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PREFACE

Are we entering a “golden age” for community colleges?

As this volume goes to press, we are witness to an unprecedented confluence of events. With a renewed focus on the role of community colleges in education and workforce development, the promise of significant funding through the Obama administration’s American Graduation Initiative, and Dr. Jill Biden’s compelling support—at home and abroad—for the community college mission, a golden age seems quite possible. This uniquely American education system, founded on open access and innovative in its reach, has helped thousands of students find their way toward the American dream.

President Obama’s pledge to reform and strengthen our community colleges so that five million more students in the next decade can have access to the education they need will revitalize how we think about the community college movement and its traditional mission of open access. If our schools can find no way to accommodate the sheer numbers of students eager to walk through their doors and help them define and achieve their education and job-related goals, the potential of this transformative moment will be lost.

That is why I am so pleased that AACRAO asked SunGard Higher Education to sponsor *Applying Strategic Enrollment Management at the Community College*, a collection of essays that could not be timelier. It is our view that SEM, insofar as it embodies a philosophy of constituent engagement closely aligned with an institution’s overarching mission, is, in many ways, already coded into the community college DNA. When done right, SEM can help an institution act more deliberately to target, engage, and support the students it serves—and seeks to serve. That twinning of access—reaching out effectively to the many diverse student cohorts your institution serves—and success—supporting them with the services they need to achieve their goals—has always been at the heart of the community college mission.

The principles of SEM, as this volume makes clear, will help community colleges pursue this dual mission in a more focused and systematic way. In independent research conducted by SunGard Higher Education over the course of 2009, community college students identified balancing school with the demands of work, home, and finances as a significant hardship. Close on the heels of this fundamental challenge were concerns of a different order: concerns about course scheduling, remediation, academic planning and tracking, and transferring credits between colleges. With a strategic approach to the *full* student experience, institutions can identify and address all of these obstacles early and effectively, building a lifelong commitment to your institution and to the principles of the community college mission.

By 2020, your institution will experience more diversity in its student body than ever before. The business models of your corporate partners will be more dynamic. How we define and measure outcomes will be more transparent. And new technologies will continue to contribute to a more mobile teaching and learning infrastructure. Going forward, your challenge will be to manage that diversity and shape those myriad stakeholder needs into an engaged and participatory community.

That, I think, is the brilliance of this volume, which, to my mind, begins to redefine SEM in the context of a broader vision of outreach and engagement. By understanding SEM as a way to manage relationships among the many constituents with a stake in the community college enterprise, this volume points the way to true “constituent engagement management:” a more open and authentic engagement model, grounded in the student experience, that asks the fundamental question: how can we help you succeed?

How our community colleges answer that question over the next ten years will comprise a tapestry of ideas and initiatives. The promise of SEM, and the engagement models that evolve from it, is the promise of expectations fulfilled. With an enthusiastic community of support, our students will realize the kinds of successes that drive personal achievement and economic development. All of us here at SunGard Higher Education are proud to support that mission and wish you well on this amazing journey.

Fred B. Weiss

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