

PROMISING PRACTICES IN ILLINOIS CAREER PATHWAYS



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is pleased to share the Promising Practices in Illinois Career Pathways Compendium. This compendium was developed by the Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPS), with consultation from the featured colleges and in coordination with the ICCB's Career and Technical Education (CTE) team. This document highlights promising practices and innovative programs related to career pathways at a number of colleges across Illinois that represent different regions, populations, and economies. To identify promising practices ICSPS conducted a survey and interviewed persons responsible for programs that demonstrated exceptional characteristics related to several of the career pathway principles including strong partnerships, curriculum alignment, pathway progression, industry recognized credentials, continuous improvement, data gathering and sharing, industry recognized credentials and sustainability and scalability. Importantly, this compendium is a living document, and will be expanded and revised in future versions.

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INTRODUCTION TO CAREER PATHWAYS

Overview

Illinois, like many states across the country, is committed to implementing and strengthening career pathways and systems at the local, regional, and state levels. Career pathways serve to strengthen the connection between higher education and the workforce. They are based on decades of research and grounded in a tradition of strong career, technical, and adult education. This document illustrates selected strategies, practices, and programs that fall under the comprehensive career pathways definition and that demonstrate improved career pathway outcomes for students enrolled in Illinois community colleges.



In 2017, the State's education and workforce agencies collaborated to adopt a statewide career pathway definition that is aligned with the career pathway definition in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This common definition framework provides guidance for policymakers and practitioners when developing, improving, and sustaining career pathways.

The commitment to equity for all participants and to continuous improvement of career pathway programs and practices are also important to Illinois' career pathway effort. The pathway system partners must share and use evidence to identify and eliminate barriers to access and success; use evaluation data of diverse participant groups to inform improvement efforts; disaggregate participant level data to identify inequities among subgroups so that causes can be discovered and addressed; and include shared data from evaluations of effectiveness in efforts to serve employers and to inform strategies for improvement.

Illinois Career Pathways Definition

A career pathway is a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that align both vertically and horizontally across Secondary Education, Adult Education, Workforce Training and Development, Career and Technical Education, and Postsecondary Education systems, pathways, and programs. Collaborative partnerships with these entities and business and industry, along with human service agencies, corrections, and other community stakeholders, serve as the foundational structure for high-quality and sustainable career pathways. A career pathway also includes multiple entry and exit points to facilitate individuals to build their skills as they progress along a continuum of education and training and advance in sector-specific employment.¹

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Featured College: Harper College

Serving more than 40,000 students each year in credit and non-credit programs, Harper College is one of Illinois' largest community colleges. The district has approximately 536,000 residents and includes 13 high schools and all or parts of 23 suburban Chicago municipalities. Harper's main campus is located in Palatine, and it offers courses and services at three additional locations.² For more information visit the following website: <https://www.harpercollege.edu>



Registered Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships have been a gold standard of work-based learning models and traditionally have been a training model used for skilled trades in the building construction industry. A Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program is one that meets federal and state standards and is organized under the National Apprenticeship Act. RA programs offer the opportunity for students to earn a salary while attending a customized, high-quality training program.

Nationally, there are programs offered in 1,500 occupations in nine industry sectors, including Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Energy, Finance & Business, Healthcare, Hospitality, Information Technology, Telecommunications, and Transportation.³ The recent expansion of RA programs is credited to the Obama administration.

In 2014 that administration provided federal support via Apprenticeship USA. Continued support and expansion of RA programs was authorized in June 2017 by the Trump administration. Fueled by bipartisan support, industry backing, and increased awareness at the local and state levels, more community colleges are demonstrating interest in sponsoring RA programs, which has the potential to provide greater program access to the colleges' diverse populations. Additionally, many employers are interested in recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce, and the RA training model of "learn and earn" offers a salary and a mentor: two elements that are often critical to student retention and completion.

In 2015, with support from the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant, Harper developed its first RA program to train Industrial Maintenance Mechanics. In January 2016, Harper became one of only three community colleges to be an RA 'program sponsor' which allows the college to complete all the paperwork for employers required by the DOL, write employer-guided program content, and provide all the program college courses that comprise the apprenticeship related training instruction (RTI). The Office of Apprenticeships at Harper is part of the Workforce Solutions Division. In only three years, seven additional programs have been developed that include Banking and Finance, Computer Numerical Control Precision Machining, Cyber Security, General Insurance, Graphic Arts Print Production, Logistics/Supply Chain Management, and Sales and Retail Management.⁴ The expansion of industry sectors is not only increasing program choice but also increasing gender diversity as students have apprenticeship opportunities in 'white collar' industries that tend to interest more females. The length of the RA programs at Harper ranges between two and three years; students complete the apprenticeship program while earning an Associate of Applied Science degree in their chosen field or with Cyber Security CompTIA credentials.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Qualifications to enroll in in the AAS degree apprenticeship programs at Harper require the applicant 1) to be eighteen years old, 2) to have a high school diploma or HSE/GED®, 3) to be a citizen of the United States or have a work visa, 4) to meet the academic requirements for selected program admission, and 5) in some cases, to possess a driver's license.



Students begin the process by completing an interest form found on the Harper College Apprenticeship website, applying to the college, taking required placement exams, and submitting an application. The Office of Apprenticeship sends candidates' applications to employers interested in hiring an apprentice, and interviews are conducted. Accepted students who are hired and sign a contract with a company are placed into a RA program cohort. Students must maintain a GPA of 2.0 and meet other company requirements and obligations to continue in the program.

Exemplary Features

The Dean of Workforce and Economic Development at Harper explained there are three main characteristics that make Harper's RA programs exemplary: employer input, inclusion of academic coaches, and consistent outreach. When planning its first RA program in 2015, Harper turned to local employers and asked them to identify the competencies they wanted their employees to possess. Their input drove the curriculum. The advanced manufacturing RA programs are compressed into 8 weeks of classroom instruction during the fall and spring semesters over three years. However, most of the RA programs are 12 weeks in length over three semesters for two years. All apprentices are mentored by an experienced employee who is trained to be an RA mentor. The Dean acknowledged that the classroom instruction provides the "foundation" students need, and the employers and mentors teach "the company way." She emphasized that the values of collaboration and transparency are needed to establish and sustain quality RA programs, something the college takes very seriously.

Harper employs an academic coach who, according to the Dean, "makes all the difference in the world" to the student and program success. The coach meets with apprentices every week, or every other week, when they are in college courses to discuss progress, barriers, grades, and classroom behavior, if needed. The Dean explained that the coaches offer "extreme support and an avenue for communication" between faculty, apprentices, and the employers. This relationship continues even when apprentices transition to their workplace, and mentors assume part of the coaching role in the company context.

Finally, in order for a successful RA program to exist, the college must pursue consistent, quality outreach and marketing to promote the opportunities inherent in the training program. Marketing includes internal efforts so that all parts of the college are aware of the programs available and of RA students' needs.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The Dean indicated that marketing efforts are also ongoing with area high schools, career centers, local workforce agencies, and veterans' groups. Other marketing efforts are targeted towards community groups and area employers. She explained it often takes five or six discussions with employers to explain the advantages of RA programs and articulate how the college can help find solutions to meeting workforce demands. She elaborated by saying, "With the numbers of baby-boomers retiring and the resultant skills gaps, RA programs are an efficient way to fill the talent pipeline and meet employer demand for a well-qualified workforce." The college frequently hosts informational sessions, runs advertisements in area movie theaters, and conducts several other outreach efforts. Champions of the of RA programs, including Harper's President Dr. Ken Ender, are committed to ensuring the college remains a leader in the movement. The Dean explained that, "Satisfied employers currently involved in RA programming are helping us to expand our program via word of mouth, but the college remains vigilant in its ongoing efforts to grow interest."



Outcomes

Registered Apprenticeship programs have only been in existence at HC for three years, and program length ranges from two to three years, so there are limited outcomes data available at this point. However, the college is tracking multiple outcomes data and looks forward to sharing it as programs mature. In the 2017-18 academic year, 97 people were enrolled in RA programs. Seventy-three percent of RA students are male, and students range in age from 18 to 57 years old. The average GPA for the group is 3.57/4.0, an increase from the previous year. Twenty-four percent of students are Hispanic/Latino, and the majority of students are White. Harper's most recent RA student retention rate is 88%, also an increase from previous years. The first class of insurance registered apprentices graduated in December of 2017, with all 19 class members employed at Zurich Insurance Company. In May 2018, the first class of industrial maintenance mechanic registered apprentices graduated. Those five individuals are now working at area companies. Program and student data are shared with employers as part of the transparency effort the RA program adheres to and the continuous improvement effort used to ensure programs are responding to apprentice and employer need.

Sustaining and Scaling

The expanding number of RA programs at Harper and the increase in apprentices served are sustainable. Harper College continues to seek funding opportunities as both the nation and the state increase efforts to train a highly-skilled workforce. Though not standard nationally among all RA programs, Harper requires the company to pay for students' registered apprenticeship programs. A flat fee of \$15,000 or \$18,000 per student, depending on the program, is charged for the entire program and billed by semester to the company. In exchange, students are expected to remain with the company for one and one-half or two years following program completion or repay part or all of the company-paid costs related to tuition, books, tutors, fees, DOL paperwork, and RA program oversight. Paid tuition contributes to student retention and program sustainability.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The RA programs have scaled within the college, as previously explained, and Harper is one of 16 Illinois members of the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium at the Department of Labor. This group shares ideas and innovations among its members to provide technical assistance, spread details on what is working, maintain quality standards, and work together to determine what can be improved. Further,

Harper is a member of the Illinois Apprenticeship Plus System project that helps scale various apprenticeship models as part of a larger career pathway system effort.



The success of Harper's experience in RA programming has attracted national interest, and the Workforce and Economic Development division fields calls almost daily from colleges across the nation that are interested in learning more about being an RA program sponsor. To respond efficiently to increasing interest the college will host "Implementing Apprenticeship Programs in Community Colleges: A Working Conference" in October 2018. Harper has provided information about the event on their Harper College Apprenticeship website to keep their partners and community informed about their current activities.⁵

Improving Career Pathways

At Harper, Registered Apprenticeship programs provide a formal, 'learn and earn' career pathway model for students ages 18 and above. Formerly somewhat restricted to students interested in a few skilled building construction trades, RA programs are undergoing a resurgence nationwide, attracting a broader segment of the population and involving programs in multiple industry sectors. With an increasing number of community colleges interested in becoming sponsors, one can assume that more diverse students will be able to benefit from this career pathway model which has historically enabled its graduates to earn higher than average wages and receive excellent preparation for in-demand occupations. The movement is still new in community colleges, and Harper College is a leader, statewide and nationally, in helping others understand the value that an AAS embedded within an apprenticeship program can provide. It's a career pathway trifecta: a win for the student, a win for the college, and a win for the employer.

Local Contact

For more information about the RA programs at Harper, contact Dr. Rebecca Lake, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development at rlake@harpercollege.edu or contact the Harper College Office of Apprenticeship at 847.925.6630.

DUAL CREDIT AND ARTICULATION

Featured College: John A. Logan College



John A. Logan College (JALC), with its main campus in Carterville, Illinois, and two extension centers, enrolls approximately 9,945 students and has a district population of 143,000. JALC serves a mostly rural area of Southern Illinois covering 11 public high school districts in five counties. The college offers 17 areas of study.⁶ For more information visit the following website: <http://www.jalc.edu>

Nationally Recognized Dual Credit Program

In 1999, JALC launched its dual credit program by offering articulated credit granted at JALC from select career and technical education courses taken at district high schools. The opportunities for students to earn college credit while enrolled in high school have expanded greatly over the years to include a broad range of courses to meet the needs of more diverse students. In 2017, JALC joined Lewis and Clark Community College as one of two Illinois community colleges to receive accreditation for their dual enrollment programs from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). Established in 2004, NACEP has grown to include 105 accredited institutions of higher education nationwide. While many colleges use NACEP standards as a framework to build their dual credit program, only a few have undertaken the self-study and external peer review process that leads to nationally recognized accreditation. NACEP's quality standards, revised in 2017, are divided into six categories: partnerships, curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation. To achieve accreditation, the college produced multiple forms of required evidence to show it had met or exceeded the standards in each category.

Exemplary Features

JALC's dual credit team is proud of the NACEP accreditation that it cites as one exemplary feature of the program. They also point to two additional exemplary features of the dual credit program: having three models of course delivery and a high level of teamwork and collaboration. Dual credit leaders advised, "One of the keys to making a dual credit program successful is to customize the model to each school district, allowing it to best serve the district's needs. [We] put a great amount of time and effort into learning about our district high schools and we view each high school as an individual with a unique set of needs."

Ten out of the eleven public high schools in the district participate in one of the three models. The first delivery model is a 'traditional' model wherein qualified high school instructors teach the courses to students at the high school. This is the most common method of delivery, enrolling the highest number of students. District high schools have recently expanded offerings in transfer level math courses (College Algebra and Statistics), and CTE opportunities (various Welding courses and Blueprint Reading).

DUAL CREDIT AND ARTICULATION

The second model is referred to as the ‘cohort’ model and is offered at two high schools each semester. In this model, JALC meets with the high schools to determine what courses they want to offer, and JALC instructors teach the courses at the participating high schools. Courses include electives such as Political Science, Sociology, Speech, Music Appreciation, and General Psychology. JALC officials emphasized that their intent is not to replicate courses for which there are high school teachers available to teach, but rather, to expand the curricular choices. Students are able to take up to two courses per semester; some students have earned as many as 24 credit hours via this model. Described as an ‘intense’ model, college officials meet with students and their parents prior to enrollment to thoroughly explain the course and program expectations and to answer questions.



The third model is ‘JALC instructor-led,’ wherein students take dual credit courses taught by JALC faculty at the college alongside college students, or online. In this model, JALC staff visit each high school to prepare students for electronic communications skills necessary to succeed, and the career pathway is outlined to explain how the courses align with other courses and programs at the college. Students must also attend an orientation prior to enrollment.

With all models of delivery, JALC dual credit staff point to the teamwork and collaboration with high school staff as a big reason for their program’s success. They have established an open dialogue so that as district needs change, the college can respond quickly to curriculum needs at the secondary level. Additionally, student and program outcomes are shared with the high school districts’ superintendents so they can see the increasing percentage of dual credit students earning college credit and other outcomes.

Outcomes

In the 2017-2018 school year, 1,039 students (unduplicated number) participated in the dual credit program. In the current school year, 6,527 credit hours were generated resulting in a savings of \$783,240 (tuition and technology fees).

NACEP Assessment Standards state that secondary dual credit students are held to the same standards of achievement as those expected of students enrolled in college. In a comparison of dual credit statistics course and on-campus statistics, the dual credit statistics course had 88.2% (82/93) of its students complete the course with a “C” or better. The on-campus statistics course had a “C” or better rate of 86.2% (56/65).

DUAL CREDIT AND ARTICULATION

Sustaining and Scaling

JALC has a strong team of internal and external partners to help administer and guide the dual credit program, including the Acting Vice-President for Instructional Services, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Director of Dual Credit, the Dean for Student Services, the Associate Dean for Admissions, the department chairs, and the Director of Institutional Research. One college administrator pointed to the importance of gathering and using data to help sustain and scale the program.



There is also an advisory committee that meets twice a year to provide input. The committee includes the JALC Dual Credit team and representatives from the in-district high schools consisting mostly of school counselors and/or directors of guidance. The purpose of the committee is to inform the team leaders of any new developments in dual credit and to receive feedback on improving the current process.

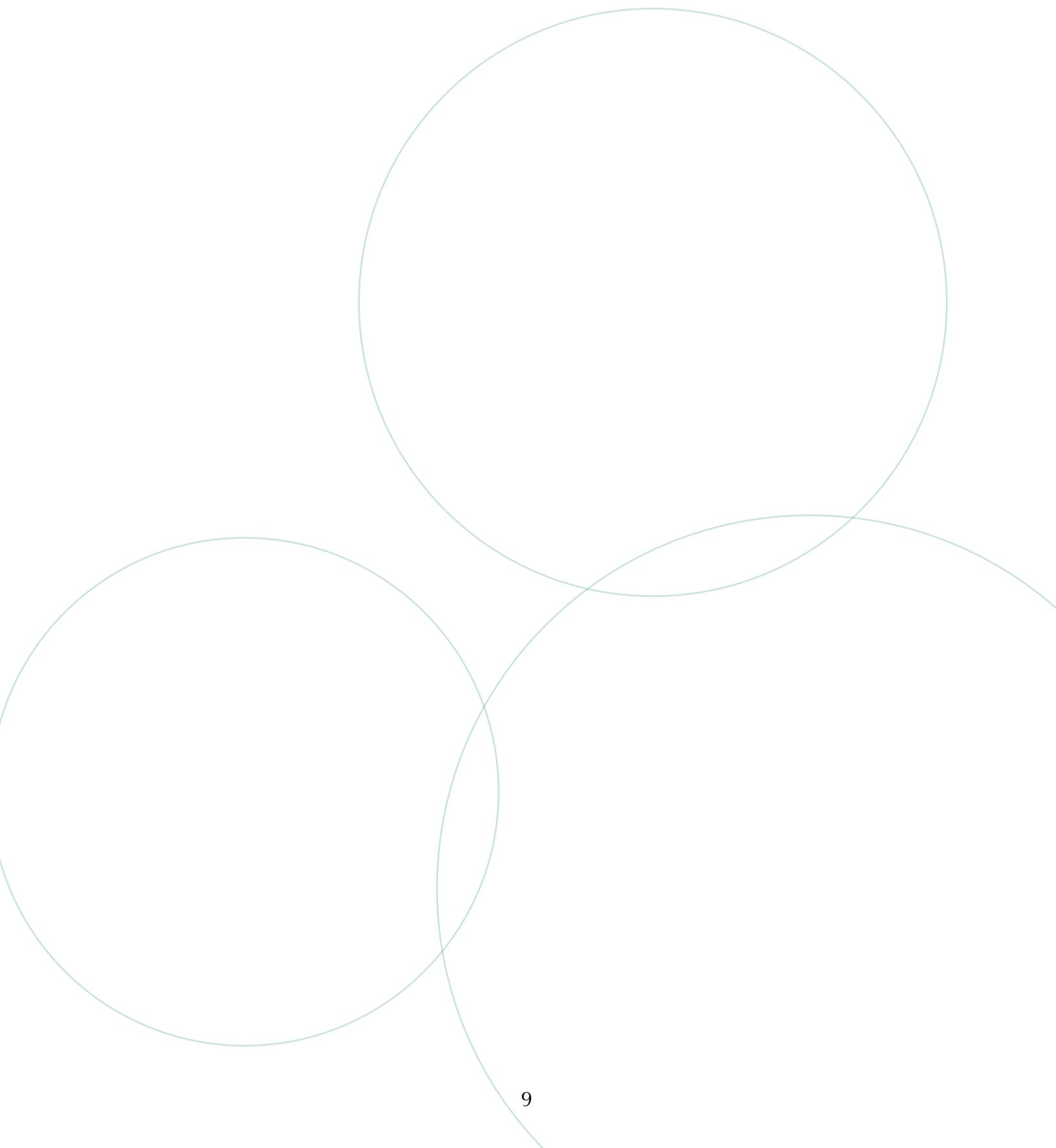
Members of the JALC team attend the annual NACEP conference as well as events sponsored by the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP). JALC has taken active leadership positions in ILACEP and credits the organization with providing professional development that has helped shape their program. The team actively participates in national and state level networks affiliated with dual and concurrent enrollment programs.

Improving Career Pathways

A major goal of dual credit programs is to offer secondary students a head start and smooth transition to college level work, guiding the transition so that students not only earn credits but also see themselves as college ready. JALC dual credit program leaders explained that they try to get high school students to complete as many dual credit general education courses as possible so that when they come to JALC and are enrolled in career programs, they are more likely to complete their degrees; and they arrive on campus ready to take the courses they are most interested in studying. Further, the college facilitates students' participation in job shadowing or summer internships that align with the college's career paths. They also work with employers to ensure students continue to have employment opportunities. A smooth transition via a robust dual credit program contributes to student success.

Local Contact

For more information about dual credit at John A. Logan College, contact Melanie Pecord, Acting Vice-President of Instructional Services at melaniepecord@jalc.edu.



PRE-APPRENTICESHIPS

Featured College: Lewis and Clark Community College

Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C) serves a district of over 220,000 citizens in seven counties in Southwestern Illinois. The college has four campuses, offers more than 40 associate degree and

transfer programs and 83 certificate programs, includes a large Workforce Training program, and has High School Equivalency/GED (HSE/GED®) completion options. L&C enrolls approximately 15,000 students annually. Learn more at the following website:
<http://www.lc.edu/>



Pre-Apprentice Construction Pathway

The Pre-Apprentice Pathway program began in 2009 with a YouthBuild grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, an annual competitive grant aimed at preparing low-income youth who have left high school without a diploma, are leaving foster care, or are incarcerated. YouthBuild combines HSE/GED® instruction with career training, so students learn basic academic knowledge contextualized with specific occupational knowledge and skills.

Nationally, there are approximately 140 YouthBuild programs operated by non-profit and public agencies, 13 of which are led by community colleges. Since 2012,

L&C's program has also been affiliated with AmeriCorps, a national network of service programs that address academic, economic, and civic needs across the nation. The addition of AmeriCorps in the L&C Pre-Apprentice Pathway program provides students with opportunities to learn and practice leadership and apply their skills training in community service projects. One student explained, "I never thought I would feel smart or accomplished . . . until I came here. We do neat projects that help me persevere and learn a good work ethic. Things we do in this program are making me a better person."

The program is housed in the Adult Education division of the college and is led by a team comprised of college leadership, construction trainers, academic instructors, case managers, and a transition counselor. The YouthBuild staff have designed the program to include three phases. The first, lasting four to five months, includes academic preparation leading to a HSE/GED®; construction skills training that leads to the Pre-Apprentice Certificate Training (PACT) credential; and skills training related to leadership, career development, and community service. The second phase is called the 'Bridge to College or Work' and lasts approximately a semester. It includes college and career readiness skills, leadership development, continuation of community service projects, and support services that together prepare students for the next phase and/or employment opportunities. If students choose to enter employment after Phase 2, their compensation is subsidized by the program or in partnership with funds from the Madison County Employment and Training office, the local American Job Center. The third and final phase, called 'Follow-up,' lasts up to one year as students are mentored through job placement, the financial aid process, college advisement, and other services that facilitate the successful transition to work or further education.

PRE-APPRENTICESHIPS

Exemplary Features

L&C YouthBuild staff credit the deep and meaningful partnerships and comprehensive suite of support services as two exemplary features of the program. YouthBuild staff counted 10 external (to the college) partners actively involved in the most recent (2017) quarter for which data have been quantified. The project director relayed that in conversations with the leaders of some of the other 13 community college-sponsored YouthBuild sites across the country, the focus on partnerships did not seem to be as strong as it is at L&C. One leader described their partners' involvement as "much more than just a letter of commitment."

A key partnership has been with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Commerce) via the Youth Career Pathway grant and the Southwestern Illinois Consortium for Youth Career Pathways. L&C serves as the fiscal agent of the consortium, but the program is overseen by the consortium. The grant serves young people, ages 16 – 24, who are out of school and out of work. Students select to study short courses in one of five programs offered at L&C. Once training is completed, the project helps students find work.

According to the adult education staff, partnerships within other units of the college are also very strong. The Associate Dean of Adult Education points to an interesting intra-college partnership with the Restoration Ecology (RE) program wherein the YouthBuild students work with the RE program's students on projects such as removing invasive species from campus property; designing and building a bioswale to channel rainwater runoff and protect the college's watershed; and working in the college's greenhouse where some students have been paid for their involvement and received mentoring from the RE program director.

The Pre-Apprentice Pathway program begins with a week-long Access Academy wherein students learn more about themselves, determine their readiness for the program, anticipate barriers to success, and discover more about careers in construction. Next, they enter a three-week pathway readiness course where they are exposed to strategies, skills, and knowledge that are unique to their academic success and overall college experience. When students begin their academic training, they are paired with a Pathway Advocate who helps them navigate college and the services available to them. There are now two Pathway Advocate positions, funded by a combination of grants that target out-of-school youth. Having these dedicated staff allows the one-on-one support and weekly, personal guidance that the Director cites as critical to student and program success. Wrap-around support services continue to follow students as they transition to and enter the workforce, providing resume writing, interviewing, leadership, and other essential employability skills that are critical to gaining and sustaining employment.

Outcomes

Part of the requirements of being a YouthBuild site is a focus on measuring student performance along the Pre-Apprentice Pathway to career, and the college has been tracking some student outcomes since 2009. As part of the data collection during the Adult Education division's strategic planning process in 2011, other program data revealed YouthBuild students' HSE/GED® completion rates, HSE/GED® attainment, and reading and math level completions were consistently better than similar adult education students who did not participate in YouthBuild.

PRE-APPRENTICESHIPS

To date, 202 students have enrolled in the program, 89 have earned a HSE/GED®, 126 have received the PACT certificate, and 126 have had initial job placement. A goal of program staff is to be able to measure how many YouthBuild participants return to L&C to pursue further education. Though the number is small, they are hopeful that the coordination of data among different systems will be improved so that longitudinal, pathway-level data can be tracked.



Sustaining and Scaling

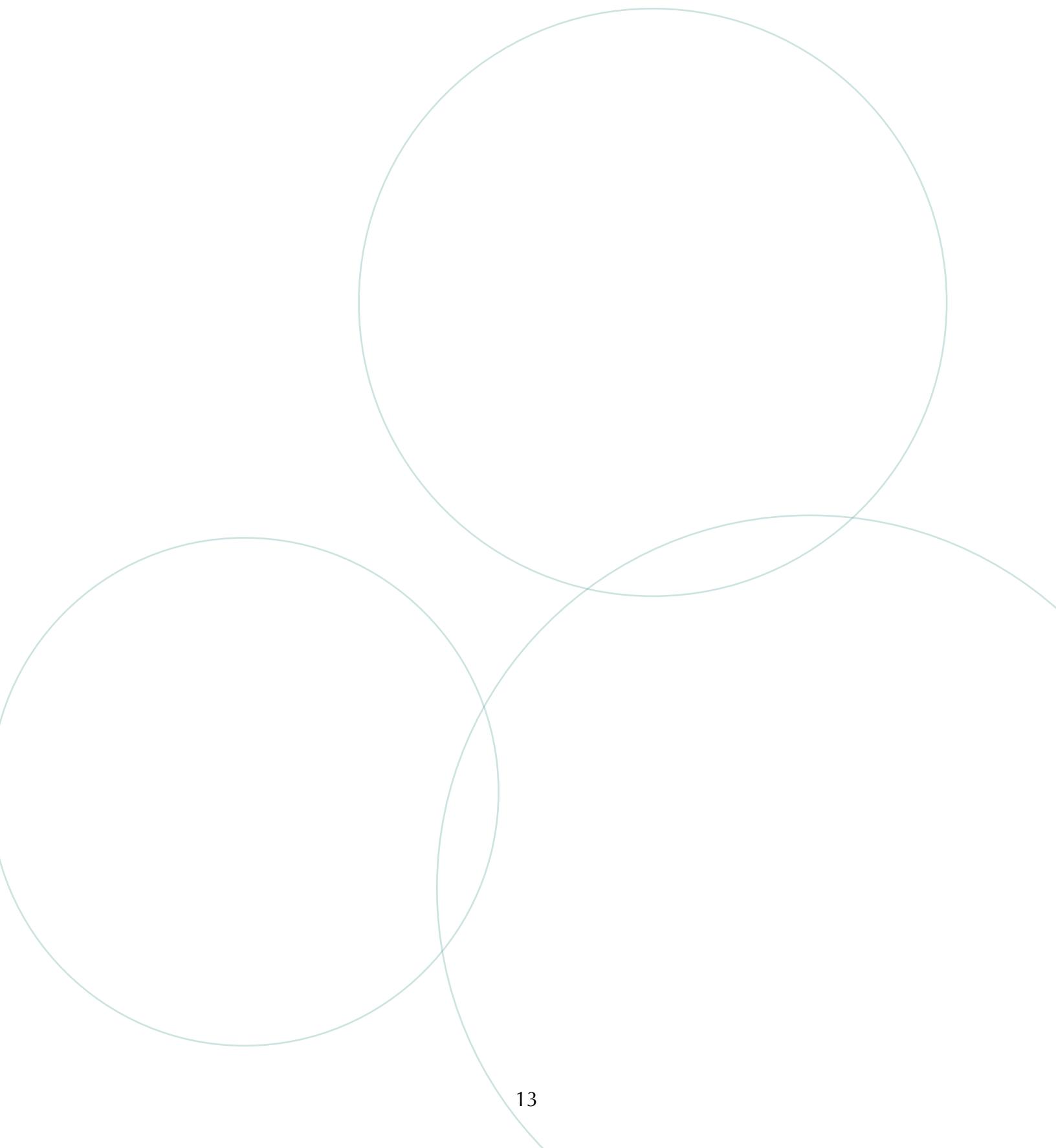
One of the parameters of the YouthBuild funding model is that the provider must raise a minimum of 25% matching non-federal funds, so the issue of sustaining the program is always paramount. One partnership has resulted in a fiscal win for the program and a bonus for a large community served by the college: The city of Alton donated a dilapidated home to the program for students to rehabilitate. Once completed, Habitat for Humanity bought the house, and proceeds of the sale are helping cover program costs not allowable by other grant funds. As part of YouthBuild U.S.A., Adult Education staff appreciate the training provided by coaches assigned to help them improve programming that meets the evolving needs of students. Networking among YouthBuild sites also helps sustain and scale ideas and practices; L&C staff are involved in Teacher Fellows, wherein YouthBuild staff across the country share lesson plans and teaching strategies. One member of the YouthBuild staff added, "Sometimes it's money, but sometimes it's the influence and information gained through networking that helps [the program] get better. Plus, the young people make us want to do a better job." By 2014, L&C's program was designated a 'full affiliate', signifying that the program adheres to the integrity of the YouthBuild model, provides support and a learning network for staff, and strengthens the YouthBuild movement in its support and advocacy for low-income youth. Finally, the collection of data and regular program evaluation, requirements of having a YouthBuild program, have revealed that student outcomes are improving.

Improving Career Pathways

Pre-apprenticeships expand access to education and workforce training to populations that have been traditionally underserved. Working closely with college partners, industry, and local employers, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships serve local economies by increasing employment opportunities for residents. The L&C YouthBuild Pre-Apprentice Construction Pathway provides the comprehensive suite of services and instruction required to train and support students from their pathway access point at the secondary level to completion of an industry valued credential that leads to employment or further education.

Local Contact

For more information about these programs, contact Dr. Valorie Harris, Associate Dean of Adult Education at vharris@lc.edu.



CAREER PATHWAY TO HEALTHCARE

Featured College: Lincoln Land Community College

Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) serves a geographically large district of 15 counties in Central Illinois. With its main campus in Springfield, there are also outreach centers in four district communities.

Each year, the college serves about 15,000 students in credit and non-credit courses; the majority of students are enrolled in transfer programs, and about 30 percent are enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) programs. The Associate Degree Nursing and the Certified Nursing Assistant programs are among the college's top five CTE programs in regards of enrollment.⁷ For more information visit the following website: <http://www.llcc.edu/>



Adult Career Pathway to Healthcare

Beginning in 2008, LLCC developed a pathway program to help students complete their high school equivalency while also learning basic skills to better prepare them for success in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. Also referred to as the 'Pre-CNA to CNA Bridge,' (or Bridge) the pathway program has continued to grow and develop to meet student and employer needs. In 2012, the program was amended with the support of an

Accelerating Opportunities grant. This grant established the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS). Eight Illinois community colleges received funding to build pathways that linked Adult Basic Education (ABE) or English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum with one-year, college level, certificate programs. The ICAPS model has been expanded to include 25 colleges in the state, due to its ability to 'bridge the gaps' between the sometimes-disconnected islands of education and training opportunities in secondary and postsecondary education, and among support systems so often necessary for student success.⁸

Exemplary Features

College leaders and Adult Education staff point to three exemplary features of the pathway that result in student and program success: a critical partnership, student support, and the Academy. The first exemplary feature is LLCC's partnership with Sangamon County Community Resources (SCCR). This partnership developed as a result of promising student outcomes data from the first cohorts of students who had benefited from support services offered as part of a Workforce Innovation Act bridge program in 2008. In addition to helping support the program financially and providing critical assistance in recruitment efforts, SCCR plays a lead role in case management services that are important for student success. In partnership with SCCR and with additional support by the ICAPS grant, the partners work together to meet student needs. The Director added that while the partnership is vital to the success of the students, braiding funding from multiple partners and sources can result in challenges. For instance, students must meet eligibility requirements not only for LLCC, but also for the partner(s) as well. In the case of the partnership with SCCR, students must meet an income threshold and live in Sangamon County.

CAREER PATHWAY TO HEALTHCARE

Case management is the second exemplary feature. The ability to address barriers immediately as needs arise has resulted in high levels of student retention. Prior to the LLCC/SCCR partnership, the Director stated they often had to “scramble” to find resources and support that some students needed in order to persist in the program. Services provided by SCCR include securing rental assistance, handling personal and family issues, finding funds for transportation, assisting with recruitment, determining eligibility requirements, and providing referrals for other services available in the community.



The Adult Education staff at the college also support students by connecting them with services available at the college, such as counseling and advising, career advisement, and sources for scholarships. At the college, the point person is an adult education transition coordinator whose role includes recruitment, orientation, assessment, enrollment, scheduling, retention, advising, and case management. The Director pointed out that it is not unusual for LLCC's transition coordinator to provide case management services daily to students, especially in the early weeks of the program. Working together, Adult Education staff feel they have tapped into both entities' strengths in order to anticipate and meet students' needs.

The Adult Career Pathway to Healthcare program includes skills training and an intensive “Academy” experience, the third exemplary feature. The Academy was introduced in 2014 as a result of program evaluation and a concern over a high attrition rate in a recent cohort. In the Academy, students “get ready for college” in a two-week long course that emphasizes teamwork, time management, college knowledge, and general issues in healthcare. Admission to the Academy begins with a group orientation and assessment, followed by an individual interview with the transition coordinator. Students who meet the eligibility requirements (income level, assessment, and a successful interview) are then admitted to the Academy.

Academy course content is designed to prepare students for the rigorous, 16-week coursework that follows. Academy courses reinforce team building and include topics on time management, communication, professionalism, work place and stress management, attitude, goal setting, and problem solving. Attendance is required, and students are evaluated on their promptness, participation, completion of activities, and attitude. Adult Education staff shared that students often become very close during the intensive two-week program, forming supportive relationships that continue through the CNA program and beyond.

Those who successfully complete the Academy move on to the first 8-week term, which is an integrated mix of courses in basic college success skills, workplace readiness skills, computer skills, and topical issues in the general healthcare industry, called the Pre-healthcare course.

CAREER PATHWAY TO HEALTHCARE

All courses earn college credit, with the exception of the Pre-healthcare course that provides information about the roles and responsibilities of a CNA. This course has evolved over the years, with input from employers, the Dean of Nursing at LLCC, and student feedback. The Employability Skills course is team-taught by CTE faculty and an Adult Education instructor. All students are also required to attend a support class, taught by an Adult Education instructor.



To continue to the CNA portion of the program, students must complete all courses with an “A, B, or C” grade and demonstrate consistent attendance and active classroom participation. The majority of students successfully complete the Academy and the first 8-week term and move on to the final 8-week term, the Basic Nurse Assistant (CNA) course.

Successful completion of the pathway results in 12.5 hours of transfer credit and a credential, two key milestones in surpassing the “tipping point” benchmark that studies have shown result in an average of \$8,500 higher annual income than for students who enroll in ABE or GED programs but earn 10 credits or less and no credential.⁹

Outcomes

The college measures outcomes including attendance, completion, grades, attrition rate, and the attainment of stackable certificates. Stackable certificates include CPR for healthcare, the LLCC Basic Nurse Assistant certificate of completion, and the Illinois state Basic Nurse Assistant certification. To date, 16 cohorts have completed the healthcare pathway. Cohorts vary by size but have ranged from 5 students to 12 students. A total of 127 students have enrolled in the healthcare pathway, and 91 (72%) completed the entire 18-week pathway and earned all 3 certificates. An additional 8 students are currently enrolled. A total of 1,389 transferable college credits and 306 industry-recognized certificates have been awarded to date. LLCC is aware of 14 students who continued on to further training in the healthcare field, and staff reported they are certain that there are more who attended programs outside of LLCC. To date, the college has documentation that 91 of the 127 enrolled students have gained employment, even if they did not complete the program. Eighty-two of those students gained employment in the healthcare field. The college and SCCR recognize the importance of gathering student outcomes data. SCCR pays a \$100 incentive for students who contact LLCC upon employment and provide proof of that employment with a current pay stub. The incentive has been very effective in promoting continued communication and follow-up with former students.

Outcomes that cannot be measured with grades and tests are also significant to program staff. They reported that many students who faced significant personal and family-related barriers, that often result in students dropping out, have remained in this pathway program, earned their certificates, and gained employment by using resources and applying new skills that helped them cope during difficult times. Staff point to support services and relationships formed among cohort students and with the instructors while in this program that provide students with the confidence they need to succeed. The program coordinator emphasized that these, and many more anecdotal outcomes, are equally as important as the data.

CAREER PATHWAY TO HEALTHCARE

Sustaining and Scaling

Partnerships, consistent funding, strong recruitment efforts, and comprehensive support services are critical elements for sustainability. Internal and external partnerships are equally important, according to the Director. Staff in college admissions, placement and testing, financial aid, advising, and the learning lab play vital roles in students' success. Case management, provided by both LLCC's transition coordinator and SCCR staff, is another key element. Also supporting sustainability is the fact that the pathway program has evolved over time by adapting to changing needs and learning from experience. For example, the development of the Academy was the result of careful analysis and reflection of poor outcomes from one cohort of students. The Academy is now considered a "best practice" within the college and will be duplicated as other pathways are developed.



Sustaining and scaling the program is aided by recruitment strategies that include promoting the pathway in adult education classes, to clients at SCCR, and to clients at the America's Job Center, the local workforce agency. Former students were cited as a good source of referrals as well. The Director also mentioned that as the college scales the bridge and pathway practices that have worked in the CNA program to planned pathways in Automotive Technology and Early Childhood Education, they will expand their social media strategies to reach more potential students.

Improving Career Pathways

Formal and informal evaluations of career pathway programs consistently point to the inclusion of student support services and the integration of workplace readiness skills in the curriculum as two critical elements for success. Both contribute to higher rates of retention, completion, and employment. Still, it is often difficult to find the partners needed and the flexibility of programs and practices to accommodate the needs of underserved, and often low-income, students and enable their success. Colleges need partnerships to achieve these goals. LLCC's Adult Career Pathway to Healthcare is one example that is demonstrating use of these elements and as a result, has achieved positive outcomes for the college and its students.

Local Contact

For more information about the program contact Lyn Buerkett, Director of Adult Education and Literacy at Lyn.Buerkett@llcc.edu or 217.786.4534.

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING

Featured College: Parkland College

Parkland College is located in Champaign, Illinois. Its East Central Illinois location comprises the third largest community college district in the state, serving over 300,000 residents in 11 counties. PC offers more than 120 degree and certificate programs to around 7,500 students (FY17) per semester. For more information visit the following website:
<https://www.parkland.edu/>



Meeting Employers' Needs

The Carle health system is a major employer in East Central Illinois. The Carle health system employs hundreds of Medical Assistants (MA) at many locations throughout the region. MAs receive on-the-job training by Carle health system staff, but the curriculum lacks some academic and technical skills training needed to successfully complete the national certification exam. Employees with the national certification are valuable to the Carle health system because national certification is required in order for an MA to enter information into patients' medical records. Having the national credential also strengthens the employees' marketability and mobility. In 2012, the Carle health system approached the director of the Medical Assistant program at Parkland to design a short-term training program that would provide its MAs with academic and skills preparation needed to complete the national certification exam and equip MAs with the skills needed to meet changing workforce demands as they advance in their careers. The result of this collaboration is Parkland College's MA to CMA program.

The MA to CMA program includes four courses, and students earn 10 credit hours in 24 weeks while working full time. The courses, taught by Parkland staff, are offered at multiple worksites at times that coincide with the start or end of employees' work shifts. Lectures are delivered online, and labs are scheduled once per week. The national certification exam is also administered at the worksite for employees' convenience. In relation to creating the training, the Dean of CTE described PC's willingness to be flexible in delivering course content so that it was conducive to employee and employer needs. Semester-long courses were compressed and paired with complementary courses to accommodate the need for learners to gain the necessary skills and learn the needed information in the shortest time possible.

Exemplary Features

The Dean of CTE cites two major organizing feature common to the incumbent healthcare training program that makes it exemplary. The process used to establish the program and incorporate the flexibility needed by both the employer and employees laid the foundation for a productive partnership.

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING

First, the college and the hospital worked closely together to provide a customized program that met the curricular needs of the students and the certification they wanted to obtain in the most expedient way possible. In the program design phase, Parkland faculty identified the knowledge and skills tested in the national certification exam, and other important skills cited by health system staff, to examine existing course syllabi for new content needed and to eliminate redundancy in the curriculum. Selected courses and content were paired in new ways to enhance learning and understanding. Parkland faculty and administrators reconfigured course formats to meet the goals of the employer and the needs of the incumbent workers' schedules, compressing some courses and lengthening others. Further, faculty considered students' work shifts when designing schedules for labs and clinicals and adapted their work hours and teaching locations to meet the needs of the students. This level of customization and consideration is appreciated, and cohorts are offered all year long at Carle health system locations to keep up with demand.

Second, this employer-driven program maximized the expertise and assets of each partner to meet common goals. The Carle health system recruited students from among their employees based on interest and experience. The orientation was coordinated by the Carle health system at a time that employees can attend. The Parkland faculty provided details of the program's content and assist with registration and billing. Carle staff oversaw clinical coordination so that student-employee schedules could accommodate on-site classroom and clinical instruction. The Carle health system offered instructional space so that employees would not have to travel after or before work shifts to attend class. The college provided the instructors from among health professions faculty who had the experience and credentials required to teach the content. Further, the college was flexible in adapting semester-based courses to meet employer and students' needs; not all colleges are willing, or have been able, to successfully accomplish this feat.

The Dean of CTE at Parkland emphasized the need to approach a collaborative effort, such as this program, with an open mind and the willingness to think differently. She added, "With incumbent workers as students, their needs and those of their employer are paramount when making curricular and instructional decisions. We adjust."

Outcomes

There are several, anecdotal outcomes to note. According to the Dean of CTE, the employer has gained increased numbers of employees that now meet the Medicare standard of "Meaningful Use," which means they can document patient information into the chart or electronic medical record. The hospital system has reported to PC that employees feel they have more confidence due to their acquired certifications. The college learned to better listen to the employer's needs and deliver what it needed, when it needed it, and how it was needed. This is in contrast to a more traditional approach of offering a standard, semester-based course during standard daytime hours and measured in seat-time format. About their ability to be flexible to employers' needs, the faculty felt "enormous satisfaction in delivering curriculum that was very much needed, relevant, and that had resulted in increased competencies and certifications achieved," according to the Dean of CTE. She added, "We [Health Professions staff] have gained insight into how we can better meet the needs of the students and the employer."

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING

Sustaining and Scaling

The MA to CMA program at the Carle health system/Parkland is considered to be sustainable, having served over 125 employees in 12 cohorts during its six years of existence. The program is providing access to a career ladder leading to expanded skills, higher income, greater job mobility, and increased job satisfaction. Helping sustainability is the fact that the employees are reimbursed for the cost of the program, and the tuition rate is set at the in-district rate regardless of whether the student's home address is within the Parkland district or not. Further, Parkland has been able to employ healthcare faculty willing to travel to distant worksites to teach both day and evening courses.



The success of the MA to CMA training caught the attention of a different hospital system, located in another community college district, that did not have MAs on staff but instead, wanted to offer their Certified Nurse Assistants (CNA) the opportunity to become Certified Medical Assistants (CMA). Parkland's Medical Assistant faculty felt they could adapt what they learned in designing the MA to CMA program for the Carle health system and scale it to the other system.

The faculty started the process by meeting with hospital representatives to assess the learning needs and logistical requirements of bringing a customized program to the new location. After learning the employer's goals and parameters, Parkland faculty designed a 12 credit hour bridge program that is delivered over a 16-week period.

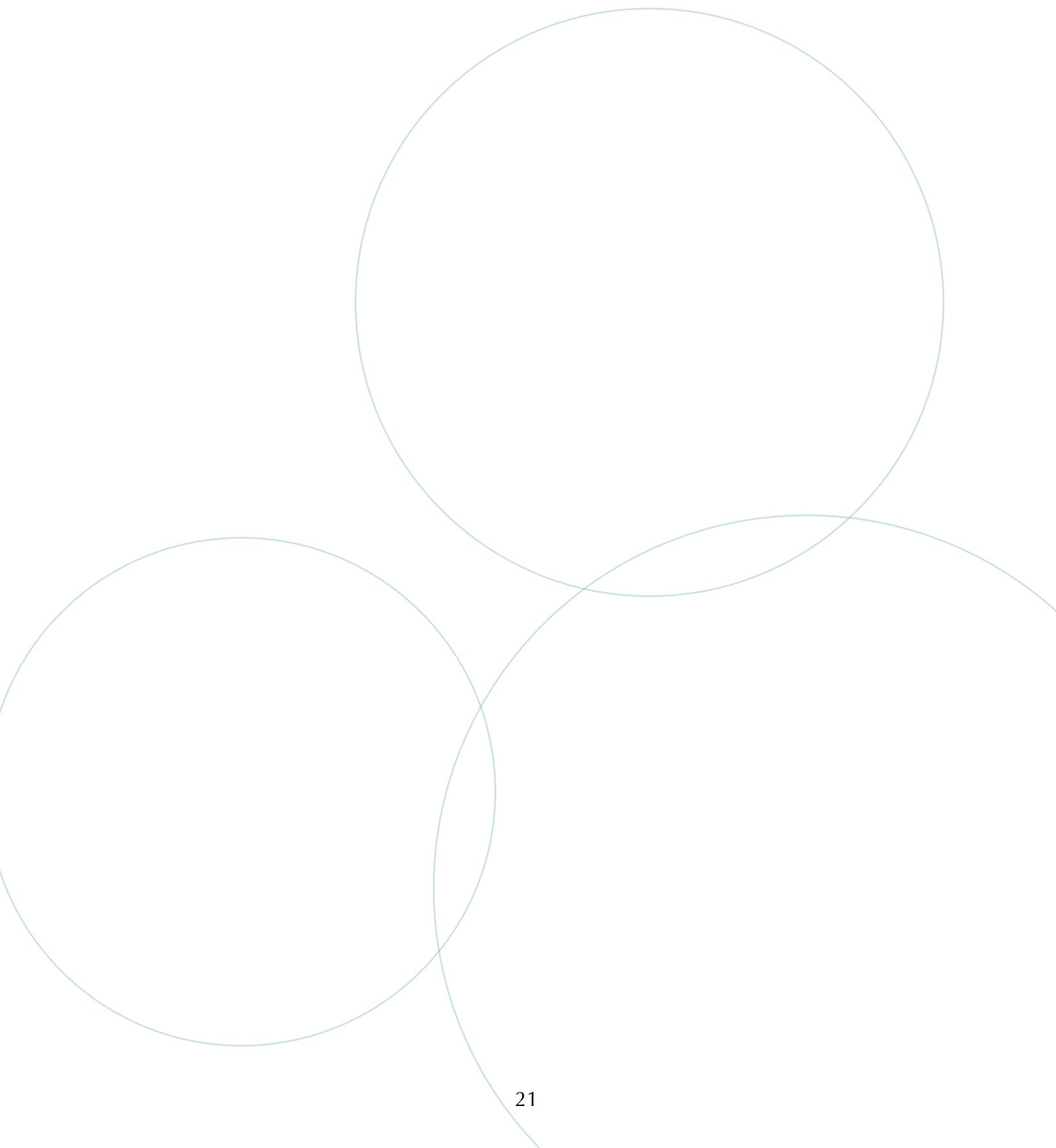
The first cohort completed the CNA to CMA bridge with 100 percent pass rate on the Medical Assistant certification exam. The second cohort began in 2018. The Dean of CTE at Parkland added, "Recently, two more healthcare systems have contacted us about designing similar customized training for their staff."

Improving Career Pathways

There is much emphasis in career pathways work on improving and expanding the entry points, or on-ramps, for diverse learner groups. When creating seamless pathway transitions partners must work together to make the next step as smooth as possible for students. The career pathway partnership between education and employers is essential for establishing and facilitating pathways to employment and in this case, enabling incumbent workers to advance in their careers. Bridge programs and other short term training programs provide an efficient avenue to achieve in-demand, stackable credentials for ever changing industries and workplaces and the people they employ. Parkland College, recognizing that the students needed to build upon their current credentials while maintaining full time employment, carefully selected content and competencies and optimized their flexibility in scheduling and staffing. This flexibility enabled invaluable savings in time and money for students and employers. Working closely together, both entities lent their strengths to sustain and grow a competitive, well-credentialed workforce that benefited all involved.

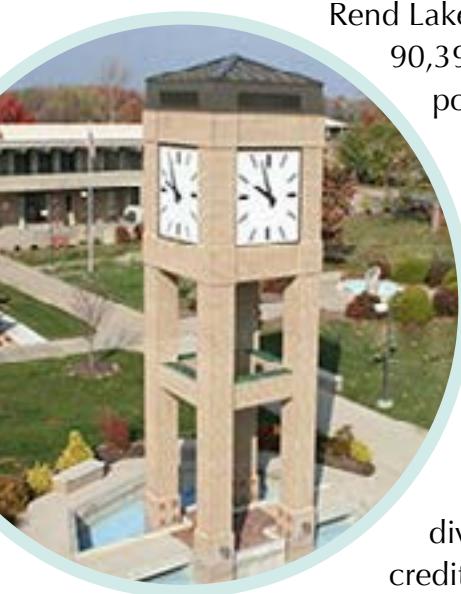
Local Contact

For more information about these programs, contact Bobbi Scholze, Dean of Career and Technical Education at bscholze@parkland.edu or 217.353.2182.



DUAL CREDIT AND ARTICULATION

Featured College: Rend Lake College



Rend Lake College (RLC) includes parts of eight counties in Southern Illinois and has 90,394 district residents, the sixth smallest Illinois community college district by population. The 2017 unduplicated enrollment was 5,773. Students can choose courses from among 58 associate of applied science (AAS) degree programs, eight college transfer programs, and 77 certificate programs. Students in the 13 high school districts can qualify for enrollment in one or more of the 60 dual credit courses offered by the college. More RLC dual credit information can be found at <https://www.rlc.edu/academics/dual-credit>.

Continuously Improving Dual Credit

Dual credit at RLC is operated out of the Community and Corporate Education division and has offered high school students the opportunity to earn college credits through articulated credit and dual credit courses for many years. Prior to 2015, dual credit courses and policies varied across academic departments. The results were multiple policies and practices and confusion among college advisors, faculty, high school counselors, and students. In 2015, the college hired a dual credit coordinator who helped standardize and coordinate the program. Since 2015, other changes and improvements have been made to respond to the decreasing availability of qualified dual credit instructors, a reduction in numbers of CTE course offerings at district high schools, and smaller populations of juniors and seniors at some high schools. The improvement of the dual credit program was part of a college-wide continuous improvement effort called Pathways to Results, a grant from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). During this process, the college investigated ways in which dual credit programs could improve student retention outcomes.

Exemplary Features

The dual credit coordinator summarized what they believe are exemplary features into two areas: 1) creating innovative solutions for delivery and 2) leveraging relationships to create student-focused opportunities. Due to changes in personnel and high school enrollments, dual credit delivery methods had to be addressed. With input from faculty and administrators in the district, RLC increased their online dual credit offerings, increased outreach efforts to high schools where there were no qualified instructors to teach dual credit courses, expanded dual credit offerings to include general education courses, worked with high schools to rearrange schedules so that students could travel to the college without missing core courses, and expanded student support services to smooth the transition from high school to college. All of these changes helped to better meet the needs of students and high schools in the district.

DUAL CREDIT AND ARTICULATION

The second exemplary feature focuses on the relationships that exist between college advisors, high school counselors, and the students. The dual credit coordinator stated that many students face an adjustment period when taking college level courses while still enrolled in high school. She explained that it is her passion to be sure the transition is as smooth as possible. She works closely with high school counselors and college advisors to see that students receive the individualized attention they need,



noting that some students make the transition easily, and others need services offered at the college. As part of her role, she coordinates students' access to RLC's support services available in career counseling; curriculum advisement; and academic assistance in the math, writing, and communications labs. Everything available to a college student is also available to high school students taking dual credit courses, including issuance of a college ID which allows full access to college amenities. The dual credit team, led by the coordinator, works hard to customize the services students need to succeed.

Expanding Partnerships

RLC staff credit three, critical partnerships as factors in the program's success.

The first is with the 13 area high schools, six of which send students to the RLC campus for courses. The high schools offer transportation, and secondary school administrators continuously work with RLC to offer the courses that students want

to take at times that coordinate with the high schools' schedules. A second key partnership is with the Regional Office of Education (ROE) that handles the verification of faculty qualifications for teaching a dual credit course. The Dual Credit Quality Act requires all instructors teaching a transfer-level, dual credit course have a master's degree in the specialty or at least 18 graduate level credit hours within that specialty. Also, the ROE absorbs the lab fees for students enrolled in certain courses. A third key partnership is with the divisions of the college (i.e. Applied Science and Technology, Allied Health, Math and Science, Liberal Arts) and the RLC Foundation. The dual credit coordinator cited very strong support from RLC's Dean of Liberal Arts whose "Can do – Will do" approach has helped dual credit offerings expand to include many general education courses. Further, the Foundation is working with the coordinator to provide some need-based scholarships to cover fees associated with some courses. Area churches and the ROE are also picking up the fees for some students in need of financial assistance.

Outcomes

RLC's dual credit students benefit from the program in several ways. According to the program coordinator, "2,786 students (duplicated) saved \$1,147,120 in tuition by enrolling in the dual credit program. And, several high school seniors graduate each year from RLC before they graduate from their respective high schools."

DUAL CREDIT AND ARTICULATION

Sustaining and Scaling

Ongoing work on several fronts helps sustain and grow the dual credit program at RLC. These efforts are especially important in the context of equity, as they address barriers specific to RLC's location in rural Southern Illinois and the related challenges of finding qualified instructors in order to offer a wide range of dual credit courses. The college has been awarded the Dual Credit Enhancement Grant, a competitive grant offered through the ICCB, for several years and has used that award to grow the program, improve curriculum alignment, and buy equipment. RLC is also among the 64% of Illinois community colleges that do not charge students tuition for dual credit courses, therefore, the college works hard to seek funds to be able to offer this jumpstart to a postsecondary credential for its students.¹⁰ Perkins postsecondary funds, regular college funds, and funds from the ROE, along with many 'in kind' donations help sustain the dual credit program. Still, sustaining and scaling the dual credit program require ongoing communication and marketing strategies. Currently the college advertises the dual credit program through a newsletter mailed to all district residents; RLC dual credit staff make visits to high school classrooms to talk about the program and maintain personal communication with high school counselors; and the dual credit coordinator presents the program's advantages at RLC's annual open house.

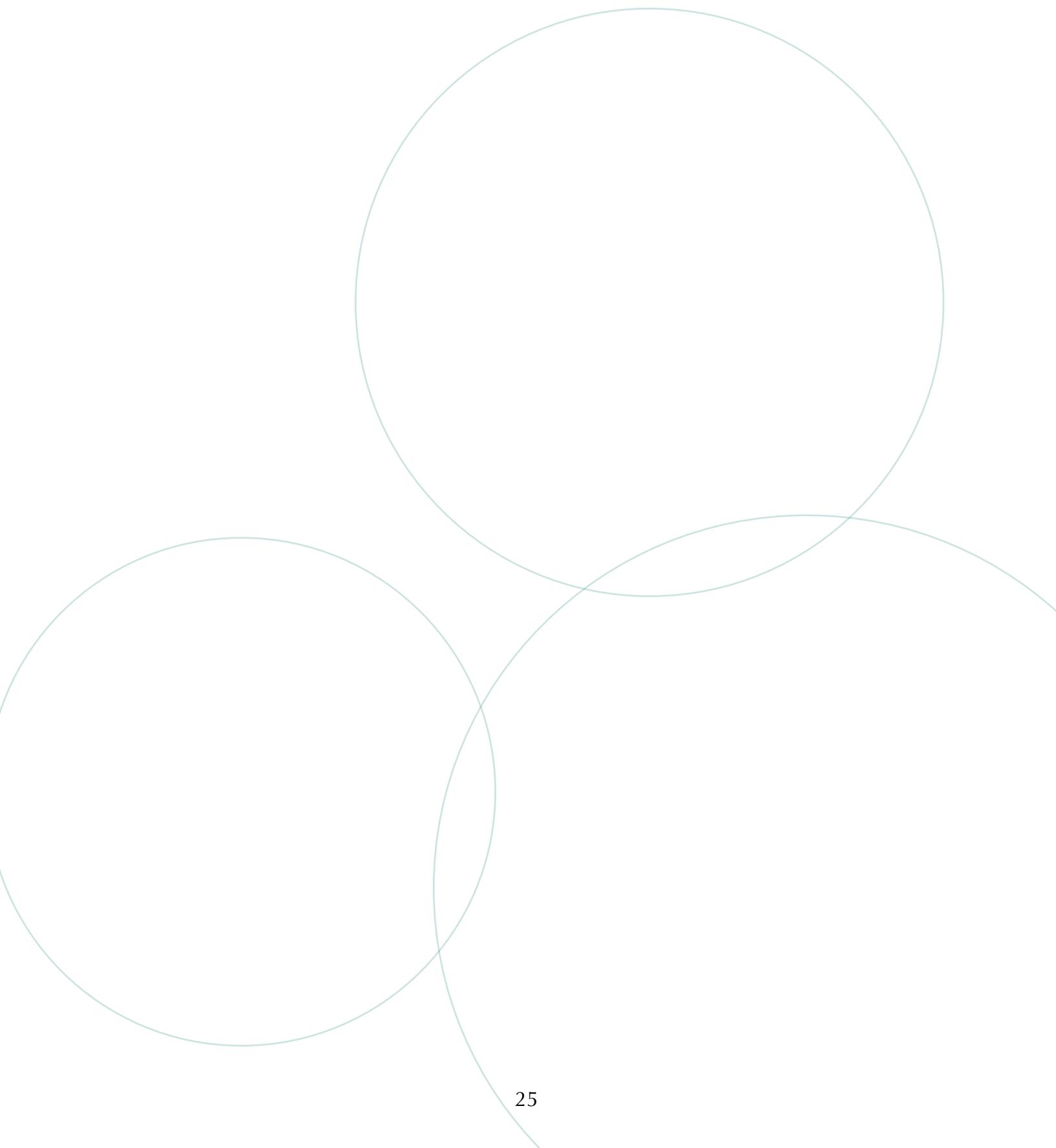


Improving Career Pathways

With a strong dual credit program, high school students can more easily make the career pathway transition from high school to college. The coordinator explained her critical role as liaison: "Dual credit students know where to go with questions or concerns. If they're taking a class on campus, I meet them before the semester starts to show where their classes are. When they enroll as college freshmen, they already know the different processes like getting books and extra schedules." This personalized service and savings in time and money allow students to achieve success and earn credentials that have value in education and the workplace. The program coordinator stated, "Dual credit is the first glimpse most high school students have into Rend Lake College. It gives me great pride to utilize that opportunity to create the most innovative ways in which all students can find their niche and truly experience success."

Local Contact

For more information about dual credit at Rend Lake College, contact Margo Wagner, Dual Credit Coordinator at wagnerm@rlc.edu or 618.437.5321.



EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-BASIC TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-PARAMEDIC PATHWAY

Featured College: Waubonsee Community College

Waubonsee Community College (WCC) has four campus locations and 16 extension sites in a geographically large district comprised of 22 municipalities including rural, suburban, and urban towns in Northeastern Illinois; the main campus is in Sugar Grove. WCC district 516 serves 13 public and 8 private high schools. With a district population of approximately 449,304 residents, the 2015-16 unduplicated enrollment was 18,931.¹¹ According to 2016 data, more than half of WCC's students were first generation college students, and 29.3 percent were Hispanic/Latino.¹² The college works closely with the Valley Education to Employment System (VALEES), located on its Sugar Grove campus, to coordinate career and technical education (CTE) curriculum; administer articulated and dual credit programs; provide staff development; and promote business and industry partnerships among high schools, career centers, and WCC. The college offers many transfer degree programs and 35 CTE certificate and degree programs, including the Emergency Medical Technician – Basic (EMT-B) Certificate and the Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic (EMT-P) AAS degree.



Emergency Medical Technician-Basic to Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic Pathway

WCC has offered the EMT-B program to secondary and postsecondary students for many years. The program of study is aligned with the U.S. Department of Transportation's national curriculum and is monitored by the Southern Fox Valley Emergency Medical System (SFVEMS). Secondary students take the one-semester EMT-B course at their high schools or a career center, and complete 20 clinical hours at an area hospital. Once students reach 18 years of age, they can obtain certification granted through the Illinois Department of Public Health or the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. The same EMT-B program is offered at WCC's campus each semester with daytime or evening course options. The EMT-B program grants 9 semester hours of college credit to both secondary and college students who successfully complete the course. The Assistant Dean reported that many students go to work as an EMT-B after becoming certified.

After the college's reorganization in 2014, a SWOT analysis was completed for WCC's EMT-B and Fire Science programs. This analysis included input from a broad array of industry partners and identified areas of growth for the EMT-B, EMT-P, and Fire Science programs. It also identified a need to develop stronger secondary and industry relationships, and to increase the number of students graduating with the AAS degree in order to meet industry demand for EMTs and Fire Service personnel with the AAS degree (EMT-P or Fire Science).

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-BASIC TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN PARAMEDIC PATHWAY

Additional efforts included hiring a full time EMT-B/ Fire Science faculty member and several initiatives to increase and sustain interaction between secondary EMT-B instructors, college instructors, and instructors offering professional development in the area. The EMT-P AAS degree program offered at WCC was restructured in 2008 when WCC and SFVEMS developed an affiliation. This relationship has led to the joint administration of the program. The college provides administration and resources to connect secondary students with the EMT-B and EMT-P post-secondary education and college credit, while also providing the AAS degree that is valued by the fire and emergency management industries. Meanwhile, SFVEMS provides a program director, clinical coordinator, and medical directors to ensure that the education that paramedic students and licensed paramedics receive is aligned with national standards and best practices. After students graduate, SFVEMS continues to maintain the students' licensing records and provide continuing education to meet licensing requirements. This affiliation led to the program's accreditation in 2013 through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP). The EMT-P program begins in January and includes 47 credits and 550 clinical hours over three semesters. Two cohorts are offered to accommodate students' needs; one group attends from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. and the other from 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

In 2016, WCC's EMT-P program was granted the Excellence in Action award from Advance CTE, one of 11 programs each year, one per career cluster, to receive the honor.¹³ This award is given to programs of study that contain work-based learning opportunities, have strong partnerships with business and industry and community organizations, include dual credit completion, represent strong career and technical education coursework, include letters of recommendation, and demonstrate success via graduation and credential attainment data.¹⁴

Exemplary Features

The needs within WCC's district vary widely due to its size and the inclusion of both rural and urban areas. When considering how to increase the number of students who transition from a certificate program to an AAS degree, WCC took a proactive approach that stressed responsiveness by deliberately gathering input from high schools, career centers, the EFE district, employers, faculty, students, and area hospitals. The Assistant Dean cited four aspects of the pathway that grew out of their conversations with partners, and that she believes make it exemplary: relationships, partnerships, curriculum alignment, and a focus on equity. The Assistant Dean explained that the culture of the paramedic and fire service industries relies heavily on close relationships among co-workers, so she sought to establish the same level of collegiality, open dialogue, and transparency that exists in the workplace. The program is designed so that "most students know each other, which mimics the workplace. It's a very familial environment," she explained. Students wear the EMT-P uniform from the first day of class, a program requirement to reinforce that EMTs are expected to always be professional and "on duty". Further, many faculty teach in the EMT-B program and the EMT-P program, and continuing education courses to working professionals. The relationships that are formed among students and faculty are especially close because everyone recognizes, "They will be our graduates' coworkers, eventually," she summarized.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-BASIC TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-PARAMEDIC PATHWAY

The program depends on partnerships with industry, the second exemplary feature. Industry has consistently and generously responded to the college's outreach. During the 2014 reorganization the program sought district employers' input on curriculum redesign and workplace skills and knowledge. Given the immediate response and valuable information provided, the program's leaders recognized they "weren't maximizing the potential that was there with industry partners."



According to the Assistant Dean that dynamic has changed, and the mantra now is, "We don't do anything without the input and support of industry." The program is enhanced with an affiliation agreement with three large area hospital systems, one (Northwestern Medicine at Delnor Hospital) of which grants them a dedicated classroom and a lab. They all offer clinical sites for students' required rotations. The program's director is dually employed by one of the hospitals and the college. Also, SFVEMS staff help manage accreditation issues. Further, the two career centers offer classroom space, and their faculty play a key role in recruitment of students who otherwise may not have considered EMS as a career option. The college is grateful to have partners who "know the industry best," and an active advisory committee of 21 employers, chaired by the local Emergency Medical System.

The Valley Education to Employment System and the two career centers help to ensure there is curriculum alignment, the third exemplary feature. Because of the overlap of instructors at all sites and their close relationships, curriculum techniques are shared and reinforced at all points on the pathway. There is complete transparency in the programs at all levels and at all sites they are offered.

Finally, a focus on equity is paramount in this program and at the college, representative of WCC's designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Additionally, the SWOT analysis of the Fire Science and EMT-B programs noted that the industry did not reflect demographics of the communities that they serve. Since then several changes have contributed to the increase in underrepresented students in the EMT-B program. The full-time faculty position was filled by a female with years of industry experience in EMT and Fire Science, and "she has made a huge difference" according to program officials. She, along with other faculty, are very involved in outreach to nontraditional students; the college acknowledges that this outreach is difficult, as it is everywhere across the country. The Assistant Dean revealed that, nationally, as students progress in the pathway, the percentage of female and minority enrollment decreases, two demographic outcomes they will continue to try to improve. Community agencies have joined the effort to include more equitable representation from diverse student groups.

In 2007, the City of Aurora initiated a program to increase community representation in the fire department and create a recruitment pipeline for the Aurora Fire Department by funding seven cadet positions for area students. This program pays for students to participate in the EMT-B program, and upon certification will pay for them to attend the EMT-P program as well. The results of the initial cadet class are still pending.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-BASIC TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN-PARAMEDIC PATHWAY

Outcomes

Each year, WCC prepares between 30-40 secondary students and about 150 college students for certification as an EMT-B. The college disaggregates and examines enrollment data to help monitor their efforts to achieve more equitable representation of program populations relative to the district at large. Over the last seven years, minority student enrollment in the EMT-B program has ranged from 23 (2014) to 32 (2018) percent; Hispanic or Latino enrollment has ranged from 14 (2014) to 22 (2016) percent; and female enrollment has ranged from 21 (2012) to 35 (2017 and 2018) percent. According to the Advance CTE report and based on 2014-15 data, 100% of the program's secondary students earned the EMT-B certificate, 60% of the postsecondary students earned the EMT-B certificate, and 84% of the postsecondary students earned the EMT-P AAS.

Sustaining and Scaling

The certificate and AAS programs have existed for many years and with enrollments of nearly 200 students per year, are considered sustainable. With the more recent formalization of partner relationships and positive outcomes as a result of those partnerships, program leaders are confident they can continue to serve the needs of the district. The 2016 award from Advance CTE as the outstanding national program in Health Science was a boost to program recognition in the state and beyond. As mentioned, the programs' partners strongly support its continuation. As an example, area fire departments and a group of emergency room physicians fund scholarships for students who are not already supported by other employers. Thanks to the outreach by area career centers and VALEES, high school counselors are becoming more aware of the programs and the industry demand for the occupation, so they can pass that information along to students.

Improving Career Pathways

Transition from secondary to postsecondary education in the same career pathway is not a new phenomenon, but it continues to be a key pathway transition point that often suffers from lack of alignment and partner involvement. Due to all partners' awareness of and investment in this career pathway, WCC and its partners have removed barriers, expanded opportunities for underrepresented populations, and created a smooth transition. The college and its partners recognize they need each other to create the pathway, and they welcome each member's critical contribution to achieve a cohesive program of study for students who can enter at multiple locations and at different times in their lives. The pathway partners continue to work diligently to create a culture of success wherein everyone benefits.

Local Contact

For more information about these programs, please see www.waubonsee.edu/emt, or contact Dr. Michelle Evans, Assistant Dean for Health Professions and Public Service at mevans@waubonsee.edu or 630.585.7900, ext. 3903.

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ACRONYM LIST

AAS: Associate of Applied Science Degree

ABE: Adult Basic Education

CAAHEP: Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

CMA: Certified Medical Assistant

CNA: Certified Nursing Assistant

CoAEMSP: Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions

CTE: Career and Technical Education

DCEO: Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

DOL: Department of Labor

EEF: Education for Employment

EMS: Emergency Medical System

EMT: Emergency Medical Technician

ESL: English as a Second Language

HSE/GED®: High School Equivalency/GED® (Specific brand of High School Equivalency test)

HSI: Hispanic Serving Institution

ICCB: Illinois Community College Board

ICAPS: Illinois Career and Academic Preparation System

ICSPS: Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support

ILACEP: Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

MA: Medical Assistant

NACEP: National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

RA: Registered Apprenticeship

ROE: Regional Office of Education

RTI: Related Training Instruction

SCCR: Sangamon County Community Resources

SFVEMS: Southern Fox Valley Emergency Medical System

VALEES: Valley Education to Employment System

WIOA: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

DEFINITIONS

Apprenticeship Models

An employer-driven, “learn while you earn” model that combines structured on-the-job training (OJT) with job-related instruction in curricula tied to the attainment of industry-recognized skills standards and leading to an industry credential. The OJT is provided by the employer, who hires the apprentice at the commencement of the program and pays the participant during the program.

Registered Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship registered with the U.S. Department of Labor meeting the standards defined by USDOL.

Non-Registered Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship that is not registered with the U.S. Department of Labor, but that meets all Registered Apprenticeship criteria other than application for registration.

Pre-Apprenticeship

A program that has a documented partnership with an employer and is designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship or Non-Registered Apprenticeship which includes all of the following:

1. Training and curriculum that aligns with the skill needs of employers in the economy of the State or region and that has been designed to prepare participants to meet the minimum entry-level requirements of the Apprenticeship.
2. Access to educational and career counseling, and other supportive services as needed by participants.
3. Hands-on meaningful learning activities that are connected to education and training activities, such as Career Exploration and Career Development Experiences, and that reinforce foundational professional skills including, at a minimum, those outlined in the Essential Employability Skills framework.
4. Upon successful completion of the program, participants are supported to apply for a Registered Apprenticeship or Non-Registered Apprenticeship program, and may receive preference for enrollment.

Youth-Apprenticeship

A program for youth (ages 16 to 24) currently enrolled in secondary education or pursuing a high school equivalency, including those with disabilities, that include, at minimum, the following:

1. 450 hours of paid on-the-job training under the supervision of a mentor;
2. At least 2 semesters of related instruction that ideally counts towards a high school and/or postsecondary credential, but minimally leading to an Industry Credential;
3. Ongoing and a final assessment measuring success in mastering skill standards;

DEFINITIONS

4. Career exploration where participants learn about several positions within the employer and the field; and
5. Wraparound supports (e.g. case management and counseling) and holistic upskilling (e.g. technical skills and soft skills).
6. Upon successful completion of the program, participants are supported to apply for one or more of the following: entry-level employment, admission to a Registered Apprenticeship or Non-Registered Apprenticeship program, or admission to other articulated postsecondary education options (including 2- and 4-year programs).

Bridge Program

Bridge programs prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary education and training leading to career-path employment in high-demand, middle- and high-skilled occupations. The goal of bridge programs is to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career-path employment. The following definition outlines the key components of bridge programs in Illinois. This definition provides a foundation for bridge program design in Illinois.

Core Elements:

1. Contextualized instruction that integrates basic reading, math, and language skills and industry/occupation knowledge.
2. Career development that includes career exploration, career planning within a career area, and understanding the world of work (specific elements depend upon the level of the bridge program and on whether participants are already incumbent workers in the specific field).
3. Transition services that provide students with the information and assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education or remedial coursework to credit or occupational programs. Services may include (as needed and available): academic advising, tutoring, study skills, coaching, and referrals to individual support services, e.g., transportation and childcare.

Note: Career development and transition services should take into account the needs of those low-income adults who will need to find related work as they progress in their education and career paths.

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Essential Employability Skills

Foundational skills needed for success in college, careers, and life including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Personal Ethic: integrity, respect, perseverance, positive attitude
2. Work Ethic: dependability, professionalism
3. Teamwork: critical thinking, effective and cooperative work
4. Communication: active listening, clear communication

Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS)

An Accelerating Opportunities Initiative, seeks to address the needs of the adults in our community who are in need of a high school diploma. Recognizing that by 2018, two-thirds of the job opportunities will require some level of postsecondary education, it seeks to provide an opportunity for skill attainment. The ICAPS program includes dual enrollment in Adult Education and Career and Technical Education courses, leading to completion of the high school equivalency (GED), an institutional certificate, and at least one industry certification. Each program includes a pathway for students to continue their education, leading to a degree.

In addition to the unique programming offerings, intense support services are offered to ensure students have the tools needed to complete their studies and be successful in the workforce. A career navigator works with each student, assisting the student with any obstacles that arise.

Definitions provided by the Workforce Readiness through Apprenticeships & Pathway project, Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth. 2018. Illinois State Definitional Framework for Career Pathways. Illinois Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth.



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