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**Abstract**

This article examines various commonalities and divergences between the English further education system and its nearest US equivalent, the community college system. In terms of commonalities, the article discusses the reliance on sub-university institutions to provide access to higher education, persistent dilemmas attendant to that reliance and conflicts over efforts to make non-university post-secondary institutions become more specialised in their missions. With regard to divergences, this article examines differences between the two types of institution in the strength of transfer arrangements, the ability to award the baccalaureate degree, the competitive environment and the balance between national and sub-national governance. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)