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Community Colleges: A Resource for Increasing Equity and Inclusion in Computer Science Education

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In the long-standing and persistent lack of diversity in computer science (CS), too little attention has been paid to the role that community colleges (CCs) can play. Community colleges are poised to provide an important resource for preparing a 21st-century workforce begging for more computer science graduates as well as more diversity in those graduates. To broaden participation in CS, CCs must be the focus of increased study and intervention. As part of this work, we revisit the current metaphors that guide CS education research and practice—the idea that students follow a "pipeline" or even a "pathway" is too simplistic to capture the convoluted routes that many CC students are constrained to follow. In this column, we argue that there is a misalignment between the existing research and practice approaches and institutional structures, which are based on a traditional educational pipeline metaphor, and the experiences of students attempting to pursue a CS bachelor's degree.

Community colleges are typically open access, lower-division institutions whose student population is more diverse than that of four-year universities and reflect a transformation of the demographics in higher education. As noted in an earlier *Communications* Broadening Participation column,[8] there is a high participation of minorities in CS at CCs; more than half of CC students are non-white, and more than half of all Hispanic and Black undergraduates start at community college.[1] Efforts to retain students through transfer to completion of a bachelor's degree would be a large step forward in helping diversify the field.

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