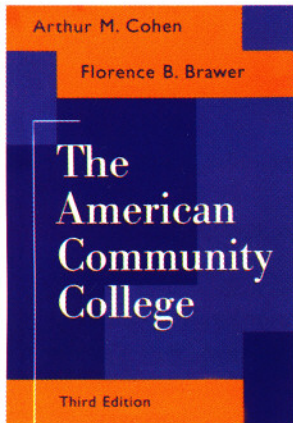


# A Look at the Historical Growth of American Community Colleges



## *The American Community College, Third Edition*

Authored by Arthur M. Cohen  
and Florence B. Brawer  
Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996  
542 pages, hardback  
\$45.00

Reviewed by **Bruce R. Thomas,**

North Valley Mountain Biotechnology Center,  
American River College

This book does an excellent job in describing the historical growth and current development of the American community colleges, including both the instructional and administrative areas. California has been a leader in college development since the 1907 law authorizing secondary schools to offer postgraduate courses. Many of our present day colleges originated from these programs. The book explains how the priorities and missions of the community colleges differ from those of the universities and the effects this has on the working environment for college faculty. Broad nationwide themes are well described together with many examples of diverse programs at specific colleges in various states.

There is considerable information about the California Community College system and how it differs in many ways from the University of California and California State University systems. Issues sections at the end of each chapter provide insightful discussions of areas undergoing rapid change, unresolved controversies and future prospects. This book will help current and prospective college employees better understand the opportunities and challenges that the community colleges present.

The open access policy of the community colleges is designed to provide educational opportunities to all adults in contrast to the selective admissions policies of the universities.

Community colleges play many critical roles in adult education and retraining, including collegiate education, career education, developmental education and community education. Authors Arthur Cohen and Florence Brawer describe how these sometimes conflicting and competing goals impact political support for college funding, curriculum development and the environment produced for staff and students at the community college. This ambitious college agenda also raises questions by some critics about the priorities and the quality of results achieved in these programs.

Nevertheless, globalization and our new service-based economy require workers with greater literacy and more technology skills than ever before. Rapid technological changes also demand that workers update their working skills continuously throughout their lives, including career changes for many workers. Thus, the authors conclude that community colleges are well positioned to continue their critical role in providing educational advancement and re-education opportunities for the American workforce in the future.

This third edition is becoming outdated in a few areas, but remains a well-written, comprehensive and authoritative source on history of the community colleges prior to its publication in 1996. No e-mail addresses or URLs for educational professionals or organizations are provided, so the book fails to help the reader connect with these sources of current and future information. The book does not include recent developments such as the rise of the for-profit colleges (such as the University of Phoenix) and corporate training programs, increasing usage of computer technology as a classroom supplement (e.g., WebCt and Blackboard course management software), and increases in the online distance education sector.

Current and prospective community college employees will find this book a valuable source of historical insight, but it needs to be supplemented with other resources to fully convey the current situation and future directions of our community college system and the other educational and training organizations with which it competes.

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*Bruce R. Thomas is an adjunct faculty member at American River College. He can be reached by e-mail at [thomasbr@arc.losrios.cc.ca.us](mailto:thomasbr@arc.losrios.cc.ca.us).*