, developmental coursework is part of the redesign and is much harder to defend. National statistics reveal that about 60% of students coming into our two-year colleges don’t come equipped with college-level reading, math, and writing.

There is a reason that I put “reading” first in that list: Cheryl Hogue Smith makes the statement in her research that “students can never out write their ability to read.

The “Redesign’s” focus on completion as a measure of student success puts students who are not “college ready” at real risk of being further marginalized.

I urge you to consider being involved in Redesign efforts on your campus to advocate for smart ways to deliver developmental coursework and student support services that are such an integral part of student success regardless of what “guided pathway” a student chooses.

For those of us who value so highly the mission of community colleges, student success matters. We contribute to social justice through our work with our students. Tragically, not all of our students are successful, and for some, their failed attempt at higher education is costly:

[*The Debt Divide, the Racial and Class Bias Behind the “New Normal of Student Borrowing”*](#) published last year, details the devastation that can accrue to students who aren’t successful. That research uncovers inequities in who completes college and who does not and who borrows the most money while they are seeking an associate’s degrees (Huelsman 9).

Forty percent of students at a community college gamely take on debt to give themselves a shot at a better life. As it turns out, these often small amounts of student debt are a dicey gamble.

The statistics are disheartening:

- If they are students of color, nearly 40% of them will be dropping out
- If are they students who qualified for Pell grants, nearly 40% of them will be dropping out

The number one reason students choose a part-time class schedule is to work more hours and earn money; however, this layers on yet another level of risk: only 43% of part-time students end up graduating within six years.

Now the really grim part of this: nearly two-thirds (66%) of students who default on their student loans are students who dropped out (Huelsman).

You all have had these students in your class –

When Pell Grant money doesn't cover their expenses, taking out a small federal student loan seems like a reasonable option, but a failed attempt at college is often the road to even greater poverty.

Default on student loans will ruin the student's credit rating: eliminating the possibility of qualifying for a loan for a mortgage or a car and eliminating many employment opportunities. Life is neither simple nor easy in our American economy for those with bad credit ratings. .

Advocating for student loan reform—or “redesign of student debt”—is crucial to avoid yet another path to economic inequity in America—and it is clearly the work of social justice:

Dual enrollment figures into the Redesign movement, too.

Dual enrollment has grown by 75% over the past 10 years according to a 2015 ACT Report, so we have more students come to us who have first year composition “out of the way.”

Some of that growth has not been lovely. For example, in Michigan, a TYCA colleague is the teacher of record for 10 high school teachers who don't meet minimum qualifications to be hired as faculty at the college but who are teaching first-year composition. This skirts accreditation standards problem of having unqualified teachers awarding college credit.

In Oregon, a few short days of “training” and a being part of a “professional learning community” is considered adequate preparation to teach college-level courses that have a college professor “partner” as the teacher of record (again, to skirt problems with accreditation). Credit can be awarded through Credit for Prior Learning that doesn't have the demands of shared curriculum. The partnership is polygamous—the college professors partner with as many high school teachers as the school district deems necessary.

But those of us teaching at a community college have cushy work lives compared to high school teachers who may see 150-200 students each week and, often with little choice, have now added teaching college courses to their duties.

If you are curious about how well your campus is handling dual credit, I recommend checking the [National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships](#) (NACEP) website. Done well, dual credit is a wonderful fit for some students.

And if it is done poorly, well, it brings me back to the topic of dismantling of developmental coursework. Surprisingly—and for me deeply troubling—is that some proponents of expanding dual credit recommend it as a panacea for the “problem” of developmental education: If students earn college credit in high school, they can avoid placing into developmental courses when they arrive at college.

In my state of Oregon, it is sold as “those who have dual credit courses in high school do better in college.”

The logic is flawed: it is true that there is a correlation between students who have college credit when they graduate from high school and their subsequent college success. However, historically, dual credit students were already privileged. Dual credit just gave them another leg up on success. Awarding a high student college credit who may be one of the 66% testing into developmental writing at a community college is of questionable value to that student. Having the college credit and not the skills and knowledge those credits represent is a potentially dreadful situation that underprepared student.

Those of us teaching at our open door institutions have a long and deep commitment to students who come to us underprepared. Moving those students forward in their academic journeys is the work of social justice, and it is our work. The consequences of using deeply flawed dual credit to obviate the need for developmental coursework in college is yet to be determined, but we can count on dual credit expanding as the U.S. Department of Education has now made [Pell Grant](#) money available for students living in poverty to pay for dual enrollment courses in 23 states.

Please be involved and advocate for the dual enrollment options being offered in your area to be high quality, valid credits that actually prepare students for next steps and meet NACEP standards. With K-12 budgets being cut in many states, some cash-strapped schools may look harder at the “double dipping” benefits and those Pell Grant dollars than they do at whether the student will actually benefit.

I know you are working hard as teachers, I urge you to become actively involved in advocating for students at the local, state, and national level. What happens outside the classroom does impact what happens inside our classrooms. Our students can't afford to hire a lobbyist—and we are writers. We can do this work.

Because of our connections, we are stronger together as collaborators in a most honorable profession: the work of education—it is truly the work of social justice.

Here are a few ways to share and keep in touch to leverage our power:

1. Joining and contributing to the [TYCA listserv](#)
2. Reading [the Policy Advocates reports](#) on the NCTE website
3. Join NCTE and subscribe to The TYCA Journal [Teaching English in the Two-Year College](#) –
Holly Hassel is the new editor—
- 4.

A focus on student success is not new to those of us teaching at a community college. We are faculty who often find ourselves teaching our subject area right along with helping students understand what it means to be in college and how to be a successful college student. We know how to do this. This is our work.