

# TOWARDS A RESILIENCY AGENDA FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The initiatives described in this *Guide* only hint at the rich field of action and possibility for community colleges willing to engage the great work before us: building resiliency. The resiliency conversation, while urgent, is young. This paper intends only to frame the subject, not forge a set of clear and comprehensive answers. Community colleges, we hope, will in fact rewrite the questions. In the meantime, a few lessons emerge, suggesting directions for engagement.



## IN PROGRAMMING

- Integrate resilient systems-thinking into every program of study, and develop curricula responsive to the particular skill implications of local climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives.
- Update existing coursework in emergency response, public service, urban planning, engineering, information technology, landscape, water, construction, environment, health, and transportation programs; and seek interdisciplinary opportunities between them.
- Pay attention to emerging opportunities nationally and regionally (including, e.g., 111(d), ACA, and the Administration's Climate Action Plan) as policy changes open doors for collaboration, action, and funding.
- Build *climate resilience* through education and training: Review local and regional adaptation plans and populate the vague sections on workforce development with an actual agenda for skill delivery.
- Build *community resilience* through economic opportunity: Work with local industry partnerships, high schools, and community programs (e.g. pre-apprenticeship, adult literacy, English language learning, and employment readiness) to align education with demand, establish or expand stackable credentials, and build career pathways to actual jobs.
- Join labor-management partnerships in training incumbent workers for advancement; seize the resiliency dialogue as an opportunity to improve college relationships with labor unions and other worker institutions.
- Define climate resiliency for your region; work with local government, workforce intermediaries, and industry partnerships to assess emerging labor market demand and skill needs driven by climate resiliency initiatives.
- Explore new partnerships in customized training for incoming and incumbent city and county workers, particularly in environmental services, engineering, urban planning, transportation, emergency response, and public health.
- Above all, hew to the college's core mission, and share it with all community stakeholders: **Post-secondary success leads to economic opportunity, and initiatives to advance it should thus be a keystone strategy in the architecture of community resilience.**



## ON CAMPUS

- Become a living laboratory of resilience; use the campus as a demonstration and teaching asset for engaging students and the community, modeling, for example, stormwater management or renewable energy systems.
- Fortify and expand sustainability work — both mitigation and adaptation initiatives — already happening across campuses; use existing college sustainability committees to initiate and expand the resiliency conversation.
- Align college adaptation and hazard mitigation planning, which colleges are already required to do, with local and regional efforts.
- Establish the campus as a safe haven — whether this is because of high ground, microgrids, or weapon-free zones — and a stable, reliable operations center for times of crisis.
- Enhance campus awareness and preparedness through education, training, and simulations; develop an all-hazards response plan that engages and supports the different capacities for resilience of individuals on campus: administrators, faculty, staff, and students.
- Insert resiliency conversations into campus planning on green initiatives; and also work to embed resiliency in institutional strategic planning at every level.
- Build on the last decade’s advances in sustainability education to prepare students to help their own communities mitigate and adapt to the most severe impacts of climate change.
- Assess vulnerability and prepare adaptive responses in collaboration with other community colleges around the country: **Join the Alliance For Resilient Campuses (see page 13).**



## WITH COMMUNITY

- Colleges are anchor institutions and community assets that can serve as regional catalysts in the movement to build resilient places. Prepare campuses not only to be an operations base during a disaster, but to serve as an operational base for quotidian community transformation.
- Use the bully pulpit to explore resiliency — its imperatives and its possibilities — with a broad audience.
- Provide educational resources on climate change and adaptation to the community at large.
- Partner with community groups; mediate conversations to ensure that outsiders bearing resilience plans build up and onto local projects and priorities — which may or may not go under the formal title of “resilience.”
- Broker conversations. Adaptation strategies developed in rooms dominated by scientists and environmentalists tend to seek technical solutions to a social problems; community groups will return the resiliency dialogue to community health and economic inclusiveness.
- Practice local workforce development in new ways — work with cities and transit authorities and regional planning bodies in addition to individual employers.
- Include all voices. Community activists and environmental justice groups need to share power with economic development and employer interests; colleges have the clout to keep everyone at the big table — where the investment decisions are made — when some seek to busy the more plebeian voices with tangential “community” conversations.
- Convene scientists, industry and community leaders, and policy-makers to shape climate action plans and determine workforce implications; **Make the college visible as an essential partner in any resiliency planning process.**