
CARNEGIE

WEBINAR

Beyond Affordability: Messaging the Full Value of Community College



Housekeeping

1

This webinar will be recorded, and slides will be shared via email later this week.

2

Have a question for our panelists? Drop questions in the Q&A box, we'll have time at the end of the webinar.

3

Closed captions are available. The icon to enable them is in the control panel at the bottom of your Zoom window.

We wanted to
understand
what's driving
decisions for the
next generation
and *why it
matters to them.*

3,300+

teens ages 13-18

~25%

said they were interested in 2 year /
community college



Your Presenters



Pope Mobley

AVP, Community College Solutions
Carnegie



Brad Henderson

Director of Marketing and
Communications
Allen Community College

What We'll Explore Today

- Two Distinct Audiences
- Affordability Looks Different
- Once Students Choose, Academics Become the Differentiator
- Students Want Flexibility, With a Destination Attached
- Campus Experience Helps Shape the Decision
- Brand Reduces Uncertainty
- Your Audience Is Larger Than the Prospective Student
- Discovery Is Happening Before Your Website



The Community College *Opportunity*

Two Very Different Learners

Affordability alone doesn't explain how students choose between community colleges — or what makes them confident in the path.

SEGMENT A

Community College Only

They're already sold on community college.

Their question: Which community college is right for me?

SEGMENT B

Community College + Others

They're comparing community college against other two- and four-year choices.

Their question: Why should community college be my path?

Priorities Shift by Segment

Community College Only — Top Factors



Community College & Others — Top Factors



Affordability Looks Different

For Students Still Comparing Options, Cost Matters

38%

name financial considerations as their most important college-choice factor. For this group, cost is genuinely persuasive.



Most Important Factors

Strategic Shift:

Move beyond tuition alone.

Show how college can actually work within a student's life, including transportation, work, food, fees, family responsibilities, scholarships, and support.

Largest affordability concern, by segment



*Once Students Choose, Academics
Become the Differentiator*

Once They've Chosen Community College, *Academics Lead*

Strategic Shift:

Affordability may get community college into the consideration set. Academics can help differentiate one college from another.

Showcase program quality, faculty, academic opportunities, transfer relationships, and outcomes.

Top decision factor, Community College Only students



Students Want Flexibility,
With a Destination Attached

Flexibility Needs a Path

Strategic Shift:

Pair flexibility with a destination.

Show students how online, evening or flexible options connect to transfer, credentials, and careers.

Community College Only — Top Academic Factors



Community College & Others — Top Academic Factors



How Allen Community College Brings the Value Story to Life

Affordability

- Fewer added fees
- Textbook rentals reduce costs
- Scholarships extend affordability beyond Allen
- Starting at Allen can lower total education costs
- Four-day class schedule

Academics

- Strong transfer preparation
- Clear transfer pathways
- University partnerships on campus

Outcomes

- Allen students perform strongly after transfer
- Higher GPA, success and retention
- Sharing student success stories

[Apply Now](#)

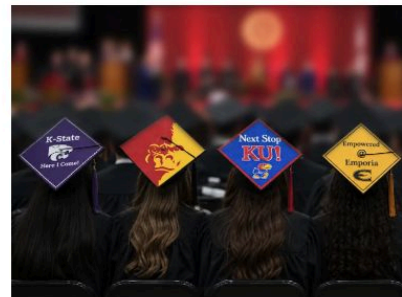
Opportunity Starts Here

Seamless Transfer Pathways to Top Universities

Allen Community College is a launchpad for students planning to [transfer to four-year institutions](#). Through established transfer partnerships and aligned coursework ([see the schedule of courses offered here](#)), ACC students move on with confidence—and results, all while saving with lower [tuition rates](#).

Students transferring from ACC consistently perform at a high level. For example, transfer students at Emporia State University earned a **mean cumulative GPA of 3.47**, outperforming both university averages and other transfer cohorts.

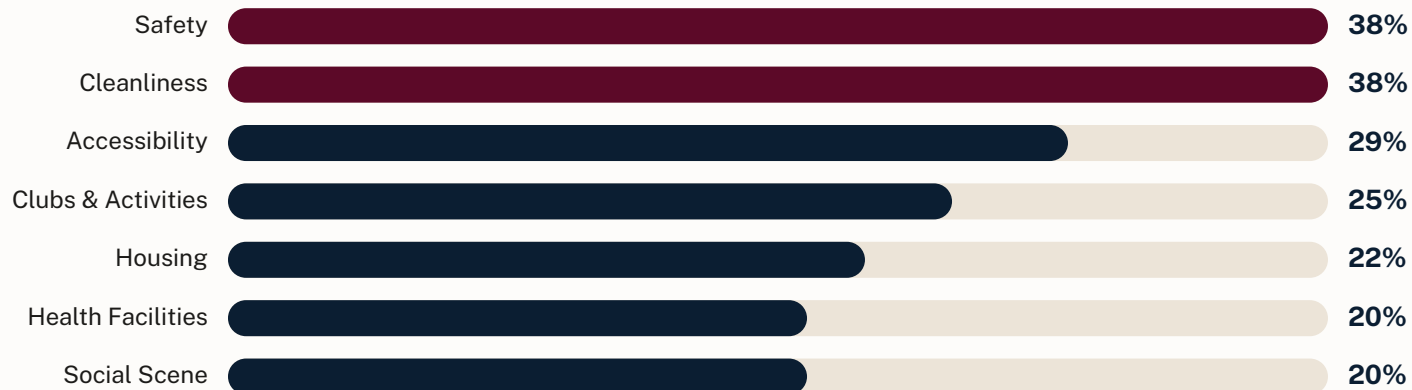
With **99.48% of ACC transfer students in good academic standing**, the data speaks for itself: ACC prepares you not just to transfer—but to thrive.

[Apply Now](#)

Campus Experience Helps *Shape the Decision*

The Factors That *Shape Campus Feel*

Top campus-feel priorities, Community College Only students



THE QUESTION TO ASK

“If I only saw your website and advertising, would I know what it feels like to be a student there?”

Brand Matters Because
It Reduces Uncertainty

Brand Recognition *Builds Confidence*

Strategic Shift:

Treat brand as a
confidence signal.

Familiarity and credibility
can help students feel
more certain about how
their choice will be viewed
by family, employers and
transfer institutions.

Community College Only students

70%

said having a recognizable brand was at least
moderately important.

Your Audience Is Larger
Than Just *Prospective Students*

Community College Students Aren't Choosing Alone

The Question to Ask:

Could a parent, counselor, teacher, or friend explain your value proposition after encountering your marketing?

The story has to be easy for someone else to repeat.

Who Influences the College Decision Most — Community College Only



Where Opportunity Meets Community

Student input shapes the brand

- Student Senate helped inform Allen's updated positioning.

Community is part of the experience

- Students pointed to safety, connection, and relationships with faculty, staff, and each other.

The experience broadens students' worlds

- Students described exposure to people, perspectives, and cultures they might not have encountered otherwise.



Discovery Is *Fragmented*

Discovery Starts With Comparison and Validation

Strategic Shift:

Build for multiple entry points.

Students may meet you first through social, search, rankings, AI or your website, so your value story needs to hold together across all of them.

Where They Start the College Search — Community College Only



AI Is Already Part of the Search

+

45%

of students who were sure about
community college reported using
ChatGPT.

+

34%

engage with AI-generated summaries
before scrolling to traditional results.

+

12.4%

read only the AI summary – no
click-through at all.

Students are forming an opinion about your institution through information you don't fully control.

Clear, consistent, specific content gives search engines, AI tools, and social platforms a stronger story to repeat.

How Allen Is Strengthening AEO Readiness

- Identify where AI is getting confused
- Strengthen consistency across website content
- Map content gaps and priorities
- Build a realistic monthly content plan
- Use video where it can have the most impact

The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query "tell me more about allen community college". The search results include an "AI Overview" section with a summary of Allen Community College. Below this, there are two main sections: "Academics & Programs" and "Tuition & Costs", each with a list of bullet points. The "Academics & Programs" section lists "Degrees Offered", "Online & In-Person" courses, and "Transfer Agreements". The "Tuition & Costs" section lists tuition rates for "In-District (Allen County)", "Out-District (Kansas)", and "Out-of-State" students. The search results are attributed to "Allen Community College" with a "+4" link.

Google tell me more about allen community college

AI Mode All Short videos Videos Images Forums News More Tools

AI Overview

Allen Community College is a public two-year community college located primarily in [Iola, Kansas](#), with a history dating back to its establishment as Iola Junior College in 1923. [Wikipedia +1](#)

Academics & Programs

- **Degrees Offered:** Focuses on associate degrees, career and technical education (CTE) certificates, and general education transfer courses.
- **Online & In-Person:** Offers over 100 online courses per semester alongside traditional on-campus classes, supporting a large online learning community.
- **Transfer Agreements:** Features dozens of system-wide transfer courses and articulation agreements with various four-year universities. [Allen Community College +4](#)

Tuition & Costs

Tuition rates per credit hour vary based on residency: [Allen Community College](#)

- **In-District (Allen County):** \$75.00 per credit hour
- **Out-District (Kansas):** \$90.00 per credit hour
- **Out-of-State:** \$105.00 per credit hour

Q&A

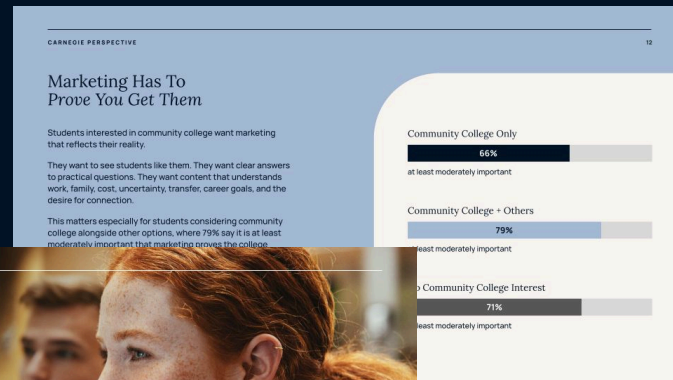
The Community College Story *Students Are Looking For*

- ✓ Affordable enough to be possible.
- ✓ Strong enough to be worth choosing.
- ✓ Flexible enough to fit my life.
- ✓ Clear enough that I can see where it leads.
- ✓ Supportive enough that I can picture myself succeeding.

The Community College Advantage: What Next Gen Learners Need Beyond Affordability

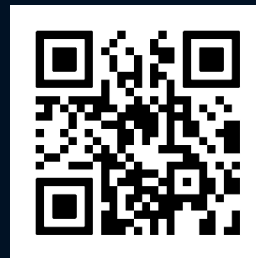


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the Report



Thank You

Ready to take
the next step?



Request a Community
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Audit

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