

Greetings from the MCNC Director!

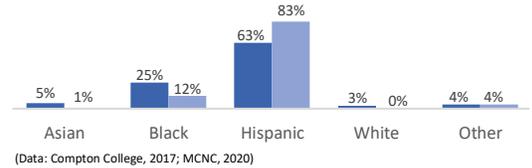
Happy New Year! As we are transitioning into this new year, I thought it was important to go back and look at how COVID impacted our college partners. Voices from four college leaders are highlighted in this month's newsletter. Interviewed via Zoom, the college leaders were asked to share their thoughts on 1) the decline in enrollments as reported nationally, 2) supporting students through the pandemic, and 3) their high school partnerships. Voices from our college presidents echo our concerns about the issues of who was able to return to school and how they were able to succeed in the face of large equity gaps in our country. The good news is that all the colleges quickly pivoted to meet students' needs for social-emotional supports, and in many cases, financial, by utilizing multiple sources of funding. All of the college presidents found ways to respond to technology gaps, both equipment-wise and in internet access. President Keith Curry at Compton College emphasized how student supports must be a central part of dual enrollment, made more evident during the pandemic. President Kenneth Adams at LaGuardia Community College thought that virtual learning could be a permanent part of the college's degree programs. Dr. Carol Johnson at LeMoyne-Owen College pointed to the importance of building a stronger pipeline and maximizing partnerships. Mr. William Reuter at SUNY Erie College is looking more closely at what worked for students during these challenging times as his college seeks to keep the college viable. As you read the excerpts from our college president interviews, consider how our schools could work with our college partners to ensure successful college course completions by our students and outreach to those in our local communities to help them participate in continuing education.



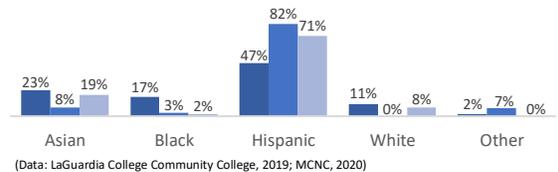
Featured Colleges & MCNC High School Partners



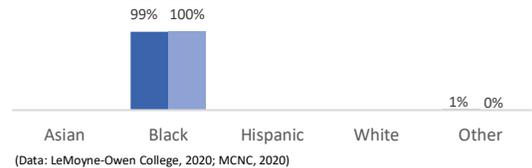
Compton College | Public, 2-year | Compton, CA
Compton Early College High School



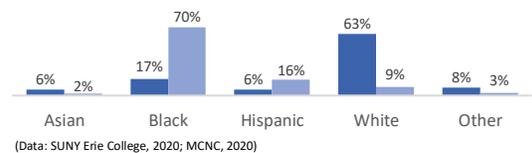
LaGuardia Community College | Public, 2-year | LIC, NY
Middle College High School at LaGuardia International High School



LeMoyne-Owen College | Private, 4-year | Memphis, TN
Hollis F. Price Middle College High School



SUNY Erie College | Public, 2-year | Buffalo, NY
Buffalo Middle Early College High School



Dr. Keith Curry,
President and CEO
Compton College
Compton, CA

"I anticipated an enrollment decline this year due to one of our partnerships ending in summer 2019 and COVID just made it a little more difficult in regards to our enrollment expectations."

"We've had significant challenges in regards to students being able to utilize technology online, and students not having available WiFi or access to hotspots at home. We knew what the data and problems were before COVID, but we never had to deal with it like this – our students had housing and technology issues before COVID, but needs became much more urgent and immediate."

"We bought laptops for students and employees. We have a laptop loan program for our students. We have a WiFi hotspot program for students. We have a full delivery food service program for our students through collaborations with Every Table Partnership and Sunrise Produce. We have changed the way we do business, in a good way."

"This year we are giving out emergency grants of \$114 to high school students in dual enrollment through a grant from Believe In Our Students In Equity. This is the first time this has been done in California, and it could become a trend in terms of providing additional incentives for students."

"Our high school partnership has been going very well because of two things: communication and relationships. We have really focused on student success. We've had really good conversations on

topics like 'What does online tutoring or counseling look like for students?' We have been providing workshops through our Student Success Center and just trying to figure out all the different ways to provide support. COVID has actually helped us strategically plan now, for a potential ongoing period of time where every student will need technology in their hands, and we would need to provide a range of tutoring and support services, remotely. And if you look at the AB288 legislation and how dual enrollment is generally offered, the student support services component has not been a central part of the conversation. Over the past five years, we went from serving 98 dual enrollment students to 1,300 this year, with very successful overall completion rates – and supporting students has been important."



Mr. Kenneth Adams
President
LaGuardia Community College
Long Island City, NY

“Our enrollment dropped about 7% which is less than the average drop for City University of New York, but it is a significant drop for us. Things are bit more challenging with COVID and the reductions in funding. This is not what one expects in a recessionary economy – in tough, economic times, when people lose their jobs, they enroll in community college for training. So, this is really an anomaly.”

“We’ve been 100% online since the fall and we saw that students started out well but were completely wiped out by the end of the term. A lot of students were withdrawing from courses, so we provided a ‘credit’ or ‘no credit’ option in the spring and fall terms. If a student received a ‘C’ grade and felt it was impacted by COVID, s/he could convert that to a ‘credit’ grade. However, keep in mind, ungraded credits meant possibly jeopardizing transfer potential to a four-year college.”

“COVID heavily impacted our economically disadvantaged students who needed access to laptops, WIFI hotspots and other supports. We set up a phone bank to call and check in on students, to make sure they had what they needed for their coursework and to be in touch with their advisors – a lot of intense support. We are very fortunate to have a generous fundraising body for our college, and they stepped right in to help out. The foundation provided emergency financial support to ensure that we could generously fund our food bank, provide rent aid for those who were about to be evicted, help with basic utilities from being shut down, technological needs, and scholarship money for our students in need. We can’t fix every problem but we are trying to be very mindful of access and equity challenges and provide resources.”

“We have already started planning for a possible, ongoing virtual, online LaGuardia. We’re looking at potential programs that could be promoted to students and faculty survey results about online instruction and potential of continuing. In terms of equity and access – online instruction, if done effectively, can really increase opportunities, especially for the working person who may not be able to easily attend classes on campus.”

“As for your question about the possibility of increased certification opportunities for our three Early College High School partner sites, I think it’s a great idea. Common certifications like in healthcare and IT would probably be good. LaGuardia has a strong continuing education and workforce development division and we’re preparing to introduce several new programs this spring.”



Dr. Carol Johnson
Interim President
LeMoyne-Owen College
Memphis, TN

“We went to fully remote in fall 2019 and so we saw an approximate 21% drop in enrollment. As a Historically Black College, we belong to the United Negro College Fund and we learned that the higher the Pell grant eligibility of students, the more likely a member college/university faced enrollment drops; our Pell Grant eligibility is over 90%.”

“Our students had lost part-time employment subsidizing their education. They might have received Pell to cover tuition and some portions of room and board but not enough to stay in college. We lost revenue that would have been generated for tuition and room and board, due to capacity limitations related to COVID protocols. We allowed some students to return due to serious housing insecurities such as homelessness or grandparents who were older or very vulnerable nearby. There were also technology and computing needs for most of our students that could not be addressed directly by their families, so we invested in computers, WiFi hotspots, and related infrastructure to directly support our students by working with the stimulus money and resource funding provided by our Shelby County Commissioner’s Office.”

“As a private, four-year college, we were unable to use our state’s scholarship lottery funds because these were designated solely for the community colleges. And I think we may have been impacted by that in that, if students are poor, first-generation college goers and/or did not have above a 3.00 GPA which triggers some of the scholarships at LeMoyne-Owen College, high school counselors may have felt it was better to advise students to attend the community college where they would have free tuition. So, the good news is that the lottery system has made college more accessible; but it also assumes that all eligible students should attend a community college.”

“You asked about our partnering Early College High School and the impact on our college enrollment, and I think maximizing our partnership with Hollis Price Early College High school could also help. In addition to the students taking college classes, I think better integrating the high school students into the entire social fabric and activities of the college would be good. For the college, it’s important to be thinking about ‘How do we make sure that we attract talented students?’ and ‘How do we build a pipeline between the high school and our college?’ We have a long-standing relationship and it has remained consistent into this year, so it’s about how we can strengthen and deepen the connections.”



Mr. William Reuter
Interim President
SUNY Erie College
Buffalo, NY

“COVID has caused a lot of challenges. Some are byproducts, but the direct challenge is almost on a daily basis, just trying to ensure health and safety of our faculty and staff, as well as a safe learning environment for our students. And our enrollment has gone down, 20% in the spring and 16.5% for this fall, so it’s had a large effect on our enrollment and with increased costs but a reduction in our revenues, it’s definitely been a challenge.”

“I think we will be dealing with enrollment and financial challenges until this health pandemic situation is resolved and our economy is able to bounce back, but the competition is still there. Tracking data have been projecting a reduction in high school enrollment and graduation rates, and with the continued competition in this area for a smaller population of potential students across the different types of institutions of higher education institutions, it gets difficult.”

“We may have to start in-person learning starting in February, and if you’re a student who is working, all of a sudden, your plans to take classes remotely while working get changed – it just causes so many unknowns and anxieties for our students. The State University of New York system administered a student satisfaction survey looking at how students felt about their remote academic instruction and we’re doing a deep dive into that data to see what kind of changes we can make programmatically moving forward.”

“Our college was going through transitions in administrative leadership, and this had been impacting our staff and faculty. People were feeling a bit defeated, and I’ve been trying to embrace and encourage a culture of ‘any idea is a good idea’ and being transparent and honest by regularly communicating and sending out updates every few weeks about where we are on enrollments, layoffs, etc. So, I think morale is good in that respect, but there is still uncertainty about whether when it will be safe to come back to work.”

“As for our partnership with Buffalo Middle Early College High School, I understood that it was always the goal to have the school on the college campus and unfortunately, that hasn’t been feasible yet. Nevertheless, the college embraces the school as a strong partnership; More importantly, it has certainly given many students in the city of Buffalo who would’ve faced huge financial obstacles to attend college, an opportunity to earn an associate degree in five years. And this is one of the hallmarks of the high school program.”