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Envisioning Opportunity:
Three Options for a Community College in Washington, D.C.

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"The District needs a comprehensive community college in order to prepare residents for employment and further education in an affordable and flexible manner."

Executive Summary

In most cities around the country, community colleges play a critical role in providing training for "middle skill" jobs, those that require less than a four-year degree but more than a high school diploma; helping students transfer to four-year baccalaureate programs; and serving adults who want to upgrade their skills. Community colleges are accessible to residents through open admissions and affordable tuition rates. They serve a diverse student body from all social and economic backgrounds with flexible schedules and offerings. Community colleges offer a wide array of academic and occupationally-focused certificate and associate programs tied to the regional labor market. Associate degree programs have clear articulation agreements with four-year degree programs to facilitate transfers. Community colleges also provide strong developmental courses for students without the reading, writing, or math skills required for college-level coursework, as well as support and guidance services to help students succeed. They often forge strong links with public high schools and adult literacy programs. Additionally, community colleges serve regional employers by working closely with them to develop curricula and programs to prepare a pool of skilled and qualified workers.

The District needs a community college to carry out these types of functions. While the regional labor market is generally a high-skilled one, not all occupations in the city and surrounding suburbs require a four-year degree or more. Nearly a third of the jobs in the city itself are accessible to workers with some postsecondary training or a two-year degree. Yet too often, District residents do not meet this threshold. Census estimates for 2005 suggest that more than 111,000 working-age adults in the city have no postsecondary education. D.C. residents with a high school degree or less have higher poverty and unemployment rates than those with some postsecondary education and college degrees.

Despite this need, the District of Columbia does not have a fully fledged community college. In fact, of the 50 largest American cities, Washington is the only city without one. Instead, the city's only public institution of higher education, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), struggles with the dual missions of a community college and a state university, straining its resources and hampering its effectiveness.

This brief lays out three options for creating a community college in the District: (1) Create a community college within UDC; (2) create a freestanding community college from an incubator institution; or (3) create a community college network that strengthens and ties together sub-baccalaureate offerings at UDC and other institutions in the city and suburbs. None of these options are easy or cheap, and all would require substantial commitment from city leaders and major new investments in higher education. If the city is not willing to make a large and long-term investment, it cannot expect much in return. While each option has benefits and limitations, we believe that the most viable, effective, and sustainable option is the creation of a freestanding community college that starts within an incubator institution.

None of the options call for eliminating UDC's state university functions in favor of a community college mission. However, the creation of a strong community college would have major implications for UDC since it currently carries out all of the city's public higher education functions. If the city chooses to move forward with one of the above options, the community college planning process should take place within a broader, inclusive dialogue about the city's public higher education needs and priorities.

I. Introduction: The District Urgently Needs a Community College

The District of Columbia is at the center of one of the best-performing regional economies in the country, experiencing solid job growth over the past decade. While many of the jobs in D.C. and the surrounding region require skills and education beyond high school, not all require a four-year college degree. In 2004, almost a third of all jobs in the District were "middle skill" occupations, meaning that they generally require education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree.[1] Occupational projections indicate that middle-skill jobs are expected to make up 30 percent of all D.C. jobs in 2014.[2] In-demand, middle-skill occupations like licensed practical nurses, respiratory therapists, radiology technicians, computer support specialists, paralegals, and building and construction tradesmen provide decent wages and potential for advancement for workers with an associate's degree, postsecondary certificate, or vocational training.[3] Yet too often, District residents do not qualify for these jobs because they lack the requisite education and skills. Indeed, of D.C. adults without a bachelor's degree, only about one-third have education beyond the high school level and less than 10 percent hold an associate's degree.[4] 2005 Census estimates suggest that upwards of 111,000 District residents between the ages of 18 to 64 have no postsecondary experience.[5]

This skills mismatch contributes to the District's high unemployment and poverty rates. At nearly 20 percent, D.C.'s poverty rate is now at the highest level in a decade.[6] Moreover, the District's 2006 unemployment rate of 6 percent is higher than both the national rate (4.6 percent) and the Washington metropolitan area rate (3.1 percent).[7] In D.C., poverty and unemployment rates starkly differ by educational attainment. In 2006, roughly one-third of adults without a high school degree and one-fifth of adults with only a high school degree or general equivalency degree (GED) were poor.[8] By contrast, approximately 14 percent of adults with some college or an associate's degree and five percent of college graduates were poor. Residents with a high school degree or less have higher unemployment rates than those with more education, indicating that those with no post-secondary training have a harder time finding work.[9] Working residents with a high school degree or less may have difficulty earning decent wages. Roughly one-third of the District's working families with children have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.[10] The majority of these working, low-income families are headed by adults that have no postsecondary education, suggesting that they may not have the education or skills necessary earn more.[11]

These findings indicate that the District cannot rely on job growth alone to tackle poverty and grow its middle class. A strong employment base and job growth are of limited value if District residents cannot compete for jobs that pay decent wages. With about 688,000 jobs in 2006, the District has more jobs than it does residents (581,000 residents in 2006).[12] Yet only about a third of those who work in the District live here, hurting the city's tax base and fiscal health since it cannot tax the income of non-residents.[13] Without a stronger educational system, the city will be hard-pressed to increase residents' employment rates, skills, and earnings. The city has recently taken bold action to reform public schools. Strengthening post-secondary options is also critical to increasing residents' access to educational and employment opportunities and meeting regional labor force needs.

In many places, community colleges play a critical role in developing a workforce for middle-skill jobs that require some education or training beyond high school but not a four-year degree. These institutions also help students prepare for and transition to four-year degree programs. Community colleges' commitment to open access and equity uniquely situates them to educate a diverse student body. They have open admissions policies, a wide range of academic and career-oriented certificate and degree programs, developmental education programs for academically unprepared students, and relatively low tuitions. Across the country, community colleges have also developed robust workforce development programs that have strong ties to local labor markets and are responsive to the workforce needs of regional employers and industries.[14] A community college education

provides real economic returns. Recent studies have found that community college has a positive effect on earnings, particularly for those who complete programs or earn a certificate or associate's degree.[15]

Of the 50 largest cities in the United States, Washington D.C. is the only city without a free-standing community college.[16] Instead, the District has chosen to give its only public institution of higher education, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), the dual mission of providing university and community college education. UDC is an urban land-grant university with an open-admissions policy that offers post-secondary education at the certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate levels. UDC houses its certificate, two-year, and university-level programs together in colleges and schools based on subject matter, such as the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business and Public Administration, and the School of Engineering. The same faculty, deans, and provost that administer baccalaureate programs also teach and oversee community college programs. In one institution, UDC attempts to carry out the functions of a complex system that in other states are provided by separate community colleges and state universities, each with substantially different missions, programs, faculties, and student bodies.

Though UDC has been tasked with this responsibility since its inception, it is extremely problematic to expect a single institution to successfully carry out these multiple, and often conflicting, responsibilities. Even a stable, adequately funded, and well-managed institution would struggle to merge the different academic cultures and priorities of a community college and a university. UDC's leadership instability, combined with deep program and financial cuts during the city's 1990s budget crisis, has compromised the institution's ability to carry out long-range planning and perform its multiple missions. Data on program offerings and degrees granted suggest that UDC has an institutional bias towards its four-year programs, which is not surprising given that the academic community generally regards universities as more prestigious than community colleges.

The tension over UDC's mission goes back to its origins. Prior to the 1960s, the D.C. Teachers College was the only public higher education option for District residents. In 1964, the presidentially-appointed Chase Committee recommended the immediate creation of a community college and a four-year arts and science college. The committee strongly urged that the two be separate institutions each with its own president, faculty, staff, and facilities due to the differences between community colleges and four-year colleges in regard to missions, programs, faculty responsibilities, and student bodies.[17] Subsequent federal legislation authorized the creation of these institutions. The Washington Technical Institute, a two-year institution with a career and technical curriculum, and Federal City College, a four-year liberal arts college, opened their doors in 1968.

In 1974 and 1975, the U.S. Congress and the District City Council passed legislation authorizing the creation of the University of the District of Columbia through the reorganization of the three existing publicly-supported schools.[18] Despite the Chase Commission's call for separate institutions, later echoed by a 1971 report prepared for the District government, trustees of the new institution opted to consolidate the three schools into one, rather than creating a system of public higher education with separate schools.[19] The consolidation drew opposition from administrators and faculty members at the predecessor institutions and initiated a debate about the new university's purpose that remained unresolved after the merger. As a result of the fast-paced consolidation, UDC began with a muddled mission. Acrimonious debates about who UDC should serve and what kinds of programs it should offer continue to the present day and have kept UDC from being able to deliver fully on either its university or its community college mission.

This policy brief discusses options for a community college in the District of Columbia. Based on a review of community college and sub-baccalaureate offerings currently available to city residents, we conclude that D.C. needs a fully-fledged community college.

Such an institution would prepare residents for middle-skill jobs and further college education in an affordable and flexible manner. Creating a community college would also be sound economic development policy for the District as it would help prepare a skilled workforce capable of meeting employers' needs. After describing our vision for a strong community college in D.C., we lay out three options for creating one: (1) Create a community college within UDC; (2) Create a free-standing community college from an incubator institution; (3) Create a community college network that strengthens and ties together community college offerings at UDC and other institutions.

None of the options call for transforming UDC into a community college at the expense of its four-year and graduate programs. However, a discussion about strengthening community college programs clearly has implications for UDC since it currently carries out all of the city's public higher education functions. If the city chooses to move forward with any of the options we lay out, the community college planning process should include an assessment of the likely consequences on UDC as a whole and should take place within a broader, inclusive, discussion of the city's priorities regarding public post-secondary education.

No community college will flourish in the District unless it becomes a serious priority for the executive branch, the city council, residents, and area employers. To succeed, a community college will need sustained oversight, support, and attention from all stakeholders, not least the city government. The city and its residents will only benefit from a community college that is adequately funded, planned, and supported from the start.

II. Community Colleges

The vast majority of the U.S.'s 1,158 community colleges are public or tribal institutions.[20] Community colleges are committed to serving a diverse student body through an open-access admissions process, providing comprehensive educational offerings, addressing community needs, and fostering lifelong learning.[21]

A. The Comprehensive Community College

The community college is historically rooted in the tradition of "junior colleges," which provided the first two years of a four-year undergraduate education. However, today's community colleges offer an array of educational services that extend well beyond the transfer mission. The contemporary community college provides a comprehensive set of services including two-year degrees designed to enable students to transfer to four-year programs, occupational certificate and degree programs, noncredit workforce development, developmental or remedial education, student support services, adult basic education, and avocational extracurricular courses for community members.

1. The Transfer Mission

Like their junior college predecessor, comprehensive community colleges provide the first two years of a four-year undergraduate education for students studying a variety of disciplines. With professional baccalaureate programs in fields like health care, education, and business, transfer opportunities are available to community college students in occupational as well as academic programs of study. As college tuition rates have increased, many students begin their undergraduate education at more affordable community colleges. Some community colleges develop articulation agreements with universities so that students can easily transfer to a public four-year program.

2. Occupational Programs and Workforce Development

Many community colleges offer a wide range of occupational certificate and associate programs. They work closely with industries and businesses in order to design curricula and programs that reflect growth occupations in the regional labor market.[22] Community colleges ensure their programs are up-to-date and responsive by assessing employers' workforce needs and including employer representatives on advisory boards.[23] Community

colleges also provide a variety of noncredit, career-oriented courses and programs, a task they are well-suited for given their flexibility, familiarity with the local labor market, technical expertise, and experience with adult learners.[24] Employers are increasingly contracting with community colleges to customize training programs for incumbent workers.[25] Indeed, surveys show that over 90 percent of community colleges provide customized training.[26] Courses that prepare students for industry skill certification tests are another common noncredit activity at community colleges.[27] Some community colleges also develop short-term workforce development programs for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program participants.

3. Developmental Education and Student Support Services

Because community colleges have open admissions policies and serve all individuals regardless of educational background, many entering students are academically unprepared even though they have a high school diploma or GED. Students who do not meet the reading, writing, and math requisites necessary for college-level work must often take remedial or "developmental" courses before enrolling in credit-bearing courses. It is fairly common for community college students to take developmental courses. One study found that 42 percent of first-time students entering public two-year colleges in the fall of 2000 took at least one developmental course compared to only 20 percent of students entering public four-year institutions.[28] Another found that over 60 percent of recent high school graduates entering higher education through community colleges in the mid-1990s took at least one remedial course.[29]

"Community colleges are a gateway to higher education, better jobs, and increased lifetime earnings."

Increasingly, developmental education is becoming the responsibility of community colleges, not of four-year schools and universities. Some states have assigned all developmental education functions to community colleges, relieving public four-year institutions of responsibility for such courses.[30] Since there is a consensus that "skill and drill" remediation approaches have limited effectiveness, community colleges are at the forefront of developing promising new approaches to developmental education.[31]

In addition to providing academic remediation, community colleges often provide a variety of support services to help students succeed in college. Student success courses teach students how to write notes, take tests, and manage their time, and they also offer college and career planning. A recent study based in Florida found that community college students enrolled in success courses were more likely than their peers to earn a credential, stay in school, and transfer to a state university, even after controlling for certain student characteristics.[32] Other community colleges use small learning communities and intensive guidance and counseling services to increase student persistence and achievement.

4. Adult Basic Education

Adult basic education refers to programs that help low-literacy adults improve their reading and writing skills, prepare for the high school equivalency exam (GED), and provide English-language instruction to speakers of other languages. These programs receive federal funding through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act), and are often also supported by local and state governments, foundations, and other philanthropists. Services are usually free and do not provide college credit.[33] Multiple entities offer adult education programs across the country, including community colleges. Other providers include community-based organizations, public school systems, and correctional institutions.[34]

While adult education services often overlap with developmental education, there are some differences. Students participating in developmental education courses are enrolled in community college and are explicitly focused on increasing their skills to the collegiate level. By contrast, students in adult education courses can take classes from a variety of providers, and they can have a variety of goals, including post-secondary education, increased skills for work, and personal goals like reading with their children.

There is potential for much stronger links between adult education, developmental education, and credit-bearing courses within community colleges, so that students can make smooth transitions from one step in the educational pipeline to the next. Some states and colleges are developing programs and systems with clearer pathways from adult education to post-secondary education.[35]

5. Programs for High School Students and At-Risk Youth

Community colleges are forging stronger relationships with high schools through dual enrollment, early college, and other youth-focused programs. In some cases, they are also reaching and enrolling students who have dropped out of high school or are at risk of dropping out. In dual enrollment programs, high school students are formally enrolled in high school and take college courses in their junior and senior years. In early college programs, students simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of college credit; the high school years and the first two years of college are treated as a single, coherent course of study.

Such programs target students who face challenges in the transition from high school to college, primarily low-income and minority youth, in order to increase their enrollment and success in postsecondary education. They combine high expectations and high levels of support. While it may appear counterintuitive to place struggling or under-prepared students in an accelerated learning program, the programs are premised on the theory that challenge is a greater motivator than remediation, and that, in the right environment, students who were previously disengaged from the traditional academic environment can succeed academically.[36]

B. Students and Faculty

1. Student Profile

Community colleges' commitment to open access and affordability makes them a critical entry point to post-secondary education for students from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. In 2005, almost half of the students enrolled in community college were among the first generation of their family to attend college and nearly a third were minority students.[37] Their breadth of offerings and flexibility also make community colleges a major entry point to higher education for students who don't attend college on a full-time basis immediately after high school. Three-quarters of community college students are 21 or older; 62 percent attend school part-time; and 43 percent work full-time while enrolled.[38]

2. Faculty Profile

The profile of community college faculty and staff differs from four-year institutions. Unlike many universities where faculty have both research and teaching responsibilities, community college faculty focus primarily on teaching and have a heavier teaching load since they are not expected to conduct research. Only 18 percent of full-time community college faculty members hold a doctorate.[39] Within occupational programs, only seven percent of full-time faculty have a Ph.D.[40] Moreover, some occupational faculty are part-time members who hold full-time jobs in the vocational area in which they teach, thereby bringing practical experience and knowledge of the local labor market into the classroom.[41]

C. A Unique Institution of Higher Education

In sum, community colleges are differentiated from other institutions of higher education by their open admissions policies; comprehensive offerings designed to be convenient and flexible for part-time and working students; teaching-oriented, practitioner faculty; and a growing set of developmental education and student support services. These unique characteristics ensure educational opportunities for a wide variety of people, including working adults, students with family responsibilities, traditional college-aged students, and those who might not otherwise have the have the academic preparation or financial resources to

attend college. They also make community colleges a valuable resource for employers and government agencies.

While community colleges are sometimes considered less prestigious than four-year colleges and universities, they are fulfilling a different mission focused on access to education and opportunity. Community colleges act as a crucial gateway to higher education, better jobs, and increased lifetime earnings for many Americans. They are the largest and fastest growing sector of higher education, and now enroll almost half of all undergraduates in the United States.[42]

III. Current Sub-Baccalaureate Offerings Available to D.C. Residents

A. The University of the District of Columbia

1. History

On its campus in the Van Ness neighborhood of Northwest Washington, UDC offers community college programs (non-credit courses, certificates, and two-year degrees) in addition to baccalaureate and graduate degrees. As far as we know, UDC is the only institution of higher education in the country that has consolidated community college and university functions in one institution. The founding president of UDC, Lisle Carter, served for five years and was reportedly a stabilizing force for the young school. Since then however, the school has cycled through numerous presidents; in its thirty-year history, UDC has been led by seven presidents.[43]

In recognition of UDC's mission overload, numerous studies have called for a different system of higher education. In 1987, UDC's then-President Rafael Cortada proposed creating a community college division of UDC, a recommendation reiterated in a 1989 report published under UDC's Center for Applied Research and Urban Policy.[44] With an endorsement from then-Mayor Marion Barry, a 1988 Education Advisory Commission proposed a major reorganization of UDC that would have created a two-year community college at UDC, which would have been independent of UDC's state university functions and would have had separate administrative staff, faculty, and facilities.[45] However, these recommendations were not adopted, and UDC continued to carry out multiple functions.

The city's fiscal crisis of the mid-1990s hit the university very hard and prompted additional discussion about UDC's role and purpose. The city's appropriations to UDC, which made up the majority of the institution's budget, declined by more than half after adjusting for inflation from over $103 million in 1992 to less than $48 million in 1997 (in 2007 inflation-adjusted dollars).[46] In nominal terms, appropriation amounts fell from more than $70 million in 1992 to less than $37 million in 1997.[47] These cuts, combined with years of financial distress at the university, resulted in an $18 million deficit in the 1996–1997 academic year.[48] The federally-appointed control board, at that time overseeing the District's finances and governance, mandated that UDC close this deficit. In response to declining city appropriations, UDC instituted unpaid faculty and staff furloughs, deferred maintenance on facilities and equipment, delayed fall classes, increased tuition, and sold the university radio station, WDCU.[49] In 1997, UDC fired 125 faculty members (about a third of the faculty) and about forty percent of non-faculty staff in order to help close the deficit.[50] It is not clear whether two-year or four-year programs suffered disproportionately from the cuts, though plainly the university's total capacity was reduced. The financial problems also threatened the school's accreditation and not surprisingly, morale among staff and students plummeted.[51]

Public debate again centered on the mission of UDC. The debate was painful, shaped by race and class tensions and the sense among UDC defenders that the institution was under siege.[52] In 1998, the control board, then chaired by Andrew Brimmer, released a report

on UDC that called for a stronger emphasis on developmental programs for academically underprepared students; strengthened occupational training and two-year degrees; and a more limited array of bachelor's degrees.[53] Calls for increased community college functions were seen as a betrayal of the university's mission and status as the District's only public university. UDC emerged from the budget crisis a smaller entity with lower morale and fewer faculty members, staff, and students, but retained its dual role as a community college and a state university.

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Arguably, UDC is still recovering from the crisis. Though the university's enrollment has modestly increased since its 1997 low of 4,700, it has not returned to pre-crisis levels.[54] Since 2000, UDC has maintained an average annual enrollment of about 5,300 students, which is half its 1994 enrollment of about 10,600.[55] At $60 million in FY 2007, UDC's appropriation from the city is also lower than its pre-crisis level.

The DC Tuition Assistance Grant (DCTAG) program, created by the federal government in 1999, has also made it difficult for UDC to compete for local college-bound residents. DCTAG makes it possible for DC residents to attend public institutions in other parts of the country at the in-state tuition rate, while the federal government makes up the difference between the in-state and out-of-state rate. DCTAG also provides tuition aid to students admitted to historically black colleges and universities and private non-profit institutions of higher education in the District.

2. Current offerings

UDC offers twice as many baccalaureate programs (47) as it does associate programs (23). It also offers some certificate and non-certificate career-oriented programs in fields like health care and construction.[56] This profile of program offerings implies that more of the institution's resources are allocated to its four-year activities. Moreover, UDC provides a limited set of sub-baccalaureate programs relative to community colleges in neighboring suburbs. Montgomery College, Prince George's Community College, and Northern Virginia Community College each offer over 100 programs of study linked to a diversity of occupations and fields.[57]

UDC does have some workforce development offerings, though they are not of the breadth commonly found at community colleges. UDC's PATHS program, operated out of the School of Business and Public Administration, offers a 16-week job training and literacy programs for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.[58] UDC's Division of Community Outreach and Extension Services (COES) also offers employment-related programs. In response to specific appropriations in recent budgets (about $4 million each in FY 2006 and 2007), the university created workforce development programs in satellite locations throughout the city. Offerings include adult literacy, developmental education, academic courses, and employment-related courses in areas such as health care, child care, and construction.[59] However, in recent City Council hearings, councilmembers were not pleased with the reports they heard from UDC representatives about the progress and implementation of the satellite programs.[60]

Overall, UDC's workforce development programs do not appear to be the result of strong relationships with employers and a strategic analysis of in-demand occupations and growth industries. Nor does UDC appear to be a major provider of customized job training for local employers or the D.C. Department of Employment Services. In fact, the city government has partnered with and funded private institutions including Catholic, Georgetown, and Southeastern universities to develop industry-specific training programs in fields like health care and hospitality.[61] By contrast, Montgomery College, Prince George's Community College, and Northern Virginia Community College all partner with governmental workforce development agencies or local employers to develop industry-specific training programs.[62]

The majority of degrees conferred by UDC are bachelor's and graduate degrees. Only

about a third of the degrees conferred by UDC in the 2003–2004, 2004–2005, and 2005–2006 school years were associate's degrees.[63] In 2005–2006, the most recent year for which data are available, only 169 of the 573 degrees were associate's.[64] The relatively small number of associate's degrees conferred could simply be a result of student demand if the majority of students attending UDC want to earn a four-year degree rather than a two-year degree. However, it could also be the case that some residents interested in certificate and associate's degree programs choose not to attend UDC because of its limited number of options and perceptions about program quality. Indeed, data on District residents using DCTAG scholarships to attend suburban community colleges suggest that UDC is not meeting resident demand for community college programs. In the 2004–2005 school year, the District awarded 466 DCTAG grants to residents attending Montgomery College, Prince George's Community College, and Northern Virginia Community College, up from the 254 DCTAG grants awarded to residents attending these community colleges in the 2000–2001 school year.[65]

Though UDC functions like a state university, much of its student body resembles that of a community college. In fall of 2005, nearly 60 percent of undergraduates were enrolled part-time, and three-quarters of enrolled students were over the age of 21.[66] Moreover, a recent Washington Post article reported that more than 80 percent of UDC students need remediation.[67] These statistics suggest that some of the students currently enrolled in the university would benefit from enhanced community college offerings.

B. Other Institutions of Higher Education

1. Educational institutions located in the District

A number of private universities within the District offer a wide array of undergraduate, graduate, continuing education, and professional education programs. Although their missions focus on baccalaureate and graduate education and research, some universities in the city do offer certificates and two-year degrees, often developed in close consultation with employers and other stakeholders. These sub-baccalaureate offerings are described below.

Located in the southwestern quadrant of the city, Southeastern University is a private institution with certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate programs in computer science and information systems management/technology, business management, public administration, and liberal studies. As of spring 2008, Southeastern offered nine credit-bearing certificate programs, two non-credit certificate programs, and 15 associate programs. Southeastern University is not an open-admissions institution, but rather, grants admission to students who show reasonable likelihood of success based in part on high school grade point averages.[68] Southeastern has also developed specialized job training programs in close consultation with area employers and a union in the fields of property management and health care.[69]

Located in Northeast D.C., Trinity University mostly provides baccalaureate and graduate programs. However, Trinity does offer an Associate in Arts degree in general studies. The courses for this associate program are located at the Town Hall Education Arts and Recreation Campus (THEARC) in Ward 8, east of the Anacostia River.[70]

Catholic University, also in Northeast D.C., offers several career-oriented certificates through its Metropolitan College, the arm of the university geared towards working adults. Certificates in human resources, information technology, business management, and special education are credit-bearing and can be transferred towards a bachelor's degree. Metropolitan College also offers similarly career-oriented non-credit certificates and programs. Students must demonstrate reading and writing skills at the freshman college level to be accepted into the program. Many students at Catholic's Metropolitan College are working professionals who have completed some level of college coursework.[71]

George Washington University offers two- and four-year degrees in police science through its College of Professional Studies. The program is designed for working police officers and requires college-level writing skills.[72]

Howard University's Center for Urban Progress operates a Workforce Development Training Program that currently offers a 16-week training course in Microsoft Office. The training program leads to certification as a Microsoft Office Specialist, preparing students for administrative and office support jobs. In the past, the program has also offered training in construction-related occupations.[73] Howard University Continuing Education (HUCE) offers a variety of courses and certificate programs, including career-focused offerings in such fields as early childhood development, conflict management, medical office management, simultaneous interpretation, and paralegal studies. HUCE also offers courses in foreign languages, GED preparation, and English as a second language, as well as courses to help students achieve college-level reading and writing skills. Generally, these HUCE classes are non-credit.[74]

The Graduate School, USDA offers a wide variety of career-oriented, avocational and academic courses and certificate programs. It is a continuing education, non-degree granting educational institution, and was recently accredited by the Council on Occupational Education. Some of the school's courses have been designated as eligible to receive college credit by the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service, and the school has formed partnerships with a number of universities in the region. The school has an open admissions policy and classes are open to anyone 18 and over who meet the prerequisites for specific classes. The school serves a diverse student body, and many students are working professionals upgrading their skills. The Graduate School works extensively with employers (in both the public and private sectors) to develop and deliver workplace training programs.[75]

In short, in addition to UDC, other educational institutions in the District offer a number of valuable courses, certificates, and two-year programs for D.C. residents. However, these sub-baccalaureate programs differ from community college programs in several important ways. Some of the programs described above do not have open admissions policies and require prospective students to have college-level reading and writing skills in order to enroll. While some programs have developed courses and services to prepare students for college-level work, others do not consider that part of their mission. Additionally, while providing sub-baccalaureate programs is central to the community college mission, universities are focused on research and education at the baccalaureate and graduate levels. Accordingly, universities do not prioritize the creation of a comprehensive array of certificates and associate's degrees informed by labor market needs and student demand.

2. Suburban public community colleges accessible through DCTAG

D.C. residents use DCTAG scholarships to attend highly-regarded community colleges in Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and Northern Virginia. For D.C. residents attending community college, DCTAG pays up to $2,500 per academic year toward the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition with a lifetime maximum of $10,000. In the 2004–2005 school year, the District awarded 276 DCTAG grants to residents attending Montgomery College, 150 to residents attending Prince George's Community College, and 40 to residents attending Northern Virginia Community College.[76] In total, the city paid $1.5 million to send over 460 residents to these community colleges in 2004–2005.[77]

Some argue that in lieu of a community college, the District should try to increase the number of DCTAG recipients attending these community colleges. However, under the program's current rules, TAG grants are distributed on a first come, first serve basis to individuals who apply for the grant by the June 30th deadline. Thus, there is no guarantee that the increased TAG funds would go to residents attending community college.

Even if the city were able to increase DCTAG grants to help more District residents attend suburban community colleges, this option is an inadequate substitute for a community college in the city. Not all residents who might benefit from community college offerings will be eligible for DCTAG grants. For one, the program only applies to residents under the age of 25.[78] DCTAG also requires grant recipients to be enrolled on at least a half-time basis in a degree-granting program with good academic standing.[79] Many community colleges require students with low basic skills to take developmental courses before they can enroll in a degree-granting program, and these students are not eligible for a DCTAG grant. There are also some District residents who could benefit from community college courses, but may not have the skills, support, or confidence needed to navigate the different higher education options available through DCTAG. These residents may face challenges in choosing, applying to, and enrolling in a suburban community college program. Moreover, it may be challenging for students without cars to travel to suburban community colleges, particularly if they are pressed for time due to work and family responsibilities.

The option of expanding DCTAG grants instead of creating a community college is also not ideal for the city in terms of building strong and sustainable economic development strategies. The lack of a community college hinders the ability of the D.C. Workforce Investment Council (WIC), the Department of Employment Services (DOES), and employers to create customized workforce development initiatives because without a community college, there is no public entity to develop and operate training programs.

IV. Envisioning a D.C. Community College

There are a variety of ways that the city can provide a full set of community college offerings to District residents. Before talking about specific options however, we ask what a strong, comprehensive community college in D.C. might look like. The community college we envision would be accessible to all District residents through open admissions, affordable tuition rates, and at a campus (or multiple locations) convenient to its students. It would serve a diverse student body from all socioeconomic backgrounds, including recent high school graduates, working adults, parents, senior citizens, and immigrants. Some students would attend school on a full-time basis while others would attend on a part-time basis and in the evenings.

The community college would have sustained political and financial support from the public, the Mayor, and City Council. Local and regional employers would see the school as a resource. The school's leadership would be committed to the open-access, equity, and comprehensive missions and would have experience in community college administration. Faculty would be dedicated to teaching classes in two-year programs, developmental education, and occupational courses.

Offerings would include academic programs, as well as occupationally-focused certificate and associate programs tied to the regional labor market. Occupational faculty and staff would work closely with employers to develop curricula and programs, and would customize training for local firms and government agencies. The college would help attract and retain jobs in the city by providing a pool of skilled and qualified workers, as well as preparing D.C residents for jobs around the region. Students in occupational and academic programs would be able to transfer to four-year degree programs through clear articulation agreements with colleges and universities.

The community college would provide strong developmental education courses for students who do not have the reading, writing, or math skills required for college-level coursework, and would design them according to emerging best practices. The school would also offer guidance and support services to help students succeed in college. It would have strong

relationships with public high schools and adult education programs and might develop specific programs to re-engage disconnected youth.

V. Options for Creating a Community College in D.C.

A. Create a Community College within UDC

The Concept

The city could develop a community college within UDC by building on the certificate, associate, and workforce development programs already in place. Since UDC is currently conducting a search for a new President, there is an opportunity to find a leader who will take the community college mission seriously and devote time and energy to carrying it out. A new president alone, however, will not be able to enhance UDC's community college function. The District government and the UDC Board of Trustees will also need to lend strong and explicit support, and the university's leadership should consult with the faculty and gain their input.

A community college within UDC would share the university's charter, accreditation, and board of trustees. It would also most likely use many of the university's existing administrative systems and infrastructure. In particular, the community college could pay a fee to UDC to use human resources systems, financial systems, and student services like financial aid and registration. However, if these systems are not high-functioning, the community college may need to develop its own.

Textbox 1. Branch Campus Community Colleges at the University of New Mexico

The University of New Mexico (UNM) is the state's flagship research institution. The main UNM campus is located in Albuquerque and offers baccalaureate and graduate programs. However, UNM has four branch campuses that serve as comprehensive community colleges, providing career education including certificate and associate programs, transfer programs, and adult basic education. Each community college is fully accredited as a branch college of UNM.

UNM retains academic and administrative oversight of the branch colleges, which are governed by the UNM Board of Regents. The UNM Board of Regents sets policy for the community colleges although each branch has its own elected advisory board that provides counsel to the Board of Regents. The university is in the process of hiring a Vice President to oversee all community college branch campuses. Each branch is managed by an Executive Director who reports to the Vice President.

Branch campuses pay the main university a certain percentage of their revenue in exchange for use of their administrative systems, including financial, legal, and human resource systems and services. Among other services, UNM also provides support to branch campuses in terms of student registration and financial aid.

The executive director hires faculty and staff for the branch campus with review by UNM faculty members. The community college is able to develop its own vocational and developmental education programs.

The community colleges are funded directly by state appropriations and tax levies, special grants, and student tuition and fees. Therefore, their budget is separate from that of university's main campus. The advisory board of each branch approves its budget. The branch campuses are also eligible to apply for certain types of federal higher education programs on their own.

The community college should have considerable autonomy within the university in order to mitigate conflicts between the community college and university missions. Four-year universities with branch community college campuses provide a model for this type of option (Textbox 1).

To develop a branch community college, the UDC Board of Trustees should first appoint a vice president to oversee all community college functions, including developmental education, certificate and associate programs, and programs run by the Community Outreach and Extension Services division. The vice president should report directly to the university president. He or she should have previous experience as a high-level community college administrator and leader.

The board of trustees, with strong input from the vice president, should also create an advisory council for the community college to provide guidance on community college-specific policies like workforce development and developmental education. This advisory council should consist of private employers, directors of public workforce and economic development agencies, and other community leaders.

The board of trustees should confer specific management responsibilities, including faculty hiring and oversight, degree and non-degree program development, and budget management, to the vice president. In doing so, the board would insulate the community college from priorities and policies specific to four-year and graduate programs, thus ensuring that the community college mission can be properly carried out.

Alternatively, UDC could have two presidents, one for the four-year university and one for the community college, both of whom would report to the same board. This governance structure would provide the community college with even more autonomy, although it might make coordination of activities, to the extent that it's necessary, more complicated.

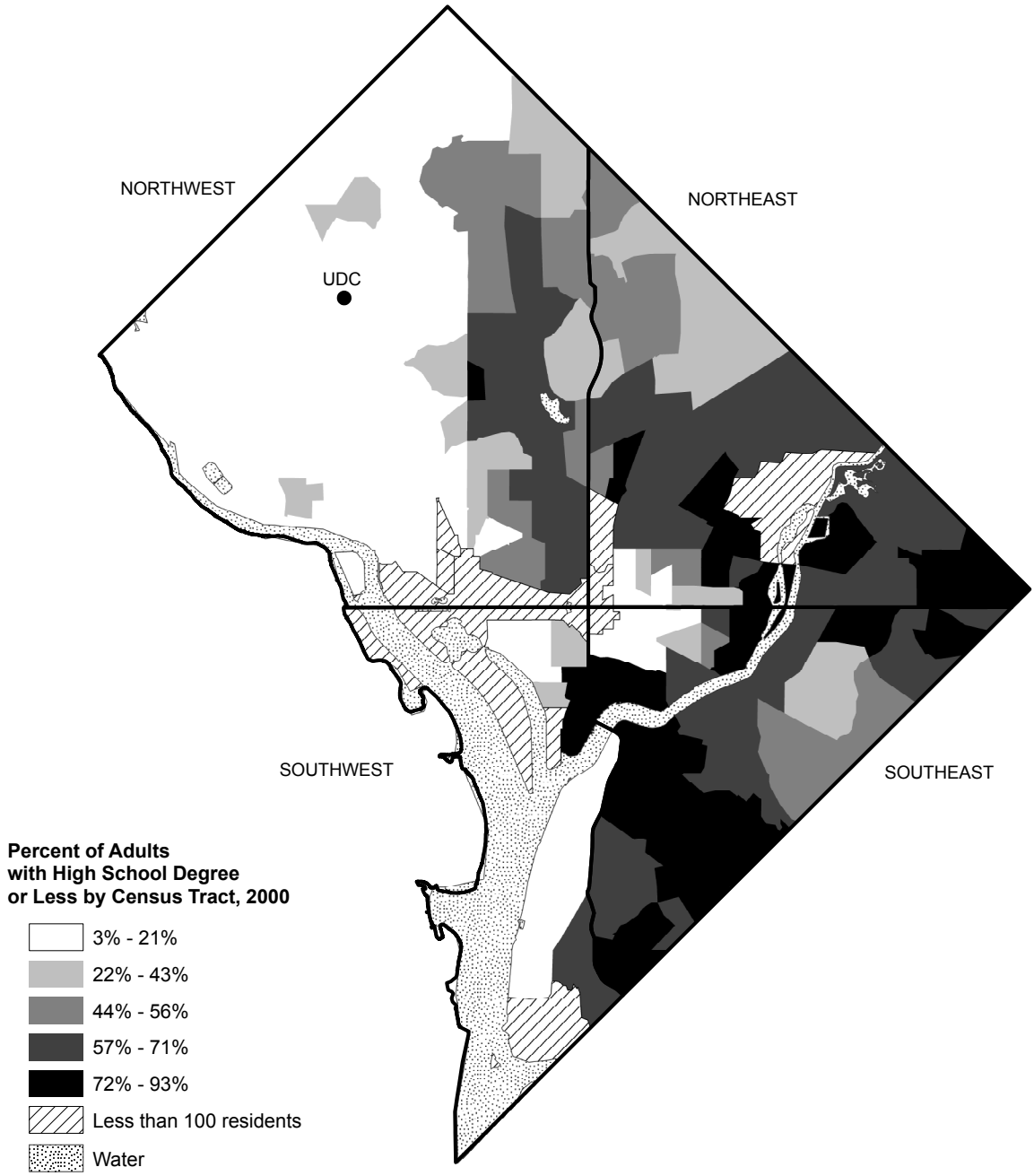
Given the university's limited community college offerings, UDC's community college must develop new programs, including occupational associate and certificate programs; developmental education and student support programs; non-credit workforce development programs; and strong ties to adult basic education providers and D.C. public high schools. Additionally, the community college must develop a clear articulation plan so that community college students and degree holders can easily transfer to UDC's four-year programs and other four-year institutions.

The community college would need staff and faculty of its own. In particular, it would need to hire faculty for occupational programs who in some cases will serve as adjuncts and may not easily fit within UDC's tenure requirements. Assuming that the community college takes on UDC's developmental education function, it will also need faculty to teach those courses. At its outset, the community college could contract with UDC faculty to teach academic courses. But if academic faculty members resist dual assignment at the community college and four-year university, the community college would need to hire its own academic faculty.

The system for hiring and promoting faculty at the community college should differ from the four-year university's existing faculty tenure system. At the community college, hiring and contract policies must accommodate adjunct faculty and those without Ph.Ds. The board of trustees would also want to consider an alternative to the tenure system for the community college's full-time faculty. While many community colleges grant tenure, others use multi-year appointments or ranking systems to ensure continuity among full-time faculty.[80]

In addition to faculty, the community college would need its own workforce development staff to cultivate and manage relationships with employers, economic development organizations, and city agencies, thus ensuring that occupationally-focused offerings are aligned

Map 1. Percent of Adults with a High School Degree or Less, Washington, D.C., 2000



Citywide Rate: 43%

Note: Adults are individuals 25 years of age or over

Source: Census 2000

with labor market needs. The community college would also need its own staff to provide student support and advising services, an essential component of college services for under-prepared students.

The community college must have an assured revenue stream sufficient to fully fund new community college programs, activities, and personnel. Student tuition and fees will not provide enough funding. Ideally, City Council would directly appropriate funding for the community college, thus ensuring that the community college programs do not have to compete for funding internally with four-year and graduate programs within UDC. While there would still be competition between community college and university programs for funds, decisions about funding would be more transparent—they would be made in the public sphere and focus on the different missions and priorities of the two entities rather than being decided within an institution where funds would be subject to competing internal priorities.

Sharing the Van Ness campus would be cost-effective. However, by providing courses in multiple locations or developing a separate campus, the community college could gain further autonomy from the four-year and graduate university. Moreover, locations or a branch campus in the eastern side of the District would place the school in a more convenient location to many potential students—those without any postsecondary education (Map 1).

Strengths and Limitations

By creating a community college within UDC, the city could take advantage of existing resources. If new UDC community college programs were high-quality, they would attract students from other parts of the region, especially those who work in D.C. Moreover, with community college functions transferred to a branch campus, the four-year and graduate faculty and administration could focus on strengthening the university's baccalaureate and graduate offerings. By taking on developmental education responsibilities, the community college would provide much-needed programs for students with low literacy and math skills while at the same time relieving the four-year university of its remedial functions. The university, like most four-year institutions, would likely welcome the opportunity to shed this responsibility. With open admissions and developmental education in the community college division, UDC could develop more rigorous admissions criteria for its four-year programs in order to become more competitive with other private and public schools if it so desired.

However, expanding the university's functions to include a comprehensive community college division would be a lengthy and expensive project with many challenges along the way. Since the two-year and four-year programs are currently integrated in the same academic departments and in some cases, taught by the same faculty, it may be difficult to separate community college offerings, resources, and costs from the university. The four-year university would be concerned about declining freshman enrollment if many students start the first two years of their four-year degrees at the community college division. The university may also be worried about losing revenue to its affiliated community college, both from city coffers and student tuition and fees, although it would have fewer programs to fund. Given these concerns, UDC leadership and faculty may resist a community college expansion.

As chronicled earlier in the paper, UDC has experienced management and financial crises over the past few decades, and it's not clear that the university is currently positioned to take on the significant additional responsibility of developing a high-quality, comprehensive, and competitive community college. Moreover, as an entity accredited through UDC and governed by the UDC Board of Trustees and President, the community college would still ultimately be under the auspices of a state university. Within this arrangement, the inherent tension between community college and university priorities may continue, a competition for resources could ensue, and the community college may be treated as a second-class entity.

B. Create a New Community College

The Concept

The city should also consider founding a freestanding community college. In addition to a comprehensive set of academic and occupational degree, certificate, and noncredit programs, an independent community college would have its own board of trustees, president, academic administration, faculty, and staff. It would also have its own administrative systems and facilities. A freestanding community college would have independent accreditation, which takes several years to achieve, and clear articulation agreements with other four-year institutions, so that students could easily transfer to a four-year program.

Creating a freestanding community college would require an initial incubation period since the necessary structures, policies, and programs cannot all be created at once. A lead institution(s) of higher education could incubate a community college with the explicit intention of moving it toward independence in five to 10 years. In such a scenario, the community college would initially be accredited and supported by the lead institution(s), much like a branch campus. The District government would need to enact legislation to authorize the creation of a new community college.

1. UDC as Incubator

UDC could act as the incubator. In order to do so, UDC would first have to develop a branch community college by taking the steps described in Option A. However, in this scenario, UDC would create the community college division with the full understanding that it would eventually become a free-standing, independent institution. To successfully incubate a new community college, UDC would need strong political and financial support from the city, explicit endorsement from the board of trustees, consultations with the faculty, and support from local and regional employers. As the incubator institution, UDC might also

Textbox 2. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) is a network of 16 public community and technical colleges on 65 campuses throughout the state of Kentucky. It was created through the Kentucky Postsecondary Improvement Act of 1997.

Prior to this act, there were 14 community colleges functioning as branch campuses of the state's flagship institution, the University of Kentucky. In 1997, then-Governor Paul Patton and state legislators transferred authority of the community colleges from the University of Kentucky to the newly created KCTCS in order to eliminate duplicative programs, increase efficiency, and develop institutions capable of meeting workforce and economic development needs. Advocates of the legislation also argued that by breaking ties with its community colleges, the university could focus on becoming one of the U.S.'s top 20 research universities.

The new legislation created an independent KCTCS Board of Regents, eight of whom are now appointed by the governor and six of whom are elected by faculty, staff, and students of the community colleges. The legislation also created a board-appointed president for the KCTCS system. The president has a cabinet consisting of a Chancellor and three vice presidents. Each of the community colleges in the KCTCS system has a president that oversees that particular community college's functions. KCTCS officially assumed management responsibilities over the community colleges when their accreditation agency approved the governance change. The KCTCS system receives funding from state appropriations, among other sources.

consider creating a formal relationship or partnership with one of the suburban community colleges to access their expertise and experience. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System is an example of a case in which a governor and state legislature decided to develop an independent community college system by separating branch community college campuses from the University of Kentucky (Textbox 2).

2. Suburban Community Colleges as Incubator

If UDC does not have the will or capacity to act as the lead incubator institution, the city could contract directly with one or more of the community colleges in Montgomery, Prince George's, and Northern Virginia to act as an incubator. In addition to passing legislation to authorize the creation of a new entity, the city government would need to develop a contract with one of the suburban community colleges to serve as the incubator, determine the funding level for the contract, acquire facilities and equipment, and appoint leadership, including a board of trustees and a president. This leadership team would then work with a suburban community college to incubate the new institution.

Through a contract with the District of Columbia, the incubator community college would provide start-up support, including strategic planning and goal setting, facilities planning, administrative systems development, programs, curricula, and master syllabi, and even potentially faculty and staff if there is adequate funding. During the incubation period, the D.C. community college would be accredited through the incubator community college. Thus, credit-bearing certificates and degrees would be issued by the incubator institution, although the new entity's public identity would be as the D.C. community college.

Over time, the D.C. entity would work toward building its own programs, hiring its own faculty and staff, and developing the other resources necessary to achieve independent accreditation. The incubator institution would play a major role in this development process since as the accredited institution, it would have to approve all of the D.C.entity's credit-bearing programs and faculty. Ideally, the incubator institution would provide programs at a facility within the District until the new entity developed its own faculty and staff. Some occupational programs are regulated by state boards that may limit institutions in Maryland or Virginia from providing those programs within the District. In these cases, D.C. community college students may have to take courses on the incubator institution's home campus until the city's community college develops its own programs.

There are precedents around the country of one community college incubating another, though none cross state lines. For example, Columbia Gorge Community College in Oregon operates under a contract for accreditation with Portland Community College as it works toward independence (Textbox 3). Closer to home, Carroll Community College outside of Baltimore, Maryland started as a branch campus of Catonsville Community College.

If a suburban community college were to incubate the District's community college, the city, UDC, and the incubator institution would need to decide what to do with UDC's existing certificate and two-year degree programs. The suburban incubator institution could work with UDC to transfer its community college offerings to the new entity.

Strengths and Limitations:

If the city founded a freestanding community college, it would finally have a permanent public institution with a clear and explicit commitment to the community college mission. A new and independent institution would also provide the opportunity to appoint new leadership, including a board of trustees and a president, with strong experience and dedication to the community college mission. With complete autonomy, the community college's leadership would be free to develop institutional infrastructure and policies specific to a comprehensive community college, such as flexible personnel policies that support adjunct faculty and instructors without doctorates; a workforce development department capable of creating and maintaining strong private-sector relationships; occupational programs that integrate academic learning; innovative developmental education programs; and student support

Textbox 3. Columbia Gorge Community College

Located in The Dalles, Oregon, Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC) has been operating under a contract for accreditation with Portland Community College.

Columbia Gorge was originally established in 1977 as an Education Service District in order to provide adult education in a rural area of Oregon that did not have a community college. The community college was founded with its own elected board, board-appointed president, and revenue stream including tuition and local taxes. It initially offered classes in a downtown store front location and at a local high school. In 1989, voters designated Columbia Gorge as a community college. In 1993, community members voted to issue a bond for the community college to purchase and remodel its own campus.

Columbia Gorge also contracted with Portland Community College to serve as an incubator. Through this contract, Portland Community College provided programs, curricula, accreditation, and certain administrative services, including student records, financial aid, and access to library systems. During the first few years of operation, faculty members teaching at Columbia Gorge were technically employees of Portland Community College.

Over the past 30 years, Columbia Gorge Community College has moved toward independence. It now has its own faculty and staff, departments, and programs. It has also started the process required to achieve independent accreditation, which takes a minimum of seven years.

Until it achieves accreditation, Columbia Gorge Community College will continue to operate under its accreditation contract with Portland Community College. Through this supportive relationship, students attending Columbia Gorge receive official transcripts and degrees from Portland Community College. Because it provides accreditation, all Columbia Gorge Community College programs and faculty must meet criteria set by Portland Community College. The accreditation polices of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities regulate Columbia Gorge Community College's relationship with Portland Community College.

centers attuned to the challenges that low-income, working, or first-generation college students face.

While the new institution and UDC would compete for the District's students, as well as its higher education funds, this option could also benefit the university. With a completely separate institution fulfilling the community college mission, UDC could shed its community college programming and developmental education responsibilities, and concentrate on improving its status as a four-year and graduate university.

A new community college will face stiff competition from other institutions of higher education, both in the District and in the nearby suburbs. In order to reach a sustainable level of enrollment, receive ongoing public support, and achieve accreditation, the District's community college must provide a comprehensive set of high-quality and competitive offerings, which will require sufficient and ongoing political and financial support for the city. Although UDC may not have the will or capacity to incubate a new community college, it would likely be politically difficult to have a suburban community college take over this responsibility.

Suburban community colleges may be hesitant to incubate the D.C. entity since the accreditation agency will hold them responsible for all activities carried out by the new entity until it achieves its own accreditation. States and local jurisdictions that fund suburban community colleges may not want their community college resources, particularly for occupations with worker shortages, to be spread thin in order to service the District of Columbia. However,

adequate funding from the District of Columbia for those services may mitigate that tension.

C. Create a Community College Network by Linking Existing Programs Together

The Concept

The Washington area is home to many postsecondary institutions that provide some sub-baccalaureate offerings, including UDC, private universities, and comprehensive community colleges in suburban jurisdictions. The city could create a community college network, which would link together the existing programs at these institutions. The network could simulate a community college by providing a campus and student support services. The concept of a "community college network" has been explored by a number of higher education and workforce development stakeholders in the city.[81]

In order for such a network to truly fill the District's need for a comprehensive community college, it must provide comprehensive services laid out earlier in this report. Essentially, the network would have to organize programs from a variety of different institutions—public and private, "in-state" and "out-of-state"—into a single network in order to provide a set of seamless services to students, as well as to public and private partners. We do not know of any community college network that combines private and public institutions from multiple states. However, the Universities at Shady Grove, a collaboration of nine state-funded universities housed in one facility in Montgomery County, Maryland, may provide some lessons about joint program administration and sharing facilities. The following components are necessary to make a network approach work.

1. A comprehensive range of academic and occupational programs

The network must have enough participating institutions to provide the same breadth of program choices usually offered at a community college. In addition to UDC, participating institutions should include private institutions with sub-baccalaureate options, and suburban community colleges like Montgomery College, Prince George's Community College, and Northern Virginia Community College.

Each degree program would be run by its parent institution. For example, one institution might run the network's health care degree programs while another might run the network's information technology programs. Within this configuration, each parent institution would provide accreditation, faculty, and curriculum guidelines for its program(s). Due to accreditation requirements, program degrees would be granted by the parent institution. However, degrees may be able to be jointly conferred from the parent institution and the "D.C. Community College Network."

The network could also institute cross-registration policies so that students could combine courses offered by different institutions. However, the network would need to work with each participating institution to determine how courses offered by other institutions would apply toward degree credits.

2. An umbrella governance structure and shared administrative organization

To be successful, the enterprise would need an independent administrative organization with its own chief executive officer and staff to manage the community college network and report to a governing board, which would set general policy for the community college system. The administration would be responsible for assembling and coordinating programs among the various institutions; managing facilities; developing, implementing, and monitoring shared administrative functions; and running a workforce development office to cultivate and maintain relationships with the business community, economic development entities, and nonprofit organizations. The governing board could consist of representatives from each participating institution. Alternatively it could have an independent board that would contract with the participating institutions.

3. Uniform tuition rate
There are currently tuition differentials between the various institutions that might participate in the community college system. Indeed, 2007 tuition rates at private universities were higher than UDC's rate of $105 per credit hour.[82] To ensure that students have equal access to the full range of programs in the system, there must be a uniform tuition rate. Most likely, the District of Columbia government will need to enter into Memorandum of Understanding or contracts with each participating institution in order to subsidize the differential between the community college network tuition and the institution's cost of providing the program in the system. The mechanism for this might be similar to the existing DCTAG program, which subsidizes partial or full tuition differentials.

4. Shared admissions, enrollment/registration, and credit transfer policies and procedures
The community college network will serve as a main entryway to post-secondary education for many District residents. Some community college students begin in general studies until they choose an academic or occupational field while others start in one occupational program and transfer to another. Still others need developmental education before they can enroll in credit-bearing courses that lead to a degree. Thus, it is essential that students enter and navigate the community college network as if it were a single institution of higher education, even though it is a network comprised of multiple institutions' programs. To ensure that students have a uniform and seamless college experience, the community college network should have shared admissions, enrollment, and registration procedures. The independent administrative body discussed earlier could run the admissions and registrar offices for the entire system. The system must also ensure that credits transfer between different institutions' programs so that students can move from one college's program to another's if they so choose.

5. Developmental education offerings
The community college network must provide developmental education for its students, and could in fact provide developmental education for academically unprepared students looking to enroll in UDC's baccalaureate programs. The network's governing board must decide if one or multiple institutions will provide developmental education. The board must also decide if developmental education should be mainstreamed (i.e. integrated into regular academic programs so that parent institutions offering academic courses like English or math also provide pre-college level developmental courses) or centralized (i.e. housed in a separate program whose sole function is to offer pre-college level developmental courses). The organizational structure of the community college network may better lend itself to centralized developmental education as the network could contract with a single institution to provide developmental programming. Indeed, the network might have no other choice but to contract with a single institution for developmental education courses since some of the private universities do not offer remediation programs and are unlikely to begin doing so.

6. Shared facilities and equipment
Programs that are part of the community college network should be housed at the same campus, furthering the network's ability to provide a cohesive educational experience to its students. An active campus life, with multiple opportunities for students to participate in academic and social activities, can be an important factor in whether students persist in their studies. Students' formal and informal interactions with faculty, staff, and other students typically happen on campus and help them stay engaged with school, which is particularly important for students attending part-time or with competing family or work responsibilities.[83] To foster both academic and social communities, the campus should include academic facilities, such as classrooms, a library, and computer labs, and social facilities like lounges and meeting/study areas. The campus should also house offices for the main administration. The District government would need to fund facilities and equipment, which would be maintained by the administrative organization.

Strengths and Limitations

A community college network would benefit the city in that it would allow the District to provide an array of affordable community college offerings to D.C. residents by taking advantage of existing programs. Since the network would draw on programs already up and running, it may be able to serve residents more immediately. Including various regional private and public postsecondary institutions in the community college system could reduce competition between them, and perhaps even turn these institutions into advocates for the network.

However, creating a community college network with multiple public and private institutions would be an extremely complex undertaking, and it is likely to be too complicated to serve as an adequate substitute for a community college. Negotiations with participating institutions are likely to be lengthy and challenging since they each have their own policies and procedures, and in some cases, may have different state laws with which to comply. For example, many of the private institutions in the District do not have open admissions for their sub-baccalaureate programs, and they may not agree to such a policy for programs offered through the network. This would severely compromise the network's open-access mission. Even with an independent administrative body in place, tasks such as aligning schedules, setting a flat tuition rate, and developing shared application and registration processes would be difficult. It is also not clear how noncredit activities in the areas of workforce development, developmental education, and high school/adult education outreach would be handled in this option. Participating institutions may not prioritize or take ownership of the most challenging tasks like remediation or programs for disconnected youth, which would compromise the network's open access mission.

The return on the investment in a community college network may not be large enough to merit the cost and complexity of the undertaking. Developing a network may be almost as expensive as starting a new community college since the city must still invest in facilities, equipment, educational programs, administrative staff and systems, and tuition subsidies. And in the long run, a community college network may not be sustainable because institutions could opt out of the system once the terms of their initial participation agreements expire. Most importantly, the city will still lack a permanent, public institution of higher education committed to and capable of carrying out the community college mission on its own.

"Without a robust community college, the District's ability to grow its middle class from within is seriously compromised."

VI. Conclusion

The community college offerings currently available to District residents are inadequate. While there are valuable programs at universities throughout the city, the city does not have a public institution of higher education solely dedicated to a community college mission. Without a robust community college, the District's ability to grow its middle class from within is seriously compromised.

It is tempting to say that "UDC should just do a better job" of meeting the community college part of its mission. However, UDC is not organized to excel in designing and providing key community college programs, such as developmental education and occupational certificates and degrees. The university has been given conflicting missions that would be difficult for any institution to carry out adequately. Any conversation about how to strengthen community college programs in the District or the role of UDC must acknowledge these facts.

We have laid out several options for policymakers, UDC officials, and other stakeholders to consider. In our opinion, the one most likely to succeed over the long term is the founding of a freestanding, community college from an incubator institution. This option has the best chance of achieving long-term sustainability and success because it would create an institution that could wholly dedicate itself to carrying out the community college mission and

develop resources accordingly. It also offers the best alignment of organizational structure and mission.

Establishing a separate community college division or branch campus within UDC also may be feasible. However, the administration, board, and faculty would have to be willing to make major organizational changes in order to create a community college division with the necessary authority and autonomy in program design, hiring, and budgeting. If UDC tries to build up its community college programs while retaining its current organizational structure or making changes at the margins, the effort will not succeed. Additionally, we remain concerned about the ability of a single institution with multiple missions to prioritize and develop high quality community college programs. UDC's history does not inspire confidence in that regard.

The community college network will do the least to build community college capacity and is the least likely to develop a durable organizational structure that will last over time. It is not clear that local and regional universities and community colleges would agree to participate over the long term. Additionally, the components necessary to fulfill the open-access and comprehensive missions within the network structure make it an extremely complex administrative undertaking. The network also fails to answer the question of what institution takes ownership of core community college functions, including developmental education, student advising and support services, and strategically developing occupationally-focused programs to prepare residents for jobs in the city and region.

Any action on community college issues will have ramifications for UDC. The process of creating a community college in the District should include an assessment of how UDC will be affected, and should take place within an inclusive dialogue about the city's higher education needs and priorities, including public four-year and graduate programs.

Developing a robust community college while simultaneously strengthening UDC would require a substantial commitment and change in heart among the city's leadership. To date public higher education has not appeared to be a major policy priority for the District. A fully-fledged community college will surely be expensive, and improving the four-year offerings at UDC will require additional resources. The city will have to make a large and long-term investment in its higher education system if it is to provide opportunities for its residents to acquire higher-level skills and better jobs—opportunities long available to residents of other cities.

Endnotes

1 High skill occupations are those in the professional/technical and managerial categories. Low-skill occupations are those in the service and agricultural categories. Middle-skill occupations are the others, including construction, transportation/material moving, and production. Gwen Rubinstein analysis of DC Department of Employment Services data on occupational employment projections (2004-2014).

2 Ibid.

3 Harry J. Holzer and Robert I. Lerman, "America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Education and Training Requirements in the Next Decade and Beyond" (Washington: The Workforce Alliance, 2007). Martha Ross and Brooke DeRenzis, "Reducing Poverty in Washington, DC and Rebuilding the Middle Class from Within" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2007).

4 Adults include individuals aged 25 and older. Brookings analysis of 2006 American Community Survey data.

5 Working Poor Families Project analysis of 2005 American Community Survey data available at www.workingpoorfamilies.org/indicators.html (March 2008)

6 Ed Lazere, "DC's Two Economies: Many Residents Are Falling Behind Despite the City's Revitalization" (Washington: DC Fiscal Policy Institute, 2007).

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8 Poverty status by educational attainment is for the population 25 years and over. All poverty rates have a margin of error of less than one percentage point at the 90 percent confidence level. Brookings analysis of 2006 American Community Survey data.

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