



## CHAPTER SUMMARY

# Improving Outcomes (Measurement): A New Survey of Community College Success

/ Tom Barkin and Laura Ullrich

Community colleges play a vital role in workforce development. But traditional methods for measuring their success undervalue some of their important contributions. The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond has developed a more comprehensive method for measuring community college success.

## Challenges

Workforce development needs vary across communities. It's not a one-size-fits-all problem. Accordingly, community colleges do not offer a one-size-fits-all solution. The traditional method for measuring success among higher education institutions, however, does not capture community colleges' broad set of contributions. A student choosing where to study, a parent or guidance counselor advising a student, or a philanthropic or government institution deciding where to direct resources does not get a full picture of community college efficacy through the traditional success metric.

Resources are finite. Stakeholders must be able to compare options and make informed decisions about how to distribute them. Outcomes data can provide that necessary information. As seen in this chapter, however, it's not just about measuring outcomes, but measuring the right ones.

## Opportunities

The Richmond Fed's Survey of Community College Outcomes (SCCO) offers a more comprehensive measure of success by expanding both the assessed student population to include nontraditional students and the definition of success to include outcomes beyond graduation like transfers to four-year colleges. Using this approach, the SCCO found a 49% success rate among surveyed school, which was 19 percentage points higher than their traditional success rate.

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## Workforce Realigned, Vol. II

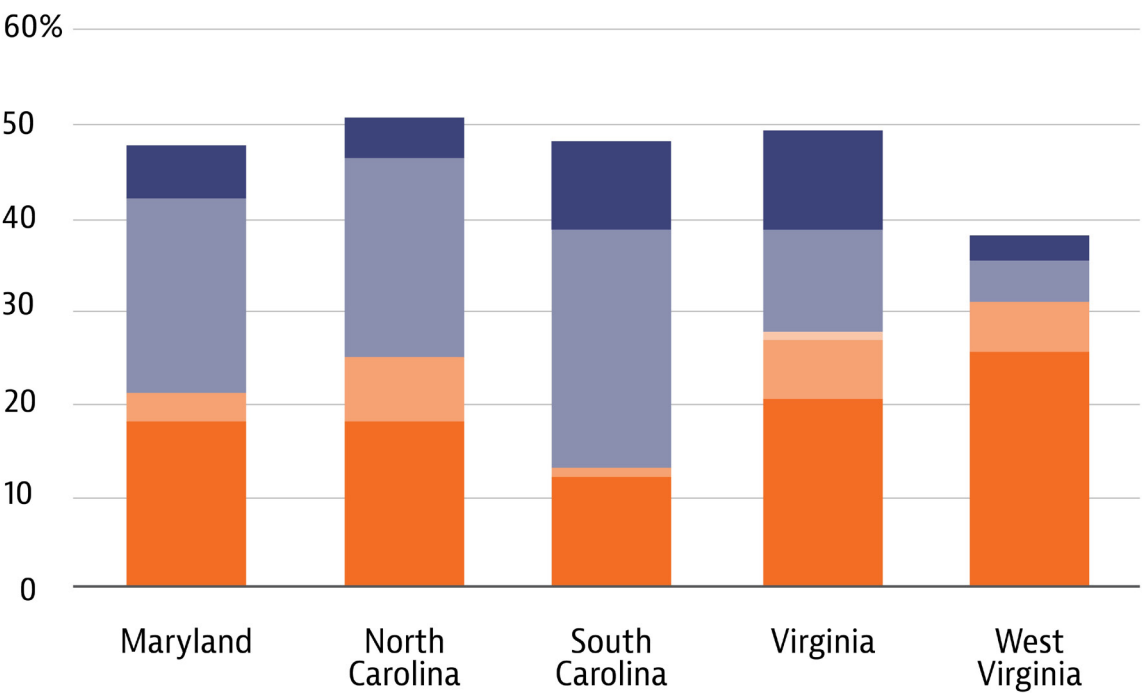
This is a summary of the full chapter included in Workforce Realigned, Volume II available at [workforcerealigned.org/chapters/improving-outcomes-measurement-a-new-survey-of-community-college-success-2/](https://workforcerealigned.org/chapters/improving-outcomes-measurement-a-new-survey-of-community-college-success-2/).



AARP Foundation’s Upskilling Initiative focused on low-income older employees and provided reimbursement for training funds in exchange for a guaranteed hourly wage increase for program participants. In this pilot, 72 SMEs offered upskilling to more than 300 low-wage older workers. Three-quarters of participants reported receiving a pay hike that was higher than the minimum required. In other words, providing training funds to employers as an incentive to providing wage gains led directly to tangible financial benefits for the workers.

### SUCCESS BY STATE IN THE 2024 SCCO

● Associate Degree Attained    ● Certificate/Diploma Attained    ● Workforce Credential Attained  
● Transferred Prior to Award    ● Persisted



Source: Survey of Community College Outcomes (SCCO) 2024

### Findings and Next Steps

- The SCCO offers a more comprehensive picture of community colleges’ contributions to workforce development.
- The flexible nature of the success rate allows two community colleges to achieve similar success rates through different avenues.
- The SCCO can also help students, policymakers and philanthropists alike make more informed decisions about investing time and resources into community colleges.

