

THE BUTLER CENTER

NEWSLETTER

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGES?: A CASE STUDY OF TURTLE MOUNTAIN



By Thecla Shubert

For many, community colleges may seem like a foreign world compared to a private liberal arts school like CC. But I (a community college alum) along with many scholars, think that there is much that private colleges and universities can learn from our public peers. This is especially true when we consider the demographics and antiracist principles of community colleges. Community colleges service 40% of all undergraduate students in the US, and these students tend to be from underrepresented and under-resourced backgrounds (1). For example, of the 32 accredited Tribal Colleges and Universities, 29 are community colleges (2). There are also 235 community colleges with the Hispanic Serving Institutions designation and 102 with the Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions designation (3).

[photo of the entranceway to Turtle Mountain Community College].

Although community colleges have an average of 75 cents per dollar spent at a traditional university per student, they nonetheless are able to serve underprivileged and rural communities and dramatically impact their student's lives (4). Mike Rose, a celebrated educator, child of working-class immigrants, and advocate for nontraditional students, calls community colleges "the great equalizer," citing that through affordable and accessible education students can ascend the socioeconomic ladder (5). Audre M. Chase-Mayoral further claims that "for more than a century, it remains undisputed that the American community college represents an integral part of higher education within the United States, even though their true impact may not have always been acknowledged as such." (6)

With this in mind, what are some key takeaways we can draw from the community college model? We will be primarily examining the work of a tribal college, Turtle Mountain Community College, as shared by student Chelsey Luger in "Catalyst for Community Change" to answer this question.

Here are three major takeaways from the work of Turtle Mountain College as well as the work of scholars studying community colleges across the US.

All jobs can be good jobs

Academia tends to divide jobs into "good" jobs (white collar) and "bad" jobs (blue collar), but it's time to recognize that any job that supports the subsistence and well-being of a student is a good job. The pretentiousness of academia only alienates students who by choice, necessity, or family tradition pursue working-class jobs.

Smith Morset describes community colleges as "the multipurpose college that balances a number of important missions: career and technical education, liberal arts education for students who intend to transfer to a 4-year university, and pre-collegiate programs such as developmental education and adult and basic education." (7)

For example, Turtle Mountain College offers "one of the best cyber-security programs out of all the tribal colleges" (8) with competitive internships and partnerships with Microsoft. This program is the fastest-growing on campus. On the other hand, student Morgan Gable shares her story of following in her family's footsteps and pursuing welding as a career. Turtle Mountain provided her a space free from gender discrimination to do so, and she feels confident welding will be a successful long-term career for her, stating "something always breaks." (9)

While, as a private liberal arts college, we may not provide training in the trades, it's nonetheless important to destigmatize these types of jobs. Not only may some of our students be interested in pursuing working-class careers, but many, like Morgan, may come from working-class families. Part of providing a successful and safe educational experience to our students must be honoring their and their families' economic background, and supporting their goals no matter how far outside of traditional academia that may take them.

Provide a healing environment

Psychologists Francesca DiRosa and Pascal Scoles write in "The Healing Pillars of Collegiate Recovery: A Community College Model of Recovery and Education," that "Education as a therapeutic healing catalyst can serve as a means of self-reflection by which students in recovery ... can hopefully envision themselves as active participants in determining the direction of their life choices and trajectories." (10) Furthermore education "helps students integrate into their 'wholeness:' their interested, skills, talents, values and beliefs that enable them to 'gain competence, to earn a living, to engage in civic activities, nurture others, and participate in cultural activities.'" (11)

Turtle Mountain College endeavors to show students how talented and capable they are. Dean Shelia Trottier describes this by saying, "I have seen many of our tribal members come into our campus sometimes with a lot of barriers and no hope. And then to see the pride of their families face at graduation ... it's just so rewarding." (12) A student from the welding program, Bradon Lawrence, described his own experience saying, "coming to Turtle Mountains completely changed my life. I got sober, I started sun dancing, and feel more culturally connected than ever before. And now I can say that I am a college graduate." (13)

Be community-centric

It's easy for universities and colleges to feel extraordinarily insular. Students often live, work, and study on campus and may rarely venture out into the outside world or local community. Community colleges do not have this luxury of isolation and as a result, must do more to anticipate the needs of their communities.

Turtle Mountain College does this in a few ways. First, their Building Construction Technology Program works directly for the community, building livable houses over the course of the two-year program (14). This helps provide affordable housing for graduates and other community members on the reservation where housing is often limited. Instructor in the Human Services Technician Program, Stephanie Decoteau, recognizes that many of her students are deeply invested in their community. Therefore, when COVID-19 hit, she and other Turtle Mountains staff rushed to create a public health workforce and certificate program that prepares students to address crises in the medical field as well as work in recovery centers and social services.

I can add that during my own community college experience at Pikes Peak Community College, "service learning" was a huge part of the curriculum. Students worked in museums, K-12 schools, boys and girls clubs, as well as social service and sustainability programs (15).

Overall, schools like Turtle Mountain can be instrumental in the economic and social development of underserved and underresourced communities. They can provide people with the skills needed to help their communities flourish.

We highly recommend reading more about Turtle College at:

<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=ffb67352-c568-3d79-a810-8aaaa22cadc8>

1. Audree M. Chase-Mayoral "The Global Rise of the US Community College Model." in *New Directions for Community College*. 2017 (177): 7.
2. Andrea Mayfield et al. "Expanding Advocacy for Community College Success." in *Wiley* ed. 197. Pg 20
3. Ibid.
4. "The Global Rise of the US Community College Model." pg 9.
5. Mike Rose, "Community College: The Great Equalizer." in *Dissent*. Fall 2021.
6. "The Global Rise of the US Community College Model." pg 10.
7. Erin Doran, "Towards a New Understanding of Hispanic-Serving Community Colleges." in *Community College Review*. 5(2). 2023. Pg 288.
8. Chelsey Luger, "Catalyst for Community Change." *Tribal College Journal*. Winter 2023.
9. Ibid.
10. Francesca DiRosa and Pascal Scoles. "The Healing Pillars of Collegiate Recovery: A Community College Model of Recovery and Education." in *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. 51:1. 15 October 2019. Pg 70.
11. Ibid.
12. Chelsey Luger, "Catalyst for Community Change." *Tribal College Journal*. Winter 2023.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. "Service Learning," *Pikes Peak State College*.

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Andrea Mayfield et al. "Expanding Advocacy for Community College Success." in *Wiley* ed. 197. Pg 13-28. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20494>

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Erin Doran, "Towards a New Understanding of Hispanic-Serving Community Colleges." in *Community College Review*. 5(2). 2023. 285-305.

Francesca DiRosa and Pascal Scoles. "The Healing Pillars of Collegiate Recovery: A Community College Model of Recovery and Education." in *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. 51:1, 68-76. 15 October 2019.

Mike Rose, "Community College: The Great Equalizer." in *Dissent*. Fall 2021. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/community-college-the-great-equalizer/>

"Service Learning," *Pikes Peak State College*. <https://www.pikespeak.edu/academics/high-impact-learning/service-learning.php>.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Judson Thomas

she/he

REMS major and Spanish minor

What is your role at the TBC?

I am a Programming Intern for the Identity and Culture Programming Team, working specifically with Behind the Masc. & Multicultural Student Leadership and Empowerment (MSLE).

What are you studying and what do you want to do after CC?

As aforementioned, I am studying Race, Ethnicity, and Migration Studies and finishing out my last required class for my Spanish minor in my current block. I would really like to be a part of the Thomas J. Watson Foundation Fellowship after I graduate CC where I can explore myself, my personality and my identity while completing a project that may lead me in a satisfying and fulfilling direction!

What is one interest you have outside of school?

One major interest I have outside of school is Volleyball. I try to play at least 4 times a week.

What does ADEI work mean to you or why did you get into this?

I got into ADEI work initially because of my goal of impacting people through their health and encouraging/teaching them to live satisfied lives, which was grounded upon becoming a surgeon. Through technical medical work, I believed I could make concrete changes to somebody's body while also emotionally connecting with them to leave them medically and emotionally healed. This was not possible for me on the block plan, though, so I switched my major to what it is now. Because of REM's and my switch of majors, I learned much more about not only myself and my direction (or lack thereof), but also about how much I strive to share with others this knowledge I've gained and these positive experiences I've had the honor of having.

What is one thing you'd like to see changed about CC or our local community? and/or what is one cause you're passionate about?

One thing about CC that I'd like to see change is connection. Therein lies many subtopics such as appreciation, expectations, accountability and action, academically based connections, connections to the wider community, connections after graduation, financial connections, and more.

What is one fun fact people might not expect about you?

One fun fact people might not expect from me is that I was training Martial Arts – Muay Thai and Jiu Jitsu – while living in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma before coming to Colorado College.

UPCOMING EVENTS



IN LOVING
MEMORY



Nex Benedict

2008 - 8 February 2024

Memorial and Grief Space

Time: 1pm

Location: Worner Quad

Date: 2/29/2024

Rest in Power

Check out
this week's
QTC events!

OUT OF THE


Closet

ACE AND ARO TALK

It's almost Asexual Awareness Week! What better way to celebrate than
by learning more about the Ace and Aro community

When? February 28th, 12:30pm

Where? Wes Room - Worner Basement

For more info Contact Deka
Dspears@coloradocollege.edu

APPLY FOR STUDENT POSITIONS



Cultural and Identity Programming Intern

Work with:

- Heritage month events
- Table Talk
- Behind the Masc

**Join our
team! Apply
by 3/27/24**

Peer Mentor

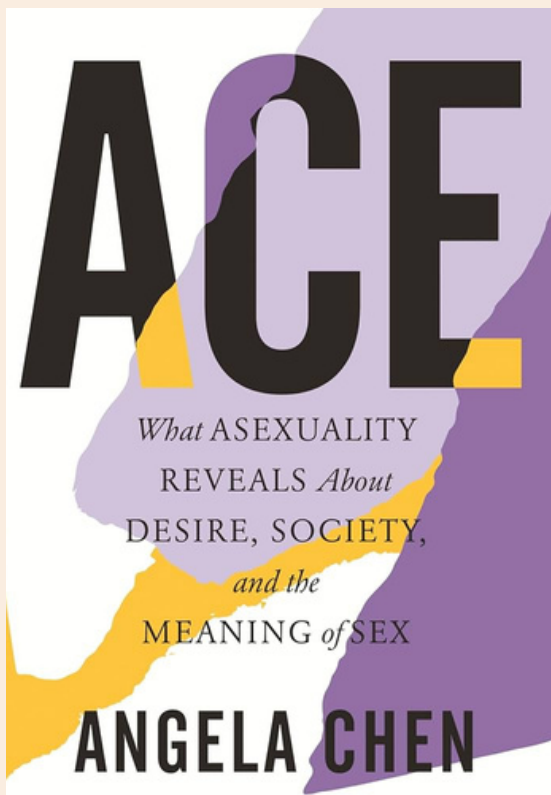
Work with:

- Student Success School Program
- Queer and Trans Collective



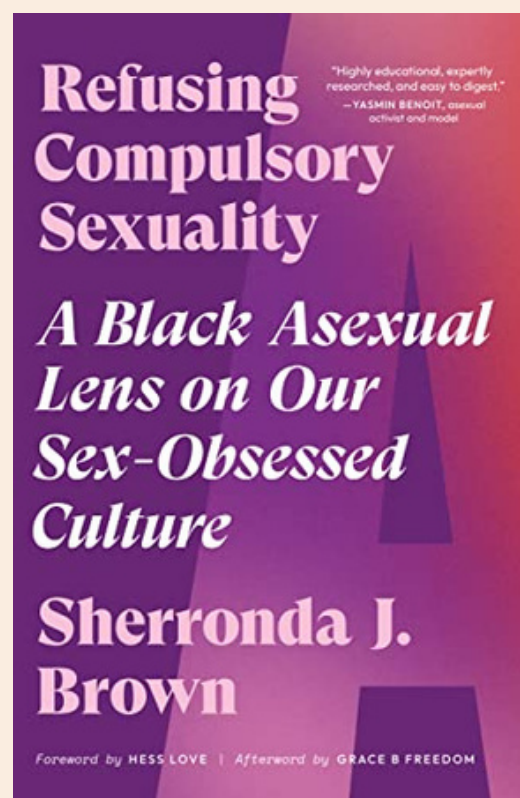
WEEKLY PAIRINGS - BOOK RECOMENDATIONS

Asexuality Day (April 6th) Books



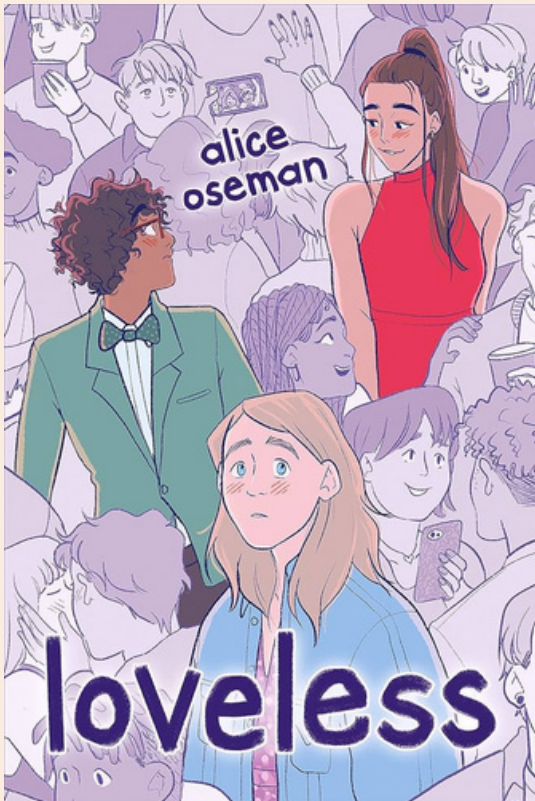
Ace: What Asexuality Reveals about Desire, Society, and the Meaning of Sex by Angela Chen is often considered the quintessential primer on asexuality. With a thoughtful blend of journalism, cultural criticism, and memoir, *Ace* endeavors to address the many misconceptions around asexuality that BookRiot deemed an “accessible guide to asexuality. Beyond the basics, Chen also explores the medical and religious histories of asexuality and the narratives of disabled and BIPOC asexual folx. NPR celebrates *Ace*, saying that the book allowed people to imagine relationships outside of the “restrictive ideas of what we’re supposed to feel and do.” abuse and sexual violence involving minors.

For a more in-depth look at theories behind asexuality, readers can turn to *Refusing Compulsory Sexuality: A Black Asexual Lens on our Sex-Obsessed Culture* by Sherronda Brown. This book starts with the premise that everything you know about asexuality is “probably wrong.” Brown explores the way that our hypersexualized and sexually normative society is intertwined with capitalism, race, gender, and queerness. This book, “centers the Black asexual experience--and demands visibility in a world that pathologizes and denies asexuality, denigrates queerness, and specifically sexualizes Black people.” Author Amber Butts calls it, “A gloriously honest examination of asexual history and Blackness.” and this book is surely a must-read for anyone looking to deepen their understanding of this often overlooked identity.



WEEKLY PAIRINGS - BOOK RECOMENDATIONS

Asexuality Day (April 6th) Books



Since Asexuality is often a brand-new topic for readers, we thought it would also be helpful to recommend some fiction works that carefully portray asexual stories. *Loveless* by Alice Oseman - author of *Hearstopper*, is a particularly good starting point for anyone who might be questioning their own identity. In this heartfelt YA book, Georgia explores her own identity, grappling with confusing feelings around sexuality and why she just doesn't "work" the same way as her friends. When she gets to college she learns more about the complexities of LGBTQIA+ identities and begins to understand herself as asexual and aromantic. Her friends will support and complicate her journey. With the tagline "Your love isn't less" this book is a wholesome and enjoyable primer to the young asexual experience. minors.

For a book that scratches more of that traditional romance novel itch, readers can turn to *The Charm Offensive* by Alison Cochrun. This book features Dev Deshpande, a producer for a successful reality dating show and hopeless romantic. Charlie Winshaw (the asexual character) is far from the romantic hero the show needs but signs up to save his crumbling reputation. But he can't help but be cold and anxious around the women competing. However, as Charlie and Dev grow closer, they'll have to reconsider how they tell love stories - and perhaps more importantly whose stories they tell. *Library Journal* says, "With its lush locales and LGBTQ and BIPOC representation, this novel shines." While the book is sure to fulfill all your rom-com needs, *Portland Oregonian* also shares that it goes deeper than that. "It starts out looking as though it might be a scathing satirical sendup of reality TV romance dating franchises, then subtly segues into a searing exploration of gender identity, sexism and mental health... *The Charm Offensive* succeeds in becoming an enthralling, entertaining and thought-provoking novel." A must read for all romance lovers or anyone looking to explore new and diverse stories.

