

## How the community colleges have served more students since 2008: an Analysis of FTE and Headcount Student Enrollments 2008-2010

November 2010

### Background

Since 2008, community and technical college full time equivalent and headcount enrollments have increased 17 percent and 5 percent respectively. The recession has created unprecedented student demand for workforce education spurred by the need for worker retraining. Despite demographic shifts that would suggest an easing up in transfer education over the next several years, this mission has also grown ahead of population because of the affordable, quality education it provides. The need for basic skills instruction is also strong as these students report the highest unemployment.

The ability of the colleges to grow enrollments is made more remarkable because their state support legislative funded level was flat to begin the biennium and then cut a cumulative 15 percent during the biennium. This raises two questions: How have colleges been able to provide this extraordinary performance? And, can it be sustained? This paper presents an analysis of enrollments from academic year 2008 (when the recession started) through academic year 2010.

### Key Findings

Colleges increased FTES in 2009 (by 8 percent) and again in 2010 (by an additional 9 percent). New admissions surged in fall 2008, as the recession deepened. By fall 2009, it became apparent that more students were enrolling full time and taking higher credit loads, making it difficult for new students to enroll. Across the system we are seeing the following:

- In 2009, colleges increased headcount and FTE enrollments in all three missions. By 2010, however, while colleges increased headcount and FTE in transfer and workforce, non-tuition bearing basic skills enrollments declined 3 percent. Unfortunately, this decrease reverses previous enrollment growth to serve the population with the highest unemployment rates in the midst of an economic recession.
- Colleges have increased both vocational and academic course FTES and class sizes. However, the growth in workforce students (30 percent) has far outpaced growth in vocational courses (17 percent). Workforce students are taking more academic classes to start as vocational courses are limited by instructional work stations and bench space. Growth in eLearning has helped all students take additional academic credits. We will continue to watch vocational course effort this year to see if any bottlenecks are appearing.

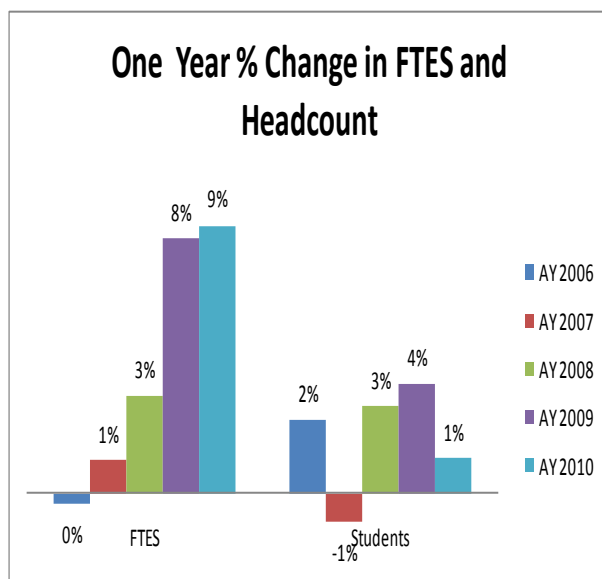
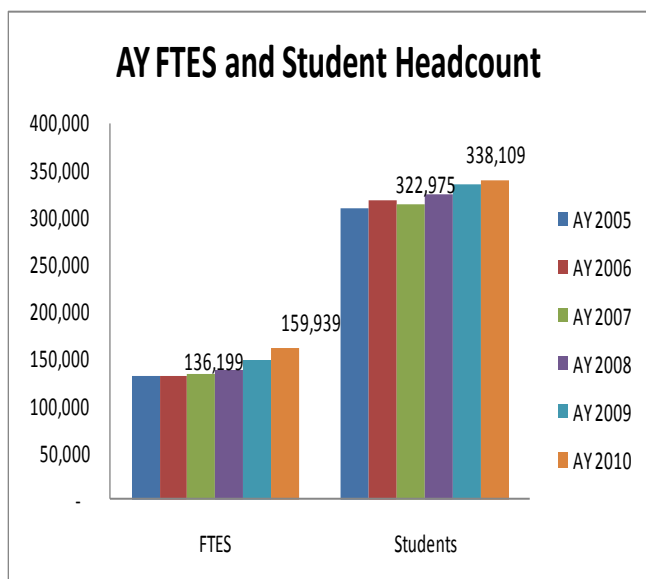


- New student applications increased in fall 2010, however, the percent that went on to register for class fell. New admissions declined in workforce and basic skills. This suggests that because students are staying in college longer and taking more credits, it is becoming more difficult for new students to enroll.
- While not showing a decline, the number of new transfer admissions was flat. More former Running Start students coming back to take more credits before they transfer kept their two-year college admissions level with the year before. This is perhaps another sign that affordability is critical to these families.

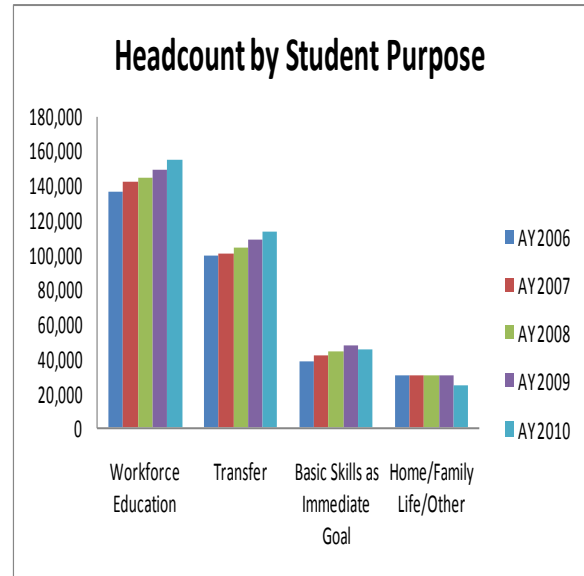
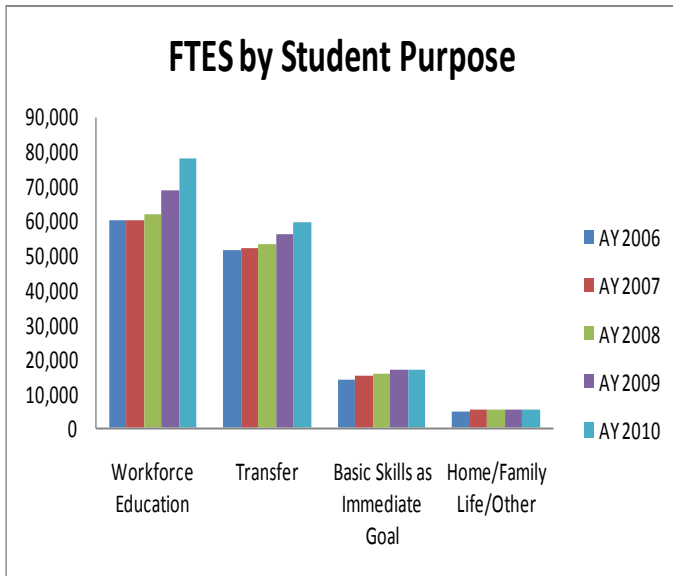
## FTE and Headcount Enrollments Detail

Academic year enrollments increased by 23,740 state support FTES or 17 percent from 2008 to 2010. This included 8 percent growth in 2009, followed by an additional 9 percent in 2010.

Headcount grew by 15,135 students or 5 percent between 2008 and 2010. The student headcount increased by 4 percent in 2009, and then an additional 1 percent in 2010.



Enrollments increased in both workforce and transfer missions, but declined in basic skills and for home and family life programs like parenting and retirement classes.

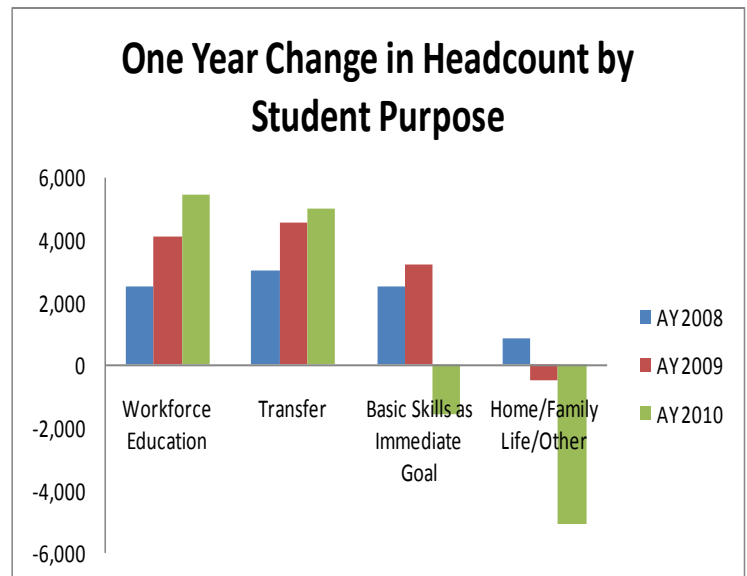


### One Year Change in Headcount Enrollments by Student Purpose

Transfer and workforce headcount have both grown substantially since 2008. In 2010 they increased 4 and 5 percent respectively. This followed 3 and 4 percent growth in 2009.

Total headcount growth in 2010 was 1 percent, following 4 percent in 2009. This was largely because of the 2010 decrease in home/family classes (-17%), and the cutbacks in basic skills (-3%).

Decreases in basic skills reversed previous enrollment trends and fall on the population with highest unemployment rates in the worsening economy.



## More students enrolling full time and for more credits

As unemployment and the economy have worsened, students have been enrolling for more college credits. Annual credits per student have risen steadily from 19 credits in 2008 to 21 credits in 2009 as total instruction has increased by more than one million credits enrolled. More students are enrolling full time in pursuit of degrees and longer training. Part-time students, while decreasing, are also enrolling for more credits.

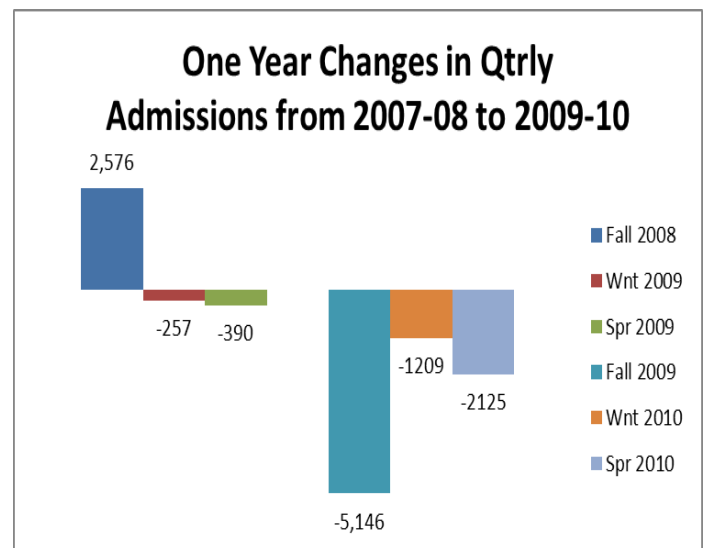
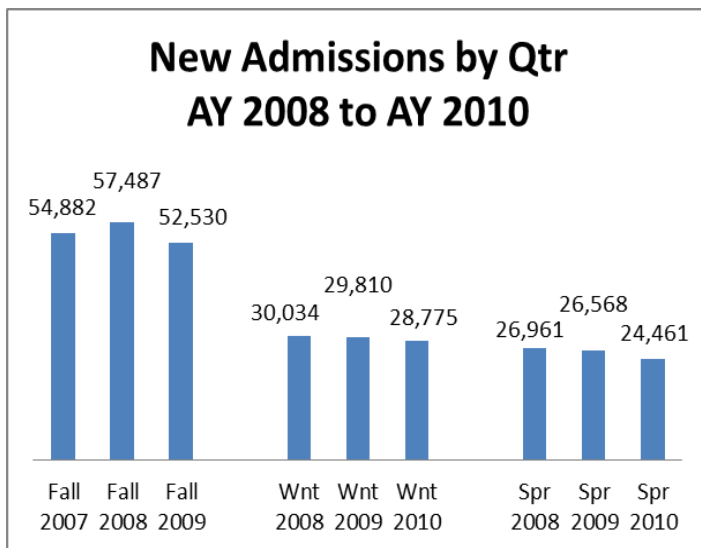
## Apprenticeships down

The weak economy has affected apprenticeships. For example, apprenticeship has fallen by 1,981 students as employer demand for them has fallen. The ratio of apprenticeship students to FTES is typically 3:1. Even with the decrease in apprenticeships, workforce headcount increased.

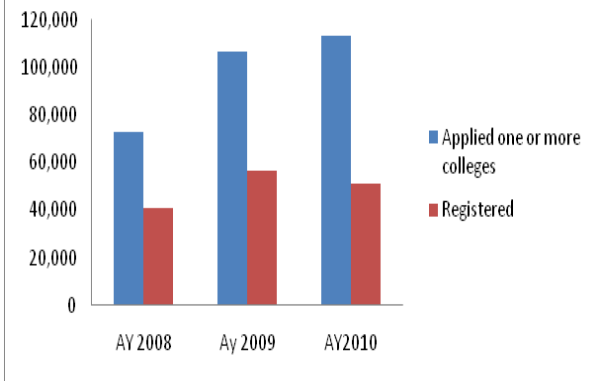
## New admissions were down in 2010 because students already enrolled are persisting longer and taking more credits

In fall 2008, Student enrollments increased 4.1 percent – going beyond population growth. Portending the worsening economy and with increasing focus on the need for education beyond high school in order to get better-paying employment, more students than ever sought out a college education.

New student admissions spiked up by 2,576 students in fall 2008. The surge was in all three missions driven by worker retraining, younger traditional college age students looking for affordable college, transfer, and basic skills students who have been among the hardest hit in terms of unemployment. By the next quarter a pattern of fewer new admissions started to emerge as continuing students were taking more credits. In fall 2009 there was a precipitous drop in new admissions. The inn is filling up.



**Since 2008, % of applicants that register has fallen from 56% to 45%**



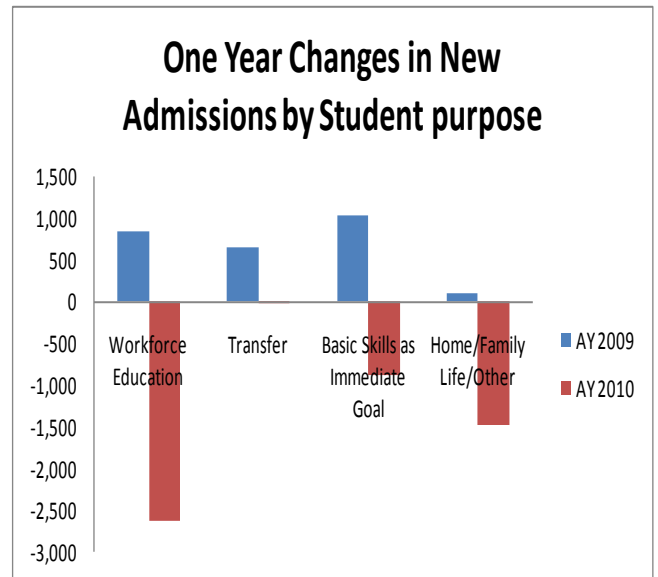
**There is unmet new demand**

Web based admission data (which capture most new college applicants) show that colleges are falling off in the percent of new applicants who subsequently register to become new admissions.

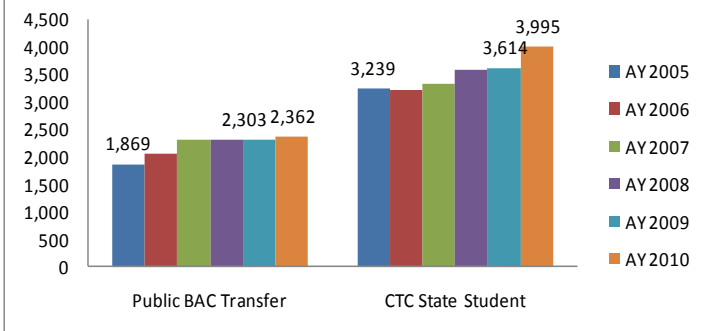
**New admissions fell in all missions and areas except transfer in 2010**

While overall workforce enrollments grew in 2010, new workforce students declined for the major share of the overall decline in new admissions. This means the majority of workforce student growth was due to continuing students, and small program size was limiting space for new students.

Along with basic skills, family life programs which include parenting also had fewer new admissions. The decline in new admissions goes along with overall enrollment decreases in these areas.



**Former Running Start New Enrollments in Public Bacs and CTCs**



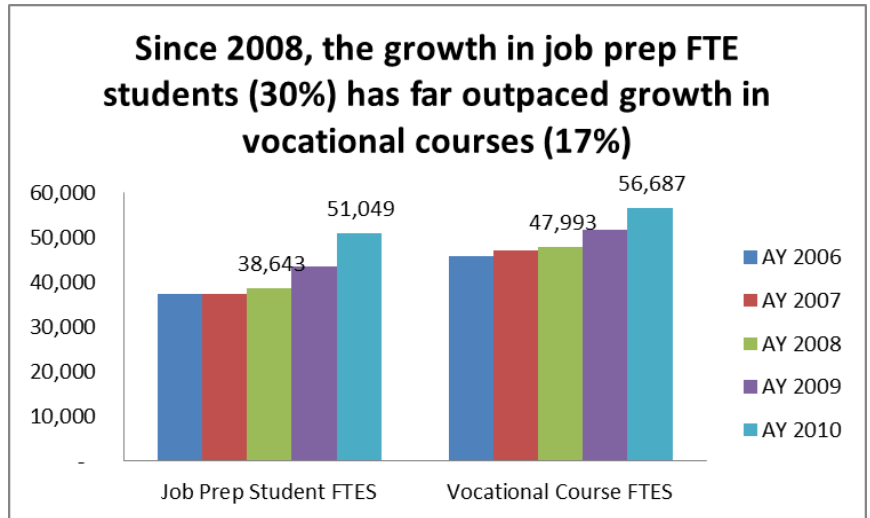
**Former Running Start coming back to CTCs before they transfer**

Former Running Start students who return as new state support students after high school are counted as new admissions. Former Running Start students who are continuing in the community and technical colleges after high school increased substantially.

## Colleges having difficulty courses have difficulty keeping up with demand

Since 2009, colleges have had difficulty growing professional/technical courses fast enough to keep pace with growth in workforce students. These courses, limited by work stations and bench space, traditionally are smaller in size than academic courses.

Because enrollment growth in professional/technical classes is lagging, job prep students are taking more academic classes to start. However, this is necessarily an efficient way to meet demand.



## State Need Grant getting to fewer students

With needier students enrolling for longer programs and taking more credits, financial aid is getting stretched. The State Need Grant served fewer students in 2010.

