

# Preface



We have written this book to support the academic success of each and every community college student. This book is written for the community college student for use in class, during orientation, in advance of attending community college, as a pocket guide to carry throughout one's studies at the community college, and/or as a book to rely on for specific help and suggestions and for more general reflection, growth, and support. We hope that community college instructors and administrators will encourage their students to read the book carefully and learn from all the tips.

Each of the tips is grounded in an extensive and substantive body of research about success in college as well as our own extensive experience and the wisdom and advice of our students. We recognize and celebrate the diversity of both community college students and the community colleges themselves. We have attempted to address the wide range of students who attend community colleges as well as the variation in size, structure, practice, demographics, and culture of different community colleges. In keeping with this diversity within and across colleges, we also acknowledge the vari-



ety of terms that are used to describe the teachers at community colleges (like *faculty*, *instructor*, *professor*, *teacher*); we elected, for the sake of consistency and simplicity (with a few exceptions), to use the term *instructor* for this position.

A college education is the key to a student's individual future and to our common, collective future. College is an intellectual adventure, an avenue to advancement, and a chance to improve lives. The United States needs well-educated citizens who can think critically and creatively, participate actively, and provide leadership for a strong democracy. We also need innovators in the workplace, producing and inventing a healthy and sustainable future for our children and grandchildren. We need people prepared to listen, dialogue, work, and communicate across our diverse racial, ethnic, economic, and global boundaries and borders. We need loving and caring adults, children, parents, partners, friends, and mentors in our cities and communities.

Lynn Dunlap, who is a first-generation college student, considers herself very fortunate to have taught at community colleges for 30 years. Although she has encountered people who think of community colleges as being in some way “less” than universities—less prestigious, less academically challenging, less socially enriching—her experiences and those of her colleagues at other community colleges around the country suggest the exact opposite, that everything about the community college speaks to **more and better**. Her classes are smaller, she can focus primarily on teaching, and her students are remarkable. The promise of college and its



pathway to improving lives is her hope for her students just as it was the hope that her parents held out for her and her sisters and brothers when they enrolled in college for the first time.

Lynn has been a devoted teacher of composition and literature at community colleges throughout the nation, and she also has served as an advisor at community colleges. For most of her professional life she has taught at Skagit Valley College, a community college in Washington. At Skagit Valley College, she coordinated the first years of their innovative General Education program.

Lynn was one of the early national leaders in the area of learning communities and integrated learning, and she has for many years worked closely with the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education on the development of effective teaching practices that engage students and lead to deep and meaningful learning. She has been the direct resource faculty member and consultant there to more than 30 community colleges of different sizes and types across the nation, attending week-long summer institutes. She has also worked at the Washington Center as a research collaborator, author, advisory board member, and as a trainer at state-wide faculty retreats.

Lynn is a much sought-after speaker who travels widely to deliver workshops and presentations for faculty and administrators at community colleges around the country. She has conducted program reviews and led trainings at more than a dozen colleges in California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Missouri. She has collaborated on research projects with faculty



and administrators from Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Arizona, Harper College in Illinois, and Delta College in Michigan. Lynn has helped organize and present in conference panels and workshops with community college colleagues from large urban colleges in Chicago, Dallas, Long Beach, and New York City, as well as from rural colleges and branch campuses. Her more recent focus has been on emerging trends in interdisciplinary assessment, helping developmental students reach college readiness, reforming college teaching, and student success in community college.

David Schoem, who is also a first-generation college student, is the Director of the Michigan Community Scholars Program at the University of Michigan. He has spent his entire career there teaching sociology and mentoring college students as a professor, dean, and vice president for academic and student affairs. As a graduate of a large, public, urban high school, David is deeply committed to the promise of education and an educated public, to educational equity, and to giving back to all of those promising and capable individuals, like the many he attended school with, who either didn't graduate from high school or who never continued their studies beyond high school.

David is a nationally known scholar and administrator of higher education and intergroup relations, and has been on the faculty at the University of Michigan since 1979, teaching in areas of education, diversity and intergroup dialogue, social identity, civic engagement, deliberative democracy and social change, and the American Jewish Community. He has given talks and led seminars



with faculty and campus leaders at more than 50 colleges—large and small, private and public, urban and rural—including more than 20 years of involvement with the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education and its ground-breaking work bringing together faculty from community colleges with faculty from four-year universities. David has published widely, and this is his ninth book.

Most of our time, commitment, and effort throughout our careers have gone to working directly with college students, as their teacher, advisor, mentor, and friend. We have benefited enormously from our relationships with our students, growing and learning from each outstanding individual we have met. We hope this book in some small way expresses our gratitude for all that they have given us.