Challenges Facing Rural Community Colleges

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Demographics

- Over 950 rural serving community colleges in the U.S.
Rural Demographics

- Declining Rural Population

![Population Trends Five County Service Area 1970-2005](attachment:image.png)

WOSC Service Area Population
Rural Demographics

OKLAHOMA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
ACTUALS: 1993-94 THROUGH 2005-06
PROJECTIONS: 2006-07 THROUGH 2017-18

SOURCE: Cohort Survival Projections
Rural Demographics

- Increasing competition for a shrinking pool of students, often leading to enrollment declines
- Average age of a rural community college student is 29
- On average rural community college students drive 50 miles round trip
  
  » R. Smith, 2005
Challenges

• Service area population (may be declining)
• Declining number of high school graduates
• More working adults returning to college (often require more and different types of services, childcare, evening courses, non-traditional schedules etc.)
Challenges (cont.)

• Increasing competition for a limited number of students (rural colleges do not have the resources that urban and suburban colleges do)

• ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT #1 challenge

• Shift in funding from state to local areas (smaller tax base)
Challenges (cont.)

- Faculty and administrative retirements will have a MAJOR impact on rural community colleges in the next two to five years
- Difficult recruiting credentialed and experienced administrators and faculty to rural areas
- 80% of all community college administrators plan to retire by 2012

» Romero (2004)
Advantages of Rural CC

• Low cost of attendance
• Open admissions
• Focus on instruction and the student
• Ability to change and adapt quickly to stakeholder and community needs
• Services offered to business and industry
• Engine for economic development in rural areas
Advantages of Rural CC

• Community colleges train Rural America’s workforce: nurses, police officers, dental assistants, paramedics, radiology techs, fire fighters, production agriculture specialists, computer technicians, early childhood teachers, mechanics, farm and ranch managers, and many more professions
Conclusion

- Sustainable rural community colleges are vital to the economic stability and workforce development of rural America.
Thank You!

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