Pennsylvania
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

Task Force on Adult Learning

Degree and Certificate
Completion Subcommittee

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS
September 2009

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Acknowledgements

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Innovation is projected to be the engine that drives the United State's economy of the future. Occupations and skills associated with innovation – science, technology, engineering, and math – are growth occupations that create wealth, but they require postsecondary education and training and lifelong learning. Pennsylvania's STEM Initiative seeks to "dramatically increase P-20 students (especially females, minorities and underrepresented groups) in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics careers while continuing the development of effective strategies to retain, recruit and retrain our incumbent workforce in these critical fields."[1] This includes a long-term strategy to increase the number and diversity of Pennsylvania's residents and workers with high quality post-secondary STEM education and training.

According to the Lumina Foundation, the United States will fall 16 million degrees short of the number needed to match leading nations in the percentage of adults with a college degree and to meet the workforce needs of 2025. Over 1.4 million Pennsylvanians have some college but no degree; and, concurrently, Pennsylvania's college participation rate for 25-39 year olds with only a high school diploma was only 60 percent of the national rate.

Adults face barriers to completing a certificate or degree that are substantively different than barriers faced by traditional students. The Degree and Certification Completion Subcommittee of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board has spent the last year diligently pursuing clarification of the barriers to successful adult degree or certification completion, and has developed recommended solutions to address the barriers of preparedness, affordability, articulation, access, and cultural misalignment.

Preparedness

Preparedness refers to the individual's readiness for college-level or postsecondary training and education – having the knowledge and skills to re-enter a degree or certificate course of study. Even adults with some college credits, because they have been out of an academic setting for many years, may find themselves under-prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education and training.

Studies have shown that 59 percent of students entering postsecondary education and training through community colleges must first take remedial courses to bring them up to the necessary level to begin their course of study. A University of Texas at El Paso study of its own enrollment patterns found that 72 percent of students who failed remedial beginning algebra did not re-enroll in UTEP the following semester.[2] Research has shown that approximately 40 percent of traditional undergraduates at four-year universities and colleges take at least one remedial or developmental course, and remediation is even more common among older nontraditional students[3]

Unfortunately, research also shows that only three to four out of every ten community college students who are referred to remediation actually finish the sequence of courses to which they are referred.[4] This issue is of particular concern when it comes to non-traditional students re-entering postsecondary education to complete their degrees or credentials after being away from an academic setting for several years or even decades.

There have been mixed results in studies evaluating the completion rates of students in remedial courses. While remediation appears to increase persistence to the second year, it does not increase the completion of college-level credits or eventual degree completion.[5] Some argue that remediation lowers degree completion rates by increasing the requirements students must meet. However, remediation proponents counter that if remedial classes successfully teach or refresh the skills needed for college-level work, remedial students should be more likely than academically equivalent non-remedial students to complete a certificate or degree.

This report details a series of developmental education promising practices, backed by research indicating a positive impact on student retention and progression through courses of study to a degree or credential. Proven components include the following:

- Orientation, assessment, and placement are mandatory for all new students.
- Regular program evaluations are conducted, results are disseminated widely, and data are used to improve practice.
- Counseling support provided is substantial, accessible, and integrated with academic courses/programs.
- A high degree of structure is provided in developmental education courses.
- Developmental education faculties employ a variety of instructional methods to accommodate student diversity.
- Programs align entry/exit skills among levels and link course content to college-level performance requirements.

- Programs provide comprehensive academic support mechanisms, including the use of trained tutors.
- It is best to pair a remedial course with a regular curriculum course where instructors collaborate on teaching with the purpose of bringing remedial students into the regular program while the student earns college level credit.
- Supplemental instruction, with small-group sessions scheduled as a supplement to the course is the best methods for delivery of remedial programs.
- Developmental education is a clearly stated institutional priority. A clearly articulated mission based on a shared, overarching philosophy drives the developmental education program. Clearly specified goals and objectives are established for developmental courses and programs.
- The developmental education program is centralized or highly coordinated.
- Administrators support and encourage faculty development in basic skills, and the improvement of teaching and learning is connected to the institutional mission

Some additional examples include the I-BEST program in Washington State, the Digital Bridge Academy in California, and the Open Doors Learning Communities in New York.

Affordability

Affordability addresses the challenge of identifying and accessing the financial resources necessary for an adult student to successfully complete a program of study to obtain a credential or degree. The challenge for adult students is being able to pay tuition and fees to complete a degree or certificate program. Many fail to qualify for financial aid because they enroll for too few credit hours to meet grant and loan programs requirements. At the same time, such limited part-time enrollment is a necessity, to minimize foregone wages so that they can continue to meet their full adult financial obligations.

Affordability was cited by participants in the different discussion groups related to this report, as the most common and significant barrier to non-traditional student success. Quantifying the extent of the cost of education as a barrier, however, is not straightforward.

According to a recent Pennsylvania Department of Education report, the cost of attending Pennsylvania public colleges and universities ranks as the sixth most expensive in the nation.[6] This ranking carries forward to comparisons of student debt incurred to achieve a degree or certificate, leaving Pennsylvania students – both those who graduate and those who do not – with a higher debt load in relation to their post-college incomes. In fact, student debt has been rising faster than the salaries for jobs requiring a

degree.[7] This comparatively higher cost is coupled with the scarcity of financial aid available to students attending less than part-time. Adult student outreach programs, therefore, have worked to find ways to ease the financial burden of attendance.

A report on student debt listed Pennsylvania as the sixth highest average debt per student among those who borrowed, in the nation, at $23,617 in 2007, compared to the national average of $20,098. In fact, 71 percent of graduating Pennsylvanians graduate with debt compared to the national average of 59 percent. In the higher education report comparing the states, Measuring Up 2008, Pennsylvania received a grade of "F" in higher education affordability due to the percent of family income required to pay the costs of college and the average annual amount of student loans ($4,400 compared to the national average of $2,600.)[8] The debt study relies on a non-uniform self-reporting source and the "Measuring Up" report gave 49 states a grade of 'F' in terms of affordability. The figures, therefore, may not be exact; but both studies point to the problem of the affordability of postsecondary education and training.

Even after receiving financial aid, two-fifths of Pennsylvania's population with the lowest incomes – poor and working class families – need 44 percent of their annual income to pay for

community college, 61 percent for a public four-year college, and 134 percent for a private four-year college.[9] Participants at the "Degree Completion" session of the 2009 Governor's Conference on Higher Education expressed alarm at these figures, both because their understanding is that the cost of community colleges is lower than cited in the study, and because the figure could serve as a frightening deterrent to parents and children from poor and working class families exploring postsecondary education options for the first time. In addition, and unlike other states, all two-year campuses are included in Pennsylvania's data set. This means that the cost of universities with two-year campuses is combined with the cost of community colleges. The result is cost data skewed upwards, especially compared to other states.

There exist very limited options available to adults returning to postsecondary education or training on a less-than-half time basis. In response, the WAGE program was created in 2005. Governor Rendell negotiated an agreement with PHEAA to invest $10 million per year of earnings generated from student loan fees and interest income in a financial aid program for working adults. The Workforce Advancement Grant for Education (WAGE) provided grants to independent students who were not otherwise eligible for state grants and, in some cases, federal Pell Grants.[10] Unfortunately, as of 2007, no further WAGE grants were distributed to colleges because of legislative changes to the Federal Family Education Loan Program that affected revenues used to fund the program.

Another incentive being tried is free tuition at community college for students meeting certain criteria. My Degree Now, a $100,000 pilot program at the Community College of Philadelphia in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, will be working with

students to help them secure additional resources to earn their degree debt free. Cost of tuition and fees for a full time student totaled $3,528 in 2008, but the program assumes that most students will attend half time, lowering their cost of tuition and fees to $1,764. The partners hope to find additional funding for the next 2-3 years once the initial seed money of $100,000 is spent.

Recommendation

- The Commonwealth should resurrect the WAGE grant or a similar student financial aid program to provide financial aid for students attending less than part-time. The Commonwealth should restore the program at the $10 million per year level, and the previous set of restrictions on eligibility should be revisited to assure they align with the goals of promoting high priority and emerging occupations as well as to significantly increase the percentage of adults with credentials or degrees.

- The Commonwealth should actively and aggressively pursue funding from the Gates Foundation to duplicate My Degree Now initiatives across Pennsylvania. The goal would be for all Pennsylvania community colleges to be participants by 2010.

- The Commonwealth should change the student financial aid deadline from May 1 to August 1 and provide the funding necessary to PHEAA to implement the necessary modifications in operations to accommodate the extended deadline.

- The Commonwealth should enhance the current financial aid awareness campaign, making it a priority to substantially increase among the adult student population awareness of the January 1 FAFSA deadline and the importance of financial planning for college completion.

Articulation

Articulation refers to agreements between institutions that permit students to move from one course, program, or educational level to the next without loss of time or resources. Adult students with some college credit must find an institution that recognizes their previous work to date and offers a clear, efficient path to completion of the student's chosen degree or credential. Articulation issues can be a particular barrier for adult students who may not be able to afford the cost of lost credits or have the schedule flexibility to take only the classes they know will someday transfer.

Community colleges are not just feeder schools; they serve an important mission in technical and occupational education. Thus, their courses are not always designed to supply credits for students intending to transfer. Moreover, four-year institutions

sometimes doubt the rigor of parallel courses offered at community colleges, and scrutinize course content or require testing before accepting the transfer of credits. These problems are compounded when students transfer from out-of-state institutions, and do not benefit from in-state efforts to harmonize curricula or maximize the transferability of credits.

While the legislatively mandated statewide transfer system does give students an assurance of some credit transferability, the system does not address major-specific courses or program-to-program articulation, which would allow a student to transfer an entire degree as opposed to individual courses. The system is also limited in that only 28 of more than 100 institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania are required by law to participate. Students and advisors are also still learning about the system

and need to be educated about its benefits and the information that is now available to them online.

Temple University College of Education conducted an analysis of the persistence of Core-to-Core (C2C) transfer students compared to students transferring through traditional transcript evaluation. The C2C program requires that the student has completed a pre-approved Associate's degree at the partner community college.

Temple researchers found that 84 percent of the C2C students persisted to graduation compared to 64 percent of the traditional transfer students.[11] This study provides evidence that an articulation program allowing transfer of the block of courses resulting in an Associate's degree instead of individual course-by-course evaluation and articulation agreements could result in higher degree attainment rates.

Recommendation

- The Commonwealth should adopt a model similar to that developed recently by the Arkansas legislature, by moving away from counting transferability course by course and towards full degree articulation and transferability. Senate Bill 820, as introduced in 2009 in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and discussed in at least one public hearing in June 2009 makes significant progress in the right direction. A student with a transfer Associate's degree should be able to transfer the entire block of curricula to a four-year degree in the same program of study.

- The Commonwealth should expand articulation agreements to include alternative pathways for competency-based certificates being transferrable to the next terminal degree. The Commonwealth should provide technical assistance and should broker the exchange of best practices in creating, implementing and advertising articulation agreements.

- The Commonwealth should develop a website that serves as a "one stop shop" for information on course equivalencies across institutions as well as institutions offering Prior Learning Assessments (PLA). The site should list all the articulation agreements that exist among all institutions – public and private – in all programs for which those agreements exist and be presented in a way that clearly provides students the information they need for course-by-course articulation options across the Commonwealth. The site should also list all the colleges that have signed the agreement to adopt the PLA protocols and participate in PLA. Currently, the PA TRAC website and analysis form lists only those agreements that have been created as result of the 2006 implementation mandate, and fails to include any mention of the PLA option. The current website offers transfer advice but only addresses foundational courses. The improved website should be completed by early Spring 2010 to provide a much-needed resource to potential Fall 2010 enrollees.

Cultural Barriers

Returning adult students must overcome family and community cultures that do not place priority value on degree or certificate completion; and overcome a lack of understanding of the postsecondary education system challenges and rewards. In some cases, the barrier is the internal academic culture that is designed for traditional students, not returning adult students with established lives and commitments.

As discussed throughout this report, adult students face a different set of barriers and challenges than do traditional students. The obligations and priorities of a 32-year old with two children and a mortgage differs significantly from that of an 18-year old fresh out of high school. Simple tasks, such as obtaining a student ID, can create problems for adult students if the only hours of access for getting the ID are normal working hours.

With over a million adults in the Commonwealth with some college but no degree or credential, the most efficient means for improving educational attainment of the Commonwealth's labor force is to bring those individuals back into postsecondary education and training to finish what they started. Reaching those individuals to convince them of the benefits of completing their degree or credential poses a major challenge, as does the next step of helping them find the right services, financial aid, and institutions to reach their goals.

Marketing is the means for outreach and information. As one source defines it, "Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily change a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole."[12] Marketing can be one strategy for raising adult education levels.

There exist model practices and best practices across the country for marketing to non-traditional students and adult learners. The University Continuing Education Association issues awards for excellence in marketing in recognition of its importance and as part of its mission in fostering excellence in communities of

practice. In 2008, Oregon's Linfield College received an award for its Adult Degree Program website. The University of Toronto received an award for its Strategic Marketing Campaign. Another tool for marketing and outreach is to set a goal and then articulate that goal in an easy to remember slogan. For example, the state of Michigan set November 2006 as "Return to Learning" month. The Lumina Foundation has "Achieving the Dream" and "Know How 2 Go."

The Commonwealth should develop low-cost marketing alternatives that are effective, such as word of mouth. Integration of marketing efforts with Rapid Response activities across the Commonwealth should be documented, allowing leverage of WIB resources and experience to help achieve the goal of improving the educational attainment of the workforce.

Given that the best predictor of future success is past success, and that the most efficient means for quickly improving the educational attainment of Pennsylvania's labor force is to focus on those individuals with some college experience, the Degree and Certification Completion Subcommittee of the Adult Learning Task Force requests the PA WIB's endorsement in urging and encouraging those institutions and departments across the Commonwealth to join in taking action according to the Subcommittee's recommendations, to significantly increase the number of adults in Pennsylvania with a degree or certificate.

Recommendation

- According to the Lumina Foundation, the United States will fall 16 million degrees short of the number needed to match leading nations in the percentage of adults with a college degree and to meet the workforce needs of 2025. The Commonwealth's current goal is a 25% increase by 2015 in the number of Pennsylvania adults who possess nationally recognized industry-ready credentials or licenses in high-wage, high demand careers, and to increase the portability and transferability of such credentials or licenses. The Commonwealth must increase the percentage of adults with credentials or degrees from 37 percent to 60 percent to attain the national goal by 2025 for the educational attainment of our work force, requiring an annual improvement of 1.4 percentage points from 2010 to 2025.

Marketing

- The Commonwealth should create a major promotional campaign focused on the goal of creating a culture shift. Such a campaign should develop a pithy campaign statement (such as "To 60 in 16") and should provide additional state resources to increase the number and proportion of adults with degrees and credentials or licenses. The campaign should be coordinated with institutions across the Commonwealth and launched by Spring 2010 to start having an impact on Fall 2010 enrollment.

The Problem

Working adults nationwide without postsecondary credentials earned an average of between $22,256 and $35,516 in 2007, compared to those with an Associate's Degree or more who earned an average between $38,480 and $77,844.[13]

According to a 2007 study:

"[A]ssuming no significant changes in degree attainment patterns, the United States will fall 16 million degrees short of the number needed to match leading nations in the percentage of adults with a college degree and to meet the workforce needs of 2025." (The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and Jobs for the Future, "Adding it Up: State Challenges for Increasing College Access and Success" (November 2007)).

"OECD data also show that the United States ranks near the bottom of industrialized nations in the percentage of entering students that complete a degree program." (Adding It Up, p. 2)

More specifically:

- 19 percent – 1,477,128 – of Pennsylvania's workforce age 18-64 has some college, but no degree. (CAEL).

- 77.5 percent of adults aged 25-64 participated in the workforce in Pennsylvania (2005).

- Between 2002 and 2012, there will be a 12.7 percent increase in the occupations requiring some postsecondary training or college degree.

- "To meet the standards of today's leading nations, we need to set a goal of having 55 percent of the adult workforce earn at least an Associate's degree." (NCHEMS & JFF, 'Adding it Up,' 2007). The current rate in Pennsylvania is 36.9 percent (2006).

- 1,191,439 Pennsylvanian's live in families with less than a living wage. (CAEL)

- Pennsylvania's college participation rate for 25-39 year olds with only a high school diploma was 114.5 per 1,000 adults. This is only 60 percent of the national rate of 190.8 per 1,000.[14]

- Pennsylvania's degree production rate needs to improve to be competitive with the best performing states. The rate for the top performing states in terms of degrees produced per 100 full-time equivalent students at public four-year colleges (2005) ranged from 22 to 26 per 100 FTE students enrolled – Pennsylvania produced 19.1. For 2-year public colleges, Pennsylvania produced 13.2 degrees per 100 FTE enrollments in 2005. The rate for the top five performing states ranged from 19 to 24.[15]

Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee, Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board

The main objectives of the PA WIB's Task Force on Adult Learning are 1) to develop specific recommendations for the Commonwealth's role regarding the tool known as a career readiness credential, and 2) to answer the question *"What strategies can the Commonwealth pursue to improve the degree and certificate completion rates of working age adults?"*

Two important, crosscutting themes surfaced in the Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee work of the Task Force:

- The need to identify collegiate-level learning and make it credit bearing whenever possible (this includes support for Prior Learning Assessments); and

- The need to base recommendations on data-driven results.

The Subcommittee looked across the Commonwealth and across the country to identify degree and certificate completion outreach programs that could serve as models for state policy and practice. These programs target adults who have successfully completed some college-level coursework but who have not earned a degree or certificate. The Subcommittee found that nearly all the programs are institution-based – they are specific to a single college or university. The one exception is Graduate! Philadelphia, which involves a consortium of postsecondary institutions, government, and non-profit and community-based organizations working together towards creating a community culture, where attaining postsecondary credentials is the norm and not the expectation.

The Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee of the Task Force chose to limit the scope of the problem being investigated due to time constraints. The Subcommittee did recognize that important topics were not discussed, and therefore, are not covered in the final report. These include:

- The challenges of adults with felony records trying to attach to the workforce successfully, a critical issue as one of every 13 adults in the United States is behind bars or on probation or parole.[16]

- The specific challenges of men and the postsecondary education system, an issue that is becoming more prominent given the relative college-going rates of men compared to women over the last decade.

- The unique problems faced by immigrants across the Commonwealth, including language and cultural barriers to improving educational attainment and occupational opportunities.

- Problems in the K-12 system that affect preparedness for postsecondary education and training.

- Unique challenges faced by different regions of the state due to geography, demographics, degree of urbanization, and economic history.

- Unique challenges and opportunities faced by military veterans of recent conflicts.

The Subcommittee completed the bulk of the work and writing for this report prior to the introduction and passage by Congress of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in February 2009. In light of the ARRA, it is clear that the work of the Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee is even more urgent than previously realized as the ARRA provides extended unemployment benefits, training funds, education funds, and student financial aid expansion on a time-limited basis. According to the most recent estimates, Pennsylvania will receive:

- $1.6 billion in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds for public and postsecondary education
- $15.4 million in State Employment Service Grants
- $92.2 million in WIA grants
- Expanded Pell Grants to support postsecondary education students

Other funding opportunities and tax incentives for training and education are embedded in ARRA initiatives targeting energy, construction, and health care.

Traditionally, meaningful changes to the workforce development system and the postsecondary educational system take much longer than six to eighteen months to implement. Adults receiving unemployment compensation have only 26-72 weeks to re-tool themselves and reattach to the workplace and do not have the luxury of waiting for training and education systems to change to meet their needs as non-traditional students.

In February 2009, the Lumina Foundation released a report explaining the urgency of improving degree and certificate completion rates in the United States. Lumina's report notes that, while the degree and credential attainment rate of other countries continues to increase, it has stagnated and seems to be declining in the United States. In response to this alarming trend, the Lumina Foundation has set a goal of 60 percent of the population obtaining a bachelor's or Associate's degree or credential by 2025 – a significant increase from the current rate of 39 percent.[17] If this goal is to be realized, substantial and swift changes are needed.

Purpose of the Report

This report contains specific, realistic recommendations the Commonwealth can take to improve degree or certificate completion rates among adults. As noted by the Task Force Chairman, Pennsylvania is in a resource-constrained environment at present, so the recommendations will target actions to implement the best practices for each component *within existing resources* and to the extent possible. Focusing on those individuals who have already exhibited some success with postsecondary education or training is the most efficient way to leverage the Commonwealth's resources to improve the degree and credential attainment rates of the Commonwealth's adults. One of the best predictors of future success is past success, which in this case points to adults with some postsecondary education and training.

Key Concepts

Certain terms and concepts are used throughout this report. For clarity, the terms and concepts are defined below:

- <u>Adult learner</u>: Individuals age 24 and older who have some postsecondary training or education but no credential or degree.
- <u>Certificate</u>: A document issued to a person completing a course of study not leading to a diploma. The course of study is a for-credit offering requiring fewer credits than an Associate's degree, most often offered in technical and vocational fields of study, like a Certificate in Automotive Technology.
- <u>Credential</u>: A document issued to a person completing a course of study not leading to a diploma. The course of study is a for-credit offering requiring fewer credits than an Associate's degree, most often offered in technical and vocational fields of study, like a Certificate in Automotive Technology. Note that credential, as used in this report, is not to be confused with a generic career readiness credential unless otherwise specified.
- <u>Credit bearing</u>: A course or class, which results in the award of some number of credits towards a formal program of study, resulting in a degree or certificate.
- Degree: Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's or Ph.D. awarded upon successful completion of a program of study.
- <u>Developmental education</u>: Refers to pre-credit courses designed to bring a student's skills up to the level necessary to succeed in college-level credit courses. The report uses this term interchangeably with remedial education.
- <u>License</u>: A document certifying that a person has completed a for-credit course of study requiring less than an Associate's degree, allowing the person to officially practice in certain professions. In this report, certificate, credential and license are used interchangeably.

- <u>Non-traditional student</u>: Students who possess one or more of several characteristics, including delayed enrollment, part-time student status, full-time employment, financial independence, responsibility for dependents, and enrollment after the twenty-fifth birthday.[18]

- <u>Postsecondary education and training</u>: Education and training beyond high school or secondary education.

- <u>Public education</u>: Education entities operated by the government, receiving government funding for operations; typically colleges and universities.

- <u>Remedial education</u>: Non-credit courses designed to bring students up to a level of competency to allow them to succeed in credit-bearing courses. In some cases, successful completion of remedial courses may be required before a student is allowed to progress to credit-bearing courses.

II. RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

National enrollment in degree granting institutions for individuals age 25 and up increased 15 percent from 1990 to 2005. For 2005 to 2016, this trend is projected to increase to 21 percent, indicating acceleration in the enrollment of adults and non-traditional students.[19]

In Pennsylvania, 5.6 percent of the population is enrolled in higher education, compared to 5.9 nationally (State Rankings 2007 and 2008). This places Pennsylvania 29th among the 50 states. The top ten states range from 6.9 to 9.2 percent compared to the Commonwealth's enrollment of 5.6 percent. This is despite the fact that Pennsylvania ranks third nationally in the number of higher education institutions.[20]

In its 2004 report, the Pennsylvania Pathways to Advancement team proposed strategies to address the following obstacles:

- Lack of awareness of the connection between educational attainment and income potential;

- Lack of a work readiness credential to bridge the gap between a high school diploma and the workplace skills required by employers;

- Affordability;

- Lack of private sector investment in human capital;

- Increased need for alternative channels for acquiring education; and

- Shortened time to degree or credential attainment, including greater transferability of credits.

The Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee, through the course of its research, discussions, and roundtable meetings, distilled the major obstacles to adult degree or certificate completion down to four categories. These categories are consistent with the research conducted by the NGA Pathways to Advancement group and are listed in the chronological order in which a non-traditional student would probably encounter them. The categories are:

1. Preparedness – having the knowledge and skills to re-enter a degree or certificate course of study.

2. Affordability – Being able to pay tuition and fees to complete a degree or certificate program while not qualifying for financial aid due to part-time status, and also potentially foregoing wages and still meeting the full set of adult financial obligations.

3. Articulation – Agreements between institutions that permit students to move from one course, program, or educational level to the next without loss of time or resources.

4. Cultural Barriers – Overcoming family and community cultures that do not place priority value on degree or certificate completion; and overcoming a lack of understanding of the postsecondary education system challenges and rewards. In some cases, the barrier is an internal academic culture designed for traditional students.

The recommendations developed by the Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee are organized according to the four major categories identified above. The recommendations were developed through the review of existing research into the needs of non-traditional students and the responses of various institutions and organizations across the country identifying how they are attempting to meet those needs. Further research was conducted to identify Pennsylvania specific solutions.

Preparedness

"Preparedness" refers to the individual's readiness for college-level or postsecondary training and education – having the knowledge and skills to re-enter a degree or certificate course of study. Even adults with some college credits, because they have been out of an academic setting for many years, may find themselves under-prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education and training.

Recommendation

Institutions should collect data to identify what does and does not work with regards to remediation and then share that information with each other. Institutions should adopt proven best practices, as supported by published research and institutional-based data and analysis – and work to change institutional culture and structure to embrace proven best practices.

These practices should be put into operation by 2010 so that the Commonwealth is able to meet its goal of a 25% increase by 2015 in the number of Pennsylvania adults who possess industry ready credentials in high-wage, high demand careers, and to increase the portability and transferability of such credentials.

In addition, the Commonwealth should create and broadcast a checklist of model institutions with regards to developmental education. The Commonwealth should broker advisory relationships between institutions experiencing significant success with developmental education outcomes, and those institutions aspiring to improve their performance. By brokering these relationships, the Commonwealth can assist institutions in identifying their own barriers to effective and successful approaches to developmental education.

Measures of Success
- An increase in the percentage of non-traditional students moving successfully from remedial education to credit-bearing courses in the students' targeted programs of study.

- An increase in the percentage of students continuing a course of study to completion of a degree or certificate.

The Problem

Studies have shown that 59 percent of students entering postsecondary education and training through community colleges must first take remedial courses to bring them up to the necessary level to begin their course of study. A University of Texas at El Paso study of its own enrollment patterns found that 72 percent of students who failed remedial beginning algebra did not re-enroll in UTEP the following semester.[21] Research has shown that approximately 40 percent of traditional undergraduates at four-year universities and colleges take at least one remedial or developmental course, and remediation is even more common among older nontraditional students.[22]

Unfortunately, research also shows that only three to four out of every ten community college students who are referred to remediation actually finish the sequence of courses to which they are referred.[23] This issue is of particular concern when it comes to non-traditional students re-entering postsecondary education to complete their degrees or credentials after being away from an academic setting for several years or even decades.

The challenge is not only for students to successfully complete the developmental courses but to stay in school until they complete their degree or certificate. One study found that only 17 percent of students who enroll in a remedial reading course receive a bachelor's degree within eight years, compared to 58 percent of students who take no remedial education courses. Even more startling is the fact that only 8.5 percent of students referred to developmental education at community colleges that service large numbers of low-income and minority students completed a credential within four years.[24]

There have been mixed results in studies evaluating the completion rates of students in remedial courses. While remediation appears to increase persistence to the second year, it does not increase the completion of college-level credits or eventual degree completion.[25] Some argue that remediation lowers degree completion rates by increasing the requirements students must meet. However, remediation proponents counter that if remedial classes successfully teach or refresh the skills needed for college-level work, remedial students should be more likely than academically equivalent non-remedial students to complete a certificate or degree.

Affordability already creates a barrier to continued postsecondary education and training. Some federal financial aid, such as the Pell Grant program, may only be used toward "for-credit" courses. Remedial/developmental courses are often non-credit courses. Other types of financial aid will cover only a limited number of remedial credits. For example, Pennsylvania State Grant Program rules require students to enroll in a minimum of twelve course hours for full-time status, six course hours for half-time status, but only allow fifty percent of a student's total coursework to come from remedial classes for purposes of qualifying for full-time or half-time status in determining eligible student aid.[26] This means that full-time student taking 12 remedial course hours would only qualify as a half-time student for purposes of student aid.

Furthermore, as remedial coursework typically does not count toward graduation requirements, students may find that they have exhausted their financial aid before completing their degrees. Of course, the additional classes will also create added expense and, potentially, additional lost wages.

The challenge of the high demand for remediation coupled with remediation proving to be a significant barrier to degree or credential completion has led to investigations of how to reduce the need for remediation and how to make remediation a boost instead of a barrier.

The Research

Clearly, there is a need for remediation. Before remediation programs and policies can advance, the Commonwealth needs to conduct further research and investigation of successful practices, especially for adult learners beyond the reach of the secondary education system.

A 1999 research paper, "What Works in Remedial Education: Lessons from 30 years of Research," from the National Center on

Developmental Education distilled lessons about remedial education from an extensive literature review.[27]

A 2007 joint report issued by the Center for Student Success and The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges – *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* – includes findings from a review of over 250 references spanning more than 30 years of research. The report identifies 26 effective practices in organizational and administrative practices, program components, staff development, and instructional practices. The table below compares the 1999 findings and the 2007 findings. The overlapping findings are highlighted, including the specific research findings supporting the practices.

Table 1. What Works in Remedial Education

"What Works in Remedial Education: Lessons from 30 years of Research" (1999)	Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges (2007)	Case Study
PROGRAM COMPONENTS		
Student orientation sessions are critical. Mandatory assessment and placement must be provided.	Orientation, assessment, and placement are mandatory for all new students.	"In a study of nearly 6,000 developmental students from 160 two-year and four-year institutions, students who were subject to mandatory assessment were significantly more likely to pass developmental English or mathematics courses than those in programs where assessment was voluntary (Boylan, Bliss and Bonham, 1997)."[28] Recent research (Gardner, 1998) has shown that underprepared students participating in ongoing orientation courses were much more likely to be retained in the community college than students who did not participate in these courses. (Boylan, *What Works*, 2002)
PROGRAM COMPONENTS		
Constant evaluation of remedial programs is important. A central place to share data and information on what works is needed. Community colleges need to report back to high schools on students trying to enter college and not being college ready.	Regular program evaluations are conducted, results are disseminated widely, and data are used to improve practice.	In a nationwide benchmarking study of best practices in developmental education, all the programs that were eventually identified as exemplary reportedly engaged in ongoing and systemic evaluation activities (Boylan, 2000). Additionally, program evaluation has been shown to be positively correlated to both student retention and success in developmental courses at both two-year and four-year schools (Boylan, Bliss, and Bonham, 1997).[29]
Counseling should be a component of all remedial programs.	Counseling support provided is substantial, accessible, and integrated with academic courses/programs.	"Counseling in and of itself is not sufficient to significantly impact student success. According to research (Boylan and Saxon, 2002), effective counseling for remedial students must be: • Integrated into the overall structure of the remedial program; • Based on the goals and objectives of the program; • Undertaken early in the semester; • Based on sound principles of student development theory; and • Carried out by counselors specifically trained to work with developmental students."[30]

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES		
Highly structured learning experiences are needed.	A high degree of structure is provided in developmental education courses.	Students participating in the Digital Bridge Academy (DBA) accelerated model at Cabrillo College were 16 percent more likely to persist in the next semester than students with similar characteristics not participating in the Academy. The DBA students earned 21 more college credits than the non-DBA students.[31]
Variety of teaching methods are best to meet the variety of learning needs.	Developmental education faculties employ a variety of instructional methods to accommodate student diversity.	"The study (Kuhn et al., 2006, 68) points to the following findings about engagement: • Student engagement in educationally purposeful activities is positively related to academic outcomes as represented by first-year and senior student grades and to persistence between the first and second year of college. • Engagement has a compensatory effect on first-year grades and persistence to the second year of college at the same institution."[32] "Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005, 21) reference studies which indicate that collaborative learning models are particularly effective for diverse populations. The evidence strongly confirms that nontraditional students greatly benefit from the opportunity to participate in group learning settings:[33] • In Washington, a statewide initiative has recently demonstrated the significant potential of contextual learning for improving student outcomes in basic skills and workforce training." "Project results indicated that I-BEST students earned five times more college credits on average and were 15 times more likely to complete workforce training than a control group of ESL students over the same amount of time (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2005)."[34]
Remedial exit standards must meet entry standards for curriculum courses.	Programs align entry/exit skills among levels and link course content to college-level performance requirements.	"Research confirms that remedial courses are most effective when regular efforts are made to ensure consistency between exit standards for remediation and the entry standards for content courses (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton and Bliss, 1992). At institutions where such consistency was present, students passing remedial courses had a higher likelihood of also passing their college-level courses. Higher retention rates have also been linked to entry/exit skill alignment in sequential developmental courses (Boylan and Saxon, 1998)."[35]
Tutoring is a critical component for success.	Programs provide comprehensive academic support mechanisms, including the use of trained tutors.	Supplemental Instruction (SI) SI targets historically difficult courses (classes with a 30 percent failure or withdrawal rate) or "gatekeeper" courses. Historically, students participating in effective SI programs earn higher final course grades, succeed at a higher rate, and tend to persist at higher rates.[36]
OTHER COMPONENTS		
It is best to pair a remedial course with a regular curriculum course where instructors collaborate on teaching with the purpose of bringing remedial students into the regular program while the student earns college level credit.		At UTEP, 56 percent of the students who are offered a six-hour math refresher at orientation went up at least one course. 87% of students who took the college English course concurrently with supplemental instruction passed the college English course.[37] The I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) program in Washington provided courses that were jointly designed and taught by basic skills and college-level occupational faculty. The program significantly increased the rate of students advancing to two semesters of college, deemed a critical "tipping point" for completion by the Washington research. 54% of I-BEST students earned a certificate or Associates degree, compared to 18% of non-IBEST students with similar characteristics.[38]
Supplemental instruction, with small-group sessions scheduled as a supplement to the course is the best methods for delivery of remedial programs.		An MDRC study on Learning Communities was inconclusive.[39] The program placed freshmen, most of whom failed one or more of the skills assessment tests that all incoming students take, into groups of up to 25 who took three classes together during their first semester. It also provided enhanced counseling and tutoring as well as a voucher for textbooks.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES		
There must be an institution-wide commitment to remediation.	Developmental education is a clearly stated institutional priority.	"In a study of 28 exemplary programs, all but one rated developmental education as "completely" or "extensively" important when assessing institutional priorities (Boylan, 2002). A study of developmental education in Texas colleges and universities also found that programs with the highest student retention rates were located in institutions that considered developmental education to be a priority (Boylan and Saxon, 1998)."[40]
Remedial programs need clearly defined philosophy, goals and objectives.	A clearly articulated mission based on a shared, overarching philosophy drives the developmental education program. Clearly specified goals and objectives are established for developmental courses and programs.	"[T]he National Study of Developmental Education (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton and Bliss, 1992) found that developmental programs with written statements of mission, goals, and objectives had higher student pass rates in developmental courses than programs without such statements. Other studies connected mission, goals and objectives with higher pass rates on state-mandated tests and higher year-to-year retention rates for developmental students (Boylan and Saxon, 1998)."[41]
Remedial programs should be centralized at institutions rather than embedded in individual academic departments.	The developmental education program is centralized or highly coordinated.	"The consensus view among researchers originally established that a centralized model of program and service delivery was superior to a more distributed "mainstreamed" model (Roueche and Baker, 1987; Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, and Bliss, 1992; Boylan, 2002)."[42] The research showed that a centralized model led to more positive student outcomes.
STAFF DEVELOPMENT		
Professional training for faculty and staff to help under-prepared learners is needed.	Administrators support and encourage faculty development in basic skills, and the improvement of teaching and learning is connected to the institutional mission.	"Programs with a strong professional development component have been shown to yield better student retention rates and better student performance in developmental courses than those without such an emphasis (Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, and Bliss, 1992). Furthermore, analysis has demonstrated that specific training is one of the leading variables contributing to the success of a variety of components of developmental education, including tutoring, advising, and instruction. Boylan goes so far as to state that, "no matter what component of developmental education was being studied, an emphasis on training and professional development improved its outcomes" (Boylan, 2002, 46)."[43]

The complexities of learning, individual life situation, course of study, institutional culture and staff training make it difficult (if not impossible) to identify the silver bullet in developmental education that guarantees student success. There are, however, promising practices supported by data as the studies in the table above indicate.

The following programs stand out as innovative and effective approaches to moving students through remediation and into their chosen courses of study.

I-BEST[44]

I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills) is an innovative program developed by the community and technical colleges of Washington State. The program aims at improving and accelerating the performance of adult basic skills students in postsecondary occupational education and training. It is usually assumed that students should complete basic skills instruction before undertaking college-level courses. But under the I-BEST model, basic skills instructors and college-level career-technical faculty jointly design and teach college-level occupational courses for adult basic skills students. Instruction in basic skills is fully integrated with instruction in college-level career-technical skills.

The analysis by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University (CCRCT) of data from 900 I-BEST participants and 31,000 other basic skills students shows that the I-BEST approach appears to work. I-BEST students were more likely than others to continue into credit-bearing coursework, earn credits that count toward a college credential, earn occupational certificates, and make point gains on basic skills tests.

Digital Bridge Academy[45]

The Digital Bridge Academy (DBA) is a semester-long, intensive program at Cabrillo College (California) for educationally disadvantaged students that integrates soft-skills training and student supports with college-level coursework. Participants (organized into cohorts of 25 students) first undertake a two-week, eight-hours-per-day foundation course that focuses on soft skills, such as team building, learning and working styles, communications, and motivation. They then enter a 13-week full-time bridge semester that combines six college-level courses with closely integrated student supports such as study groups and counseling.

A four-year study by CCRCT assessed DBA participants against a control group according to eight educational outcomes. DBA

students performed significantly better than students in the control group in the number of degree credits earned, re-enrollment during the next two semesters, and maintaining full-time status in the following semester. On three additional outcomes (transfer credits, passing associate-level English, and passing transfer-level English) accelerated DBA participants (those who also received college-level English instruction in the DBA program) performed significantly better than those in the control group.

Open Doors Learning Communities[46]

Open Doors Learning Communities was a program operated between 2003 and 2005 at Kingsborough Community College in New York City, designed to improve student performance through peer relationships, better connections with faculty, and deeper

understanding of coursework. At-risk freshmen (most of whom had failed one or more assessment tests) were placed in groups of up to 25 who took three classes together during the first semester and received enhanced counseling and tutoring.

An MDRC study of Open Doors Learning Communities that tracked participants for two years concluded that the program significantly improved their college experience (e.g., sense of engagement) and also accelerated progress through remedial English coursework. However some other positive effects, such as course passage rates and credits earned, did not appear to persist beyond the initial semester. The evidence was mixed about the impact on student reenrollment rates.

Affordability

Affordability addresses the challenge of identifying and accessing the financial resources necessary for an adult student to successfully complete a program of study to obtain a credential or degree. The challenge for adult students is finding the resources to pay tuition and fees to complete a degree or certificate program while not qualifying for financial aid due to part-time status, and also potentially foregoing wages and still meeting the full set of adult financial obligations.

Recommendation

- The Commonwealth should resurrect the WAGE grant or a similar student financial aid program to provide financial aid for students attending less than part-time. The Commonwealth should restore the program at the $10 million per year level, and the previous set of restrictions on eligibility should be revisited to assure they align with the goals of promoting high priority and emerging occupations as well as to significantly increase the percentage of adults with credentials or degrees.
- The Commonwealth should actively and aggressively pursue funding from the Gates Foundation to duplicate My Degree Now initiatives across Pennsylvania. The goal would be for all Pennsylvania community colleges to be participants by 2010.
- The Commonwealth should change the student financial aid deadline from May 1 to August 1 and provide the funding necessary to PHEAA to implement the necessary modifications in operations to accommodate the extended deadline.
- The Commonwealth should enhance the current financial aid awareness campaign, making it a priority to substantially increase among the adult student population awareness of the January 1 FAFSA deadline and the importance of financial planning for college completion.

Measures of Success

- The increase in private sector and community support – as measured by dollars and the value of in-kind administrative support and outreach – of adult learners working toward a degree or certificate.

The Problem

Affordability was cited by participants in the different discussion groups related to this report, as the most common and significant barrier to non-traditional student success. Quantifying the extent of the cost of education as a barrier, however, is not straightforward.

According to a recent Pennsylvania Department of Education report, the cost of attending Pennsylvania public colleges and universities ranks as the sixth highest in the nation.[47] This ranking carries forward to comparisons of student debt incurred to achieve a degree or certificate, leaving Pennsylvania students – both those who graduate and those who do not – with a higher debt load in relation to their post-college incomes. In fact, student debt has been rising faster than the salaries for jobs requiring a degree.[48] This comparatively higher cost is coupled with the scarcity of financial aid available to students attending part-time, especially less than half time. Adult student outreach programs, therefore, have worked to find ways to ease the financial burden of attendance.

A report on student debt listed Pennsylvania as the sixth for highest average debt per student in the nation in 2007, at $23,617, compared to the national average of $20,098. In fact, 71 percent of graduating Pennsylvanians graduate with debt compared to the national average of 59 percent nationally. In the higher education report comparing the states, Measuring Up 2008, Pennsylvania received a grade of "F" in higher education affordability due to the percent of family income required to pay the costs of college and the average annual amount of student loans ($4,400 compared to the national average of $2,600.)[49] The debt study relies on a non-uniform, self-reporting source and the

"Measuring Up" report gave 49 states an affordability grade of F. The figures, therefore, may not be exact; but both studies point to affordability as a problem for postsecondary education and training in the Commonwealth.

Even after receiving financial aid, two-fifths of Pennsylvania's population with the lowest incomes – poor and working class families – need 44 percent of their annual income to pay for community college, 61 percent for a public four-year university, and 134 percent for a private four-year college or university.[50] Participants at the Degree Completion session of the 2009 Governor's Conference on Higher Education expressed alarm at these figures, both because their understanding is that the cost of community colleges is lower than that cited in the study, and because the figure could serve as a frightening deterrent to parents and children from poor and working class families exploring postsecondary education options for the first time. In addition, and unlike other states, Pennsylvania's data set include all two-year campuses. This means that the higher costs for two-year campuses of Pennsylvania's public four-year universities is combined with the cost of community colleges. The resulting cost data skew upwards, especially compared to other states.

A six-year cohort study by Penn State University of adult learners' use of financial aid and completion of degrees found the following:[51]

- 49 percent of part-time students applied for financial aid their first year, compared to 78 percent of full-time students.
- A significant percentage of students submitted their applications after the May deadline, causing them to receive aid packages equaling half the amount of the students meeting the May application deadline.
- Half of the adult learners completed their degrees in six years, compared to two-thirds of the traditional students.
- In terms of degree completion, the study found that family income and financial aid awarded in the first year had no bearing on completion rates.

In the 2006 report "Rising Tide," conducted by The Learning Alliance for Higher Education, survey results showed that those who started college but dropped out reported that cost was the most significant reason. During a discussion at the 2009 Governor's Conference on Higher Education, during the Degree and Certificate Completion presentation, several attendees explained that, according to their experience, cost as an excuse was often used to mask the real reasons for dropping out, such as poor grades or family and work pressures.

In line with this theme of contradictions when it comes to affordability, during the February 5, 2009 Roundtable discussion, one of the participants pointed out that, while the first barrier

people cite is money, the University of Phoenix and DeVry University (two proprietary, online colleges) charge twice what Penn State does and still attract many students because Phoenix and DeVry make a more effective argument regarding return on investment (ROI). The public postsecondary community is just starting to internalize the idea of promoting the message that education has value in the world.

Affordability was a major topic of conversation at the Roundtable discussions. Participants commented that:

- Students might be carrying some college debt remaining from previous efforts at postsecondary education when they try to reenter the postsecondary system.
- There exists a lack of funding geared towards non-traditional students.
- Accessibility and affordability is a major issue in rural regions.
- Many adult learners think there is an age limit to financial aid.

In addition to affordability, adult learners encounter the barrier of financial aid deadlines. According to a study cited by the College Board:

Because of their limited incomes, a larger proportion of independent students than of dependent students receive student aid. However, several factors work against independent students in obtaining all the aid they may need. Over half of all independent students file their federal financial aid applications after May 1 (Wei, Nevill, and Berkner, 2005, p. 48). Many state and institutional grant programs have deadlines for receipt of grants that are before May 1 and often as early as February. Moreover, fewer independent students than dependent students attend college in the fall term. Many programs make their awards for fall term and either do not make new awards in the spring or are out of money and thus are unable to make spring awards. Many state and institutional grant programs only provide awards to full-time students. These factors are less relevant for federal aid eligibility than for state and institutional aid eligibility, but they point to important characteristics of aid programs that can help or hinder their usefulness for nontraditional students.[52]

The Research

Workforce Advancement Grant for Education (WAGE)

There exist very limited options available to adults returning to postsecondary education or training on a less-than-half time basis.

A report commissioned from FutureWorks, a partner in the National Governor's Association Pathways to Advancement

project, specifically examined state policies and policy options for expanding student financial aid to working adults in Pennsylvania. It identified ten significant challenges to working adult students accessing student financial aid for postsecondary study in Pennsylvania.[53] The five challenges are:

- Many working adults without postsecondary credentials do not earn enough to pay for college without assistance.

- There is limited federal aid available for less-than-half-time students. Working adult students often attend less-than-half-time, thereby failing to qualify for federal loan aid at this enrollment intensity. Although less-than-half-time students are technically eligible for federal Pell grants, the low cost of attendance and full-time incomes typically eliminate calculated need in the need formula. In other words, they do not qualify for Pell grants because the ratio between incomes and education costs is too low. The Pennsylvania State Grant does not award aid for less-than-half-time study.

- There is no state grant aid for students pursuing degrees or certificates through programs that are less than two years in duration.

In response, the Workforce Advancement Grant for Education (WAGE) program was created. Governor Rendell negotiated an agreement with PHEAA to invest $10 million per year, earned from student loan fees and interest income, in a financial aid program for working adults. WAGE provided grants to independent students with financial need who did not qualify for a State Grant Award for reasons such as those listed above. The grant was capped at a maximum of $3,500 and extended eligibility to students who participated in postsecondary education less than half time or who were enrolled in for credit certificate programs that are less than two years in duration. PHEAA's internal policy considerations led to a departure from the above recommendation to remove need-based criteria. WAGE awards were determined using expected family contribution minus other federal and state aid received. PHEAA originally agreed to a three-year pilot project and had planned to extend that commitment to six years.

WAGE grants went to 2,698 adult students at 186 colleges and universities with an expected increase to 8,000 persons in 2007. An in-depth analysis and program review is currently being conducted to determine if the program met the original goals. Early data analysis suggests that the two higher education sectors that serve most of adult learners – community colleges and private colleges and universities – might not have received an appropriate share of the financial aid awards. In addition, preliminary data suggests more full time students are receiving aid then part-time students. Policy revisions will be made to better meet the goal of serving working adult students based on the final data and outcome analysis.

As of 2007, no further WAGE grants were distributed to colleges because of changes in federal student financial aid fees used to fund the program. A study is currently underway to determine the impact of the WAGE program on degree and certificate attainment of its recipients.

Gates Foundation and Community College of Philadelphia

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has set a goal of doubling the number of low-income adults earning a postsecondary degree or credential by the time they are age 26 and has embarked on awarding tens of millions of dollars in grants to foster research and programs to reach this goal. The Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) is involved in the My Degree Now program as described above. CCP also participates in Graduate! Philadelphia, which is a joint initiative of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania. Graduate! Philadelphia's mission is to increase the number of adults with college degrees in the Greater Philadelphia region. Graduate! Philadelphia has partnered with nine local colleges and universities, including CCP, that have high graduation rates, are fully regionally accredited, and offer courses that are flexible, focused, and convenient for adults.

The Commonwealth has an opportunity in the Gates Foundation to foster and expand programs close to home to improve degree completion rates of adult learners across Pennsylvania.

My Degree Now

Another incentive being tried is free tuition at a community college for students meeting certain criteria. My Degree Now, a $100,000 pilot program at the Community College of Philadelphia in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, will be working with students to help them secure additional resources to earn their degree debt free. Cost of tuition and fees for a full time student totals $3,528, but the program is assuming that most students will attend half time, lowering their cost of tuition and fees to $1,764. The partners hope to find additional funding for the next 2-3 years once the initial seed money of $100,000 is spent. To be eligible, students must:

- Have 30 or more transfer credits.
- Have not been enrolled at a college or university within the past two years.
- Have no prior degree from a college or university.
- Must not be in default of any prior educational loans.
- Must be a Philadelphia county resident.
- Must complete a Community College of Philadelphia My Degree Now application for admission.

- Must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for state and federal financial aid.
- Must commit to enrolling at the College in consecutive fall and spring semesters, taking a minimum of six credits per semester, in order to complete degree requirements and graduate within two to three years.
- Maintain at least a 2.0 GPA to remain in the program and maintain good academic progress.

My Degree Now is not expected to be a sizeable program and projecting actual costs will be difficult until the program accumulates some experience. About 100 students were enrolled in My Degree Now as of the Spring 2009 semester.

Many of the community colleges across the commonwealth offer free tuition to students who lose their jobs. For example, Luzerne Community College, Community College of Philadelphia and Northampton Community College, for example, offer a one-time, 12-credit tuition waiver. Bucks County Community College is waiving tuition for unemployed residents for up to 30 credits.

Recently some proposals for financial aid programs in Pennsylvania have focused on helping non-traditional students complete degrees or certificates. One proposed financial aid program would include all students in degree or certificate programs, no matter how few credits they take each semester. Students and their families would pay only what they can afford, which would be determined by the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) calculation of the financial aid form. The proposed program would cover any remaining gap between the Expected Family Contribution and all available existing state and federal grant aid. No matter their EFC, however, every student in the program would have to pay at least $1,000 to ensure that all students are investing in their education. The proposed program requires Legislative approval and funding.

Additional efforts to ease financial barriers to degree completion are detailed in Appendix III.

Articulation

Articulation refers to agreements between institutions that permit students to move from one course, program, or educational level to the next without loss of time or resources. Adult students with some college credit must find an institution that recognizes their previous work to date and offers a clear, efficient path to completion of the student's chosen degree or credential. Articulation issues can be a particular barrier for adult students who may not be able to afford the cost of lost credits or have the schedule flexibility to take only the classes they know will someday transfer.

Recommendation

- The Commonwealth should adopt a model similar to that developed recently by the Arkansas legislature, by moving away from counting transferability course by course and towards full-degree articulation and transferability. Senate Bill 820, as introduced in 2009 in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and discussed in at least one public hearing in June 2009 makes significant progress in the right direction. A student with a transfer Associate's degree should be able to transfer the entire block of curricula to a four-year degree in the same program of study.
- The Commonwealth should expand articulation agreements to include alternative pathways for competency-based certificates being transferrable to the next terminal degree. The Commonwealth should provide technical assistance and should broker the exchange of best practices in creating, implementing and advertising articulation agreements.
- The Commonwealth should develop a website that serves as a "one stop shop" for information on courses equivalencies across institutions as well as institutions offering Prior Learning Assessments (PLA). The site should list all the articulation agreements that exist among all institutions – public and private – in all programs for which those agreements exist and be presented in a way that clearly provides students the information they need for course-by-course articulation options across the Commonwealth. The site should also list all the colleges that have signed the agreement to adopt the PLA protocols and participate in PLA. Currently, the PA TRAC website and analysis form lists only those agreements that have been created as result of the 2006 implementation mandate, and fails to include any mention of the PLA option. The current website offers transfer advice but only addresses foundational courses. The improved website should be completed by early Spring 2010 to provide a much-needed resource to potential Fall 2010 enrollees

Measures of Success

The measure of success, as a part of the assessment strategy for the statewide transfer system, is in the process of being developed by PDE. The Commonwealth's goal is a 25% increase by 2015 in the number of Pennsylvania adults who possess industry ready credentials in high-wage, high demand careers, and to increase the portability and transferability of such credentials.

Another measure of success should be an increase in the number of Bachelor's degrees awarded annually.

The Problem

Community colleges are not just feeder schools for four-year institutions; they serve an important mission in technical and occupational education. Thus, their courses are not always designed to supply credits for students intending to transfer. Moreover, four-year institutions often doubt the rigor of parallel courses offered at community colleges, and scrutinize course content or require testing before accepting the transfer of credits. These problems are compounded when students transfer from out-of-state institutions, and do not benefit from in-state efforts to harmonize curriculum or maximize the transferability of credits.

It is easy to say that this problem could be simply solved if only all four-year colleges would recognize all courses from accredited institutions of higher education, but the problem is more complex. Other solutions for reform have included standardization of curriculum at the community college level to make coursework more credible to four-year institutions, or stronger efforts by four-year institutions to recognize legitimate coursework by transfers, in-state or out-of-state. Specific articulation agreements between institutions are helpful, but often not as much as generally accepted standards for transferable credits.

The Research

A 2001 study recommending specific transfer and articulation policies and practices, included the following conclusions:[54]

1. Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions [should be] equal partners in providing the first two years of baccalaureate degree programs.
2. Transfer students should be treated comparably to incumbent or resident students by the receiving institution.
3. Faculty from both two-year and four-year institutions [should] have primary responsibility for developing and maintaining statewide articulation agreements.
4. Statewide articulation agreements should accommodate those students who complete a significant block of coursework (such as the general education requirements) but who transfer before completing the Associate's degree.
5. Articulation agreements should be developed for specific program majors.
6. A state's private institutions should be included in statewide articulation agreements.
7. A statewide evaluation system should monitor the progress and completion of transfer students.

According to a 2002 survey, six states — Arkansas, Florida, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, and Texas — have statewide transferable general education core curricula to facilitate transfer

and articulation. This same 2002 study identified seven academic policies that affect transfer:[55]

1. Admissions policies for four-year institutions; dual admissions or transfer guarantees; testing and remediation policies.
2. Statewide core curriculum (mandatory or voluntary); articulation agreements (mandatory or individually negotiated).
3. Statewide catalogues; student course audit capability.
4. Transfer of credit policies: general; core curriculum; policies oriented to Associate's degree; guarantees.
5. Common course numbering.
6. Common academic calendars.
7. Support for voluntary agreements and cross-sector collaborations.

In 1999, Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) adopted and implemented the Academic Passport and Student Transfer Policy. The Passport creates a structure for seamless transferability of students and credits between institutions in the State System as well as between Pennsylvania community college-issued Associate degrees and State System university academic programs. In addition to the Passport, PASSHE created a structure for non-degreed community college transfers not qualifying for the Academic Passport.

Limitations of the Passport and the Transfer Policy are the exclusion of private and state-related institutions (both of which can participate voluntarily) and the requirement that students have at least 12 credit hours of college level course work (if they lack an Associate's degree) before their community college general education coursework can be transferred to a State System university. Another key limitation is that the Passport and the Transfer Policy apply only to general education coursework and not to more specific curriculum or programs. This leaves non-general education credit transferability to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

In July 2006, PDE began implementation of Article XX-C of the Public institution Code of 1949. Intended to create a seamless statewide transfer and articulation system, this legislation required Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and the 14 state-owned universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) to develop and implement equivalency standards for at least 30 hours of foundation courses, not including developmental or remedial courses or career, technical or applied courses, and to accept for transfer foundation courses determined to meet those equivalency standards.

As of March 2009, 49 individual courses have been identified as foundation courses and are guaranteed to transfer to any of the

institutions participating in the transfer initiative. These courses comprise what is now known as the "Transfer Credit Framework". The Transfer Credit Framework was first applied to students matriculated in Fall 2008.

Courses listed in the Transfer Credit Framework represent the type of coursework that is generally completed during the first and second year of a four-year degree program. Completing courses in these categories is a good choice for students who are undecided about the major they wish to pursue or to the institution to which they plan to transfer. The Transfer Credit Framework allows students to transfer up to 30 credits of foundation courses to any of the participating colleges and universities and have those courses count toward graduation. Certain majors have specific requirements prescribed by external agencies. It is the student's responsibility to work with an advisor to select appropriate courses as they relate to the major.

As a way to inform the public about the transfer system and to make them aware of articulation and transfer opportunities across the Commonwealth, PDE created the Pennsylvania Transfer and Articulation Center (PA TRAC), a one-stop online portal for transfer students, administrators and advisors/faculty. The site contains information about the Transfer Credit Framework, transfer course equivalencies, college profiles for the participating institutions, searchable databases, and transfer planning assistance.

In addition to the mandated community colleges and universities, voluntary participation in the transfer system by private colleges and universities and state-related institutions is allowed under the law. As of the spring semester of 2009, Lackawanna College, Lincoln University, Seton Hill University and St. Francis University have joined PA TRAC. This brings the number of institutions participating in PA TRAC to 32.

While the statewide transfer system does give students an assurance of credit transferability, the system does not address major-specific courses or program-to-program articulation, which would allow a student to transfer an entire degree as opposed to individual courses. The system is also limited in that only 28 of more than 100 institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania are required by law to participate. Students and advisors are also still learning about the system and need to be educated about its benefits and the information that is now available to them online.

Temple University College of Education conducted an analysis of the persistence of Core-to-Core (C2C) transfer students compared to students transferring through traditional transcript evaluation. The C2C program requires that the student has completed a pre-approved Associate's degree at the partner community college. Temple researchers found that 84 percent of the C2C students persisted to graduation compared to 64 percent of the traditional

transfer students.[56] This study provides evidence that an articulation program allowing transfer of the block of courses resulting in an Associate's degree instead of individual course-by-course evaluation and articulation agreements could result in higher degree attainment rates.

In February 2009, Arkansas passed legislation "to eliminate obstacles to transfers of credits among public institutions of higher education by providing a seamless transfer of academic credits from a completed designated transfer degree program to a baccalaureate degree program without the loss of earned credits and without the receiving public institution of higher education requiring additional lower division credits."[57] The new act requires a four-year public institution of higher education to accept all hours completed and credits earned for a designated transfer degree upon a student's transfer to a baccalaureate degree program at the four-year public institution of higher education, granting the transfer student automatic junior status towards a bachelor's degree.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

In 2004, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry identified that only three percent of Pennsylvania's adults were enrolled in postsecondary education, compared to six percent in benchmark states. In order for the commonwealth to be economically competitive both in the national and global marketplaces and for our workers to succeed, Pennsylvania needed to respond to the critical issue of life-long learning, a fundamental focus of the Governor's 'Job Ready Pennsylvania'.

As a result of participation in the "Pathways to Advancement Policy Academy" initiative, coordinated by the National Governors Association, the commonwealth has had the unique opportunity to develop a long-term agenda to increase adult Pennsylvanians' participation in postsecondary education.

One of the strategies identified by the "Pathways to Advancement Academy" Team was to increase attainment of portable, marketable, and transferable credentials recognized by academic institutions and industry. Based on the recommendation of the Governor, the Pathways state leadership team (consisting of representatives from state agencies, the General Assembly, the business community, higher education, and the workforce development system and CAEL), the state began considering policies to promote the validity, transferability and accessibility of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) in the commonwealth.

According to the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), PLA refers to systems to award college credit for what people learn outside the classroom through corporate training, work experience, civic activity, independent study, and even high

school classes. Through a process called Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) advocated by CAEL, colleges and universities evaluate and award credit for this learning when they determine it to be similar in content, depth, and breadth to what they consider college-level learning.[58]

A survey conducted in 2006 led to the first statewide summit on PLA for higher education institutions. The State Board of Education made a resolution to support and expand the use of PLA in the Commonwealth.

This led to a series of roundtable discussions across the Commonwealth in 2007, and the formation of a Task Force to develop statewide strategies for accepting and transferring PLA credits.

The Task Force met several times to work on developing consensus among the stakeholders. To help move the work forward the Task Force invited strategic planners from higher education institutions, local WIBS, and other postsecondary educational providers. The resulting workshop held in April uncovered some of the primary concerns about PLA. The Task Force continued meeting to address these concerns.

In September of 2008 a subset of the Task Force developed the first draft of the policies and standards for PLA in Pennsylvania. Their work is based upon research, current PLA practices, and accrediting standards established by the Middle States Association

Commission on Higher Education (MSACHE), the "Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit" developed by the American Council on Education (ACE), the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

With the finalization of the PLA standards and policies, Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions are being encouraged to develop, implement, and maintain PLA Programs with policies and procedures that are aligned with the recommended guiding principles. A letter has been sent out to postsecondary institutions inviting them to join the Commonwealth PLA Consortium and voluntarily agree to adhere to the PLA policies and accept PLA credits from others in the group.

The next step will be to establish a joint PDE-L& I website to include the policies, standards, best practices, and other materials as appropriate and useful.

Eventually, it is envisioned that actual training in the assessment of portfolios might be offered to institutions around the state.

Additional opportunities and suggested strategies for capturing college-level credit to apply towards degree and certificate programs, such as WEDnet, Certifications for Credit based on the National Association of Manufacturers, and Industry Partnership training are detailed in Appendix IV.

Overcoming Cultural Barriers to Success

Returning adult students must overcome family and community cultures that do not place priority value on degree or certificate completion; and overcome a lack of understanding of the postsecondary education system challenges and rewards. In some cases, the barrier is the internal academic culture that is designed for traditional students, not returning adult students with established lives and commitments.

Recommendation
• According to the Lumina Foundation, the United States will fall 16 million degrees short of the number needed to match leading nations in the percentage of adults with a college degree and to meet the workforce needs of 2025. The Commonwealth's current goal is a 25% increase by 2015 in the number of Pennsylvania adults who possess nationally recognized industry ready credentials or licenses in high-wage, high demand careers, and to increase the portability and transferability of such credentials. The Commonwealth must increase the percentage of adults with credentials or degrees from 37 percent to 60 percent to attain the national goal by 2025 for the educational attainment of our work force, requiring an annual improvement of 1.4 percentage points from 2010 to 2025. **Marketing** • The Commonwealth should create a major promotional campaign focused on the goal of creating a culture shift. Such a campaign should develop a pithy campaign statement (such as "To 60 in 16") and should provide additional state resources to increase the number and proportion of adults with degrees and credentials or licenses. The campaign should be launched by Spring 2010 to start having an impact on Fall 2010 enrollment.

Marketing

The Problem

With over a million adults in the Commonwealth with some college but no degree or credential, the most efficient means for improving educational attainment of the Commonwealth's labor force is to bring those individuals back into postsecondary education and training to finish what they started. Reaching those individuals to convince them of the benefits of completing their degree or credential poses a major challenge, as does the next step of helping them find the right services, financial aid, and institutions to reach their goals. Marketing is the means for outreach and information. As one source defines it, "Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily change a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole."[59] Marketing can be one strategy for raising adult education levels.

The Research

Outreach programs targeting adult learners rely on traditional advertising to market programs, such as, billboards, television and radio, and newspapers and magazines. They also rely on additional advertising tools, including:

• Online marketing,

• Open houses,

• Direct mailings and

• Information sessions at local businesses.

Out of all the strategies, however, word of mouth was cited as having a significant marketing role for nearly every college interviewed. Marketing requires a financial commitment on the part of the institution or organization. While not every college disclosed the size of their budget for marketing to non-traditional students, the ones that did ranged from $300,000 to "over six figures."

There exist model practices and best practices across the country for marketing to non-traditional students and adult learners. The University Continuing Education Association issues awards for excellence in marketing in recognition of its importance and as part of their mission in fostering excellence in communities of practice. In 2008, Linfield College received an award for their Adult Degree Program website. The University of Toronto received an award for their Strategic Marketing Campaign. Another tool for marketing and outreach is to set a goal and then articulate that goal in an easy to remember slogan. For example, Michigan set November 2006 as "Return to Learning" month. The Lumina Foundation has "Achieving the Dream" and "Know How 2 Go."

Marketing and outreach requires an investment of resources; and the more wisdom institutions and the Commonwealth can draw from successful campaigns across the country, the better the results can be for the investment of resources made.

The Commonwealth could develop low-cost marketing alternatives that are effective, i.e. word of mouth. Integration of marketing efforts with Rapid Response activities across the Commonwealth should be documented, allowing leverage of WIB resources and experience to help achieve the goal of improving the educational attainment of the workforce. Interventions and outcomes should be documented beginning in the Spring 2010.

Additional research and suggested practices for minimizing cultural barriers to degree and certification completion including Partnerships, and Specialized Student Services are included in Appendix VI.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

A Community-Focused Approach to Implementing a Degree and Certificate Completion Initiative in Pennsylvania

The Degree and Certificate Completion Subcommittee has developed a solid set of recommendations, but these must be accompanied by a unifying implementation strategy to tie the recommendations together and to move the initiative forward.

Steps:

- Identify the counties (or regions) that have low postsecondary education participation rates or high numbers of adults without a postsecondary education credential.

- PDE and L& I should reach out to organizations in each of those areas to find an appropriate volunteer organization (WIB, Chamber, Intermediate Unit, Service Club, etc.) to spearhead the coordination of a massive public relations, promotional, student support initiative to connect adults to postsecondary education. The coordinating body should use community organization principles and practices similar to the Graduate! Philadelphia approach and provide modest coordination seed grants.

- Using the recommendations developed by this subcommittee, PDE and L&I should develop a package that a community group could use to initiate potential student contact, provide information, and create incentives, while developing support systems for retention and completion of a credential.

- The package could include: (responsible entity in parentheses)
  - Convincing data on the benefits of a postsecondary education credential
  - Promotion of various types of credentials in different fields (L&I)
  - A website (L&I and PDE)
  - List of postsecondary institutions and their programs, plus any alternative educational program delivery methods (PDE)
  - Ways to finance the education (PHEAA)
  - Local counseling supports (PDE)
  - List of local companies, service organizations and foundations that provide tuition assistance (PDE, L&I, local coordinating group)

Only by using a committed, local coordinating group will the subcommittee's recommendations be able to be implemented.

IV. APPENDICES

Appendix I: **Adult Student Outreach Efforts**

State	DEFINITION
Program Name	
Partnership	*Multiple entities collaborate*
Articulation	*Create transferability agreements between multiple institutions*
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	*Online, traditional "seat time", combination; accelerated courses, modular courses; credit for work experience; rolling enrollment, evening and weekend courses*
Pilot phase	*Test out agreements, concepts before taking to scale across all programs*
Marketing	*Activities to advertise the programs existence and benefits*
Incentives	*Inducements for students to participate, such as financial aid, waived admission fees, priority enrollment, individualized counseling, child care options*
Identify outreach population	*Contact former students*

State	Arizona
Program Name	**90/30 Program**
Partnership	Pima (Community) College and Northern AZ University
Articulation	Students complete 90 credits at the community college and then can complete a bachelor's degree at NAU
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Programs can be completed online, face-to-face, or in a combination of the two
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	

State	Arizona
Program Name	**Life Happens**
Partnership	Arizona State University
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Emphasizing online courses as being a convenient way to finish their degrees
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	ASU has financial aid available depending on income and the program selected
Identify outreach population	Targeted 14,000 former students who had attended the university but left since 2001

State	Arkansas
Program Name	**Non-Traditional No More**
Partnership	Department of Higher Education, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the Lumina Foundation
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	Identify "ready learners" who may be close to completing a degree

State	California
Program Name	**Graduation Green Light**
Partnership	California State University – Long Beach
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Work with the student's major department to find suitable classes, even if offered at another school; compiled lists of distance education courses at universities across the country
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	List of students who failed to complete graduation requirements a year after applying for graduation

State	Kentucky
Program Name	**Project Graduate (as part of Adult Learner Initiative), Lumina Foundation**
Partnership	Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, educational institutions
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	Waived admission fees, priority enrollment, individualized advising
Identify outreach population	Identified 11,000 individuals who had previously earned at least 90 credits at a public college or university in Kentucky but had failed to graduate

State	Maine
Program Name	**The Maine Compact for Higher Education – Maine College Transition Initiative**
Partnership	Joint effort of the Maine Development Foundation and the Maine Community Foundation
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	

State	New Mexico
Program Name	**The Graduation Project**
Partnership	University of New Mexico
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	**Admissions:** a special, short re-admit application designed specifically for this program. **Degree Summary:** A progress report to help students determine which classes they need to graduate. **Priority Enrollment:** priority enrollment in "over-enrolled" classes that are needed to graduate. Tuition Payments: The Graduation Project allows for monthly tuition payments. Tuition Assistance: Students with a GPA of 2.5 or above automatically qualify for the Regents Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), which awards a tuition credit of up to 50% of a student's tuition, not to exceed $1000.00 per academic year for two years.
Identify outreach population	A systematic effort to identify, recruit and support students who have left UNM after doing the majority of work needed to complete a degree

State	Ohio
Program Name	**Complete to Compete**
Partnership	Kent State University & Ohio University
Articulation	The universities will co-develop programs and certificates for emerging markets and career fields that can be combined into course credits at either institution.
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Course offerings will create maximum flexibility for students through online, distance learning and other formats. National guidelines will be used to give course credit for work experience. The partnership also will be capable of serving statewide needs for degree completion through distance learning collaborations with other higher education institutions.
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	Effort to expand access to higher education for adult learners in 33 counties in eastern Ohio

State	Oklahoma
Program Name	**Reach Higher**
Partnership	OK's public universities
Articulation	It appears that this is program presents a centralized and unified curriculum, offered at one of eight public universities throughout the state.
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Allows adults to combine past college credit and an eight-week modular course format, with most assignments completed online. Students can enroll at any point during the year.
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	

State	Pennsylvania
Program Name	**Graduate Philadelphia**
Partnership	Philadelphia Education Fund and is funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the City of Philadelphia. Chestnut Hill College, Community College of Philadelphia, Holy Family University, Neumann College, Pierce College, Philadelphia University, Rutgers University-Camden, Thomas Edison State College, Widener University
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Offer flexible, focused, and accelerated programs that are designed especially for adults with some college experience. These colleges offer courses in a variety of formats: shorter sessions (5-, 7-, 8-week sessions), online and mixed-method delivery, multiple start-times throughout the year, evening and weekend courses
Pilot phase	Developing and piloting innovative programs, such as the Graduate! Philadelphia outreach center
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	Provides services for any adult wishing to go back to college "regionally" in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

State	Utah
Program Name	**Returning to the U**
Partnership	University of Utah
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	Academic advising; individualized connections with academic programs and departments; a team of University agencies that can identify financial resources, child care options and career opportunities to facilitate success; the admissions office waives the re-admission fee for these returning students.
Identify outreach population	Former U students who have completed most of their coursework but have not earned their bachelor's degree.

State	Wisconsin
Program Name	**UW Oshkosh Graduation Project**
Partnership	UW Oshkosh
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Courses may be transferred in or taken online to complete the degree, as long as 15 of the last 30 credits taken are completed at UWO
Pilot phase	UW-Oshkosh's degree completion program is modeled after the University of New Mexico's. Pilot program during the 2004-2005 school year. UWO originally piloted the program by identifying 100 individuals who were within one semester of graduation, had maintained a 2.5 GPA, and had left within the previous five years.
Marketing	
Incentives	Enrollment incentives to 100 students that left campus between 1999 and 2003. New funding will expand it to 1,500 students.
Identify outreach population	

State	Wisconsin
Program Name	Baccalaureate Completion Project
Partnership	UW-Superior
Articulation	
Courses and credit available through multiple delivery channels	Partner with UW Colleges' online-degree program to help students complete general education requirements
Pilot phase	
Marketing	
Incentives	
Identify outreach population	Lure back 50 students who left campus with junior standing between the fall of 2000 and the present

Appendix II: **Developing Solutions**

NGA Pathways to Advancement Report

Intensified global competition, rapid technological advances, and an aging Pennsylvania workforce are creating new challenges for the state's economy. These dynamics are driving the disappearance of unskilled jobs and increased demand for workers with postsecondary technical and academic education, producing a growing gap between the supply and demand for highly skilled workers in Pennsylvania's labor market. As a result, Pennsylvania's lower-skilled workers are experiencing entrenched unemployment and declining wages, while many of Pennsylvania's businesses are having difficultly hiring the skilled workforce they need to remain competitive.

Although increased educational attainment will not in and of itself address all of the structural economic challenges brought about by de-industrialization and globalization, access to education and training is a critical component to ensure our residents have the opportunity to compete in the Twenty-first century economy.

In the face of these challenges, Pennsylvania was selected as one of eight states to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices' Policy Academy, *Pathways to Advancement: Expanding Postsecondary Educational Opportunities for Working Adults*. Supported by the Lumina Foundation for Education, this initiative works with selected states to design policies and practices to increase the number of working adults who attain postsecondary credentials that can lead to high-demand, high-skilled jobs.

Governor Edward G. Rendell appointed a high-level, public-private policy team of key government, education, business, and workforce leaders to participate in the NGA Pathways to Advancement project. This bipartisan policy team was charged with assessing Pennsylvania's current workforce, welfare, education, and economic development policies and developing comprehensive strategies for overcoming barriers to postsecondary access for low-income and low-skilled adults.

Working with national experts and counterparts in the other participating states, the Pennsylvania Leadership Team conducted research, gathered input from key leaders across the state, reached consensus on a vision for increasing adult participation in postsecondary education and training, and developed goals and strategies for achieving that vision.

A report was issued in 2004 based on the policy team's work. The report became the framework for Pennsylvania's workforce development strategy from that point forward.

Targeted Industries, High Priority Occupations and Industry Partnerships

Even in these economically stressed times, when unemployment is clearly on the rise, in the short-term and the long-term, some occupations will continue to grow in demand and will continue to face a shortage of qualified workers. This is due in part to Pennsylvania's demographic profile. From 2000 to 2005, the national rate of population growth age 64 and under was 2.9 percent compared to Pennsylvania's rate of population loss of 1.5 percent.[60]

Pennsylvania recognized several years ago that the demand for health science occupations had outstripped supply, almost to the point of crisis. In fact, 16 percent of all jobs in Pennsylvania were

in the health care sector; and the number of jobs grew by over four4 percent during the 2000-2002 recessions. The Center on Health Careers was created as an initiative of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board in 2004. The Center conducted a focused needs analysis and found that by the year 2010, the Commonwealth would face a shortage of 4,100 LPNs. In response, the Center focused on identifying and coordinating the resources necessary to attract, train and retain individuals in health care careers, mainly nursing and allied health professions.

In addition, Pennsylvania developed a strategic framework for addressing workforce development challenges overall, in the short and long term across the Commonwealth. At the core of the new workforce development strategy was the recognition that Pennsylvanians needed a better understanding of the key industries that supported their economy.

In order to determine on which businesses to focus resources, it was necessary first to identify PA industries with competitive potential. Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) directors and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's (L&I) Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA) determined which employers belonged in which industry clusters. Criteria were developed for selecting targeted industries: those that create jobs paying family-sustaining wages, opportunity for employment expansion, career ladders, and openings created by significant retirements. The resulting list of targeted industry clusters and sub-clusters became the foundation upon which the new workforce development strategy was built.

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jobs paying family sustaining wages, opportunity for employment expansion, career ladders, and openings created by significant retirements. The resulting list of "targeted" industry clusters and sub-clusters became the foundation upon which the new workforce development strategy was built.

PA focused its resources in occupations that would increase the competitiveness of these key industries. CWIA developed a list of high priority occupations that were critical to the clusters, establishing criteria that occupations were required to meet, such as family sustaining wages, importance to the cluster, and inadequate supply in the pipeline. This list of high priority occupations became the future framework for guiding career awareness, as well as making investments to community colleges and career and technical schools.

Industry Partnerships (IPs)

Once targeted industries and high priority occupations were identified, the workforce system needed a more thorough understanding of the human capital challenges, technological trends and global competition facing the Commonwealth's employers. Developing this industry-focused approach required that new resources be devoted to organizing employers in critical industries and providing the skills training necessary to bring their workforces up to competitive standards. These partnerships would become the cornerstone of a new demand-driven system that would provide information and intelligence to workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

In 2005, the Pennsylvania General Assembly allocated $5 million to organize partnerships and $15 million to address the training needs of current employees. Guidelines for obtaining these funds required the involvement of LWIBs and emphasized the importance of employers' ability to choose their own training providers. Many LWIBs responded enthusiastically, contacting thousands of employers in multiple sectors. As a result, 6,200 employers now participate in 76 active partnerships across 11 sectors.

Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs)

Other vehicles exist for helping adult learners pay for their education and training. Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs) are employer-matched, portable individual savings accounts used to finance education and training – like a 401(k) for skill building and career advancement. According to the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning, LiLAs have the following features:

- Universal LiLA Eligibility. All individual workers would be eligible for accounts.

- Broad Use of Funds. Since individual learning needs vary, LiLAs can be used for a wide variety of educational expenses, including tuition and fees assessments, supplies, materials, and books.

- Portability. The LiLA funds always stay with the individual, regardless of the person's current employer or employment status.

- Voluntary Participation. Individuals and employers have the option of participating. The design encourages and facilitates widespread participation.

- Sources of Funding. LiLA accounts are funded through individual contributions, employer matches, and potential matches from third party sources. The third party funds can be in the form of foundation or public sector funding allocations, or federal or state tax credits.

- Informed Choice. Individual participants choose the training and education they need to meet their career goals based on a learning plan developed with the assistance of educational and career advisors.

At present, the Southwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board is developing a LiLAs pilot.

Companies increasingly rely on government to fund training, so the Commonwealth needs to create incentives for employers to invest in education. The Commonwealth could create tax benefits for businesses contributing to employee tuition or a state match program for employer tuition programs or programs such as LiLAs.

The Industry Partnership (IP) grant program should also have incentives or rewards such as one-to-one tuition matches for company contributions for IPs coordinating credit-bearing training and college completion opportunities.

Yellow Ribbon Program [61]

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a new Veterans Administration (VA) initiative designed to supplement college financial aid offered to returning veterans. Under the post-9/11 GI Bill, financial assistance is capped at an amount equal to the highest public in-state tuition and fees. To help returning veterans who want to

attend more expensive private or out-of-state institutions, the Yellow Ribbon Program offers a one-to-one VA match when institutions commit to offer additional financial assistance. Like the post-9/11 GI Bill benefits generally, the Yellow Ribbon Program is available only to honorably discharged service members who served an aggregate of 36 months of Active Duty after September 11, 2001. There is no minimum requirement for the number of courses or credits taken, so the program can benefit the full range of part-time as well as full-time students.

As of June 2009 there are currently about 89 public and private higher education institutions in Pennsylvania that have enrolled in the Yellow Ribbon Program, which will make its first payments in August of 2009. Most Pennsylvania schools are offering annual stipends ranging from $500 to $5,000. Some schools cap the number of participants; others do not.[62]

To participate in the VA Yellow Ribbon Program, Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) must agree to:

- Provide contributions to eligible individuals who apply for the Yellow Ribbon Program on a first-come first-served basis, regardless of the rate at which the individual is pursuing training in any given academic year;

- Provide contributions during the current academic year and all subsequent academic years in which the IHL is participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program and the student maintains satisfactory progress, conduct, and attendance;

- Make contributions toward the program on behalf of the individual in the form of a grant, scholarship, etc;

- State the dollar amount that will be contributed for each participant during the academic year;

- State the maximum number of individuals for whom contributions will be made in any given academic year.[63]

One institution experienced success targeting fundraising appeals to alumni with military backgrounds for scholarships for returning veterans. Institutions could use such a model of targeted fundraising campaigns for scholarships for adult students.

Individual Training Accounts

Another option for some adult learners who are unemployed is Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). ITAs are training vouchers issued by local workforce investment boards (LWIBs). The capped amount of the ITA is determined by each LWIB and ranges from $3,500 to $15,000. Typically, the ITAs pay for books, tuition and fees. Many LWIBs also allow ITAs to cover uniforms, physical exams, and licensure fees.

Child Care

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke links adult students with the Ellen Hubbard Child Care Fund (www.uncp.edu/cae/cal/). The Center for Adult Learners at Midlands Technical College (SC) helps identify financial resources, childcare options and other services. Anne Arundel Community College (MD) provides links on their website to the Child Development Center.

Several Pennsylvania institutions address the need for day care to support adult students. Among these, Penn State York and New Kensington provide child-care stipends to eligible students. The child-care provider is paid directly with the stipend amount determined by the student's number of credits/noncredit hours in the semester. Penn State Fayette has a childcare facility on campus.[64]

Other Incentives

Examples of incentives other than traditional student financial aid used in adult student outreach programs include waived admission fees, priority enrollment, individualized counseling, and childcare options. Other examples from Pennsylvania colleges include:

- Fuel cards for participating students,
- Tuition discounts for business partner employees, government employees or military personnel,
- Book delivery to homes or offices.

Financial Aid System

Resources are one side of the financial aid equation. The financial aid system, however, can have a significant impact as well. A 2006 Achieving the Dream policy brief, "Money on the Table: State Initiatives to Improve Financial Aid," outlines examples of student financial aid administration efforts in four states – California, Texas, Connecticut, and North Carolina – that have resulted in increases in financial access and awards. The strategies include:

- Creation of the **www.icanaffordcollege.com** website in California as part of a marketing and outreach strategy.
- On-campus workshops.
- A media campaign to target specific audiences including low-income students and potential students age 25-64. The campaign included partnering with community-based organizations to get the word out.
- Adding over 1,000 financial aid staff to community college campuses.
- Integrating financial aid outreach with other student service programs.
- Creating a single unified financial aid system for all the community colleges in the state of Connecticut, including

integrating back-office operations and automating the various processes, providing access via the Web.

- Automatically combining enrollment application with financial aid application processes.
- Managing an unanticipated spike in community college enrollment and demand for financial aid by hiring at least one additional staff for each college.

PHEAA has been working towards more user-friendly online access to critical financial aid forms. In February 2009, PHEAA announced the availability of a new electronic application for the Pennsylvania State Grant Program for the 2009-10 academic year. Students already are required to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) to apply for federal aid, as well as the Pennsylvania State Grant Program. Note that when a student submits the FAFSA, the State Grant Form is pre-populated with selected information that the student has already submitted. An email is sent to the student acknowledging that the State Grant Form is ready for completion and providing a link to the application. The application is interactive so questions are dictated by information that the student has already provided, saving the time of going through unrelated questions. The State Grant Form only needs to be completed by first-time State Grant applicants who will be notified through email. Renewal students already have the necessary information on file. PHEAA is reaching out to students, school counselors, and financial aid administrators to educate them about this new process.[65]

Strategies to optimize student financial aid through outreach campaigns become especially important given the increased benefits resulting from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (federal stimulus package).

Financial Planning

The Community College of Philadelphia, in response to the increased personal and institutional financial pressures, has begun offering financial planning workshops for students as a means for improving student persistence through to a degree or credential.[66] A 2001 study, *Factors Affecting Time To Baccalaureate Degree at Pennsylvania Colleges and Universities*, by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) included a recommendation that the Commonwealth should develop and support a model college information program that included a module specifically on "Personal financial planning and its relationship to the need to work while in college."[67] This recommendation was based on surveys and interviews of students and higher education professionals.

Suggested Practices to Improve
Financial Aid for Adult Students

The Commonwealth should promote three elements of the financial aid process: helping adults navigate the difficult and complex financial aid system; making the process and variety of resources available more transparent; and helping adults realized there is more to paying for college than financial aid – it also requires financial planning.

Institutions should join PHEAA's efforts for community outreach and implement a campaign to raise awareness among non-traditional students of the May financial aid application deadline and the FAFSA deadline.

In addition, adult students need help with financial planning, not just student financial aid.

Appendix IV: **Other Promising Practices: : Articulation**

Certifications for Credit

Another One way to help students – young or old – capture higher education credits is through skills certification programs that are either integrated into formal college curricula, or that are transferable into college credits. Such programs are also typically designed to engage non-traditional students in pursuing higher education.

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) Manufacturing Institute has just launched one of the most ambitious recent initiatives, with assistance from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is aimed at creating a national manufacturing skills certification system (covering both general, entry-level skills and advanced, industry-specific skills) that both employers and colleges will recognize. This system will be designed for the particular benefit of low-income young adults and transitioning workers, and will seek to integrate skills credentials into the curricula of degree-granting institutions, primarily community colleges.[68]

Community colleges in North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Washington have agreed to implement the Manufacturing Skills Certification System in their own programs.

A similar effort to recognize skills certificates is being developed in Ohio pursuant to legislation requiring the state Board of Regents and Department of Education to create a statewide system of "stackable certificates." The "stackable" concept involves a series of certifications (provided at regular intervals) to create tangible incentives for students to complete an academic degree. These certifications will recognize course work as well as competencies, skills and experiences derived from training provided by employers, career centers, and the colleges themselves.[69]

WEDnetPA

The Workforce and Economic Development Network of Pennsylvania (WEDnetPA) is an alliance of educational providers across Pennsylvania that delivers the Commonwealth's Guaranteed Free Training (GFT) program. Through the GFT Program, administered by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), qualified in-state businesses and out-of-state companies relocating to Pennsylvania can receive reimbursement grants for Basic Skills Training or Information Technology Training for new or incumbent workers. The business selects the training provider. In 2008, WEDNet received $19.5 million from the Commonwealth to provide training; 2,595 businesses participated to obtain training for over 108,000 employees under the program.[70]

Industry Partnerships

As mentioned in the Introduction, IPs are a critical component of Pennsylvania's strategy to improve the skills of the Commonwealth's workers and provide employers with the skilled human capital they need to thrive. IPs have become an important nexus for training across the Commonwealth. As of December 2008, Industry Partnerships (IPs) can cite the following accomplishments:

- Workers who received training through IPs saw their wages rise by an average of 6.62% within the first year since receiving the training.
- 88% of businesses in IPs reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the program.
- 84% of businesses reported IPs and training have helped them significantly increase their productivity.
- Total Number of Participants Trained: Over 70,000
- Total Number of Employers: Over 6,300
- Total State Investment (since 2004): $83million
- Total Match Investment (cash/in-kind from employers, foundations, and others): $54million ($43 in-kind/$11 cash).

Suggest Practices to Leverage
Credit-bearing Courses

Not all curricula receiving state funding has been categorized as credit bearing. There exist opportunities to change this by identifying components of existing postsecondary training and education courses that include college-level curricula and classify

the appropriate credit to those courses. For example, PDE could broker an advisory group of volunteer faculty and colleagues representing union training who would be willing to review curriculum for this purpose. One existing model is the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service, which evaluates company training relative to credit.[71] Another example is the New York Board of Regent's National Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction (National PONSI), which publishes their recommendations on a website – College Credit Recommendations **(http://www.nationalponsi.org/ccr/ccr_online_listings.htm)**.

The Commonwealth should recommend priority use of State-supported training funds to advance credit bearing/credential-bearing training aligned with State workforce priorities. In the past, the focus for workforce expenditures was on how many people got placed and how long they lasted in the placement. The focus on quick placement created a disincentive for workforce agencies to recommend college-level training, given the time required to complete the training.

Partnerships involving colleges, universities, churches, non-profit organizations and community-based organizations, should be formed with professional training associations so that schools can award credit after adults complete training courses linked with the associations. This is a correlate of PLA (Prior Learning Assessment), and should include not just the professional accredited training, but the examinations used for professional credentialing as well.

WEDnetPA policies should be changed so that funding awards more closely align with supporting credit-bearing courses that can be counted towards degrees or credentials, especially since WEDnetPA is targeting strategic sectors across the Commonwealth. While there is no prohibition for funding credit programs, currently most of the WEDnetPA funding goes to non-credit programs. Also, WEDnetPA should be encouraged to augment its data collection categories to include unique coding for credit-bearing courses to make it easier to analyze the profile of courses requested and funded each cycle.

Appendix V: **Other Promising Practices: Access**

Summary

Access is a matter of geography and of personal life situation and resources. The challenge for adult students is both geographic proximity to a school or coursework – including student services staff – providing the program of choice under terms that work for the non-traditional student. Often, these students are place bound with jobs, families, and mortgages. The challenge is also access that accommodates their lifestyle, with courses and services provided at the times and delivery channels that allow the individual to progress consistently and efficiently through a course of study to a credential.

Prior Learning Assessment refers to systems to award college credit for what people learn outside the classroom through corporate training, work experience, civic activity, independent study, and even high school classes. Through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), colleges and universities evaluate and award credit for this learning when they determine it to be similar in content, depth, and breadth to what they consider college-level learning.[72] One concern of colleges and universities is that if they accept credit through alternative channels such as online or accelerated courses, including Prior Learning Assessments (PLAs), the demand for their own courses will decline. At least one study shows this may not be the case. Simpson College (Iowa) tracked the persistence rate of students with PLA credits and those

without. The result was a significantly higher persistence rate for PLA students (75 percent) compared to non-PLA students (39 percent).[73] Greater persistence translates into enrollment in a greater number of courses.

Information should continue to be provided to colleges and universities illustrating why alternate channels of course delivery (beyond traditional classroom setting) will not adversely affect enrollment, and in fact, how it leads to increases in enrollment and courses taken.

The Problem
Access is a matter of geography and of personal life situation and resources. The challenge for adult student is both geographic proximity to a school or coursework – including student services staff – providing the program of choice under terms that work for the non-traditional student. Often, these students are place bound with jobs, families, and mortgages. The challenge is also access that accommodates their lifestyle, with courses and services provided at the times and delivery channels that allow the individual to progress consistently and efficiently through a course of study to a credential.

The Research
Many colleges and universities across the Commonwealth currently deliver curriculum through non-traditional channels. These channels include:

- Online courses,
- Hybrid courses with online curriculum combined with traditional "seat time";
- Accelerated courses,
- Modular courses, where a main course is a combination of credit-bearing modules. For example, each module may be worth .5 to 1.0 credits (All modules, however, ultimately must be completed to get the full 3.0 credits.),
- Credit for work experience,
- Rolling enrollment, and
- Evening and weekend courses.

One concern of colleges and universities is that if they accept credit through alternative channels, including PLAs, the demand for their own courses will decline. At least one study shows this may not be the case. Simpson College tracked the persistence rate of students with PLA credits and those without. The result was a significantly higher persistence rate for PLA students (75 percent) compared to non-PLA students (39 percent).[74] Greater persistence translates into enrollment in a greater number of courses.

At the 2006 Prior Learning Assessment Summit, PDE provided data to colleges and universities showing the positive impact of providing alternative delivery channels, as an incentive to get them to shift their internal cultures/resistance to non-traditional structures. Information should be provided to colleges and universities illustrating why alternate channels will not adversely affect enrollment, and in fact, how it leads to increases in enrollment and courses taken.

Pennsylvania is participating with other states in a Sloan Grant to create a catalogue of available online courses that are credit bearing; the project is scheduled to be completed by June 2010. The focus is on targeted industries and skills and on rural areas.

Community Education Councils (CECs)

One model of multi-institutional collaboration known as Community Education Councils (CECs) has been in operation in the Commonwealth since the 1970s. Residents of many Pennsylvania communities do not have ready access to education programs to meet their professional, vocational, occupational and developmental needs. Community Education Councils, nonprofit educational organizations governed by a community-based board of directors, are designed to fill this void by providing access to postsecondary education and training resources for citizens.

According to PDE:

They serve their communities by assessing the education and training needs of their community and partnering with providers to offer educational programs. Programming includes programs, courses or classes leading to professional, vocational or occupational certification or licensure, an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, GED preparation, skill development or skill enhancement f or the community workforce and customized job training for community employers. Further, the community education councils serve as a vehicle for employment opportunities, which meet the community's current and future economic development needs.[75]

There are nine CECs in operation across the Commonwealth. Funding for the CECs in difficult budget times has become challenging with one recent recommendation placing their state funding at zero.

Suggested Practices to Improve Alternative Delivery Channels

The Commonwealth could create and broadcast a checklist of model institutions with regards to adult degree and certificate completion. The Commonwealth could broker advisory relationships between institutions experiencing significant success with re-engaging adults and retaining them to degree or certificate completion, and those institutions aspiring to improve their performance regarding adult learners. By brokering these relationships, the Commonwealth can assist institutions in identifying their own barriers to alternative channels for delivering courses.

The Commonwealth could also identify subject-matter experts and organizations, such as CAEL's Adult Learning Focused Institution credential, and create links to such resources. In the course of work on the PLA, PDE is developing a website that will be rich with resources for institutions to learn how to do PLA.

Information should continue to be provided to colleges and universities illustrating why alternate channels of course delivery (beyond traditional classroom setting) will not adversely affect enrollment, and in fact, how it leads to increases in enrollment and courses taken.

The Commonwealth should identify specific incentives and examples that will result in more colleges and universities offering more convenient delivery channels for their adult students.[76]

The PA WIB should partner with PDE to support the concept of Community Education Councils (CECs) as a means of providing access to postsecondary training and education, especially to rural areas.

Partnerships

The Problem

The Commonwealth and institutions and communities across Pennsylvania have limited resources for outreach and marketing campaigns directed at adult learners. Duplicating outreach and marketing efforts due to a lack of partnerships and coordination is a waste of precious resources that no one can afford in the current economic climate.

The Research

Institutions working to successfully serve non-traditional students have developed innovative strategies, including stepping outside of traditional academic partnerships and reaching out to groups and organizations best positioned to meet the unique needs of the non-traditional population.

Four of the institutions surveyed are part of the Greater Philadelphia Alliance of Colleges and Universities (GPACU), a consortium of approximately 30 regionally accredited colleges and universities that aim to meet the needs of employers and help employees find the right educational opportunities by hosting free job fairs and information sessions on site.

The North Central WIB recognized the disconnect between Industry Partnerships and schools, so the WIB is working to strengthen partnerships between the WIB, employers and the postsecondary education community. The WIB took the first step by convening a training consortium meeting that includes college and university staff members and WIB staff. Quarterly, the WIB invites all providers to the table to share their needs. North Central WIB is planning on doing an employer panel to talk to training providers so the providers can hear directly from employers.

Institutions surveyed formed partnerships to attract and retain non-traditional students. Participants in these partnerships included:

- Local businesses,
- Foundations,
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA),
- Hospitals,
- Community-based social service organizations,
- Technical training schools,
- A military base and
- Chambers of commerce.

Institutions are taking a pragmatic approach to overcoming their students' cultural barriers.

Suggested Practices to Leverage Partnerships

The Commonwealth could research and post on an accessible website twenty examples from around the state of different types of institutions partnering with businesses, including descriptions of steps in creating and maintaining the partnerships, as a means for spurring partnering activity.

Local WIBs should be encouraged to have representatives from four-year institutions to ensure inclusion of postsecondary education in workforce policy and funding discussions. Having WIB representation would help with responsiveness, foster collaboration, and provide better support for partnerships and marketing in alignment with WIBs' broader mission. In addition, L&I should review four-year institutional involvement in IPs, not just as training providers but also in setting priorities and strategic direction.

Specialized Student Services

The Problem

Student services include such activities as guidance counseling, academic advising, financial aid advising, tutoring, career counseling, and in some cases, supplemental services such as childcare and transportation.

As discussed throughout this report, adult students face a different set of barriers and challenges than do traditional students. The obligations and priorities of a 32-year old with two children and a mortgage differs significantly from that of an 18-year old fresh out of high school. Simple tasks, such as obtaining a student ID can create problems for adult students if the only hours of access for getting the ID are normal working hours.

The Research

CAEL designed the Adult Learning Focused Institution (ALFI) Assessment Toolkit specifically for colleges and universities that want to retain undergraduate adult learners by providing programs that meet and exceed their expectations. One of the elements of assessment looks at student support services designed specifically for adult learners, including the student's flexibility in accessing services and completing transactions, as well as the range of services and how pro-actively they are provided to the student.[77]

A report issued by MDRC found research by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) suggesting that:

Special services targeting nontraditional students are linked to better academic outcomes and improved retention rates.

Attributes associated with these positive outcomes appear to be that the services be consistent, that they take into account students' strengths, and that they respond to students' needs and to the challenges posed by a college environment.[78]

Four of the programs identified in the survey of Pennsylvania colleges have points of contacts/counselors/advisors specific to their adult outreach program. The remainder of the programs cite referral to counselors in the degree or certificate programs for which the students enroll.

The following describes practices across the country and across the Commonwealth:

At Gwynedd Mercy University in Pennsylvania, the adult outreach program has its own enrollment division and student services division, all of which is housed on the adult campus; representatives don't cross over to the regular campus.

- Graduate! Philadelphia provides free and ongoing support and guidance, both in-person and online, for everything from application through graduation.
- California's Graduation Green Light program staff works with the student's major department to find suitable classes, even if the classes are offered at another school. They compile lists of distance education courses at universities across the country, and they advocate for the student with administrative units in the university (e.g., to modify previously made decisions regarding transfer credits).
- Through Kentucky's Project Graduate, each participating college or university has designated a "Project Graduate Advocate" to assist students in the process of returning to school.
- The Maine Compact for Higher Education – Maine College Transition Initiative provides support for those who have degrees

but may need remedial or developmental assistance, and also assists these students as they navigate the transition to college.

- De Anza College (California) operates a one-stop shop designated the Student Success and Retention Services Center for students who have historically low retention and transfer rates, first-generation college students, and reentry students. Services include educational planning and academic advising services, personal counseling, academic mentoring and coaching, study groups, leadership development activities, access to computers, four-year college and university campus tours, academic enrichment workshops, and scholarship and financial aid information.
- Lorain County Community College (Ohio) employs a specialized team for non-traditional students to provide academic advising, career counseling, personal counseling, financial aid advice, and referrals to other staff who have expertise in particular areas. Ratios of students to team members are kept low so that students have easy access to counselors, and services are offered in a one-stop shop format at an off-campus location.[79]

Suggested Practices for Student Services

Institutions could make better use of social networking technology to provide support services and to create learning communities for non-traditional students, providing students a flexible channeling for posting questions and concerns and receiving ongoing support.

Institutions should demonstrably place higher value on transfer students than they currently do. Colleges and universities should make it a priority to provide student support services designed specifically for non-traditional adult students. In addition, institutions should do more than just change transfer policies for adult learners; they need to give equal standing in housing, parity with financial aid and placement in the registration cue for courses.

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