

#EndCCStigma Podcast Project / Episode Four

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[INTRO MUSIC – VOICE MONTAGE]

Andy Bowne: There's this sense among some that we're kind of the "Plan B" option, and I include in this mix both community colleges and technical colleges, that we kind of thrown into this bucket of "well, you know, maybe that's not REALLY college."

Jenae Parker: Walking on to campus... overwhelming sense of community and love and support. And not just in one area of your life, this is an holistic approach to how can we get you through, how can we support you, let me sit here and talk to you, because you need this right now in this moment. That's what community college offer.

Joe Gilgour: One of my buddies there said, "Well, it's just a community college that you work for. Wouldn't you want to work at a regular college?" And I was just like... Dude! It's unfortunate that perception is out there, but yeah, we just seem to see it all the time, in general. This underlying culture that is pervasive.

Linda Lujan: Fortunately, I went back. And I found what our students find: great faculty, caring advisors, support networks, and people who wanted me to succeed. And I did. I thrived. I owe everything to community colleges. They changed my life.

[MUSIC FADES]

Steve Robinson: Welcome to the #EndCCStigma podcast project. I'm Steve Robinson, President of Owens Community College in Ohio, and this is Episode Five of our podcast dedicated to ending the unfair stigma placed on America's community colleges. This a six-part series of podcasts due to the incredible response from people on social media using the hashtag #EndCCStigma. The podcast is designed to amplify the voices of people from across the country who are working to create a more accurate view of community college and technical careers.

On today's episode we hear from community college alumni, presidents, students and a university administrator who helps community college transfer students. Guests on this episode include Jenae Parker, Joe Gilgour, Katie Dixon, Doug Peacock, Andy Bowne, and Linda Lujan.

We begin the episode with my conversation with Jenae Parker, a Franklin University student who transferred from Columbus State Community College and has become a highly effective national spokesperson for community college

students and the real issues facing the overwhelming majority of students in higher education today.

Steve Robinson: Well I am absolutely overjoyed to be talking to Jenae Parker who, in addition to being a college student at Franklin University studying Human Resource Management, has become a spokesperson for the great things that are going on in community colleges and some of the real struggles that we have. Jenae, thank you for making some time to talk with me.

Jenae Parker: Hi, Steve, thank you for having me.

Steve Robinson: Oh it's great. It's great. Now you have been on kind of a wild ride. You testified before Congress, you've become a real spokesperson. What's this been like for you?

Jenae Parker: I did. It has been a very enjoyable learning experience and just an overwhelming feeling of joy to be able to advocate and just put exposure on what's going on with real college students.

Steve Robinson: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And so what kind of reactions are you getting from people as you get that message out there?

Jenae Parker: So much positive feedback, thanking me for being a voice. I think it's just really important that ... What I realized, I'm sorry, is really important, that I've connected with so many individuals and I'm able to tell their story while I tell my story. Because they're not different. We are all experiencing hardships in pursuit of our education and our goals. So just great positive feedback. And now they're asking me, "So this is also going on and this is also going on so can you bring that to the table? Can you bring these issues so that all issues can be exposed and not just tailored to my experience."

Steve Robinson: So that's fascinating to me. In addition to being a spokesperson for the real college, the struggles of being a transfer student and all the great things that you testified about, it sounds like people, because you're an effective voice, would like you to get involved in other things. How does that feel?

Jenae Parker: It feels great. I guess going into this I did not really think about how far this would go. I took the opportunity and understanding for that moment what it meant without understanding how far, the bigger picture, the possibilities that could come out of this. So to me, it's awesome. And connecting those pieces and people connecting with me and bringing their ideas to the table and asking me to say, "You know what? This is also what's going on," it's like I'm learning and being able to educate others, the people that need to be educated, the policy changers, the policy makers and that's what's most important to me. So it has been a great opportunity to continue on.

Steve Robinson: Well let me say thank you on behalf of all of us who work in America's community colleges for being such an effective voice. And I know that my experience was a lot like everybody else's when we saw you testifying before Congress and all these things. We were just nodding our heads. Not only are we really proud of you, but you're just nailing it. I mean this is what has to happen. So look, I'm so glad that you were willing to talk to me here on the podcast because this issue of stigma against community colleges, it's a smaller piece of the things you're talking about but it's really important. So I guess the question I have for you is have you encountered some negative perceptions or stigmas about community colleges? And what would be some examples or anecdotes about that that you could share with me?

Jenae Parker: Sure. I think that, for me, my experience, I've experienced it on two different sides. One side would be the idea that community colleges are free. So I don't need all this help. And we don't need all these resources when that is just not the truth. And then the other side would be ... I'm sorry, community college is free and then the other side of that would be that community colleges are not the real way to go to college. Or not the real way to pursue your dreams, in the sense that that's just not how it's going to happen. If you don't go to a four year institution then it's not going to happen for you. When that's not the truth as well. So many people have started off at community colleges. And to connect the other piece, we are still having these struggles, but we still go through the process and are able to achieve our dreams, having a community college education. And at the same time, yes, we're still experiencing the hardships.

Steve Robinson: Exactly. And you put that so well. And you're also so right that there are those misconceptions out there. Now you use the phrase Achieving the Dream, you and I are both familiar with that great organization and you were an ATD scholar, right? A couple of years in a row?

Jenae Parker: I was. A scholar in 2017 and a Dream scholar alum. I'm sorry, 2018 scholar and 2019 Dream Scholar alum.

Steve Robinson: Right. And there's an organization that's making a real difference. Tell me what impact it had on you personally.

Jenae Parker: So ATD, honestly, it was my aha moment.

Steve Robinson: Really?

Jenae Parker: Yes. ATD is when I realized ... Because if you have my experiences with Columbus State, I went to the four year institution and then after that I was at community college. It was at Columbus State. So my experience taught me that Columbus State cares about me. Columbus State, our staff, our teachers, our instructors, our president, they care about me. ATD taught me that, wow, there is a whole network, there is people behind this, not just one community college, there is ... Nationwide, we are caring about what's going on with our community

college students. And that was my aha moment. I was like, oh my goodness. I thought this is so much bigger than just me and just us and just us being at Columbus State.

Jenae Parker: Because for one, I didn't even realize there was so many community colleges across the nation. So that was a big piece for me and just to see that my story was not my story alone, that was an aha moment at ATD. People are of different races and ethnicities and backgrounds and cultures are also experiencing what I'm experiencing to pursue an education. It wasn't just a focus on me.

Steve Robinson: And there's power in that isn't there? Knowing that you're not alone, right? That there's other folks going through it and that there's a network of people who get it and want to work on that, right?

Jenae Parker: Yes.

Steve Robinson: That's so cool. And I know that a lot of folks who will listen to this podcast are part of that ATD network and will be really happy to hear your voice. Now Jenae, I can already figure out what part of your answer will be to this question but I always like to ask, what is it that makes you proud to have come from a community college? You're now at Franklin University so you made that- Well you had an interesting journey right? You started at a four year and then you went to a community college and then you transferred. But Columbus State and community college will always be a part of your journey, what makes you proud about that?

Jenae Parker: The piece about community. When I showed up at Columbus State, because of personal things and professional combined, I just was in a very low place. Not really sure where I was going with my education or my professional career and walking onto campus, I mean, the overwhelming sense of community and love and support and not just in one area of your life, this has been a wholistic approach to how can we get you through to the final goal of graduating and going on to- I'm sorry, not the final goal but onto transferring. How can we support you?

Jenae Parker: I mean, by any means, all types of resources, all types of individuals that, they have work, tasks and things to complete. But yes, they'll say, "You know what? I can put that aside, let me sit here and talk to you because you need this right now in this moment." That's what community colleges offer their students.

Steve Robinson: Wow. And it sounds like that's what it offered for you.

Jenae Parker: Yes. And it changed the whole trajectory of my personal life, my education and now my professional development.

Steve Robinson: And you end up working there, right?

Jenae Parker: Yes. I work there currently.

Steve Robinson: It happens to me sometimes, I'm getting choked up talking to you. That is so cool and I bet everybody back at Columbus State and all the Dream schools, and frankly all the community colleges have goosebumps hearing the impact that a community college had on your life, Jenae so that's fantastic. I have one more question for you and it's gonna be so easy given what you've been through, right? You have testified before Congress but I'm always asking folks, if you had the opportunity to talk to a group of people who maybe didn't understand community colleges very well or even harbored some of these negative ideas or stigmas about community colleges and they were going to have to listen to you, what would you tell them?

Jenae Parker: I'm trying to think of that group of people that would be beyond policy makers because that's who I want to tell.

Steve Robinson: You can do that because here's the thing, there's so many people whose minds we have to change, right? But since this is becoming your expertise now, why don't you do that? From a policy perspective, because you've already thought about this, what would you tell law makers? What would you tell policy makers that you think they don't know about community colleges?

Jenae Parker: I would like to tell them that a large population of community college students come from backgrounds that may not have given them the most equitable access to opportunities. And honestly, I think policy makers they already know that.

Steve Robinson: Some of them.

Jenae Parker: But I think that it's a little more ... For example, me testifying on Congress, them actually seeing me and hearing my story, I think that was more effective. Because you can change policies, write policies behind closed doors or sitting in an office at a meeting. But to actually see who it's connected to, that's what community colleges do. They see their students. They know their students, they spend time with their students and they really enjoy and want to support students. I think that we need to be mindful that there's not one successful person that I can name, and I try to tell people, especially people that are successful, to think about, that have done anything without help.

Steve Robinson: Right.

Jenae Parker: And that's what community colleges are offering their students. They're offering them a chance and they're offering them help to get to whatever it is that they want to do. If everyone could just think about that in the mindset and want to really support and be there for someone and show up and allow that to be an equal opportunity for everyone that walks onto any campus, community or four year, that's what I would say. Think about that. Try to keep that in the front of

your mind. If it means knowing Jenae Parker's story then think about me. Because it's not my story alone. It's across the nation.

Steve Robinson: That's like a mic drop. That's awesome. That's perfect. So see me, me being the student, you. And nobody gets where they are going without help. I love it. I love it. So Jenae, thank you so much. I know you've got a busy life and there's a lot going on so I appreciate you taking some time to talk with me. And also, on behalf of all the community college people who are so proud of you, thank you for telling your story.

Jenae Parker: Thank you, Steve. Thank you so much for having me and allowing me an opportunity to tell my story. Thank you to everyone that is doing that and that is supporting me and encouraging me to keep going. Because it really does drive me. Especially as I grow and allow this to be something that is driving me, like full force driving me and understanding how important it is. I'm just so very thankful. I'm so thankful that I have the opportunity to be able to be a voice.

Steve Robinson: Yep, well you're a great voice and we're thankful too. And you're going into a great field where you're going to make a difference in the world and we're all proud of you Jenae. Thank you.

Jenae Parker: Thank you. Steve, can I say something really quick?

Steve Robinson: Please do.

Jenae Parker: Okay, it's just about a student. Her name is Jenae Jones. She was at Owens Community College, I met her at CLCL in 2017. I did not see her this year so if she was to listen to this I would want her to know to keep pushing, keep striving and I hope that everything is going great for her.

Steve Robinson: That's so great. I feel like one of those late night radio hosts that's doing a dedication. That's awesome. Perfect. Well thank you so much, from one Jenae to another, right?

Jenae Parker: Yes.

Steve Robinson: All right, great. Thanks for talking to me.

Jenae Parker: Thanks, Steve.

Steve Robinson: Yep. Well I'm really happy to be talking to Joe Gilgour, who has been named the new president of Mineral Area College in Missouri. How are you, Joe?

Joe Gilgour: I'm good, Steve, how are you?

Steve Robinson: I am great, I'm great. First of all, congratulations on being named the new president at Mineral Area. You have to be pretty excited.

Joe Gilgour: I am really excited. It's a huge deal and we can't wait to get started.

Steve Robinson: Well I will tell you what, as a relatively recent college president myself, you are in for a really wild ride that is super fun. There is no better job in the world because community colleges are phenomenal places. So we connected on Twitter because of this #NCCStimga. So many of us are pushing back on the misconceptions of community colleges. What is it about this that resonates with you?

Joe Gilgour: Well, I didn't attend a community college and I think I fell victim to that stigma when I was in high school. We had a community college 20 minutes from my house and I had friends going there and I chose not to. I was a first generation, low income college student and I had no idea what I was doing, for one, but I really should have made that choice. I mean my student loan debt right now is a reflection of my decision. I love the college I went to, four year university I went to, and I met my wife there. So I would say she loves it too. I hope I can speak for her on that because that was a good decision on her part.

Joe Gilgour: But now that I work for a community college, what we're seeing is that the stigma's all around us, from the legislators and state funding to students who feel like it's not real college, that they want to go to a four year institution, to even students who say things to me like, "I don't want to go to college, I want to be a welder." Well okay, we have welding at our college.

Steve Robinson: Yes we do.

Joe Gilgour: So they don't see it quite that way so it really surrounds us. And Missouri, we enroll half of the undergraduate students in the state and we get 17% of higher education funding. So it's a little unequitable there and I don't know how it is in other states, it may be worse off there too, but I see that stigma all the time. And I really hope that I can be a part of this movement. I love the work that you've done in bringing awareness to this and following along with social media. I feel it's a really important message.

Steve Robinson: There's so many of us and I appreciate you joining us. And that's an interesting regional case study. I love the percentages that you talked about. To the extent that I've done an environmental scan, those percentages hold up. Nationally about 49% of students in college are at community colleges or started there. And the funding disparity is huge. So, that's kind of a monetary case study. Can you think of an interpersonal or anecdotal example of this stigma that you've seen in your career as a community college person?

Joe Gilgour: Yeah we see ... I mean there's casual examples of my niece, for instance, plays competitive softball and she's a freshman in high school. She's recruited by schools all across the nation and she's really good and we have softball at the college I work for. And so my brother in law, my wife was telling me my brother in law said, "She's not going to go to community college, she's going to go to

real college to play softball." And so I couldn't help myself, I immediately had to call him and get this straightened out. And he didn't go to college at all. And that's still a stigma he has, even though he didn't go to real college. And so we see that with students on campus that say, "Well, if we can't get into the four year institution then we might go to the community college." And really we just see it as a general conversation piece with students on campus sometimes or people in the community that don't really understand what community colleges do and that it's not that much different from what four year schools do, as far as what they're looking for.

Joe Gilgour: But we have, with some colleagues in the state, they were some four year colleagues, and one of them made a comment a couple of weeks ago and said, "Don't you want to be a four year college some day?" And it's like no, we're a community college and there's a mission there and there's specific ... It's not a step up. And that's why I really hate the term junior college because people associate us being second class or a lower tier. It's really not that way. And so yeah, I mean, we just see it on a day to day basis just in general conversation of how people feel about it.

Joe Gilgour: I did have some friends over for a card game one night and they were talking about me and my career and where I'd work in the future and how things would go and that's when one of my buddies there said, "Well it's just a community college you work for. Don't you want to work for a regular college?" And it's just like dude. I mean, you don't get it. He's a local industry leader and that's unfortunate that that perception is out there but yeah, we see it all the time just in general. It's just this underlying culture that is pervasive.

Steve Robinson: I think your experience is repeated at card tables and family gatherings all over the country. And I want to call out a couple of things that you said that I think are really important. When you were talking about the conversation about softball, you used the word immediately in terms of getting back with somebody. I think we have to politely but immediately, in real time, say no, we are a real college. And so I'm glad you did that. And it's interesting also to talk about the folks in business and industry. We work so closely with them that we hope that they get it. So one of the things that we're trying to do is make sure that they get it.

Steve Robinson: So you know, obviously you work at a community college now, you have just been named president of another great community college, what makes you proud to do this work, Joe?

Joe Gilgour: Really it's the impact, I think, that I see on students. And it's such a variety. When I went to college, I loved the university that I went to. I applied to one college and never been to it until I started classes, which was a mistake. I don't recommend that. But I saw all students around me, they had cars and they had parents that came to things and I didn't have those things. I had a single parent at home that was working two jobs to help me go to college and taking out debt for me and I didn't have a vehicle and I didn't see any students like me. And

once I started working at community college, I really got to see a wide range. You can see students that don't struggle with money and their parents very supportive to those that really have nothing. I mean, that PELL grant they get may be all they have. And it's really, it has a huge impact on me.

Joe Gilgour: And one of the things I get to do at my current institution is I get the pleasure of reading the names of graduates right before they walk across the stage.

Steve Robinson: Isn't that the best job? Being the [inaudible 00:21:30].

Joe Gilgour: I love it.

Steve Robinson: It's best job at commencement, hands down.

Joe Gilgour: It is so good. And I get to be the last person you interact with right before you cross that stage and just to see the pride and to see the sense of accomplishment on their faces. And I see 45 year old single mom, never went to college, she gets this done and she actually, the one I'm thinking of specifically, doesn't actually want to use her degree. She's not going to go and get a job with it or transfer it. But it was something she always wanted to accomplish and never could. And now she did. And she walk across that stage proud with her head held high. And it just gets me. It gets me every time and I love seeing that and that impact. But you get to see a daily impact at community colleges and just the difference it makes in people's lives.

Joe Gilgour: I think that's really the biggest thing that makes me proud to work for a community college and be a part of this. I don't see myself working for any other sector of higher education in my career. This is where I want to be, I feel like I get to help students that are just like me. And if it wasn't for the support that I got I wouldn't be where I am right now and I want to be that for others.

Steve Robinson: Amen. And what a great lens to have from the president's office. So hats off to your new board and the community that selected you to be president there. And just another little aside about commencement, you're moving from the number one job to the number two job. Because being the president at commencement is pretty cool, too. It's really great. It is. But I loved being a faculty nomenclature back in the day.

Steve Robinson: So look, Joe, you have probably already been in this position and you will certainly be in this position as college president, but imagine for a moment that you have an assembled group of folks that might not know too much about community colleges and maybe even have some of that misconception or stigma floating around in their head and you have an opportunity to deliver an argument about why community colleges are a great option. What would you tell that group?

Joe Gilgour: Well, I would remind them of the quality of the education. High quality education that we have and the workforce training. And about the affordable cost of it. Those are keys there. What I see is when I talk to students coming to campus, visiting is don't let anybody tell you this isn't a real college. We are accredited by the same agencies that accredit the four year colleges, our faculty are just qualified as the four year colleges. There's no difference in the quality of education you're going to find. In fact, I would argue it's even better quality because it's more intimate. It's a little smaller classes, you get to know your faculty a little better and that stuff's really important.

Joe Gilgour: I really feel like to keep those education costs low, I give them a little background on myself and how much student loan debt I have. And that I will probably never pay that off. I mean I don't think I'll live long enough to get all that paid off. And that's part of the problem. If I would have made better choices of my community college in my education, I wouldn't have so much debt. That really seems to resonate with people really well and I try to try to give that impact, but I encourage them to look around. I currently reside in the city of about 20,000 people, and you cannot go anywhere in this town with that finding someone who went to college at the community college in town. You can't find them. They [inaudible 00:24:53] one class, then they've got their degree, whatever it is. They are all around us.

Joe Gilgour: The impact is felt community-wide and beyond. I remember when my wife and I went to have our son at the hospital, we were at a town, it's about 20 miles away and every nurse in that hospital had graduated at the community college they worked for and it was like, this is great. You get to see this surrounding us. I think that I encourage people to not only appreciate the value, the affordability, the access, but also appreciate the impact it has on your community. It's not just a separate few buildings on the other side of town. This is a part of the community. That word community in the college is extremely important. I think they tend to realize that once you kind of open their mind up to that a little bit, because they all know somebody who's gone here, in fact they've probably gone there. They really, really can see how it's real in people's lives.

Steve Robinson: That's a fantastic observation, because I think most of us who work in community colleges, we move in those pockets where there may be is less or no stigma. One of them is a hospital usually, because we train all those ADN nurses. For me, it's a dentist office too. At any rate, I think one of the things that you were saying there that I think we should all pay attention to is, we have this great resource in our communities in the form of our graduates, in the form of our alumni, the folks who even if they only took a few classes ... One of the things that I think we can all do is encourage those folks to list their community college on their LinkedIn profile, to put it on their CV or their resume and tell great stories. That certainly happens when you go to the hospital, doesn't it?

Joe Gilgour: Absolutely.

Steve Robinson: Joe, this is a great conversation. I appreciate you joining in and all the best in your new presidency. I will tell you that as a relatively recent community college president, that first year is really special. You're going to get to meet and work with phenomenal people and thanks for taking on this work. It's a really cool job in a very important job. So, thank you.

Joe Gilgour: Thank you very much. I appreciate this opportunity and just any point I can play in helping in the community college stigma and being a part of your movement, that's really I appreciate the work you're doing.

Steve Robinson: Go be an awesome President at Mineral Area. All right.

Joe Gilgour: I'll do my best.

Steve Robinson: Thank you so much. Talk to you later.

Joe Gilgour: Thank you.

Steve Robinson: So Katie, thanks for talking to me. You're a community college student. What are you studying?

Katie: Business and accounting.

Steve Robinson: Right, and you are going to be transferring to a university soon, because you're graduating this semester. Congratulations.

Katie: Thanks.

Steve Robinson: Cool. What do you like about being a community college student?

Katie: I like the togetherness. It's more like a community. The resources that you guys have for a community college is as great. You guys have a career closet and a great food pantry and I love the lower ... The small classes, it's really personalized and the professors really have a lot of extra time to talk to you if you have any question. If you can go talk to them like in their office or stuff like that.

Steve Robinson: That's perfect. That's been helpful for you while you're a student?

Katie: Yes.

Steve Robinson: Great. You're a community college student. Have you heard people say anything negative or bad about community colleges?

Katie: I do hear that their ratings, there's some people that talk about like Ivy League colleges and that they kind of downgrade a degree from a community college compared to a university, but they both have the same accreditation. Around

here, I hear a lot of talk about UT compare to Owens. I'm just like, "They're just more expensive."

Steve Robinson: It sounds like you're pretty informed, because you're right. The accreditation is very similar if not the same. If you had a bunch of folks who were thinking about going to college and you had a chance to tell them about community colleges, what would you say to them?

Katie: I would tell them definitely go to community college. It saves you money and it's more personalized and there's a lot more resources that you can get from a community college than from a university and also they help you go to university. Like I'm about to go to university.

Steve Robinson: That's right, congratulations.

Katie: Thanks.

Steve Robinson: Katie, thank you so much for talking to me. I'll look forward to seeing you at commencement. I'll be the guy in the big red robe.

Katie: All right.

Steve Robinson: All right. Thanks Katie.

Katie: No problem.

Steve Robinson: Yep, bye.

Katie: Bye.

Steve Robinson: Well, I'm pretty excited to be talking to Doug Peacock who's at Wayne State University. It'll probably come up in the conversation, but Wayne State University is an important college in my childhood and history. Doug is the program coordinator for Wayne Advantage and he's been following this Twitter #NCCStigma campaign on Twitter. Doug, thanks for talking to me.

Doug Peacock: Thanks for having me.

Steve Robinson: It's great, it's great. So, I tell you what, why don't you tell me why this social media campaign matters to you? You do transfer work with community college students at a public research urban university. Why do you care about this? It's pretty awesome that you're dialed in.

Doug Peacock: It's been very interesting to me to actually put a name on this. I've been working with transfer students for a long time now, over 10 years. I'm always going to advocate for the two year schools. Sadly, I've been told by people before that as much as I advocate for transfer students and transfer more credits, I've been

told before that I'm giving away the college degree. I had someone tell me one time that I was giving away college degrees out of the back of my car.

Steve Robinson: What? No.

Doug Peacock: Yes.

Steve Robinson: I'm not going to make your name names, but what kind of person would tell you that and why?

Doug Peacock: You know what? It's just something that resonated with me a long time ago, and then it's just ... It was a very odd conversation.

Steve Robinson: At the back of your car.

Doug Peacock: The back of the trunk of my car. [inaudible 00:31:15] building articulation. It was told I'm building ... It's there. It's real. It's neat what you're doing and putting a name on this.

Steve Robinson: It certainly has a name, yes. Why don't you talk to me a little bit about the program you run? You run a program called Wayne Advantage at a public urban research university. Tell us about it.

Doug Peacock: Yep. I run a program called Wayne Advantage-Macomb. We work with one of our largest two year schools in the area.

Steve Robinson: Big, big college. Macomb is a large community college.

Doug Peacock: Very large. Two large campuses right in our backyard. It's a great partnership. We have campuses right near there. It's a good partnership. So, this thing really makes sense, but the simplest item for Wayne Advantage, it's a single admissions dual enrollment programs. A student can be admitted at a high school and opt into this Wayne Advantage program and take all their classes at Macomb Community College.

Steve Robinson: For the first two years, right?

Doug Peacock: Yep, yep. Well really, as long as they want. Some of our programs take up to three years with the credit. So, however they want to do it, and then it's also for the current Wayne State student that may have started at Wayne State, decide that maybe that [inaudible 00:32:40] scholarship isn't as big as they thought or making as much ... Saving as much money as they could at a community college. We'll let our Wayne students go back to the school, either go back there full time or mix up their enrollment between the two.

Steve Robinson: I have a question for you there, because I helped build some programs like that in Michigan. We have what we call our express programs at Owens. I think a lot

of people think there's all kinds of technical behind the scenes work for a dual admission program. What's it like for your Wayne Advantage-Macomb students? I mean, how hard is it to get involved in that?

Doug Peacock: For the students?

Steve Robinson: Yeah.

Doug Peacock: It's the easiest thing.

Steve Robinson: Isn't it? It's a lot easier than you think. So, from a student's perspective, talk to me about how that happens.

Doug Peacock: So, basically all they have to do is being admitted Wayne State students, and then have an application on file at Macomb Community College. At that point, they basically go onto my Wayne Advantage website, enter their Macomb student number and click a button that they're agreeing to be in this program and that puts them in the program. So, we scaled it down. We made it very easy. They can do it through their application to Wayne State. They just got to have an application on file submitted to Wayne and have it on file at Macomb.

Steve Robinson: Now, here's a question I get asked and I was asked by one of our trustees at our college. So, coming from the perspective of the four year destination transfer partner from Wayne, what is Wayne's view of these Macomb transfer students? Do you see this as a competition, a threat or a pipeline?

Doug Peacock: No, absolutely not. We see this as a true partnership-

Steve Robinson: A partnership.

Doug Peacock: ... Between your two schools.

Steve Robinson: Talk to me about that.

Doug Peacock: At Wayne, we are all about retention and keeping our students. We're increasing our retention rates. We hired I think 45 new academic [inaudible 00:34:55], 45 new academic advisors.

Steve Robinson: Okay, great. So, there's wraparound services to keep students progressing.

Doug Peacock: Yep, but this program, it saves us money, but it also adds the flexibility of a student where you're basically opening up the books of two schools' registrations, two schools classes. Basically it creates more class offerings for that student. I see this as a big tool for academic advising, as a tool that they can use to maybe. A class is filled up, we can pop them into Wayne Advantage-Macomb, they can go take that class at Macomb Community College.

Steve Robinson: One thing I hear you saying that I try to get through to people is that I think we're in a new space between four year and two year institutions where we're not competing over the same group of students. We are of a limited slice of pie. We're trying to grow the pie, we're trying to get more students coming to college. Right?

Doug Peacock: Correct, yep. I think most schools will say that they're transfer friendly, but from my experience, I want to see something you're doing to be more transfer friendly that just saying you accept a certain amount of credits. What are you doing to be transfer friendly? I love seeing programs like this, and that's one of the reasons that I was excited to kind of work with Wayne State and Macomb on this program.

Steve Robinson: Right, right. In Wayne Advantage-Macomb, I'm imagining you have an MOU or some kind of a curriculum map where the students who are taking the classes at Macomb, there's a guaranteed transfer component, right?

Doug Peacock: [inaudible 00:36:36] guaranteed transfer component where you work with your advisor at both schools. We're doing our best to train our Wayne State advisors on the Macomb courses and the Macomb advisers are really good with putting them on the associate plan. That's kind of where I come in and come together when the student hops in the program in their first semester, I'll go through their classes and certain areas and make sure that they transfer in correctly. Our big thing in Michigan is the Michigan transfer agreement.

Steve Robinson: Exactly, I know about it.

Doug Peacock: Yeah. We'll go through all these students that are in Wayne Advantage and make sure they have that MTA. We do a 390 programs and over 200 advisors at Wayne State. It's a lot of programs and a lot of credits.

Steve Robinson: Well, as you and I are talking, one of the things that when I talk to parents, when I talk to guidance counselors, when I talk to high school principals, I think some of them are not aware of the high degree of alignment and some of the specific agreements that two year and four year colleges have. In southeast Michigan, you have built this great pathway for two year college students to achieve junior status at Wayne, right?

Doug Peacock: Correct. Yeah. They can ... Even really senior, and we have built programs, they're transferring up to 90 credits.

Steve Robinson: Really?

Doug Peacock: Yeah.

Steve Robinson: That's excellent, that's excellent. That's great.

Doug Peacock: Yeah. Those programs are based on associate degree, so we want the students to get that associate degree.

Steve Robinson: Yeah. Tell me about ... This is a little sort of geeky enrollment management stuff, so that associate degree, do you have a reverse transfer component back to Macomb so that they get credit for that associates or is that something that Wayne transcripts?

Doug Peacock: No. Yes. I mean, with Wayne Advantage, the classes from Macomb automatically come over to Wayne State. It's kind of like, I feel it's like reinvented transferring and then it's also we're taking the Wayne State classes at the end of the semester and they'll transfer automatically back to Macomb for reverse transfer.

Steve Robinson: That's excellent. That's what it's all about. I think I emailed you or direct messaged you. I spent a lot of time at Wayne when I was a kid. My dad was an adjunct professor and later in life he was dean of the law school. You've got a great public research university in a city that's doing great stuff. So, thanks for doing great things in Detroit.

Doug Peacock: Yeah, no. We're keep on going. A lot going on at Wayne State, so it's exciting time to be there.

Steve Robinson: It is. Yeah. I tell you what, so if you had, and you probably are in this situation, because you administer this Wayne Advantage-Macomb program. If you had a room full of parents and a room full of prospective students who were shopping around for what their options are in post-secondary ed, what would be your best argument for starting at the two year college?

Doug Peacock: Good question, because it's something I run into almost daily and weekly, because I meet with students that are considering transferring to either ... They're in the decision mode of starting at the four year school or starting at the two year school. Sometimes, I'll have them come in with their bill from Wayne State, and let's look at their bill and let's look at the bottom line. It's usually a pretty sell at that point where we can say ... Just say for example, the freshman students coming in, they worked hard in high school, they did well. Maybe they got some scholarship money, little scholarship money. It's great that they've got a scholarship, but usually going to a two year school is going to be a better scholarship than I can offer you, besides the full ride.

Doug Peacock: I'll be honest with you, full rides, big scholarships, they are hard to come by, so this is a better scholarship then I can really offer you.

Steve Robinson: Right, and you can, with your program, you can tell them, "Look, you're on the path to a four year degree."

Doug Peacock: Yup. Yup. As long as you stay enrolled at Macomb, you are considered a Wayne State student, so you stay in our system. You keep access to Wayne State and you can live on campus and take all your classes at Macomb if you want to.

Steve Robinson: That's really, really cool. You know, I didn't even think about asking you this question, but I'm putting you on the spot. You're in in Detroit. American or Lafayette, Coney Island. What are you? You can only be one or the other.

Doug Peacock: The last time I went there, I went to both.

Steve Robinson: What?

Doug Peacock: I had to just ... We had to try. We had to walk from one to the other one. I guess I'd say American was better [crosstalk 00:41:31].

Steve Robinson: All right. So, American. You can't be one or the other. Well look, Doug, this was a great conversation, a trip down memory lane for me because of your Detroit connection, but I want to thank you for building great transfer pipelines for students from two year colleges to four year colleges. One of the things that people don't know is that we work together really well and our four year partners want our students, because they transfer at higher rates and they complete a with higher grade point averages. Thanks for what you're doing.

Doug Peacock: Thank you very much and thanks for this new campaign. [inaudible 00:42:07] to follow you. It's exciting what you're doing down there at Owens.

Steve Robinson: Yeah. Well, let's get you some more students in Detroit.

Doug Peacock: We appreciate that.

Steve Robinson: All right, great. All right, and we're done. I'm going to stop recording. Doug, that was fun.

Steve Robinson: Well, I'm really happy to be joined by my friend and colleague and fellow Aspen Fellow Andy Bowne, who is the senior vice president and chief operating officer at Ivy Tech Community College. Andy, how are you?

Andy Bowne: I'm doing great, Steve. How are you doing? Are you having fun with these podcasts?

Steve Robinson: I am having a lot of fun and you and I are going to have some fun because I know you've got some great stories to tell. I just know. So look, we've connected over the past little while about this issue of community college stigma and so, I'm interested, what is it about this topic, about the issue of misconceptions about community colleges that resonates with you?

Andy Bowne: I think it's just that. It's just this misperception, misconception of what we are as part of the higher ed community. That there's this sense among some that probably isn't well founded anymore that we're kind of the plan B option and I include, I think in this mix, both community colleges and technical colleges alike, that we kind of get thrown into this bucket of, "Well, maybe that's not really college," or it's a plan B because, well, you didn't really apply yourself in high school and so your options are limited. So, why don't you go to the community college and figure it out or it's even our students own perception often that, "Well, maybe I'm not really college material," or "I like to work on my hands." There's just this misconception that I think people are missing out on and making choices around a value that they don't appreciate.

Andy Bowne: It's about trying to bring an end to that misconception of what it is that we do.

Steve Robinson: You used a couple of phrases I think are really salient and haven't been on the podcast yet, and that is this idea of a plan B, something lesser than. It's something that you would do if you can't do the other thing. Right? Then, this idea of someone being college material, it almost begs this philosophical question, what is college material, right?

Andy Bowne: My belief if college material is anybody that wants to go to college.

Steve Robinson: Then you must a community college person. That's awesome. That would be my answer too.

Andy Bowne: If you look at so much the research that's been done and continues to be done around growth mindset, if we fundamentally believe that, and we often look at it in terms of economy and we had Dr. Murphy from Indiana University was together with 600 of our colleagues from around the state and our student success summit a little over a week ago. She talked about the work that she and Carol Dweck are doing around growth mindset and that it's not a dichotomy. It's not a choice of you're either growth mindset or fixed mindset. It is, we all have some of that innocent, it's much more of a continuum. It often, the community college has been looked at as from a fixed mindset standpoint of kind of as I started out with, well, that's not really you, so why don't you go to the community college and figure it out?

Andy Bowne: Or that's where people that like to work hard go. The smart people go to colleges and universities and get bachelor's degrees and beyond. I never really have bought that, although my understanding of it certainly has changed in the last 15 years or so working in community college. I'm sure you see the same things, Steve. You talk to parents, you talk to teachers and our students and counselors that college is about the four year track and we are very much about the four year track, right? When you look at the work that we do, it's both and it's about how do you get the skills so you can go and get a great job? And how do you get the skills that allow you to transfer successfully to a four year school? And then from there, you get that great job. Anyway, it's breaking through that myth of what we are.

Steve Robinson: Well, I love the way you hooked it up to growth mindset, right? Because if you understand and accept some of the findings that are coming out of that great research, then I think you'd be much more receptive to the idea of what community colleges are about, which is a great transition to another question I'd like to ask you. So this plan B or not college material, have you seen that a stigma in practice in your daily life as you go through your career? Can you give an example or an anecdote of seeing that up close?

Andy Bowne: Yeah, absolutely. I've thought about this and I'm careful when I use this example because I'm going to go close to home and I'm going to talk about an extended family member. I mean, here I am. I work in the community college and a family member and their soon to graduate high school student were talking about the different options. What about the community college? What about Grand Rapids Community College? What about Ivy Tech Community College? The response was, "But he needs to have a four year experience. You need to have that four year residential experience. I know that's where you work, but look at the four year school. Those first year or first year or two is when you make your lifelong friends and if you transfer in as a junior, if you transfer in after an associate degree, you miss that opportunity to make friends."

Andy Bowne: I was, to my own frustration, was never able to break through that argument. Again, it's family, so you're also a little sensitive to that. Right? I wish I could say that the story worked out really well, but it didn't. The four year experience wasn't right. I wish I could say, "Well, if you'd come to the community college, you'd be ... It'd have all worked out. Right? You come here, two years later, poof, you got a degree. If it's a transfer track, you transfer on to whatever the four year schools you wanted to go to anyways. I can't promise that that or guarantee that that would have been the case, but I have a feeling that would have been a better experience." Again, right? I've seen it close to home with people you'd love to be able to influence and wasn't able to break through that barrier of, "You need to have the four year collegiate experience, residential collegiate experience nonetheless."

Steve Robinson: That's a great example, Andy, for a couple of reasons. One is when you're having a conversation like this with somebody who does have a high degree of literacy about higher ed and it's somebody who's close to you, you're sensitive about not wanting to offend anybody, right? But you're up against some real momentum of Lore, of cultural presuppositions. One of the things I heard you say is that, with this family member, the last thing you want to do is say, "I told you so," right, right?

Andy Bowne: Yeah.

Steve Robinson: It seems like there was such a strong preconception that, of course the four year right away is what's required. You know what? While you were talking, I had a question for you. I'm putting you on the spot. So, when you're having this conversation about forming your lifelong friends and the freshmen and

sophomore year of college, was that your experience? Are your lifelong friends, folks that you met when you were 18 to 20?

Andy Bowne: I have two of my friend, right? Two.

Steve Robinson: Two of your friends, two out of ...

Andy Bowne: I have three, total with my wife, but other than that ... 67% of my friends, [inaudible 00:52:00] percentages, no, no. All seriousness, no, I've made friends through out my life that are friends from childhood, friends from my college experience. I was a transfer student, right? So, friends from the first year of college and friends after that, and then friends from grad school and from my professional life and being part of the community. So, yeah. Do we make ... Are we asked to have made good friends? We have a common experience that if it's a deep friendship, it's likely to last. I bet we both can look back over our college experience and think about all the people that we considered to have been friends that we haven't talked to ... For me it's 35 years.

Steve Robinson: Right. Yeah, same. Same. That's interesting. You've probably been in this last situation a bunch of times, but imagine you were with your family member, although if you had an audience of folks who may be harbored some misconceptions about the community college network in the United States. Didn't quite know about them. What would your elevator pitch be in terms of delivering our value proposition to that audience?

Andy Bowne: I'm going to put myself right here in Indiana, right? So, maybe just quick context and then I'll answer your question. In Indiana, the community colleges as a teenager, if you put it in human terms, the Comprehensive Community College in Indiana didn't exist until 2005. It happened when the State General Assembly in essence merged together Vincennes University into what with what is now Ivy Tech Community College, the Comprehensive Community College. The technical school and the four year institution blended together from a community standpoint to be a comprehensive community college. The practical reality in Indiana is people are still learning what the community college is about. If I were to answer that thumps speak question, I'd say, "Look, the Ivy Tech community college is the most cost effective efficient solution for a student's college experience."

Andy Bowne: You can start at Ivy Tech and transfer to any one of our four year partners in the state, any one of our public universities. You don't lose time or credits and the bonus is you save \$30,000 in the process.

Steve Robinson: Sounds like you had this thumb speech down.

Andy Bowne: I wrote it down.

Steve Robinson: That's good.

Andy Bowne: But then I'd say, did you know that Purdue University in their own research reports that students who transfer from Ivy Tech to Purdue university do as well, if not better than the students who started out at Purdue. That's not Ivy Tech research. You'd expect Ivy Tech to say that. That's Purdue's own research of their own data of their students, those who have transferred from Ivy Tech and those who started at Purdue. That story is true at any state university. I'd say any private institution as well, private university in the state of Indiana as well. That's true of ... It's consistently true across the country. If you're interested in getting the skills you need and go on straight to your career, Ivy does that as well.

Andy Bowne: Our graduates, whether on the transfer track or on the workforce track, they stay in the community and 45% of our graduates, one year out, are earning more than the statewide average, specifically median income. So, our students do well when they graduate, but you can start as a student if you've got a son or a daughter who's interested in transferring to a four year school. They can transfer in a year. They can do an associate degree in our accelerator program. They can do a two year degree in 11 months. I want to speak specifically those who are thinking about the profession of teaching. You can, and I know several teachers in the area who have done the one year accelerated program, transferred on to a four year partners, specifically Ball State, graduated with a teaching degree in three years with no debt.

Steve Robinson: There is a compelling argument.

Andy Bowne: Whether you're bachelor's degree track, you're straight to career, I don't think there's a better way to start or restart the do so with Ivy Tech.

Steve Robinson: Well, that's fantastic Andy, and a great Indiana specific answer, because you're right, that's a very specific context that you're talking about. Look Andy, this was so wonderful to catch up with you and also to talk about this very important topic. Thank you for making some time for me and I sure wish you all the best in all the great work you're doing at Ivy Tech.

Andy Bowne: To you as well. Great things going on at Owens.

Steve Robinson: All right. Thank you so much Andy. Talk to you later.

Andy Bowne: All right my friend.

Steve Robinson: Bye now.

Andy Bowne: Bye-bye.

Steve Robinson: I am at the annual convention of the American Association of Community Colleges and we've found a quiet place to do an interview with Linda Lujan who

is the president of Lamar Community College in Colorado. Linda, thanks so much for taking some time to talk with me.

Linda Lujan: You are welcome.

Steve Robinson: So, what an inspiring meeting we're at today. We've heard a lot of great stories and you and I connected on Twitter because this social media campaign to end community college stigma really resonated with you. What is it about this campaign that connected for you?

Linda Lujan: Well, first of all, I'm a community college grad myself and then through life pathways, ended up becoming an adjunct faculty member, full time faculty member, crossed over to the dark side, became an administrator, and now I'm a proud person of a great community college. For years, beginning when I was a faculty member, the notion that community colleges are second choice, second class, that bugged me, because I know the work we do. In fact, I worked for a while on a joint campus with community college in Denver Metropolitan State University in University of Colorado, Denver. The faculty were using same books, giving many of the same assignments. The students sometimes ping ponged between the three institutions. There was no difference in quality.

Steve Robinson: So, you had an up close view of how similar the instruction was, or the learning outcomes were the same, the textbook, sometimes the faculty were the same, but have you encountered any examples or anecdotes of, even though it's the same, people treat it differently or talk about community colleges differently?

Linda Lujan: Oh yeah, absolutely. Especially when I would go to meetings. I was a dean at the time. So, we held joint meetings with deans from the three institutions and they would often talk about our students as if they were less than, or they would talk about the quality and how can we know we have the same quality, and it's like, "Well, look at our learning outcomes. Look at our results."

Steve Robinson: It comes out in talking to you, but what is it that makes you proud to serve a community college? You're a community college person. It's clear that that's part of your identity.

Linda Lujan: It is.

Steve Robinson: Why are you so proud to be a community college person?

Linda Lujan: My own story, and it's no different from many of our students' stories. I was a blue collar kid, always wanted to go to college, had no idea how my family was going to afford it and then life happened. I got pregnant, dropped out of high school, and got married. And in raising a family, I loved our kids, but I was so jealous of my friends who had gone on to college. I was doing part time minimum wage jobs, trying to supplement the family income and I knew I could do better. There was this community college at my neighborhood, Arapaho

Community College in Littleton, Colorado. I [inaudible 01:01:18] as I was taking kids here and there, doing grocery shopping, and I would think, "Maybe someday, maybe someday." So, when our youngest was old enough to go on the child development center, I thought, "It's my time." I drove in the parking lot. I sat there. I burst into tears and I drove away.

Linda Lujan: I thought, "I can't do this. I'm too old. I can't learn. They're going to laugh at me." Fortunately, I went back and I found what our students find your college, my college, great faculty, caring advisors, support networks, and people who wanted me to succeed and I did. I thrived. I graduated, went out into the world of work. I owe everything to community college. It changed my life.

Steve Robinson: I could listen to stories like that every day, all day. That's so inspiring. It's also inspiring to know that there are a lot of stories like that. Our institutions do this on a fairly regular basis, but to hear it from you, someone who's been a community college president for 10 years, right? Our institutions made a difference in your life and put you where you are. That is so cool. I've got goosebumps listening to you talk. So, you're probably in this situation a lot, Linda, where you get an opportunity to talk to folks who maybe don't know the power that our institutions have, the transformative possibilities like your story.

Steve Robinson: Imagine you had a group assembled that was kind of skeptical or didn't know much about community colleges or maybe even harbored some of these stigmas. What would you tell them to create a more positive view of what community colleges are and do?

Linda Lujan: I'm a qualitative researcher, not quantitative. Data's great and there was a lot of good data that demonstrates our success, but I think our stories are what resonate. I just came from the [inaudible 01:03:30] Kappa breakfast where we recognize the all American, all USA team and the new century scholars. In that group of students, there were young, they were old, there were all ethnicities, there were men, there were women, there was a felon, there were immigrants, there was a former addict, there were students who had come from a place of privilege who could've gone anywhere in the country and picked a community college. Just that vast spectrum of the students that we serve. When you listen to their stories about how community college has touched their lives, changed their lives, it's just impactful.

Linda Lujan: I think people look at us as social workers and maybe we are a teeny bit, but at the end of the day, we're educators. What changes the lives of those students and all of the students at your college or my college, the education they received in our environment. It's the story, story after story that just, that resonates with me. When I'm with a skeptical group, I talk about those students. Yeah. We have students who struggle. We have students who couldn't go anywhere, but to us, and we help get them started. But we have those students who could have gone anywhere or we have those students who didn't know how smart they were, how motivated they were, and we changed their lives. They all have stories.

Steve Robinson: It makes you want to take them along with you to those meetings.

Linda Lujan: I do.

Steve Robinson: It sounds like you do. You physically take them, but it also taking their stories and those wonderful stories from this morning were great for you to highlight.

Linda Lujan: Goosebumps, yes.

Steve Robinson: Linda, thank you so much for taking some time. I know it's a busy time here at the conference and it was great to connect with you. I hope to see you out there on Twitter as we try to change people's view about our institutions.

Linda Lujan: You're going to see me on Twitter, and I want my button.

Steve Robinson: I have it right here. Yes, I have a button for you. Thank you so much Linda.

Linda Lujan: Thanks.

Steve Robinson: Well, that's it for Episode Five of the #EndCCStigma podcast project. I hope you have enjoyed hearing the voices of our many allies who are working to end the stigma against community colleges through social media. If you missed the previous three episodes, they can be easily found on our landing page at endccstigma.org. Stay tuned for future episodes, as we are producing a total of six segments with the same format during throughout community college month.

This podcast is produced, recorded, and engineered by Steve Robinson, president of Owens Community College in Ohio. My Twitter handle is @OCCPresident. The theme music is "Make Your Dream Reality" by Scott Holmes of scottholmesmusic.com, and is licensed through Creative Commons.

Until next time, please push back against inaccurate and unfair characterizations of community colleges and share this podcast with your friends and colleagues. Use the hashtag #EndCCStigma as we focus our efforts and attempt to change the conversation.

Thanks for listening.