

二年制學院

蓬勃發展

■亨利·摩斯

根據美國勞工統計局 1998 年發布的一份報告顯示，在 2008 年之前，全國二年制大學所培訓出來的人力資源成長率是 31%，比四年制大學學士學位 24% 以及碩士學位 18% 的成長率都要高。這樣的趨勢，雖然因整體經濟情勢陷入低迷而有所影響，但已凸顯出就業市場對二年制大學的需求的成長幅度，首次超越四年制大學，二年制大學首次躋身美國高等教育的核心之列。

促成二年制大學成長的因素有很多，其中最值得注意的在於大學教育的變革，重視實務應用層面，以及與國家或區域的經濟發展緊密結合。

舉例來說，九〇年代資訊業人力需求的特徵，著重於個人在特殊技術領域所具備的才能，不論是硬體維護、軟體應用、或程式設計。要訓練出這樣的技術人才，高中畢業程度當然不足，但四年制學士學位也非必要。在此情況下，二年制大學迅速嶄露頭角，培訓出許多符合資格的專業人才，授與文憑或證書，甚至有許多已經完成四年大學教育的學子，選擇再到二年制大學進修，或

參加短期職業訓練以自我充實。目前紐約地區至少開設

了 214 所二年制大學，培育出超過 22 萬 5000 位學生。自 1990 年至 1997 年之間，取得電腦相關科系副學士學位的人數大幅成長近百分之百，其中還不包括選修電腦課程的商業科系學生。

另一項造就八〇及九〇年代就業市場結構變遷的重要因素，在於非傳統就業人口的異軍突起，包括想為家庭賺取第二份薪資的女性人口。由於家庭責任佔據她們大部分的日常生活時間，二年制大學為女性提供了更具彈性的選擇。其次，許多來自中低收入社會階層的人士，為了突破現狀，他們開始設法謀取較高的學歷，以求獲得更好的工作機會，二年制大學正是他們的最佳跳板。第三，越來越多的移民人口湧入美國，為了盡早打入主流社會，二年制大學也成為新移民的理想選擇。

一般而言，四年制大學傾向全國性與國際性，二年制大學則與地方的繁榮興盛息息相關。在州或郡的立法規範下，一所良好的社區大學，能為當地創造良好的商業環境，吸引廠商投資，促進地方繁榮。這也間接促成了二年制大學的蓬勃發展

。過去 25 年來，二年制大學不斷革新進步，加強競爭力，提昇學術聲望，迎合時代潮流。以往的社區大學僅將本身定位在專科學校，或成為進入四年制大學的墊腳石。然而時至今日，大部分的社區大學已有相當自覺，以各自的專長提供兼具深度與廣度的教育水準，是學生邁向專業領域的康莊大道。另一方面，它們也未就此摒棄人文教育。

這是獨特的美式雙重教育目標。世界上大部分國家，個人的前途通常在早期的教育過程中已經決定，然而在社區大學，學生仍然有機會根據自我價值的判斷，選擇進入職場或繼續就學深造。換言之，在州政府或地方政府的補助下，任何人都將有機會決定自己未來的人生道路。

未來 10 年中，職業訓練這一趨勢仍將持續蓬勃發展，我們甚至預測，職訓學校，或某些社區大學會在固有的資源和基礎之上，開始提供四年制的專業課程。不少四年制大學已經開始為社會人士和專業人士設計許多特殊課程，供二年制職業學校畢業生能夠繼續深造。

◆本文作者為長島商學院法拉盛分校校長。

The Two-year College Degree: More Popular Today than Ever

Henry Moss

In 1998 the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics projected that the two-year degree-trained workforce would grow by 31% nationally by 2008, as compared to 24% for bachelor's degrees, and 18% for those with Master's degrees. Although these trends have changed somewhat with the economic slowdown and decline in technology jobs, this represents the first time that the two-year degree has outstripped the four-year degree in labor market demand growth. This highlights the underappreciated fact that two-year college education has become a central part of the higher education community in the United States. Only 25 years ago, when one spoke of higher education, one usually meant getting a bachelor's degree at a traditional four-year college. Community and junior colleges did not get much respect. What has changed?

A number of things have contributed to the growing importance of two-year college education. Most noticeably, college education has been forced to become more practical and related to national and regional economic trends.

For example, the information economy of the 1990s created a huge demand for workers with specific technical skills, from hardware maintenance to soft-

ware applications and programming. Training for these positions requires more than a high school diploma, but not necessarily a four-year degree. Two-year colleges quickly developed degree programs, and even certificate programs, that could produce graduates qualified for these positions. Even many four-year degree graduates returned to two-year colleges and other short-term programs to update their skills. The New York region has 214 two-year colleges serving 225,000 students. From 1990 to 1997 the number of Associate degrees in computer services doubled (and this does not include business degrees that require computer skills.)

Another factor influencing educational choice over the 1980s and 1990s has been changing workforce demographics toward non-traditional populations. This includes the entry of women into the workforce as second earners. With family responsibilities occupying their time, two-year education is often a more practical way to begin a college career. In addition, during these decades, many unskilled workers from economically disadvantaged communities, often in their 30s and 40s, sought ways to enter an economy that was increasingly oriented to services and demanding more than a high school education.

Again, a two-year degree has been the most effective way to proceed as minorities and the poor entered the world of higher education. Finally, this period was one of large-scale immigration. Many immigrants beyond traditional age for college want a U. S. higher education to gain skills they need for productive employment. Here again a two-year college was a more practical choice.

Two-year colleges are typically connected to their immediate region while four-year schools take a national or even international perspective. This has been another reason for their growing importance. Community colleges, for example, have their missions defined by state legislatures and county commissions. Quality community colleges have been important for regions seeking to attract businesses to their areas and mission-based funding has stimulated the growth and development of these institutions, many of which have begun branching into the smaller communities in their region.

The trend toward occupational degrees will continue over the next decade and we should expect to see these colleges, and some community colleges, begin to offer four-year professional degrees that build on this unique kind of education. We are already seeing some four-year colleges developing special divisions for adult and professional studies, where working people and two-year occupational degree graduates can continue their professional studies.

❖ Dr. Moss is the Director and Associate Academic Dean of the Flushing Branch of Long Island Business Institute.