This introductory paper lays out the finding from the eight papers in this series and briefly describes four broad recommendations to help community colleges improve student success in order to meet the national goals set by policymakers for increased postsecondary attainment.

Despite the limited amount of economic evidence of how to do so and the potential consequences of different strategies, Community Colleges are under pressure to improve completion rates and efficiency. This paper set out an economic model of student course pathways linked to college revenues and expenditures. Then use data form an example college to calculate a baseline along with potential differences in efficiency for students following different pathways. The authors conclude that there are substantial differences in efficiency across pathways and across strategies to help students complete college.

This book is comprised of case studies and other tested processes to help faculty and staff become high performing leaders and create a school where every student can achieve their highest success.

In 1988, the Chicago Public Schools decentralized, giving the schools the ability to reform; this book tracks the seven year period following that decentralization. The book focuses on what two neighboring schools did accelerate school learning during that seven year time period. The authors highlights a comprehensive sets of principles and conditions that were key in the success of the schools; including school leadership, and the professional capacity of the faculty, along with how outside factors such as crime were linked to the schools’ success.

This book highlights case studies about how educators reached high standard in schools considered to be hard-to-teach. Chenoweth explains in detail different ways these teachers and principals achieved these levels of success.

This report examines the integrated online planning and budget development system at Baton Rouge Community College and how it links college strategic priorities and unit plan objectives with financial resources. Not only does this system bridge the gap between planning and budgeting, it allows for input and feedback at all levels.

This article describes the impact of an open, participatory planning process with the faculty and staff at Parkland College in Illinois. The result of this planning process lead to happy and enthusiastic faculty and staff and increased the number of full-time teaching positions while decreasing the number of administrative positions.


This book provides five real life case studies of schools transforming the way they do business through lean. Flumerfelt and Soma explain various business, financial and operational problems and the corresponding lean solutions used to tackle these problems.


This book contains a series of chapters organized to teach the development of a school’s budget; including examples for monitoring funds, managing budget reports, and preparing action plans that are aligned with a strong fiscal accountability system.


This article examines the Cincinnati Public Schools reform strategy for improving student performance. Leaving the district’s traditional and inadequate budgeting system behind the authors trace the district’s process of moving to a system of student-based budgeting inking funding equity and flexibility to accountability and excellence.


This report offers recommendation for state policymakers to use limited educational resources more productively. The authors identify four key areas that states must address to ensure they are getting the most out of their education budgets: how schools organize employees, special education spending, the distribution of state funding to schools, and financial information collected at the district level.


This article examines how the shift to student-weighted allocation affected the pattern of resource distribution within two districts: the Houston Independent School District and Cincinnati Public Schools. This study provides evidence that student-weighted allocation can be a means toward greater resource equity among schools within districts.


As outside factors continue to limit the revenues schools receive and the demand for higher student performance increases, schools need to ways to become more efficient with their resources. Hess and Osberg argue that eliminating inefficient spending, rethinking basic cost assumptions and financing, will free up resources that can be used to achieve one’s desired results at a cost the school can afford.
Hill, Paul T. “Ohio at the crossroads: School funding – More of the same or changing the model.” The Thomas B Fordham Institute 2009.

The report critiques Ohio Governor Ted Strickland’s plan for modernizing Ohio’s K – 12 education system. The author argues that the governor’s funding plan would prop up an outdates system of school finance that establishes funding levels based on convention rather than need and focuses accountability on compliance rather than results. The author argues that because the spending model does not reward results that it will only hinder modernization efforts.

Jenkins, Davis, and Sung-Woo Cho. “Get With the Program: Accelerating Community College Students’ Entry into and Completion of Programs of Study.” Working paper no. 32. Community College Research Center April 2011.

This paper focuses how important it is for community colleges to help students formulate goals and plans for careers by educating them about potential programs of study. The authors measure rates of program entry and completion using data collected on students’ actual course-taking behaviors and as predicted this analysis shows the importance of students entering a program as soon as possible in order to maximize success and completion. This paper concludes by offering suggestions for how community colleges can engage their students in order to increase their rates for program entry and in turn completion.


This report points out how in the past very little research has been done in regards to institutional effectiveness primarily because of the diversity of community colleges and who they serve. Jenkins sets out to change that by analyzing over 150,000 transcripts of Florida community college students. After his research he concludes that high-impact colleges were more likely than low-impact colleges to coordinate their programs and services to support student success.


This report examines research on high-performance organization and specific strategies for engaging faculty and staff in organizational innovation. Jenkins concludes by providing recommendations for specific steps for community college leaders to redesign how they manage programs and services to increase the percent of student completion in order to meet the national goals set forth for college attainment.


In this journal entry the author describes the 10-step process he used as former superintendent of Arlington (MA) Public Schools to reduce special education costs while maintaining quality. He details each of the ten steps, and the 75 specific strategies within them that allowed him to balance Arlington’s budget while keeping special education costs in check and improving student performance.


In this article the author discusses the concept of academic return-on-investment (ROI), a calculation which evaluates the cost-effectiveness of the amount of money spent per student on his or her academic performance, and examines how it applies to special education students. He discusses how academic ROI can be used in school budget planning, and examines how student data regarding academic achievement is the main focus of academic ROI.

Levenson’s book challenges the traditional way of thinking about school budgeting and provides examples for how schools should budget during times of financial constraints. This book shows different means of improving the productivity of school while experiencing shrinking tax revenues, decreasing federal aid, rising health care and pension cost and the growing needs of students. Levenson provides various theoretical examples of this can be done, along with other charts and sample worksheets.


The authors analyze how over time, in particular between 1979-2002, and across states, sociopolitical systems influence how states’ chose to adopt accountability policies in higher education. The results from this research support only part of the authors’ initial theory. Their research supported the theory that the primary drivers of policy adoption were legislative party strengths and higher-education governance arrangements but the direction of these influences varied.


Mullins analyzes measures of student success in community colleges. He provides a conceptual framework for thinking about student success and offers new emerging principles related to the measurement of student success in community colleges.


This report examines funding trends in California’s Community College system and offers strategies for adapting to the challenges the future holds. The author finds that Community College revenue growth is falling behind that of other Community Colleges in the rest of the nation. He then hints at the need for reform in California’s complicated Community College allocation system, offering two ideas to improve this system.


Odden’s book reads like a manual for achieving excellence during times of budget constraints. The book provides an outline for a school improvement plan and explains how to pinpoint resources to execute the plan.


Odden and Picus have updated this fifth edition with new data and case studies to better explain school finances. This book highlights how recent research in school finance, resource allocation and use for higher performance along with site-based management impact funding for schools.


This paper contributes to the ongoing research regarding the cost of various types of professional development by proposing an analytic framework for organizing professional development costs. The
authors draw from recent research on effective professional development and previous attempts to analyze the costs of professional development to argue for site-based analyses with a common framework.


The article seeks to identify the expenditures for school improvement strategies and patterns of resource use in successful schools. An expenditure structure organized into nine elements is presented that helps reveal the educational strategies behind a school’s use of resources. The authors show that when budget data and resource indicators are organized according to the expenditure structure strategies such as class-size reduction and a focus on core academics are visible.


This article offers a number of suggestions for ways schools and school districts can reduce spending while maintaining a strong emphasis on improved student performance. These ideas include focusing more resources on core subjects, making trade-offs that include the potential of larger classes in exchange for professional development in the form of instructional coaches, and establishing research-based priorities for the use of existing resources.


Romano analyzes the historical trends of community college revenues and expenditures from 1999-2009 using data provided from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). He argues that certain policy issues flow with the trends related to state and local appropriations, college costs, output and productivity. He then provides suggestions for future public and institutional policies.


The findings presented in this article demonstrate how isolating spending on discrete services can identify the relationships between priorities, current spending, and outcomes; clarify both relative spending on discrete services and the organizational practices that influence how resources are deployed; and establish the current cost of providing high school services as a necessary precursor to identifying whether there are better ways to provide some services.


Roza’s book analyzes education finances from the school’s point of view. She spends a great deal of time explaining how varying funding streams can prevent schools from delivering academic services that align with their agreed priorities. The book stresses the importance of linking your expenditures to your desire student outcomes especially during times of financial constraint and provides some concrete examples of how to accomplish this.


This paper discusses the benefits to school districts of breaking down education costs to the per unit – in most cases per pupil – level. This is particularly relevant as school districts struggle to make ends meet in difficult economic times. The author suggests that braking budget cuts, expenditures, or investments down
into per pupil dollar amount can help school leaders communicate with stakeholders and the public about proposed changes to education budgets.


This chapter dives into the current machinery of resource allocation decisions, highlighting the effects of the multidimensional manner of how resources decisions are actually made, and the resulting consequences for the alignment of resources with stated goals, public education pricing, system sustainability and the capacity of the system to adapt and innovate.