

**Testimony of Pam Eddinger, President
Bunker Hill Community College
to the House Committee on Education and Labor
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment**

**The Cost of Non-Completion: Improving Student Outcomes in Higher Education
May 9, 2019
Washington D.C.**

1 Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and Members of the Subcommittee,
2 thank you for the opportunity to brief you on the pressing issue of degree completion, its
3 implications for our future workforce, and solutions we are implementing at Bunker Hill
4 Community College.

5 Bunker Hill is a mid-size urban institution in Boston, serving 18,000 students annually
6 from the metro area and a number of Gateway Cities. Community colleges educate over 13
7 million students, one out of every two undergrads around our nation. Middle- and lower-
8 income students are more likely to attend community colleges than any other type of higher
9 education institution.

10 We are the source for the future workforce, performing what we call “new-collar jobs.”
11 Jobs that are middle-skills, requiring some college, and pay well. Jobs in IT, STEM, Health Care,
12 Manufacturing, and the Creative Economy driven by the expansion of gaming and artificial
13 intelligence. In Massachusetts alone, 65,000 middle-skills workers are needed by the beginning
14 of the next decade. In fact, 80% of the jobs created now will require some college.

15 But our enrollments are not trending to meet this need. Our high school population will
16 drop steeply in five years, and fewer college grads will reach the workplace. Our hope of filling

17 these new-collar jobs lies in educating our adult learners, who are becoming the majority at
18 community colleges.

19 Degree completion in two, or even three years has always been a challenge for
20 community college students, and now even more so with adult learners.

21 The first challenge is financial and social. College is not at the center of the lives of adult
22 learners. 3 out of 4 work. 3 out of 5 are parents. 77% earn at the lowest two quintiles of
23 income. They are often one small financial disaster away from dropping out. They are
24 financially fragile, but they also know college leads to economic mobility.

25 A majority of students who drop out were in good standing. 60% had a 2.5 GPA or above,
26 and 40% have finished a full year of classes. The pressures of Basic Needs: housing, food,
27 transportation and childcare are what derailed these students. Over 50% of students
28 experienced food insecurity on our campuses; 14% were homeless.

29 So Bunker Hill's immediate answer was to open a food pantry, to fundraise for public
30 transportation passes, and to advocate for alignment of social benefits like SNAP with needs of
31 adult college students. Additionally, Open Educational Resources available online replaced
32 traditional textbooks, saving approximately \$1.5 million to our students since the start of the
33 OER program in 2016.

34 The second challenge is academic preparation. 90% of entering students need
35 developmental math; 45% are below college level in English. We used to call Developmental
36 Education (Dev Ed) the revolving front door. The longer you stayed in Dev Ed, the more likely
37 you were to drop out. So we compressed and accelerated Dev Ed. Take math and English two
38 levels at a time (we call it a co-requisite), with tutoring services available at the student's

39 request. It seems counterintuitive, but students did better, and can complete their Dev Ed
40 work in one year. We are working on our sequences for English as a Second Language courses
41 now with the same principles.

42 The third challenge is to map the shortest pathway to employment. This requires
43 industry-aligned curriculum, apprenticeships, and internships from our business partners. We
44 need certificates that stack toward a degree. We need fully paid experiential learning
45 opportunities with transportation stipends. The best retention strategy is a promised job at the
46 end of the program.

47 The final challenge is for the institution to shift from the traditional college paradigm. To
48 retain and graduate every adult learner, we must craft policies, procedures, schedules, services,
49 and mindsets that respect the complex lives of the adult student, and cater to it. Bunker Hill
50 used to offer midnight classes to accommodate workers on the second shift. Now we offer
51 hybrid and online classes for the same reason.

52 Meeting these four challenges will help retain, and graduate a larger and more
53 prosperous future workforce. Thank you for an opportunity to share our strategies.