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Human Resource Challenges at Rural Community Colleges in the U.S.

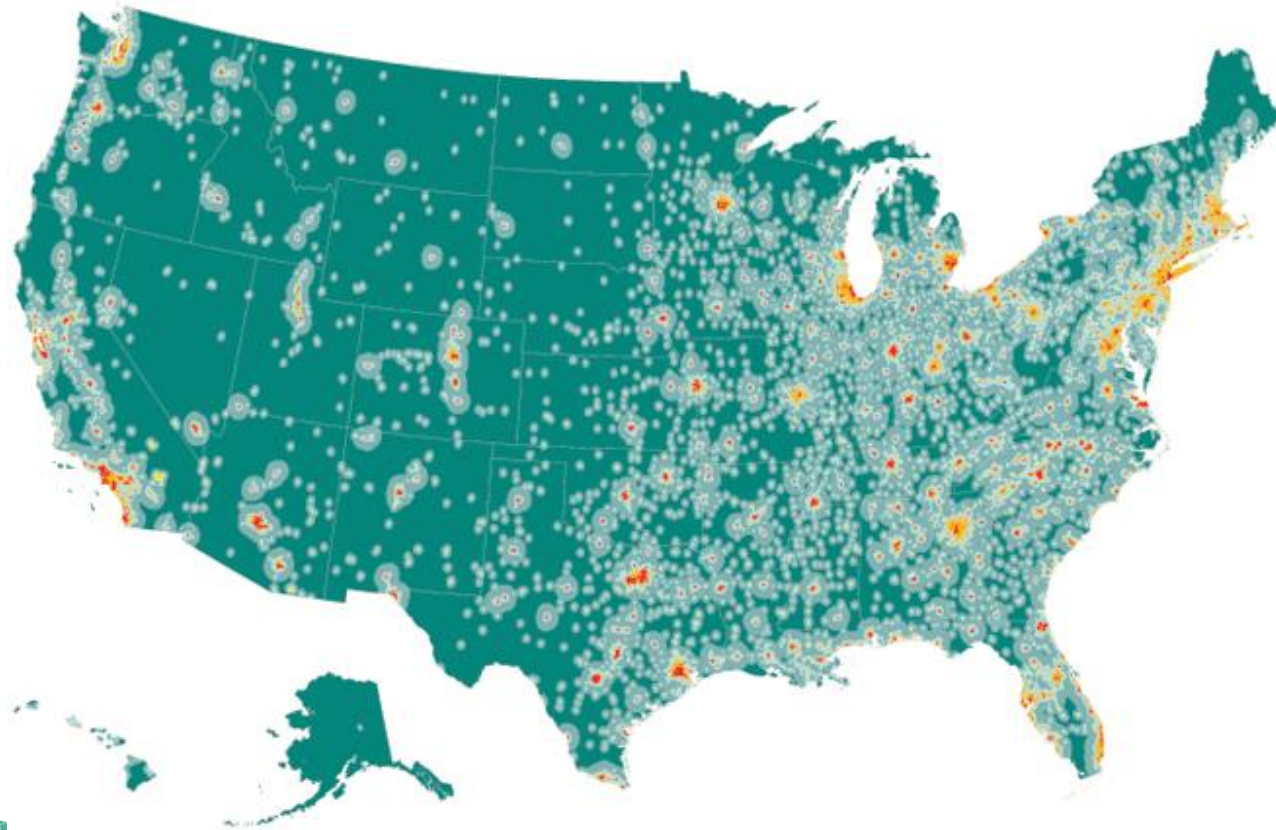
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Courtesy: Colorado Northwest Community College

Rural Regions in the U.S.



Legend

- City (Large, Midsize, Small)
- Suburb (Large, Midsize, Small)
- Town (Fringe, Distant, Remote)
- Rural Fringe
- Rural Distant
- Rural Remote

Higher Education Linkage to Local Community and Labor Needs



Rural Recruiting as a Challenge



Background

- While there has been extensive research completed on K-12 rural labor challenges, limited focus has been centered on rural higher education
 - Biddle, C., & Azano, A. P. (2016). Constructing and reconstructing the “rural school problem”: A century of rural education research. *Review of Research in Education*, 40(1), 298-325.
 - Cejda, B. D. (2010). Faculty issues in rural community colleges. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2010(152), 33-40.
 - Eddy, P. L. (2013). Developing leaders: The role of competencies in rural community colleges. *Community College Review*, 41(1), 20-43.
- Rural communities are different from urban and suburban locations in both their structure and socialized norms
- Finding the right “match” for personnel to succeed in rural institutions of higher education continues to be a challenge

Ongoing Research

How are rural community college leaders leading efforts to recruit and retain college professionals in our current labor market?

What specific characteristics are indicators for success in the rural college environment?

Do specific strategies exist to help support professionals from a non-rural background to be successful in a rural college environment?



Initial Findings

- Values and Attributes of Successful Staff
 - Desire to learn about the community and engage with community events outside of the campus
 - Ability to create connections and establish trust with fellow staff, students, faculty, and community
 - Understanding or willingness to learn about rural culture, terminology, etc.
 - Ability to share knowledge with proper delivery based on institutional culture
- Candidate considerations
 - Local may not have the same level of training as external candidates
 - External candidates may not be successful if their approach does not fit the culture of the institution and the community

Initial Findings

- Hiring Process as a Socialization Opportunity
 - Prepare non-rural candidates for life in a rural area
 - Share opportunities for cross training because of smaller environments
- Long-Term Human Resource Strategies
 - Engage student employees who can become hires after completing their 4-year degree
 - Develop community partnerships to engage new employees with opportunities outside of work

In-Progress

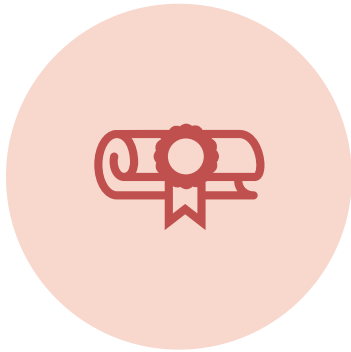
Research team is currently in the process of collecting data from rural community college leaders regarding these ongoing challenges

- Qualitative inquiry methodology using a pre-determined population of community college leadership

Framework and design is based in organizational socialization utilizing a rural education lens

Findings will be available in Spring 2023 and will be published in the *Journal of Education Human Resources* special issue focusing on Higher Education Human Resource Issues in the Rural Context

Questions?



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