



The Plus 50 Initiative Evaluation:  
**Initiative Impact**

**plus 50**  
Community Colleges:  
AGELESS LEARNING



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# Overview of the Plus 50 Initiative



The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), with funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies, created the Plus 50 Initiative (2008–2012). This initiative was designed to build the capacity of community colleges nationwide to develop programming that engages the plus 50 learner.

## The primary components of the Plus 50 Initiative included:

- + **Support to a pilot group of 13 community colleges** to develop or expand campus programs for plus 50 learners that focused on one or more of these three tracks: learning and enrichment, workforce training/career development, and volunteering (for a list of the colleges and the tracks they focused on, see Appendix B).
- + **An annual conference:** This conference offered every summer brought all the grantee colleges together so that they could learn from presenters and from one another.
- + **A "Plus 50 Expansion:"** To build the capacity of additional community colleges (and enable them to respond to the need for the workforce development needs of plus 50 learners specifically), Plus 50 paired seven of its pilot colleges with 11 affiliate colleges to become Learning Partners to these new colleges. In addition, three of the pilot colleges became Peer-to-Peer Ambassadors to additional community colleges, inviting these new colleges to participate in information sharing about resources and tools available to assist them with effective programming for plus 50 students. And finally, select pilot colleges hosted Plus 50 Regional Meetings to bring the Plus 50 message and resources to additional community colleges; 42 community colleges attended these meetings.
- + **Building an extensive knowledge base** that community colleges across the country can access online at the Plus 50 Website and use for the purposes of launching and developing their own Plus 50 programs.

### What you will find in this report:

- + An overview of the Plus 50 Initiative
- + Information about the impact that the Plus 50 Initiative has had on students, community colleges, and the field
- + A discussion of what's next for Plus 50, and how the program continues to impact the field



## Overview of the Impact of the Plus 50 Initiative on Students, Colleges, and the Field



The impact of the Plus 50 Initiative has been felt at multiple levels – students, colleges, and the community college field.

Students at the pilot colleges benefited from Plus 50 programming in all three tracks, as well as from the Plus 50 Advising component that emerged as a promising practice as colleges sought to find ways to make their services “learner centered.”

- + **Workforce Training/Career Development:** Across all the colleges, the number of the workforce training courses targeted to plus 50 students grew from 54 to 1,147. Plus 50 students reported that workforce training programs helped them to improve current or acquire new job skills, work toward a license or certificate, and become employed. They reported that tailored Plus 50 career development services helped them to explore new career options, learn new job search skills, locate and apply for jobs, and become employed.
- + **Learning and Enrichment:** Plus 50 students reported that the enrichment courses they took helped them to increase their knowledge, keep their minds active, and learn new skills. They also reported that taking these courses increased their enjoyment of returning to school.
- + **Volunteering:** Plus 50 students reported that the Plus 50 volunteering services helped them to understand that their skills and experience are valued, feel more connected to the community, and learn new skills. These services also helped them to reach career goals: obtain work experience that adds to a resume; explore new career options, and find a job.
- + **Plus 50 Advising:** Plus 50 students reported high satisfaction levels with the advising they received that was tailored to their needs.

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Plus 50 programming at the pilot colleges showed very high levels of sustainability.

At the end of the initiative, 12 of the 13 pilot colleges reported that they were continuing to offer Plus 50 programming beyond the grant period.

By building an extensive Plus 50 knowledge base, and through efforts to reach out to additional community colleges, the Plus 50 Initiative has made substantial progress in disseminating the model nationwide.

Plus 50 has developed an extensive set of tools, information, and other resources that community colleges can use to design and implement their own Plus 50 programs. These resources are housed on the Plus 50 Website and are also actively pushed out to the field through a Plus 50 electronic newsletter that goes out every two weeks. The “Plus 50 family” has also grown with pilot colleges acting as Peer-to-Peer Ambassadors and Learning Partners to 33 additional colleges.

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## Plus 50 continues to impact students, colleges, and the field with its new Completion Strategy.

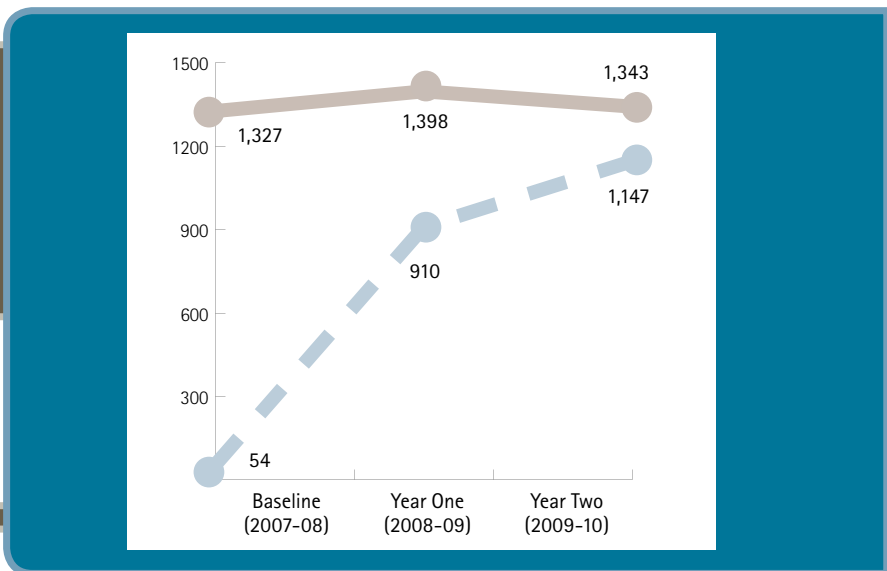
The Atlantic Philanthropies is providing seed funding to help the launch the next stage of Plus 50: the Completion Strategy. Through this strategy (funded primarily by Lumina Foundation) Plus 50 will support 18 community colleges over four years to implement programs that engage plus 50 students in their efforts to obtain degrees, certificates, or non-credit certificates that will lead to jobs and/or career advancement. The Completion Strategy builds on the learnings of the Plus 50 Initiative, promoting specific standards of Plus 50 programming excellence that emerged from the initiative. The Completion Strategy also continues to generate learnings that build the field, enabling additional community colleges to access resources that will support implementation of Plus 50 Completion programs on their campuses.

This report provides additional detail about each area of the Plus 50 Initiative’s Impact.

# How Plus 50 Students Benefitted from the Plus 50 Programs



**Exhibit 1**  
Courses Offered for Plus 50 Students  
(Changes from Baseline to Year Two)



## Plus 50 Community Colleges Expanded Course Offerings

Over the course of the initiative, grantee colleges dramatically expanded their workforce training course offerings that were either tailored to or marketed specifically to plus 50 learners (Exhibit 1). Prior to the initiative, colleges concentrated course offerings for older learners on learning and enrichment, but workforce training courses for this student group were rare. As a result of the initiative, colleges increasingly focused on the career needs of students 50 and older. This new emphasis also resulted from the recession that began in December 2008. However, colleges' participation in the initiative greatly supported their ability to respond to the new workforce needs that arose for plus 50 students as they faced the economic realities of post-2008 America. Plus 50 grantees collectively offered 1,093 more workforce training courses for plus 50 students in year two than at baseline – an approximate 20-fold increase. In addition, enrollment in courses associated with the Plus 50 program more than doubled, increasing by over 15,000 students from baseline to the end of year two.

## Workforce Training and Career Development Programs Helped Plus 50 Students Find Employment

All 13 grantee colleges either began with or added a workforce training track to their programming. Plus 50 students at these colleges received surveys asking them about how much the workforce training programs had supported their skill-building and job searches.

The results of the student surveys reveal that students are very satisfied with what they are getting from their workforce training courses (Exhibit 2). About 90% agree that the courses have helped them acquire new skills or improve upon their current job skills; a remarkable 72% agree that their workforce training program has helped them to get hired into a job. These results show that grantees' workforce training programs offered to plus 50 students supported students in their efforts to achieve a range of career objectives, including finding a job in a very difficult employment environment.

Most colleges with a workforce training track also offered career development services such as career assessment tools, career counseling, career workshops (e.g. resume writing, interviewing, networking), and job matching. The results of the student surveys show that students have high levels of satisfaction with these career development services as well. These services helped them to adequately prepare for a job search: 86% reported that the services helped them to explore new career options; 85% reported learning new job search skills; and 75% said that the services helped them to locate jobs to apply for. Almost half (47%) said that career services had helped them to land a job (Exhibit 3).

Customers of the career development services spoke about the ways that career services were helpful to them. Students reported receiving assistance to: define career objectives; create or update resumes; learn new job-hunting skills; network; learn how to efficiently look for job openings; and use new technologies to hunt for jobs.

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*[The staff person] was very understanding of what the job search for someone over 50 might require and was very encouraging and helpful.*

*— Plus 50 Participant*

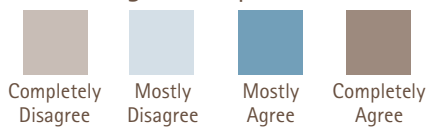
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### Exhibit 2

Plus 50 Workforce Training Program Helped Me...

#### Percentage of Respondents



Acquire new job skills (n=105)



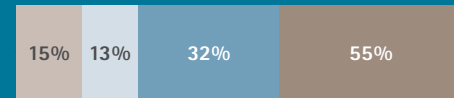
Improve my current job skills (n=104)



Work toward obtaining a license or certificate (n=73)



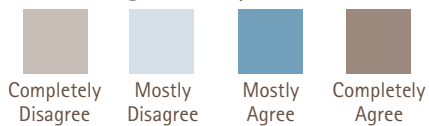
Land a job (n=91)



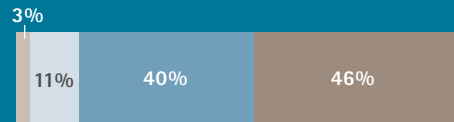
### Exhibit 3

Plus 50 Career Development Services Helped Me...

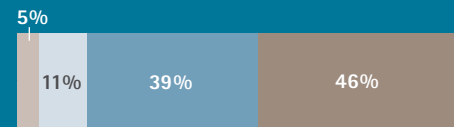
#### Percentage of Respondents



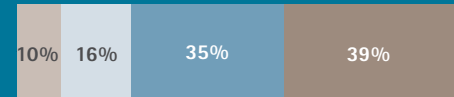
Explore new career options (n=88)



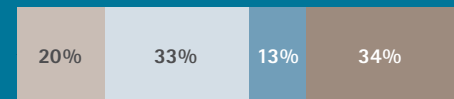
Learn new job search skills (n=88)



Locate jobs I might apply for (n=77)



Land a job (n=61)



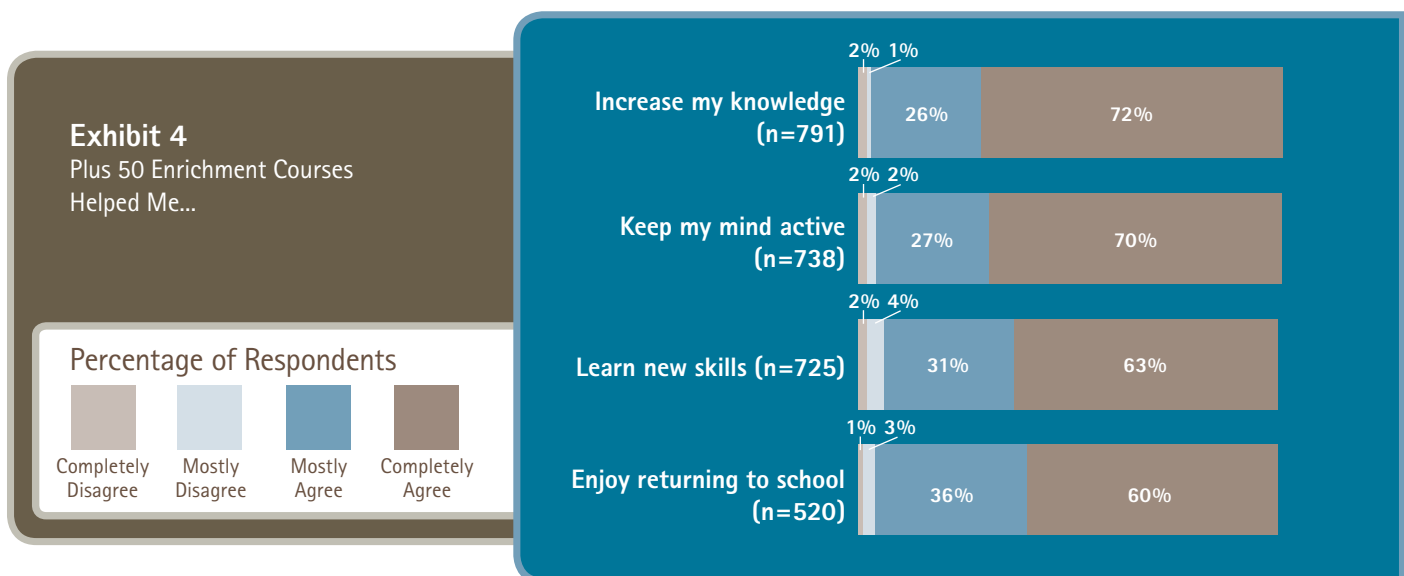
## Learning and Enrichment Courses Increased Plus 50 Students' Knowledge and Skills

Enrichment courses are meant to help plus 50 learners hone their interests and goals, as well as develop plans for pursuing further training or coursework that might contribute to earning a degree or certificate. Results from student surveys indicate that students found Plus 50 learning and enrichment offerings to be very rewarding. As shown in Exhibit 4, nearly all survey respondents agree that Plus 50 enrichment classes increased their knowledge (98%), helped to keep their minds active (97%), taught them new skills (94%) and contributed to their enjoyment of school (96%).

In addition to valuing the intellectual stimulation of the enrichment courses, plus 50 learners also expressed appreciation for the social aspect of Plus 50 enrichment programming. In response to open-ended questions, nearly all respondents said that the enrichment courses contributed to their enjoyment of returning to school. They spoke of the ways that sharing new experiences with other plus 50 learners reduced feelings of isolation and fostered feelings of community and excitement.

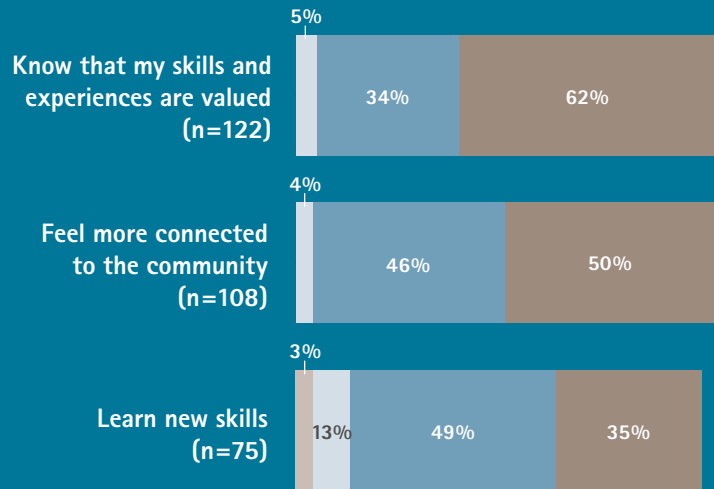
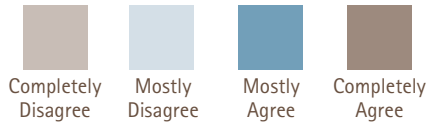
## Volunteering Opportunities Connected Plus 50 Students to their Communities and to Paid Employment

Through Plus 50 volunteering programs, students found opportunities to use their skills and knowledge to benefit their communities. Among plus 50 volunteers, a large majority agrees that through their volunteering opportunities, they have been able to learn new skills, explore new career options, feel more connected to the community, and feel that their skills and experiences are valued (Exhibit 5).



**Exhibit 5**  
Plus 50 Volunteering Services  
Helped Me...

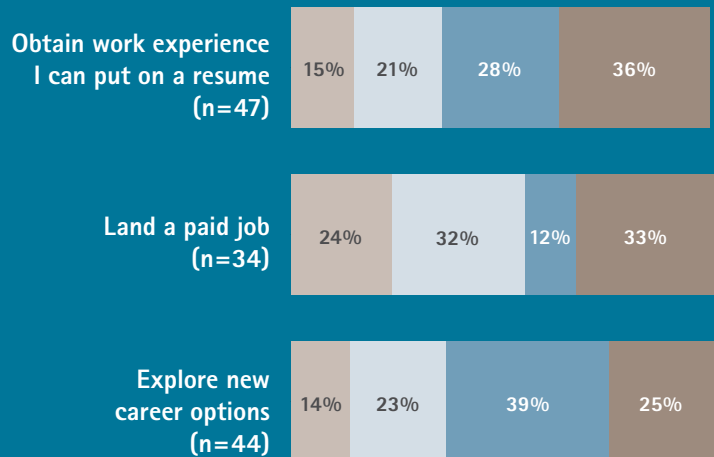
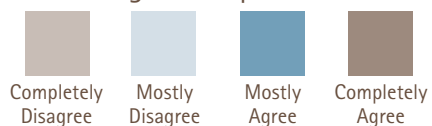
Percentage of Respondents



Certainly there were personal rewards from engaging in community service, but survey respondents cited career benefits of volunteering as well. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of plus 50 learners surveyed agreed that the volunteer services helped them to explore new career options and obtain work experience they could put on their resumes (Exhibit 6). In addition, nearly half (45%) of plus 50 volunteers were able to leverage their volunteer experience to obtain a paid job.

**Exhibit 6**  
Plus 50 Volunteering Services  
Helped Me...

Percentage of Respondents

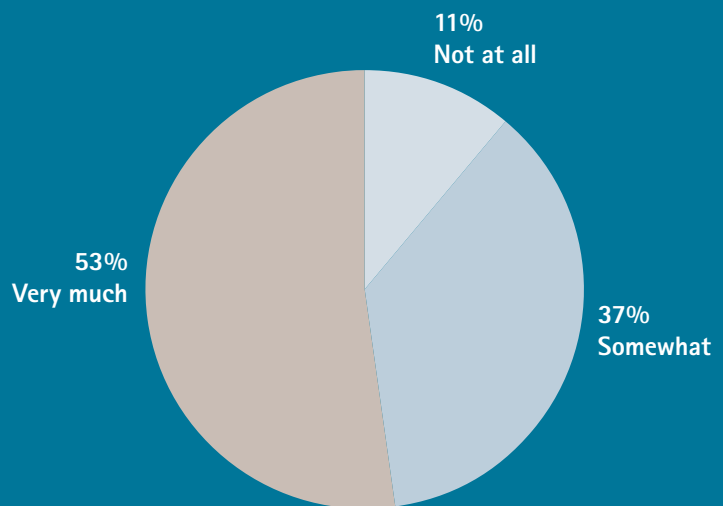


## Plus 50 Advising has Helped Plus 50 Students Navigate Community Colleges

Research into the experience of plus 50 students returning to college shows the critical nature of advising. Although colleges typically have advising and counseling available to all students, the standard counseling that is aimed at the traditional student will most likely not prove sufficient. Plus 50 students need advisors who understand their specific situations – their constraints and assets. A Plus 50 Advisor performs the critical role of providing individual attention to plus 50 learners, helping learners take advantage of career exploration and assessment tools, providing information about the local labor market, and identifying courses that will prepare plus 50 learners for their careers. The Plus 50 Initiative supported grantees in their efforts to customize advising to the needs of plus 50 learners, and survey results show that colleges have been successful at providing advising and counseling services that take into account the specific needs and assets of plus 50 learners. Feedback from students at colleges with tailored advising and counseling services suggest that colleges are meeting the advising and counseling needs of plus 50 students: 90% of respondents said that they were “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with these services, with more than half (53%) being very satisfied (Exhibit 7).

### Exhibit 7

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Advising and Counseling Services (n=319)





## The Plus 50 Initiative's Lasting Impact at Community Colleges



The Plus 50 Initiative was designed not only to support grantee colleges with program implementation during the grant period, but also to position community colleges to sustain their programs. As a result of this focus on creating and enhancing Plus 50 programming to have a lasting impact, 12 of the 13 initial pilot grantees continued to offer Plus 50 programming beyond the grant period. This section describes how Plus 50 community colleges achieved impressive sustainability as a result of their efforts to: (1) cultivate broad-based

organizational and institutional support; (2) embed plus 50 programming in how a college does business; (3) embed Plus 50 program goals into course offerings by tailoring courses to the needs, interests, and learning objectives of plus 50 learners; (4) leverage community partnerships; and (5) plan for financial sustainability.

## Cultivating Broad-Based Organizational and Institutional Support

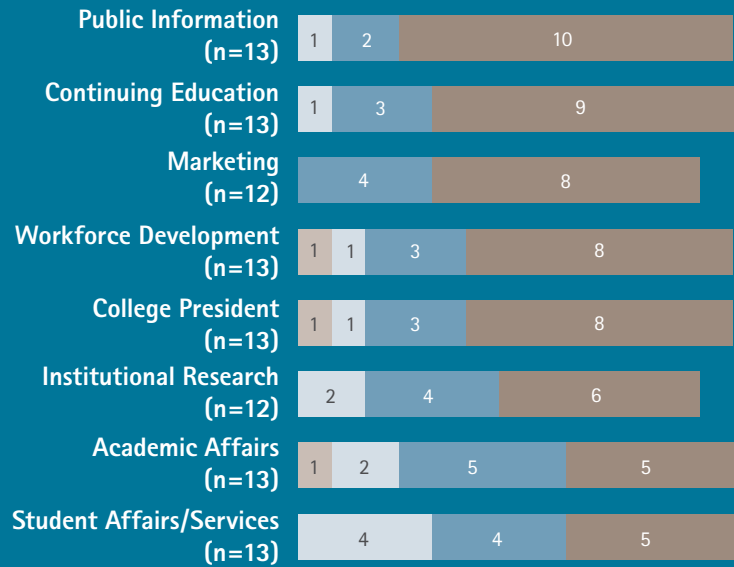
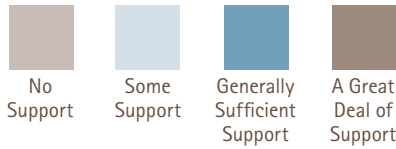
### Plus 50 Community Colleges Built Internal Constituencies and Formed Cross-Functional Partnerships

Looking ahead to sustainability at the beginning of the Plus 50 Initiative, AACC required participating community colleges to cultivate support from partners across the college through the formation of Plus 50 Advisory Committees. Advisory Committees consisted of individuals from diverse college departments and divisions, as well as external community members. Through these committees, Plus 50 program staff began early to generate support from diverse institutional positions within the college.

Support from key personnel at departments throughout the college greatly enhanced the sustainability of Plus 50 programs. For example, personnel embedded Plus 50 goals into their own service delivery, committed to providing resources to the Plus 50 program, became spokespersons for Plus 50, and/or advocated for maintaining or growing the college's financial commitment to Plus 50 offerings. Exhibit 8 shows the wide range of support for Plus 50 across stakeholders throughout the institution. One key stakeholder is the College President; and eight Plus 50 community colleges received a great deal of support from their presidents.

**Exhibit 8**  
Extent of Support for Plus 50  
Programming from College  
Departments

Number of Respondents

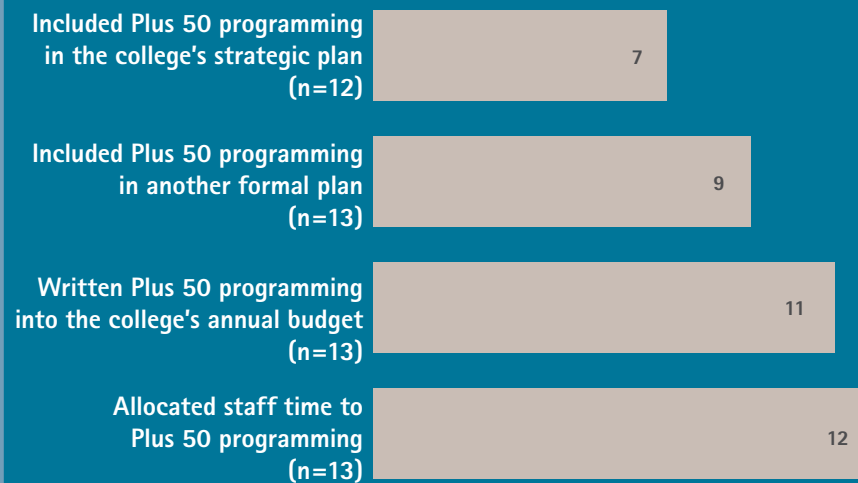


## Plus 50 Community Colleges Embedded Plus 50 Programming in How a College Does Business

Cultivating institutional support happens not only through gaining the support of individuals fulfilling specific organizational roles, but also through institutionalization: the integration of Plus 50 program components into the college's structures and processes. Once program components become embedded in standard operating procedures, they are normalized as organizational routine, and no longer need individuals to champion their promotion. This institutionalization can happen through: (1) the dedication of staff time to Plus 50 programming; (2) including the Plus 50 program and components in the college's annual budget; and (3) developing Plus 50 programming or program goals into a formal plan. The grantee colleges have been extremely successful with all three strategies (Exhibit 9).

## Exhibit 9

Integrating Plus 50 Programming into Structures and Processes, These Colleges Have...



### Plus 50 Community Colleges Embedded Plus 50 Program Goals in Course Offerings

Plus 50 learners come to community colleges largely to enroll in courses. If colleges are to effectively serve plus 50 learners, they must tailor courses to the needs, interest, and learning objectives of this student population. In developing or refining courses so that they meet the needs and interests of plus 50 learners, the grantee colleges are creating sustainability at a very deep level: they are embedding plus 50 program goals into courses, which constitute the core business of colleges. Grantee colleges have done this in a variety of ways, including tailoring instructional delivery (scheduling and pace). They have also provided professional development to instructors in an effort to ensure that pedagogy meets the learning needs of this age cohort. Some ways community colleges achieved this was through:

- + “Refresher” courses designed according to the needs of plus 50 learners who have been away from school for many years;
- + Accelerated courses designed to allow plus 50 learners to move through career preparation programs quickly;
- + Flexible course scheduling designed to accommodate the schedules of plus 50 students; and
- + Faculty professional development that focuses on the learning styles and preferences of plus 50 students.



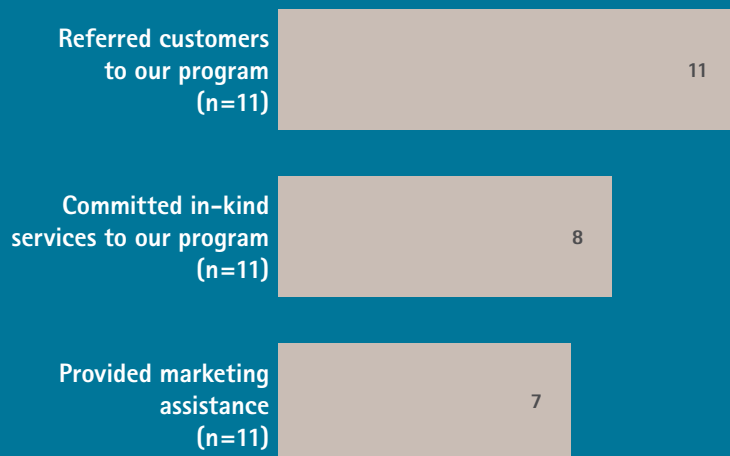


## Plus 50 Community Colleges Leveraged Community Partnerships

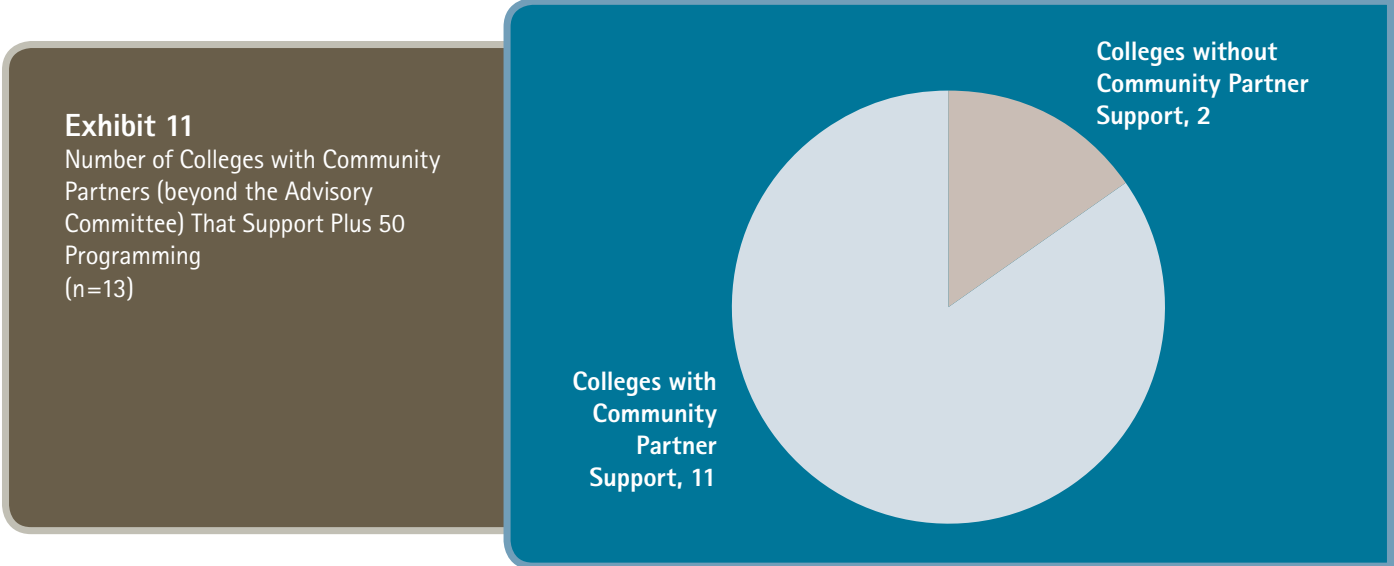
Grantee colleges have been able to collaborate with other organizations in the community in order to pursue common goals of serving the local plus 50 population. Community partners have supported grantee colleges' Plus 50 programs by referring customers and thus boosting program participation, and by bringing additional resources to the table (including marketing support, space in community-based locations, and workshop instructors). Results of a grantee survey (Exhibit 10) show that 11 of the colleges have community partners who referred customers to their program, eight colleges have partners who committed in-kind services to their program, and seven colleges have partners who provided marketing assistance.

### Exhibit 10

In Support of the Plus 50 Program,  
Community Partners Have...



A key method for enlisting community partners has been to invite them to be members of the Plus 50 Advisory Committee. This membership means that partners commit time and expertise to the program and become invested in program goals. It also means that they have regular communication with program staff and can offer their expertise and connections to additional resources in a timely way. While enlisting support from community partners by inviting them to join the Plus 50 Advisory Committee is an effective approach, grantee colleges have also been extremely effective in their ability to enlist support from organizations beyond committee membership. Exhibit 11 shows that 11 out of 13 grantees have community partners outside of the Advisory Committee who support their Plus 50 programs.



## Plus 50 Community Colleges Planned for Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability primarily revolves around this question: is funding available – either through the college budget or through external funding sources – to meet the needs of program implementation and maintenance?

Plus 50 community colleges have been remarkably successful in securing financial sustainability. The colleges have met with sustainability success primarily in the following ways:

- + Seven colleges have made Plus 50 courses self-sustaining through tuition or course fees;
- + For 11 colleges, Plus 50 program components are included in the college's annual budget; and
- + Eleven colleges have obtained outside funding that will continue after the conclusion of the AACC grant.

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*The college has made a commitment to sustain the current level of services with operational funds at the end of this grant, and we have leveraged the AACC Plus 50 grant to obtain additional grant funding from Civic Ventures and local philanthropy.*

*– Grantee College*

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What are the most common outside funding sources? Funding comes from public sector, private foundations and the college foundation, and commitments from partner organizations. Eight colleges report that they will receive state funding; three report that they will receive federal funding. More colleges will receive government funding than foundation funding; four colleges will receive support from their own foundations; two will receive outside foundation funding. Advisory Committee member organizations have made funding commitments at seven colleges.



## Disseminating the Plus 50 Model



From the beginning, Plus 50 has been working toward the long-term systemic goal that programming tailored to the needs of plus 50 students will eventually be institutionalized in community colleges nationwide. This goal is being pursued primarily through two strategies: developing a knowledge base for the community college field; and finding ways to expand the reach of the initiative beyond the pilot colleges.

## Tools for the Next Generation of Plus 50 Community Colleges

A critical ingredient for model dissemination is the development of a knowledge base that community colleges across the country can use to design and further develop their own programming for plus 50 learners. To this end, AACC aggregates online resources that community colleges can use to stay abreast of developments in the field and to design and continually improve their Plus 50 offerings; this information can be found on AACC's Plus 50 Website: [plus50.aacc.nche.edu](http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu). One key element from the initiative, the Plus 50 Standards of Excellence, is featured below.

**Plus 50 Standards of Excellence (SOE):** The SOEs are an important part of the effort to codify and leverage the lessons that Plus 50 grantees learned through years of innovation, program implementation, and continuous improvement. The SOEs provide guidance for developing the essential and core elements that community colleges need to have in place to sustain a Plus 50 program. The SOEs are highlighted below and a full description, including specific foundational elements, can be found on AACC's Plus 50 Website.

- + **Conduct Needs Assessments and Ongoing Evaluation:** A Plus 50 needs assessment is a study that aggregates information on the needs of the local plus 50 population. Program staff use the data to understand how to design the program in a way that best serves plus 50 students. Ongoing evaluation is a process that staff can use to collect feedback from students and other stakeholders and then use the data for continuous program improvement.
- + **Secure Broad-Based Organizational and Institutional Support:** A Plus 50 program has broad-based organizational and institutional support when it engages people in management positions throughout the college as internal partners. It is important that these stakeholders have sufficient authority to influence day-to-day operations, and thus can make decisions to allocate resources to the Plus 50 program such as space, staff time, and the use of information technology. The broad base of support denotes the presence of stakeholders in diverse departments, including the Office of the President, Workforce Development, Continuing Education, Academic Affairs, Student Services, Public Information, Marketing, and Institutional Research.

- + **Develop Community Partnerships:** Community partnerships are collaborative relationships that the Plus 50 program establishes with other local organizations that have related or similar goals. Local organizations can be of many types: nonprofits, area businesses, and local offices of government agencies. In these collaborative relationships, the college and its partners can work together to meet the needs of the local plus 50 population.
- + **Offer Learner-Centered Programming:** Plus 50 students are very different “consumers” of education than are younger adult learners. Programming is learner-centered when it is tailored to the needs, interests, and objectives of the plus 50 population. Implementing learner-centered programming means being responsive to learners’ feedback.
- + **Provide Learner Support Services:** Learner support services may be offered at an actual Learner Support Services center that is staffed by one or more Plus 50 advisors or coaches. These services may be offered through a dedicated advisor or coach based in the Advising and Counseling Department. An advisor serves learners as a single point of contact and provides academic and career advising tailored specifically to the academic and career needs, interests, and objectives of students in this age cohort. Learner support services also offers a wide range of “system navigator” supports: additional services that enable a plus 50 learner to more easily navigate the community college system, including new student orientations for plus 50 students, registration support, or guidance to sources of financial aid.
- + **Provide Accessible and Accommodating Materials and Environments:** Another goal of the Plus 50 Initiative is to ensure physical comfort and accessibility. Accessible and accommodating materials and environments are those that are designed to take into account any physical or financial supports that a plus 50 learner might require.
- + **Offer Professional Development for Faculty:** Professional development for faculty working with plus 50 learners provides instructors with a thorough understanding of how to most effectively design courses and activities to meet the unique learning needs of this student population.
- + **Publicize Through Integrated and Targeted Marketing:** Integrated and targeted marketing is an approach to advertising a Plus 50 program that is not siloed and instead is embedded in a wide variety of community college marketing strategies and collaterals. In addition to integrated marketing,

targeted advertising engages specific plus 50 communities through tailored approaches (e.g. including inserts with AARP membership mailings or a Plus 50 web page on the college website) and may focus on particular offerings, such as re-careering courses, in specific settings.

**Additional Resources:** In addition to the SOEs, important toolkits, fact sheets, and other information to support plus 50 students at community colleges can be found on the AACC's Plus 50 Website: [plus50.aacc.nche.edu](http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu). Resources available on the website include:

- + **Jump Start Plus 50:** A self-assessment tool that assists community college professionals in planning and implementing a Plus 50 Initiative program, or in strengthening an already existing Plus 50 program.
- + **Plus 50 Needs Assessment Toolkit:** This toolkit helps community colleges conduct a needs assessment for the purposes of developing workforce training and career development programming for their local Plus 50 population. It provides a menu of options for data collection strategies.
- + **Plus 50 Community Outreach Toolkit:** This toolkit supports community colleges in building partnerships with the business community. It includes a series of fact sheets for employers that discuss the value in hiring plus 50 workers.
- + **Plus 50 Students: Tapping Into a Growing Market:** This publication describes what is attracting plus 50 students to community colleges and provides tips on effectively serving this population.
- + **Plus 50 Webinar Series:** AACC developed a series of webinars that makes available the essential knowledge and tools that allow community colleges nationwide to implement their own programming for plus 50 students. Representatives from 96 colleges have participated in the webinar series.
- + **Public Relations Materials:** Materials were developed to strengthen community colleges' messaging about the program such as a Plus 50 speech template, Plus 50 success story, and a Plus 50 messaging framework.



## Adding Expansion Colleges to the Plus 50 Family

In 2009 and again in 2010, AACC made a strategic decision to expand the impact of the initiative and increase the number of community colleges under the “Plus 50 umbrella” that had access to ongoing support from AACC. This expansion demonstrates AACC’s commitment to thoughtful and proactive Plus 50 program model dissemination.

### Learning Partners and Affiliate Colleges

Changing economic circumstances generated additional need for Plus 50 programs focusing specifically on the initiative’s training, retraining, and career development: due to massive declines in retirement savings throughout the U.S., many workers who thought they were poised for retirement now must remain on the job. The Plus 50 expansion reflected this additional need, and paired existing and more experienced Plus 50 pilot colleges with new community colleges that became “affiliates” of the Plus 50 Initiative. Learning Partners served as guides and worked to expand the network of Plus 50 colleges by reaching out to additional community colleges. Through one-to-one relationships, they shared information about how to start and sustain a quality educational program for plus 50 students.

- + St. Louis Community College was a learning partner for affiliate Metropolitan Community College.
- + Joliet Junior College was a learning partner for affiliate Moraine Valley Community College.
- + College of Central Florida was a learning partner for affiliate Rose State College and Pasco-Hernando Community College.
- + Century College was a learning partner for affiliate Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.
- + Western Dakota Technical College was a learning partner for affiliate Dawson Community College.
- + Clover Park Technical College was a learning partner for affiliates Bates Technical College, Tacoma Community College and Pierce College.
- + Community College of Spokane was a learning partner for affiliate Shoreline Community College.

## Peer-to-Peer Ambassadors

- + Peer-to-Peer Ambassadors invited new colleges to participate in information sharing about resources and tools available to assist them with effective programming for plus 50 students.
- + Joliet Junior College began as a peer-to-peer ambassador for three other Illinois community colleges.
- + Clark College served as an ambassador for seven other community colleges in Washington and Oregon.
- + St. Louis Community College served as an ambassador for 12 other community colleges in Missouri, one community college in Illinois, and an additional community college in Oregon.

## Regional Meetings

Select pilot colleges hosted Plus 50 conferences to bring the Plus 50 message and resources to additional community colleges.

- + Century College hosted a conference for nine Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn., community colleges.
- + Three Plus 50 Initiative community colleges in Washington (Clark College, Clover Park Technical College and Community Colleges of Spokane) hosted a regional conference for 22 community colleges from Washington and Oregon.
- + Richland College in Dallas, Texas, hosted a Plus 50 Initiative Conference for 11 other community colleges in the Dallas area.



## The Next Stage of Plus 50: The Completion Strategy



With funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies and Lumina Foundation, Plus 50 launched its Completion Strategy in 2010. This is a four-year strategy in which AACC will fund and provide technical assistance to 18 colleges to implement programming that supports plus 50 students to reach completion outcomes (degrees, certificates, and non-credit certificates). These credentials are in programs that prepare students for careers in growing fields, such as health and green technologies. The ultimate goal is that participating students will find employment or advance in their careers.

In addition to supporting students as they pursue credentials in specific workforce training programs, the colleges are funded to implement the following types of program components as part of their Plus 50 Completion Programs:

- + Plus 50 Advising/Completion Coaching;
- + Services that help students capture credits for prior learning (so they can advance to completion more quickly);
- + Math and English refresher courses that support the plus 50 student to avoid remediation when s/he returns to school;
- + Computer courses tailored to the plus 50 student;
- + Courses and programs that are offered in an accelerated format or with flexible scheduling;
- + Financial aid services and supports for plus 50 students, guiding them to available scholarship and aid opportunities;
- + Tailored career workshops;
- + Employer linkages; and
- + Professional development for instructors, so that they are able to better support the learning of plus 50 students.

## Appendix A: Methods

AACC engaged LFA Group: Learning for Action to conduct an evaluation of the Plus 50 Initiative. The LFA Group evaluation team developed a mixed-method evaluation designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of the initiative and support continuous improvements over the course of the three-year initiative. To measure the many components of the initiative, LFA Group collected data using several methods: conducting interviews with program staff at each of the grantee colleges and with AACC staff; asking grantees to complete program implementation data collection worksheets; and partnering with grantees to administer participant surveys for the students taking part in Plus 50 programming. The primary elements measured include grantees' implementation progress, participant satisfaction, and capturing lessons learned and promising practices.

# Appendix B: Plus 50 Grantees, by Program Track

| College                            | Plus 50 Program Tracks                                |                         |              |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|--------------|
|                                    | Workforce Training and/or Career Development Services | Learning and Enrichment | Volunteering |
| Cape Cod Community College         | ✓   |                         | ✓            |
| Central Florida Community College  | ✓   | ✓                       | ✓            |
| Century College                    | ✓   | ✓                       | ✓            |
| Clark College                      | ✓   | ✓                       | ✓            |
| Community Colleges of Spokane      | ✓   | ✓                       |              |
| Clover Park Technical College      | ✓   | ✓                       |              |
| Joliet Junior College              | ✓   |                         | ✓            |
| Luzerne County Community College   | ✓   | ✓                       |              |
| Richland College                   | ✓   | ✓                       | ✓            |
| Santa Fe College                   | ✓   | ✓                       |              |
| St. Louis Community College        | ✓   | ✓                       |              |
| Wake Technical Community College   | ✓   | ✓                       |              |
| Western Dakota Technical Institute | ✓   |                         | ✓            |

