

2022-2027

Strategic Plan

JANUARY 2022



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

PTK Cares



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

MISSION

The mission of Phi Theta Kappa is to recognize academic achievement of college students and to provide opportunities for them to grow as scholars and leaders.

VISION

Phi Theta Kappa's vision is to make the benefits of membership accessible to all deserving college students.



What we know

3.8
million

PTK Members
inducted across
the world



Community colleges are one of the best kept secrets in higher education—and we want to change that. Now, more than ever, the work of community colleges is critical to improving the lives of individuals, families, communities, and the nation.

Community colleges, like their students, face challenges.

Previous strategic plans have focused heavily on providing opportunities, programs, and supports for PTK members. And, while this plan continues to prioritize the needs of members, it also takes into account the needs of the colleges themselves. We cannot sustain and serve our community of constituents if we do not recognize and address the challenges facing community colleges within our own strategic planning.

PTK's new strategic plan—PTK Cares—represents an effort to position PTK to continue to provide support to the nation's top community college students, while also working to support and strengthen the sector as a whole.

91%

success
rate for Phi Theta
Kappa Members

What we know

PTK CARES
2022

OUR RESEARCH: STUDENTS AND COLLEGES FACE CHALLENGES



We conducted a national analysis of community college strategic plans to inform our research as we create our next strategic plan. In a nationwide review, we analyzed strategic plans that represent rural and urban institutions, colleges that are heavily transfer-focused and employment-focused, colleges that are minority-serving and non-minority serving, and colleges serving a high population of Pell-eligible students and non-Pell-eligible students. We looked at all of them and this is what we learned: being intentional with student success strategies matters; today's students need engaged college staff to help navigate the complexities of the education/work/life balance, and adequate educational funding is needed to provide higher education opportunities to underrepresented groups and reverse declining community college enrollments.

Be Intentional

The best, most successful community colleges in the nation didn't get there by accident. They have a commitment to student success that is pervasive and intentional, and it is evident in their outcomes. A recent national survey found that 70% of colleges were implementing at least one national-level initiative to increase college completion, and 88% of colleges had formulated local completion initiatives. But we know it goes far beyond that.

F
The best, most successful community colleges in the nation didn't get there by accident.

keeping expectations high for leading and learning. These colleges know their students—not as a single group—but by name and by circumstance.

Dismantle Barriers

Our research shows that community college students are incredibly resilient but face more barriers than other college students. Many are minorities, from low-income families, or the first in their families to attend college. The majority of community college students work, many have families, and most receive some form of financial aid. The combined effect is that these students are often more "at risk" of dropping out or stopping out than students who have fewer things working against them. The impacts of COVID have magnified the barriers already facing community college students and, as a result, we are seeing an increased need for social, emotional, financial, and mental health supports.

Cultivate Compassion

Colleges who are mature in their efforts to support students do so with unrelenting persistence. They are both passionate and compassionate with their approach. Their cultures are rooted in spending time with students, listening to them, and providing them with the necessary supports to persist—all while



What we know

PTK CARES
2022

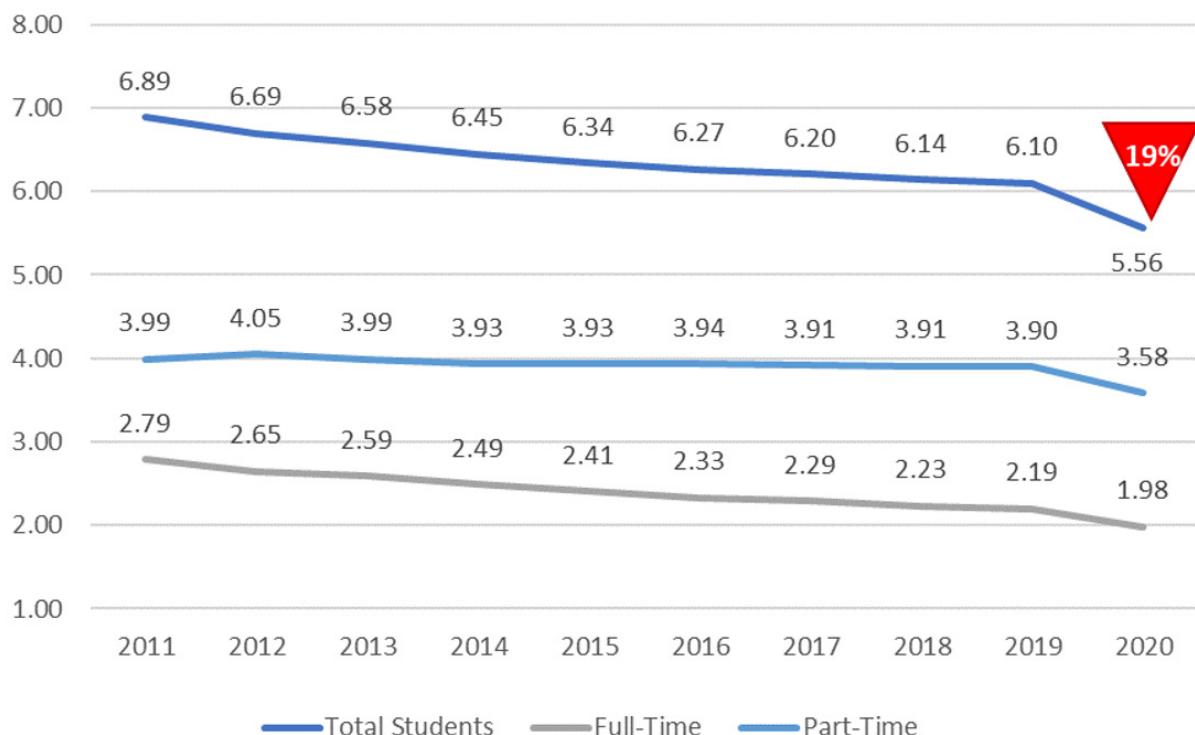
Support Part-time Students

Most colleges know how to support students, but few have the funding to scale and sustain their initiatives. Over the past decade, the cumulative effect of America's economic recovery, the underfunding of colleges, and lack of adequate student financial aid has steered enrollments down below expected margins.

When work is available, it is typical to see small, incremental losses in full-time student enrollment

at community colleges and increases in enrollment of part-time students. This is particularly true for students from low-income families, who must work when they can and are only able to attend classes on a part-time basis. However, financial aid systems, at the federal level and across many states, are unresponsive to the needs of part-time students. As a result, enrollment in America's community and technical colleges has declined by 19%, with 8% of the loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Lower enrollments ultimately mean that fewer underrepresented students have access to higher education.

Figure 1.0
Enrollments of Primarily Associate Degree Producing Institutions





What is at stake

\$246
million
in transfer
scholarships for
PTK members

Community college enrollment is not just an issue impacting the colleges themselves—it is everyone's problem. As a nation, we are facing an increased need for a skilled, trained workforce while simultaneously facing decreased student enrollment.

With fewer students in higher education, the biggest loser will be the US economy. The shortages seen now will only amplify as time goes on. We must find better ways to adequately support colleges and students; and better communicate the value of a community college education.

The impact of the nation's community colleges is undeniable. We are an engine, fueling the dreams of more than 6.8 million students annually and

the driving force behind America's classrooms, hospitals, shipyards, manufacturing, and business innovation. Our students are doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, engineers, accountants, welders, first responders, and front-line workers. Community college students are fearless learners, master jugglers, and second-chance takers. They are the dreamers. The doers.



What is at stake

PTK CARES
2022

PTK CARES

PTK Cares—the theme of PTK's new five-year strategic plan—is dedicated to furthering the impact of the nation's community colleges through the following three commitments:

Commitment 1: **Caring for Students**

Over the past five years, we have worked to increase recognition and opportunities for student engagement among our members. Because we know that self-efficacy and student engagement are closely tied with student success, we have sought out ways to connect with and support as many students as possible—including adult and traditional students, full- and part-time students, student athletes, students who are dually enrolled, and online students.

...student success is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

In addition to traditional group activities and onsite programming, we have invested more time and energy into creating flexible programming that allows students to participate in targeted programming activities at a time and place that works for them.

At PTK we have also learned that student success is not a one-size-fits-all approach. As we continue to find new ways to support the collective and individual needs of our students, our focus is on developing programs and strategies more geared toward meeting students where they are by assessing and meeting the individual needs of as many students as possible.

Strategies:

- Increase access to a high-quality member experience
- Meet students where they are by providing one-on-one services to navigate successful transition to work, transfer, and career exploration
- Expand career, employer, and transfer-aligned partnerships
- Increase the reach of PTK's learning community

Assessment

- Increase membership acceptance to 20%
- Provide career and transfer services to at least 15% of PTK members
- Increase transfer scholarship opportunities in all 50 states
- Expand individual student engagement by 20%
- Increase the number of Five Star Chapters by 20%



Commitment 2: Caring for Student Success

Many people are surprised to learn that PTK members are not unlike their community college peers. They face the same complex barriers to completion and are just as likely to be underprepared for college coursework, from a low-income family, or the first in their family to enroll in college. Yet in three separate national tracking studies over the last decade, PTK members have consistently achieved an overall 91% student success rate—including a completion rate of 87% within six years of entering college.

When we look at reasons why PTK members have such high rates of success, a deeper and broader understanding of student success emerges—one that can be applied to the broader population of community college students. As a result, Phi Theta Kappa is in a unique position to help inform a new student success agenda—one that is shaped by intentionally and proactively centering the voices and perspectives of our students.

Before now, PTK has focused its work primarily on providing programming and supports to its members; but, student success doesn't happen in a vacuum. Through our research, we have learned that student success is complex and requires coordinated and intentional efforts by students, colleges, individuals, organizations, policymakers, and members of business and industry.

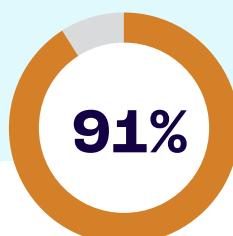
In addition to our continued commitment to support student success among our members, our work will guide the student success agenda by including educating and equipping others to join in our efforts.

Strategies:

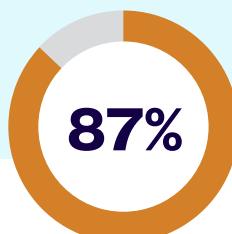
- Provide curricular experiences for faculty and administrators seeking to deepen their understanding of students and student success.
- Advocate for policy changes that strengthen financial aid systems and better meet the needs of today's students.
- Expand recognition of four-year college partners to include DEI.

Assessment

- Produce three publications per year, including books and articles, as well as speak on the student perspective of student success across outlets and events
- Provide a professional development experience exclusively for community college faculty and administration to exceed 2,000 participants over the next five years.
- Expand participation in the four-year Transfer Honor Roll program to over 1,000 colleges.
- Expand recognition for companies who support community colleges and hire their students.
- Increase scholarship opportunities by 25% over the next five years.



Success rate of
PTK Members



Completion rate
of PTK members

Commitment 3: Caring for community colleges

In the past, many of the conversations surrounding the good work of community colleges has been focused inward—with conversations about research, student outcomes, and economic impact only taking place among community college leaders. But declining enrollments require all of us to take a more active and intentional role in elevating the work of our colleges.

Community colleges are quality institutions

Community colleges have long been known for their convenience, accessibility, flexibility, and affordability but not as well known for their quality. But we know that public perceptions around the quality of a community college education are not always favorable and that many students cite the “community college stigma” as a top concern related to college choice.

Community colleges are quality institutions, and PTK members provide some of the best evidence of that quality. Our goal is to leverage the experiences and voices of our members to combat the community college stigma and advocate for the value of community college education among their peers and others. We plan to do this by equipping students to be advocates and by providing them with platforms and opportunities to elevate the value of their community college experience.

Strategies:

- Shape national conversations about the work of community colleges
- Promote student-led advocacy for community colleges
- Provide a communications platform through CCSmart.org



- Recognize excellence in transfer at the two-year level

Assessment

- Advocate for grant support for CCSmart.org to exceed \$3 million over the five-year period
- Provide national recognition for excellence in two-year transfer support
- At least 50% of all chapters to embrace CCSmart student advocacy campaign



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Phi Theta Kappa is the premier honor society recognizing the academic achievement of students at associate degree-granting colleges and helping them grow as scholars and leaders. The Society is made up of more than 3.5 million members and nearly 1,300 chapters in 10 nations.