Community and technical colleges are rightly seen as the foundation of affordable education, providing a gateway for students to begin their academic careers. These institutions, however, face challenges in ensuring equitable access for all students, particularly those who may not have access to reliable transportation. According to the Seldin/Haring-Smith Foundation, which researches transportation issues, the transportation gap between students and their academic opportunities can be significant.

Community college enrollment has been falling, with the National Student Clearinghouse reporting that institutions had 4.1 million undergraduates in fall 2020, down from nearly 5 million students in spring 2019. In Florida, students near the coasts or urban areas may be accessible via public transit. However, students in spring 2022, which is down from nearly 5 million students in spring 2019. In Florida, students near the coasts or urban areas may be accessible via public transit. However, students in rural areas may be physically incapable of driving or may not have access to reliable public transportation. This can be a barrier for students who would benefit from attending these colleges, especially those who cannot afford a car.

The foundation is mapping by hand public transit stops. About one in four community or technical college students are near a main campus, according to the foundation’s map. But the foundation’s map shows inland transportation gaps, which are mostly due to public transit stops. Some universities have worked with local transit agencies to better sync their course start times with the local bus schedule. That was the case at the Clearwater campus. Students at the college also ride the bus free of charge.

St. Petersburg College, an American Association of Community Colleges member, offers workforce training, which primarily awards two-year degrees. Students in spring 2020. Some universities have worked with local transit agencies to better sync their course start times with the local bus schedule. That was the case at the Clearwater campus. Students at the college also ride the bus free of charge.

Community and technical colleges are rightly seen as the foundation of affordable education, providing a gateway for students to begin their academic careers. However, the transportation gap between students and their academic opportunities can be significant, especially for students who cannot afford a car.

Clearwater campus. Prior to the pandemic, about 100,000 rides every month involved students, said Brad Miller, CEO of St. Petersburg College's Pinellas County. Students at the college also ride the bus free of charge. Students at the college also ride the bus free of charge. Some universities have worked with local transit agencies to better sync their course start times with the local bus schedule. That was the case at the Clearwater campus. Students at the college also ride the bus free of charge.

What can colleges do to ensure that students can access these opportunities, regardless of their transportation situation? Community and technical colleges can work with local transit providers to ensure that students have access to the transportation they need to attend classes. They can also work with local school districts to understand the transportation needs of their students and provide transportation assistance as necessary.

Ad

Corrections & clarifications: A prior version of a story misstated the number of students who rode the local bus. The story has been updated.