



# Conquering the Enrollment Challenges of Rural Community Colleges

Community College Executive Forum

**We help schools support students from enrollment to graduation and beyond**

➤ **ROOTED IN RESEARCH**

**8,000+** Peer-tested best practices

**500+** Enrollment innovations tested annually

➤ **ADVANTAGE OF SCALE**

**2,100+** Institutions served

**9.5M+** Students supported by our SSMS

➤ **WE DELIVER RESULTS**

**95%** Of our partners continue with us year after year, reflecting the goals we **achieve together**

➤ Find and enroll your right-fit students

➤ Support and graduate more students



➤ Prepare your institution for the future

# Your Moderator for Today



**Christina Hubbard**  
*Senior Director,  
Strategic Research*

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[CM\\_Hubbard](#)

# Meet Our Panelists



**Albert Lewis, Jr.**

*Executive Vice President*

Northwest State College,  
Ohio



**Heather Speed**

*Vice President, Student Success*

Pueblo Community College,  
Colorado



**Geoffrey Fortunato**

*Associate Vice President*

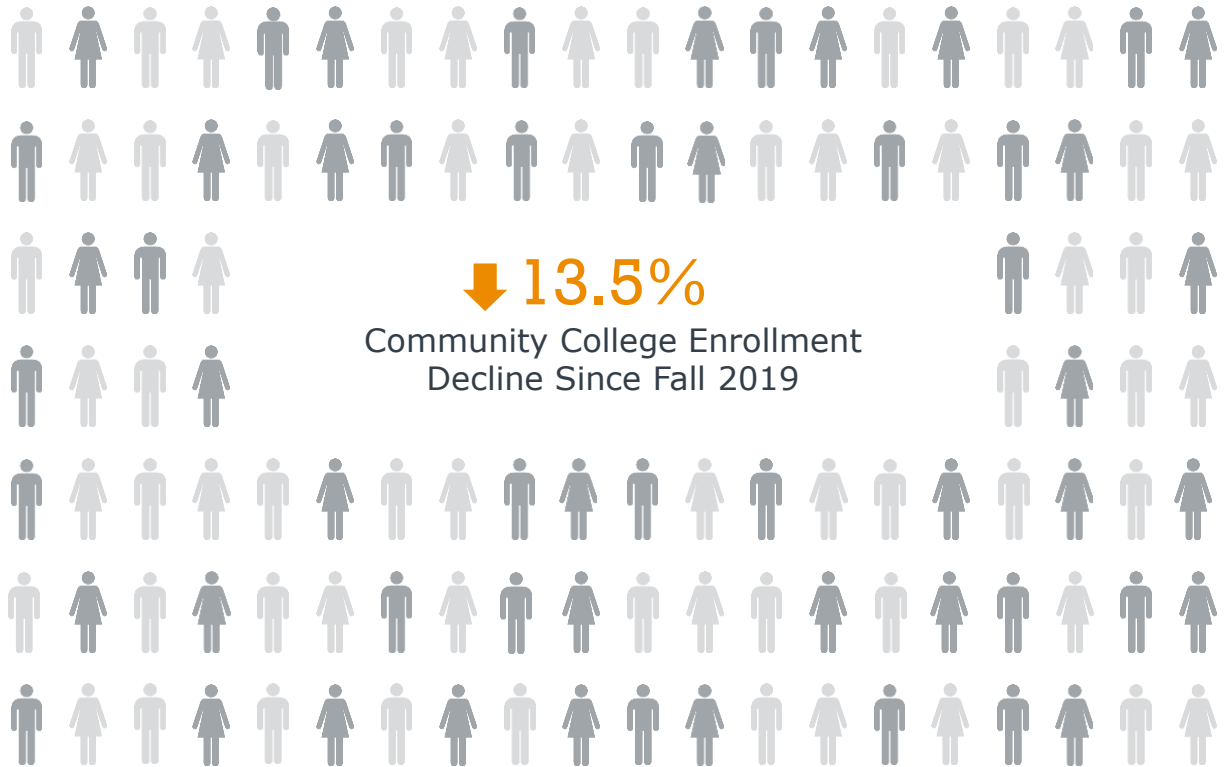
Seminole State College,  
Florida



## Quick Poll

Which best describes your role on campus?

# Enrollment Declines Continue in Fall 2021



↓ 13.5%

Community College Enrollment  
Decline Since Fall 2019

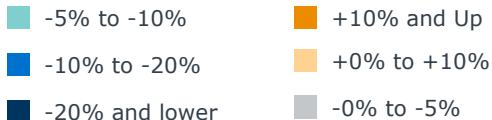
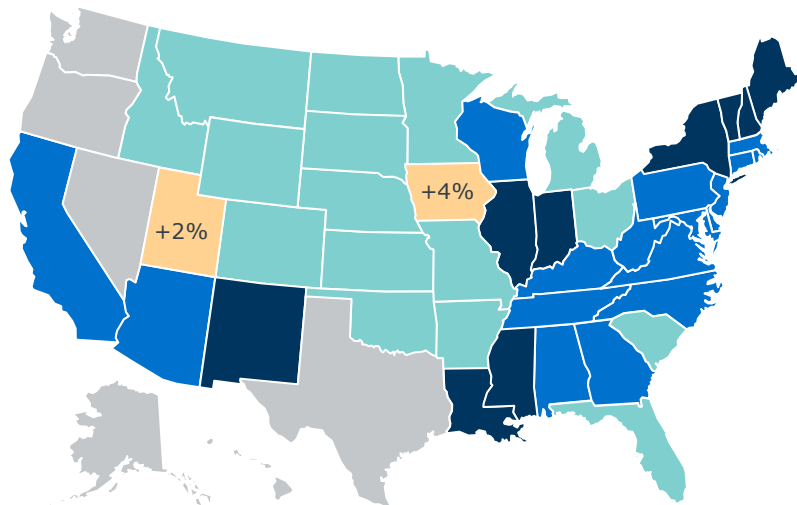
Source: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/> ;  
<https://www.acct.org/files/Strengthening%20Rural%20Community%20Colleges%202021.pdf>

# A Nearly-Universal Population Cliff



## Falling Birthrates Will Hit Institutions Across the US

Percent Change in the Population of 18-Year-Olds, 2025-2035



## Less Selective Institutions Bear the Brunt

Change in demand, 2025-2035

**-1%** *'Elite'*  
Top 50<sup>1</sup> research universities & liberal arts colleges

**-5%** *National*  
Top 50-100<sup>1</sup> research universities & liberal arts colleges

**-10%** *Regional*  
Ranked<sup>1</sup> outside of Top 100

**-14%** *Two-Year*

# Today's Topics



## Driving Enrollment by Addressing Rural Student Needs



**Meeting Unmet Financial Needs**



**Addressing Transportation Issues**



**Providing Access to Job Skills**



**Providing Flexibility**



## Quick Poll

What is the average distance your students travel for clinicals in your medical (or other hands-on) programs?

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## Quick Poll

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Does your school still have federal COVID relief funds available for students?

## Quick Poll

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC: What percent of your available classes were online?

NOW: What percent of your available classes are online?



# What Are Your New Students Experiencing?

EAB Has a “Secret Shopper” Enrollment Pain Point Audit – Now VIRTUAL

## Custom Evaluation Includes Quick Wins, Proven Practices, Researcher Support



EAB

### Enrollment Pain Point Audit

Custom Results for  
Your Community College

Community College Executive Forum

- 15-30 page report detailing researcher’s findings
- Deep dive follow-up conversation with researcher
- Implementation support and best practice recommendations

### Sample Admissions Findings and Quick Win

- ✓ **Student ID Number Provision Immediate:** The admission staff hands students a note with the student’s ID number moments after processing the student’s application. This enabled the EAB researcher to seek placement, advising, and registration in one visit to campus.
- ✗ **No Follow Up:** The EAB researcher did not receive any follow up communication by mail or personal e-mail following any step in the admission process within 10 days except for RSVP for orientation.

### Quick Win

#### Provide Review of Onboarding To-Do List:

New applicants at **South Puget Sound Community College** are provided with an enrollment checklist at the time they submit an application to the institution. In follow-up, student-facing staff at the college carefully review the checklist with students in-person, to ensure they understand each upcoming step in the process.

# Final Thoughts: Facing Enrollment Challenges in Rural Communities

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- 1 Partner with your community-based organizations to address holistic needs
- 2 Build and leverage close relationships with business and industry
- 3 Invest strategically now to prepare for increased turbulence ahead

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*There is **no "new normal."**  
It's time for us to **build** our **preferred normal.***



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