During every economic recovery, community college enrollments decline as students return to work. However, community colleges today are losing students not only to the job market but also to other higher education institutions. As four-year universities enhance their marketing and recruiting efforts, community college leaders must adopt scalable strategies to reverse enrollment declines and prevent long-term revenue losses.

Since 2002, community college market share has steadily slipped to 38%—the lowest in three decades—in spite of economic trends.

**Eight Strategies to Reverse Declining Market Share**

**Students Who Are New to Higher Education**
These first-generation college students are choosing between attending community college and entering the workforce. We need to help them cultivate college navigation skills.

- **Missing-Step Enrollment Prompts**
  Send brief call-to-action messages that remind applicants to complete steps such as FAFSA, orientation, and registration. Use mail merge to personalize email reminders—or partner with a text messaging platform to reach applicants on their mobile devices.

- **Non-registrant Phone Survey**
  Ask applicants who have not yet registered for classes to identify any barriers to enrollment they face. Conduct these surveys several weeks before classes start so that staff can connect applicants to relevant resources before registration closes.

- **Pre-enrollment Success Course**
  Offer applicants a free class in college navigation and success skills to help them overcome common anxieties. Award each class completer a scholarship worth one free three-credit course to incentivize their continued enrollment the next semester.

- **One-Stop Enrollment Caravan**
  Send teams of student services staff to local high schools to lead a series of mandatory college admissions workshops for seniors. Keep visiting teams consistent across the workshop series so that staff can build trust with participating students.

**Students Who Have Many College Options**
These students intend to earn a bachelor’s degree, and they’re choosing between community college and university. We need to help them understand our distinct value proposition.

- **Mobile Geofencing Campaign**
  Partner with a marketing vendor to serve ads to mobile devices in high-yield locations. Target high school graduations and athletic events to reach traditional-aged students—or industry conventions and employer sites to reach adult learners.

- **Preliminary Financial Aid Estimates**
  Send all prospective students who submit their FAFSA forms a personalized letter with their net cost of attendance based on their financial aid eligibility. Mail letters early to reach students before they receive aid offers from more expensive institutions.

- **Customized Electronic Brochure**
  Invite prospective students to design their own college brochures by submitting an online inquiry form that indicates their academic and extracurricular interests. Use the information from these inquiry forms in follow-up recruitment communications.

- **Standardized Communications Plan**
  Respond to every inquiry with a series of prescheduled messages that guide prospective students toward application. Implement a customer relationship management (CRM) solution to automate and personalize these messages across multiple channels.