Student Guide

COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COMPLETION CORPS

cccompletioncorps.org
Dear Student Leaders:

Next time you are in class, take a look around. Chances are that one out of four of your classmates will not be there by the end of the year. For Hispanic, African American and economically underserved students, the numbers are likely to be higher.

And those of you who stick around should prepare for a long stay – only 20 percent of community college students complete their credentials in three years.

The drive to improve college completion rates in the United States has become a national education mandate, and we need your leadership, your drive and your commitment.

We, the International Officers of Phi Theta Kappa, have formed the CCCC – the Community College Completion Corps. We are committed to completing our degrees and we are calling on you to educate your fellow students on the importance of staying the course and completing a college credential.

Whether you are studying for an associate degree or a certificate, your future will be much brighter with a college credential. You will earn more, have job security and be more likely to find the job you want. Even if you are planning to transfer to a four-year school you need an associate degree. Otherwise you are more likely to spend time and money taking and retaking courses that a degree would have made unnecessary.

Commit to complete, and get the support of your college administration and all the students on your campus. These pages, and our website, cccompletioncorps.org, have all the ideas, information and best practices you need to plan an awareness campaign culminating in a public endorsement of college completion by signing our Call to Action.

We want you to be our partner in improving the lives of our fellow students and restore our country to a position of global leadership in higher education and a competitive economy.

The most influential and prestigious organizations in the community college arena have asked each student to help one other student succeed. Working together, we can reach out to millions of students and turn the educational tide in favor of college completion.

We are committed to college completion! Will you commit, for yourself, for your peers and for the nation? We are counting on you to be counted as completing community college, and to encourage others to do the same!

Matthew, David, Jessica, Natalie and Onjalai
2010-2011 Phi Theta Kappa International Officers
You'll earn more! Students who complete their associate degree or certificate can expect to earn as much as $8,000 more per year and about $400,000 more in a lifetime than a high school graduate.  

You'll be prepared! People change jobs up to 10 times in their working lives – and when you are job-hunting, a college credential will always give you an edge.  

Credential holders also are more likely to retain jobs. Unemployment for community college graduates is typically 30 percent lower than for high school grads.  

You'll encounter fewer barriers to transfer! Many state college systems have articulation agreements that guarantee transfer of community college credits when associate degree students enter state universities. You'll save time and money by not having to repeat courses or take courses you did not know you needed.  

You'll have the personal satisfaction of reaching your educational goal and having something tangible to show for it – something valued by employers, scholarship officials and transfer recruiters.  

You'll help reverse a national trend in the declining number of college graduates, and you'll also open doors for your children. Children of college graduates are more likely to graduate themselves.  

You and your family's health will improve. Research links greater educational attainment to longer life, healthful eating, exercising and avoiding risk factors. Better-educated people are quicker to change behaviors in response to new evidence. Better-educated people have higher incomes, making them more likely to have health insurance and live in safer neighborhoods with better access to recreational facilities and grocery stores.  

You will be more likely to promote environmental sustainability.  

You'll be more likely to volunteer, vote, contribute to charity, serve on boards and run for office.  

You'll be an educated, prepared and higher-paid employee, providing support for federal, state and local governments and helping the national workforce be competitive and productive in the global economy.  

Fiction: You can get a good job without finishing college. 
Fact: 60 percent of jobs by 2020 will require a college credential.

1 U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 data  
3 Internationally, College Graduates Fared Better During Recession, Chronicle of Higher Education, September 2010  
4 The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, American Association of Community Colleges, The National Articulation and Transfer Network  
5 With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them, A Public Agenda Report for The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
6 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a Healthier America
Phi Theta Kappa, as the student arm of the Community College Completion initiative, is committed to actively encouraging completion of a college credential, meaning an associate degree or certificate. Following are ideas for best practices to support community college completion:

- Make an appointment with your college president to share chapter activities related to community college completion, especially plans to have campus organization leaders and the college president sign a resolution of commitment.

- Contact campus organizations and share plans to encourage college completion. Ask these organizations to jointly sign a resolution to support Community College Completion and the Community College Completion Corps (CCCC). The resolution and signing sheets are available online at cccompletioncorps.org.

- Invite campus and local media to cover the signing and all CCCC activities. Schedule the signing on Phi Theta Kappa’s Founders Day (November 19) if possible, or use your regular Founders Day observance to promote college completion. A checklist for planning a successful signing event is available online at cccompletioncorps.org.

- Conduct a public awareness campaign on campus on the value of a community college credential based on benefits for the student and the community. Distribute stickers and display posters promoting Community College Completion and the Community College Completion Corps. Create a display or staff a booth in a highly visible high-traffic area.

- Submit Dr. Rod Risley’s opinion piece on community college completion to the college paper and local newspaper. An electronic version is available.

- Sponsor a campus essay contest on the importance of community college completion.

- Visit local high schools using a presentation on the importance of community college completion.

- Utilize the video presentation by Dr. Risley and the International Officers promoting college completion by showing it on campus closed circuit TV.

- If you subscribe to the Honors Seminars, have the Community College Completion discussion aired on your campus’ closed circuit TV.

- You may access the Community College Completion panel discussion at cccompletionchallenge.org.

- In the Call to Action, every student is asked to help one other student succeed. Individual chapter members or students may volunteer as tutors or mentors for at-risk students on your campus. First year students, first generation students, low-income students and minority students may fall into at-risk situations.

- Encourage chapter members to use Five Star Competitive Edge to develop time management, organizational and study skills to avoid stress and academic challenges to college completion.

- Encourage chapter members to use CollegeFish.org to facilitate plans for transfer and promote college completion.

- If your campus has a career center, involve them in your efforts to promote college completion. The majority of students who fail or drop out because they cannot keep up with the classwork say they had little or no guidance in selecting a college or course of study.

- Contact your local and state legislators and lobby for their support for community college completion and funding for higher education.
Why do students fail to complete their community college credential? They are overwhelmed, overextended, underfunded and underprepared. According to a recent survey* of students who did not complete their community college studies:

- 54% needed to work to support themselves or families and could not balance work and classes
- 31% could not afford college
- Drop-out rates for students who could not handle the academic work vary, but range around 20 percent, although the figure may be as high as 40 percent for students enrolled in remedial classes

More revealing statistics:

- 60% of community college students work 20 hours per week
- 25% of community college students work 35 or more hours per week
- 23% of all college students have dependent children
- 62% of all college students who drop out are responsible for paying for their own education
- College costs have risen 400% in the last 25 years
- Community college costs have risen 200% in the last 7 years and 7.3% since 2009
- 30% of students who drop out still must repay student loans
- Textbook costs have significantly increased in the past 10 years
- 60% of community college students are enrolled part-time, limiting their financial aid and benefit options, including access to health care

Fiction: Students who drop out eventually return to college. Fact: While 65% of students who drop out plan to return, only about 38% do return.

* With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them, A Public Agenda Report for The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
A history-making, unprecedented and unified action took place in April 2010 when leaders of six national organizations representing the nation’s 1,200 community colleges, their governing boards, their faculty and their 11.8 million students signed a pledge to commit to increase student completion rates by 50 percent over the next decade.

Signers included:

**Dr. Rod Risley**, Executive Director of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for community college students

**Dr. George Boggs**, President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), whose membership includes approximately 1,200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions

**J. Noah Brown**, President and CEO of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond

**Dr. Evelyn Waiwaiole**, Director of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), dedicated to the professional development of faculty, administrators, and staff; and to the continued improvement of teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of student success

**Dr. Gerardo de los Santos**, President and CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College, committed to improving community colleges through innovation, experimentation and institutional transformation

**Dr. Kay M. McClenney**, Director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement, a research and service project of the Community College Leadership Program

Community college students, all members of the All-USA Academic First Team and of Phi Theta Kappa, were on hand to witness the signing.

The *Call to Action* affirms the signers’ belief in the completion agenda as crucial to the future of community colleges, commits the signers to an emphasis on access and success, and calls on all community college constituencies and stakeholders to support the effort.

“As organizations representing America’s community colleges, we mutually commit and pledge to promote the development and implementation of policies, practices, and institutional cultures that will produce 50 percent more students with high quality degrees and certificates by 2020, while increasing access and quality,” the *Call to Action* states.

Access a video panel discussion by *Call to Action* signers at [cccompletionchallenge.org](http://cccompletionchallenge.org). Hear the most influential leaders in the community college arena discuss the importance of the Community College Completion Challenge and the steps they are taking to support this crucial initiative.

Honors Seminar subscribers receive the panel discussion on DVD. Access a video presentation on the Community College Completion Corps, featuring Dr. Rod Risley and the International Officers, at [cccompletioncorps.org](http://cccompletioncorps.org).
President Barack Obama and higher education leaders have pledged to boost college completion rates by 50 percent over the next 10 years. Phi Theta Kappa is heading the Community College Completion Corps, the student-led initiative to raise awareness of the importance of college completion, not only for students but for colleges and the communities they serve. Here’s what you can do to plan a day on your campus for students, faculty and administrators to sign the Call to Action in Support of Students and “Commit to Complete.”

1. Phi Theta Kappa advisors and chapter officers: Review the information and resources at [cccompletioncorps.org](http://cccompletioncorps.org), especially the checklist for a successful campus-wide Signing Day and the signing sheets, and schedule a meeting with your college administration. Take the Call to Action poster provided in your Community College Completion Corps toolkit and sample signing sheets.

2. College administrators: Endorse the idea of a campus-wide initiative to support college completion, and provide any assistance that Phi Theta Kappa officers and other campus leaders need to promote this event, including information on the college website.

3. Phi Theta Kappa advisors and officers and college administrators: Meet or communicate with the faculty advisors and student officers of all campus organizations to invite them to support the event. Larger campuses with multiple student organizations might wish to appoint a planning committee.

4. Signing Day planners: Meet and decide a date, time and high-traffic location for your event. Phi Theta Kappa chapters may incorporate Signing Day into their November 19 Founders Day observances. Alert campus and community media. Download the signing sheets and stickers for distribution. Plan to display the Call to Action poster at your signing location. Ask the college president and key administrators and heads of all campus organizations to be the first signers. Show the Community College Completion panel discussion and Community College Completion Corps videos on your college’s closed circuit TV.

5. Signing Day planners: Work with the college newspaper and college webmaster to provide follow-up information, stressing that this initiative is continuing. Use the fact sheets and best practices in your Student Guide to continue to raise awareness of the importance of community college completion. Send media coverage of all events to Phi Theta Kappa’s Public Relations Officer Melissa Mayer at melissa.mayer@ptk.org.


**BONUS for Phi Theta Kappa Chapters: Make Signing Day your Five Star College Project!**
For more information, visit [www.ptk.org/fivestar](http://www.ptk.org/fivestar).