



FORGING NEW PATHWAYS

THE IMPACT OF THE BREAKING THROUGH INITIATIVE IN MICHIGAN

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By Jennifer B. Schanker and Judith C. Taylor

BreakingThrough

HELPING LOW-SKILLED ADULTS ENTER AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE AND CAREERS



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The **Michigan Center for Student Success**, which operates under the umbrella of the Michigan Community College Association and is funded by The Kresge Foundation, provides state-level support to Michigan's 28 community colleges by serving as a hub connecting leaders, administrators, faculty, and staff in their emerging and ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes by emphasizing linkages between practice, research, and policy.

Breaking Through

HELPING LOW-SKILLED ADULTS ENTER AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Breaking Through promotes and strengthens the efforts of community colleges to help low-skilled adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. Counteracting high attrition rates in Adult Basic Education and developmental education, Breaking Through colleges create effective pathways through precollege and degree-level programs that raise college completion rates. This initiative proves that low-skilled adults can advance through remediation and earn credentials while saving time and money.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Jobs for the Future, and the National Council for Workforce Education launched Breaking Through in 2005, the purpose was to demonstrate that community colleges could create pathways to postsecondary technical credentials for adults with reading and math skills at or below the eighth-grade level—a population long neglected by both the higher education and workforce development worlds. Michigan’s community colleges were introduced to Breaking Through in 2007, just as the state’s major industries—automobile and related manufacturing—were collapsing. The initiative seemed tailor made to address the problems faced by thousands of dislocated workers seeking retraining for new careers.

Five years later, the Michigan Center for Student Success commissioned this study to determine whether Breaking Through strategies have taken root and spread beyond the original colleges. A statewide survey revisited four of the colleges profiled in previous publications, and the research looked more closely at two additional colleges that have experimented with Breaking Through-type programs.

In this research, some themes emerged to guide future state investments:

- > The importance of scaling up from “boutique” programs to serve more students;
- > The need to create clear pathways between noncredit workforce training and credit programs leading to Associate’s degrees in occupational disciplines;
- > The significance of investment in upfront program features such as skill assessments and career guidance; and
- > The role of workforce training programs in incubating student success strategies.

Based on this research, the Center for Student Success has created a new initiative, Michigan Pathways to Credentials, to broaden the impact of Breaking Through strategies and support the development of career pathways across the state. Supported by a grant from the Kresge Foundation, six colleges will scale up their efforts to support adult students in obtaining credentials leading to family-sustaining careers.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the American Association of Community Colleges released *Reclaiming the American Dream*, a call to action for community colleges to reinvent the community college experience to meet the needs of 21st-century students. The report emphasizes the role of community colleges in closing the skill gaps in America's labor market. It recommended that colleges expand community partnerships, build career pathways to family-sustaining wages, connect programming to labor market needs, and provide resources to help students plan their careers.

These recommendations echo the experiences of colleges that have participated in the Breaking Through initiative, launched in 2005 by Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The goal of Breaking Through was to demonstrate that community colleges could create pathways to postsecondary technical credentials for adults with reading and math skills at or below the eighth-grade level—a population long neglected by both the higher education and workforce development worlds.

During the first phase of Breaking Through, researchers documented four high-leverage strategies that contributed to increased success for this target population:

- > **Accelerated Learning:** Change delivery methods and content to enable students to meet their goals faster through the innovative use of assessment tools, restructured curricula, targeted instruction, contextualization, and other strategies.
- > **Comprehensive Support Services:** Make academic, economic, and social support services easily accessible to students whose life challenges put them at risk of not completing their education.
- > **Labor Market Payoffs:** Restructure both precollege and college-level instruction to connect course content with the workplace and

to connect students with actual employers and workplaces.

- > **Aligning Programs for Low-skilled Adults:** Reorganize college programs and link them with external programs to provide students with a better understanding of how they can move into and through college, and to provide clear pathways that enable them to do so.

Breaking Through community colleges around the country have used the four strategies as a framework for creating programs customized to local needs. Some colleges serve recently unemployed factory workers; some focus on entry into health care professions. Others seek to develop programs for English language learners or GED students.

Mott Community College in Flint, part of the original round of Breaking Through colleges, was the first in Michigan. Before long, other Michigan colleges showed interest in the innovative ideas being brought back by people attending Breaking Through's early peer learning meetings: Robert Matthews and colleagues from Mott Community College, as well as Jim Jacobs from Macomb Community College who, as president of the National Council for Workforce Education, was a keen promoter of Breaking Through goals. They began holding informal meetings with staff from interested colleges on a regular basis. Beginning in 2008, the Mott Foundation contributed funds for formal meetings as well as for more Michigan colleges to participate in state and national peer learning meetings. JFF provided a subgrant to the Michigan Community College Association to organize the meetings and manage the Breaking Through network within the state. This network was originally made up of the eight colleges who were participating in national Breaking Through peer learning meetings, but quickly expanded to include administrators, faculty, and staff from colleges across the state who were working on improving outcomes for lower-skilled adults entering career training programs. This group has been meeting

quarterly since 2008. Thirteen colleges were represented at the most recent meeting. As Breaking Through took hold, however, Michigan's major industry, automobile manufacturing, was collapsing, and the ensuing dislocation of workers rippled across the state. Many of these dislocated workers were exactly those targeted by Breaking Through: desperately needing technical retraining but with test scores in reading and math too low to get into college-level programs.

The mismatch between college admission requirements and many workers' skills was brought into sharp relief by an innovative new state program launched in 2007: No Worker Left Behind, which provided eligible workers with tuition for technical training at a postsecondary institution. The state urged community colleges to partner with their local Michigan Works! agencies (the state's local Workforce Investment Boards) to recruit dislocated workers to enroll in postsecondary education and training programs leading to new employment opportunities. However, colleges quickly discovered that many of those eligible workers could not score high enough on placement tests to enroll in college-level programs.

Fortunately, the state had earlier invested in Michigan Technical Education Centers. By the mid-2000s, many community colleges had an MTEC on campus or nearby. While their structure and operation varied from center to center, MTEC programs were largely noncredit. Although noncredit programs were accessible to many of the workers who would not score high enough on placement tests to get into the for-credit side of the college, the programs still required foundational skills for students to succeed. Many MTEC staff members had long been involved in providing training to adults with lower skills, so they quickly embraced the high-leverage strategies from Breaking Through to prepare their students for success in earning industry-recognized credentials.

The ability to leverage funding for low-skilled adult students from a variety of federal and state programs strengthened the ties between noncredit workforce programs and the implementation of Breaking Through in Michigan. Rather than place

large numbers of lower-skilled displaced workers into traditional developmental courses, which frequently serve as prerequisites for Associate's degree programs, innovative colleges leveraged funds from the Workforce Investment Act; Trade Adjustment Assistance; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; and Michigan's Jobs, Education and Training Program to provide short-term career training combined with basic skills that put workers on a pathway to additional education and career advancement. The fact that most of these funding sources target the attainment of employment provided a natural fit with Breaking Through goals and strategies.

State and national data underscore this urgency to increase educational attainment for low-skilled adults. A 2011 report projected that population decline will cause Michigan's annual number of high school graduates to decrease 12.2 percent by 2020, while the demand for college-educated workers will rise by over 4 percent (CLASP and NCHEMS 2011). This mismatch between supply and demand means that Michigan must turn to its adult learners to remain competitive in the national and global economy.

However, these adult learners are very likely to be dislocated workers from the auto industry or related manufacturing jobs. In the past, these workers found employment in factories immediately after completing high school, and many dropped out to join the workforce before graduating. Today, however, low-skilled jobs no longer pay family-sustaining wages. Now, as these workers attempt to retool for new careers, they find that resources to help them are rapidly diminishing. In Michigan, an estimated 692,000 adults lack a high school diploma or GED, but federal funding for adult education has been cut by 17 percent over the last 10 years. Moreover, with the state's budget hit hard by dwindling tax revenue, fewer than 35,000 Michigan residents participate in adult education each year (Foster 2012).

Finally, adults who do find their way to technical training programs at community colleges encounter funding constraints in these programs as well. As of July 2012, as a result of the elimination of the

“Ability to Benefit” provision in Federal Pell Grant legislation, participants in these programs were no longer eligible to receive federal financial aid for students. Further changes in federal laws affect low-income adults who do have a secondary credential, including a higher threshold to qualify for an “Expected Family Contribution” to educational expenses of zero, a reduced number of semesters for which aid can be awarded from 18 to 12, and the elimination of awards for those who qualify for less than 10 percent of the maximum award, all of which penalize adults who must work to support themselves and their families while they are in college.

Michigan’s progress since 2007 in implementing Breaking Through strategies has been reported previously in *The Breaking Through Practice Guide* (JFF 2010), *Achieving Ambitious Goals* (Endel & Anderson 2011), and *Leaving No Worker Behind* (Hilliard 2011). This study, commissioned in early 2012 by the Michigan Center for Student Success, seeks to determine which, if any, Breaking Through practices have survived state and federal funding cuts and are still evident in Michigan colleges today. MCSS conducted a statewide survey and revisited four of the colleges profiled in previous publications. The study also looked more closely at two additional colleges that have experimented with Breaking Through-type programs.

MICHIGAN CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AND BREAKING THROUGH

Mounting evidence suggests that a postsecondary credential will be a prerequisite for a majority of jobs in the future, resulting in growing calls from policymakers, experts, and foundations to increase educational attainment to meet labor market demands and global competition. Michigan is not immune from these pressures and, over the past several years, community colleges across the state have responded by intensifying efforts to improve student outcomes. The challenge, given the decentralized nature of higher education in Michigan, has been that college innovations are taking place in isolation on individual campuses.

To address this disconnect and provide greater opportunities for colleges to collaborate, the Michigan Community College Association has established the Center for Student Success through a generous Kresge Foundation grant. The center provides state-level support to Michigan’s 28 community colleges by serving as a hub connecting leadership, administrators, faculty, and staff in their emerging and ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes, emphasizing linkages among practice, research, and policy.

The goals of the MCSS include convening communities of practice, promoting the use of data, establishing a state research agenda, and supporting policy efforts leading to increased student success. In 2013, the MCSS will combine multiple communities of practice, including the Achieving the Dream and Breaking Through networks, into a larger Michigan Student Success Network. MSSN meetings will be held quarterly and will focus on cross-cutting topics affecting all students including college readiness, intrusive advising and other supports, and career planning and placement.

THE STATEWIDE SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS

The Michigan Center for Student Success surveyed the state's 28 community colleges to catalog policies and practices related to serving low-skilled adults. Twenty-one colleges responded to the survey, which focused on the high-leverage strategies identified by Breaking Through. Not surprisingly, these strategies were more prevalent in colleges participating in the Breaking Through network, but the survey also identified pockets of innovation among other colleges. The survey also highlighted obstacles and concerns related to serving lower-skilled adults.

ALIGNING PROGRAMS

"Aligning programs" refers to the strategy of reorganizing college systems to assist students, particularly low-skilled adults, to navigate what can be a maze of confusing and sometimes conflicting requirements to progress toward credentials. This alignment may include laddering or stacking credentials to lead to an Associate's degree as well as designing programs to "bridge" low-skilled students into higher-level programs.

Nineteen colleges report offering at least some stackable credentials. These credentials are concentrated in health care fields, with an emphasis on progression from Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse. Only nine colleges reported offering bridge programs, but the survey identified a few strong examples of this type of programming, notably at Northwestern Michigan College.

ACCELERATING LEARNING

Through the innovative use of assessment tools, restructured curricula, targeted instruction, contextualization, and other strategies, Breaking Through colleges across the country changed delivery methods and content to help students meet their goals faster. Michigan colleges are exploring various methods of acceleration, ranging from "boot

camps" focused on reading, writing, and math, to blending basic skills and first-year courses, to contextualized on ramps to college. In the survey, 17 colleges reported offering intensive courses addressing skill gaps, while 11 reported experiments with integrating basic skills into occupational instruction, largely in noncredit programs.

Offering credit for learning on the job or through military service is another way that colleges can help adult learners reduce the time needed to complete a credential, but it is not widely used, according to the survey. Only five Michigan colleges reported significant use of prior learning assessments to reduce time to completion for adult learners. According to comments submitted with the survey, this use tends to be concentrated on exams such as the College-Level Examination Program and the DANTES Subject Standardized Test.

CONNECTING TO EMPLOYERS

Ensuring a labor market payoff to postsecondary education proved to be a major motivational force for the national Breaking Through colleges. Michigan colleges concur: 16 colleges reported engaging employers, usually through advisory committees for career and technical programs. Fifteen colleges reported that they are significantly engaged in regional efforts to link education and training with employment.

While most Michigan colleges make career guidance available to both their credit and noncredit students, they struggle with implementing effective career services, including job planning and placement for students completing career-oriented programs. Only 10 colleges indicated that their career services office connects regularly with employers. One college commented that its career services office works more internally with students than with employers.

Another college stated, “We are challenged by not having timely and comprehensive data about employment trends in our region. Hence, we are too often in a reactive stance to industries that approach us with specific needs. We are also aware that we must educate students for jobs of the future and not only with a short-term occupational focus.”

PROVIDING SUPPORT

Research from the original Breaking Through colleges suggests that making academic, economic, and social support services easily accessible to students will decrease the likelihood that life challenges put them at risk of not completing their education. The most common service offered by Michigan colleges was academic support: 15 colleges reported that they made tutoring or access to learning labs available to both credit and noncredit students.

Colleges also recognize the importance of guidance as students progress through their postsecondary experience. Fourteen colleges reported that they provide advisors or “navigators” to help credit and noncredit students overcome obstacles and stay on track, while 11 colleges have systems to follow up with students who stop or drop out of their programs.

The impact of Michigan’s No Worker Left Behind program was reflected in the number of colleges that reported working with community partners to provide support services. Because NWLB participants were referred through Michigan Works! agencies (as Workforce Investment Boards are known in Michigan), a number of colleges have developed or strengthened relationships with these local offices to ensure that students have access to supports through the Workforce Investment Act or other sources. These partnerships have survived the elimination of NWLB funding.

Colleges have also formed partnerships with nonprofits such as Goodwill and United Way, as well as with local foundations. One college reported collaborating with over 30 agencies to serve adult students in a bridge program. Overall, 17 of the 21 responding colleges indicated that they worked with community partners to provide support services.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The final sections of the survey focused on colleges’ perceptions of their capacity to effectively serve low-skilled adults, as well as their perceptions of institutional and state policies that enable or present obstacles to effectiveness. Not surprisingly, a large number of respondents reported funding constraints as the primary barrier to improving services from both a capacity and a policy standpoint.

Specifically, colleges noted gaps in their ability to diagnose and address learning disabilities in adult students and in their ability to teach adults at the lowest levels of reading and math. Among the common complaints was the lack of funding to add staff, invest in training to improve the skill levels of existing staff members, or provide resources directly to students. To make the most of scarce resources, colleges reported sending staff to conferences (e.g., Breaking Through peer learning events), bringing consultants to campus for workshops and short-term training, and initiating internal working groups focused on low-skilled adults.

From a policy perspective, changes to federal funding were cited as external barriers for colleges attempting to serve low-skilled adults. In particular, the colleges noted the elimination of the Ability to Benefit provision in federal financial aid and reduced eligibility for Pell Grants, as well as cuts to funding sources such as WIA. Colleges also noted challenges with internal policies related to developmental education and noncredit-to-credit articulation, which slowed progress for low-skilled adults.

GOING DEEPER/COMMON THEMES

By the time of the Center for Student Success' research, cuts to WIA and the loss of funding for No Worker Left Behind had reduced funding for programs directed at lower-skilled adults.

Nevertheless, the statewide survey indicated that Breaking Through principles were flourishing in six colleges, summarized in the table below and described in more detail in the appendix.

	JOINED BREAKING THROUGH BECAUSE . . .	ORIGINAL BREAKING THROUGH STRATEGY	CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION OF BREAKING THROUGH STRATEGIES	FUTURE PLANS
Grand Rapids Community College	Workers laid off from low-skilled manufacturing jobs lacked the academic skills and "college knowledge" to train for new careers.	Career Advancement Program for displaced workers (predates Breaking Through)	Pathways Out of Poverty, a U.S. Department of Labor-funded grant to provide entry into green career pathways for low-skilled adults	Redesign the welding credit certificate program to incorporate Breaking Through strategies
Jackson Community College	Review of outcomes suggested that very low-skilled students were not progressing through developmental education into credit programs.	Rapid Review Math, a 15-hour individualized review of math concepts keyed to pre-algebra	Destination Success, a pilot based on Breaking Through strategies combined with Achieving the Dream philosophy to see whether academic progress can be accelerated	Add career assessments to encourage students to move into credit programs
Lake Michigan College	Clients referred for training through the local workforce agency lacked the basic skills needed to succeed in short-term career training programs.	Add academic skill development and a "Career and College Knowledge" module to short-term career training programs for TANF and WIA clients	All noncredit training programs require an orientation course combining customer service instruction, a National Career Readiness Certificate, and access to advising and support services	Incorporate aspects of the Breaking Through orientation into intake processes for students pursuing credit programs
Macomb Community College	Large influx of international students with a variety of skill levels	Vocational ESL to help students qualify for short-term workforce training programs	Restructuring noncredit offerings to link them with their associated credit departments	Noncredit students will use the same systems and have access to the same supports (e.g., advising, tutoring) as credit students.
Mott Community College	Large population with limited skills and employment histories seeking advancement through new skills and careers	Noncredit-to-credit articulation agreements modeled after those used in secondary-to-postsecondary Tech Prep programs	Blended certificates combining noncredit and credit courses originally created for a DOL Pathways Out of Poverty grant	Develop institution-wide standards to cover connections between noncredit and credit for all program areas
St. Clair County Community College	Large population of low-skilled adult students who wanted to attend college	The Adult Learning Lab (ALL), an open-entry/open-exit learning lab designed to accelerate basic skill development for adults	AWARE (Adults Who Are Returning to Education) included intrusive support and wraparound services, career advising, skills for life and college success, acceleration through developmental education, competency-based extensive assessment, NCRC certification, and flexibility for student schedules via open-entry/open-exit lab	ALL continues to operate; AWARE ended in 2011, pending new funding.

Several themes emerged from the close study of these six programs.

Scaling Up: We found clear examples of “scaling up”—the holy grail of education reform—accomplished essentially with the energy and determination of local program managers, along with, of course, supportive leadership within the college administration. At Grand Rapids and Lake Michigan, all workforce development programs in the host institutions are now or soon will be delivered in a Breaking Through design.

Creating Pathways from Noncredit to Credit:

The success of programs in the MTECs and on the noncredit side has highlighted the need for students to have clear pathways into the credit side. In other words, students seeking to advance beyond noncredit credentials needed access to the programs and degrees in the regular college, but a number of barriers impeded their progress. Two of the six colleges have undertaken institutional reforms to smooth the progress of students entering on the noncredit side.

Significant Investment in Upfront Program

Features: Significant upfront elements in successful programs, including skills assessments and career guidance, are critically important. While this is not one of the four high-leverage strategies in Breaking Through, it needs attention regardless, especially because it’s potentially relevant for colleges’ student success goals.

Incubating Student Success Strategies: The Breaking Through strategies that emerged in these Michigan sites can provide lessons for colleges seeking to improve overall retention and completion rates. Administrators in several of the colleges visited for this research suggested that they were looking to Breaking Through (and the MTECs) as incubators of innovative strategies with potential for implementation in the “regular” college.

SCALING UP

Generally speaking, scaling up refers to “expanding, replicating, adapting and sustaining successful policies, programs or projects” in a reform context

(International Fund for Agricultural Development 2011; Coburn 2003). In education reform, significant investments have been made in the scaling-up paradigm, the thesis that successful small programs serving a small number of students can be scaled up to serve a large proportion of, or even all of, the students in an institution. It has also proved elusive (Moltz 2011).

It was quite surprising to find the opposite in the Breaking Through research in Michigan. Scaling up is a reality in two institutions: the MTECs at Grand Rapids and Lake Michigan colleges, with the Workforce Education Center at Mott Community College not far behind. At Lake Michigan, all the center’s short-term training certificates are offered as Breaking Through programs. At Grand Rapids Community College, the MTEC has a detailed plan showing how and when each training program in the center will be reconfigured around its “Job Training Student Success Model.” A number of programs have been converted thus far, and the rest soon will be. The Success Model is based on GRCC’s much-tested version of Breaking Through. The story is fairly similar at Mott’s Workforce Education Center.

While each college’s model is unique, all share a number of features that align with Breaking Through’s high-leverage strategies:

- > Academic remediation is available for those who need it; some remediation is contextualized; all of it is linked to a technical program.
- > Ongoing support, often consciously “intrusive,” is provided by staff with titles such as navigator or academic advisor. Additional supports include individual or group work career assessment, exploration and planning, work and college readiness, and connections to resources for food, transportation, day care, and other necessities.
- > Given these are technical education centers, a labor market payoff is almost automatic, including certificates valued by regional employers. At Lake Michigan College, this includes customer service training, introduced at the request of certain employers and now given to all students.

- > The path from entry to program completion is clear; often it is laid out clearly in maps or other graphics.

It's worth considering whether the MTECs share some features that facilitate scaling up. Here are some ideas that might help explain why pilot programs in MTECs could scale up with relative ease when this has proved so difficult for community colleges in general:

- > MTECs are flexible compared with the for-credit side of colleges. Changes in direction and program design are relatively easy to implement and sustain, at least given skilled administrators;
- > MTECs are data and results driven. They can test the effectiveness of new strategies and make changes based on student outcomes. And they can do that with a short turnaround time, rather than waiting for six years to find out whether students are succeeding; and
- > MTECs have relatively simple administrative structures, especially compared with the full community college, with its multiple missions and complex hierarchies. They seem more amenable to forceful, sustained leadership. And if leadership is promoting new approaches that outcome data justify, effective programs can be brought to scale.

CREATING PATHWAYS FROM NONCREDIT TO CREDIT

There is a gulf between the credit and noncredit sides of community colleges across the United States. In some states, the gulf is deep and in others less so, but there are few places where it doesn't exist, as documented by the Community College Research Center's Noncredit Community College Workforce Education (see <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Collection.asp?cid=41>). The primary consequence for students is that courses taken and competencies gained in the noncredit side do not count toward degrees and further academic advancement opportunities offered on the credit side. More broadly, different cultures have emerged

on the two sides, and they often fail to understand and even respect each other.

The issue is visible in Michigan where systematic investment in the MTECs at community colleges created standalone quarters—often strikingly attractive—for the noncredit culture to flourish. The fact that *Breaking Through*, with its emphasis on clear pathways to degrees, took hold in several MTECs seems to have both strengthened program offerings and raised the question of bridging the gulf.

The gulf stems from potential conflicts in two of community colleges' main missions: preparing college-bound students for transfer to baccalaureate programs; and providing nimble service to local businesses and workers. A variety of rules and regulatory bodies have arisen to promote rigorous standards on the for-credit side. The most notable is regional accrediting systems and their numerous criteria. Accreditors are enormously influential, their leverage coming in part from the fact that legislators rely on their stamps of approval for state funding to colleges. In some colleges, faculty unions or associations add another layer of rules. Of increasing importance recently are steps community colleges—with a long tradition of open admissions—have taken regarding unprepared students, especially the institution of “cut scores” for placement tests.

Breaking Through students (by definition having eighth-grade skills or lower) cannot meet college-level cut scores, but they can obtain education and training in noncredit programs which, in Michigan, are mainly located in MTECs. These students benefitted from the MTECs' exemption from for-credit regulations, but they also found that the courses they took and the skills they acquired did not count on the for-credit side, with its courses and programs required for further advancement. And many of those students would in all likelihood still not have been able to make the cut score for admission to the college-level coursework.

Therefore, it's not surprising that two *Breaking Through* colleges are pioneering strategies for bridging the noncredit/credit divide: Mott

Community College and Macomb Community College.

Starting in 2005, Mott Community College's Breaking Through project was to connect students from the Workforce Education Center to the regular college. As described in the profile of Mott's Breaking Through efforts, the college has initiated two approaches to bridging the gap: using the articulation process and creating hybrid programs that blend noncredit and for-credit courses. The initiative has come primarily from the noncredit side, but that may be changing. The college as a whole has made a commitment to improve student success rates, and Breaking Through's success in retention and credential attainment is one model being looked at.

If the momentum builds, Mott will become an important source for "what works" information, and for the challenges encountered in the undertaking. For example, a question on the table is what will happen to students from the center if the college implements mandatory placement. Mandatory placement could eliminate the possibility that students with articulated certificates from the center but test scores below the mandatory cut could enter for-credit sequential courses instead of being diverted to remediation.

Another question concerns whether what looks like a potential solution—turning successful noncredit programs into for-credit—benefits the low-skilled students now served by noncredit. For example, would the flexible scheduling essential for many low-income students be preserved?

Macomb Community College presents a very different model. There, the pressure to connect noncredit and credit comes from the top, not surprising for a college president (Dr. Jim Jacobs) whose background includes national leadership for Breaking Through. The approach at Macomb is institution-wide, creating noncredit-to-credit pathways for industry/occupational program areas (e.g., health care) where there is a noncredit component. This is a first step: All the differences that divide noncredit from credit students need to be surfaced and addressed. Fortunately, program

staff and administrators are documenting issues as they arise (e.g., Should noncredit students be included in the advising system? If so, how do you get them into the system and how do you prepare advisors for the unique questions that noncredit students will have?)

To the extent that different "cultures" divide noncredit and for-credit, the Breaking Through experiments provide a reason for optimism that the divide can be bridged. Using almost exactly the same words, several colleges reported that once staff from the two sides started working together to solve common problems, they learned they have a lot in common. "We had to do a lot of learning about each other's program," noted a developer of the Grand Rapids Community College model. "As time went on, we figured out that we were doing a lot of the same things but calling them by different names."

SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN UPFRONT PROGRAM FEATURES

Well-operated technical training centers frequently have many upfront program elements—they are essential to determining who should be placed where. Among other things, the centers need to identify students' eligibility for various public funds, ascertain their academic skill levels, and evaluate their technical aptitude and skills. So it was not surprising to find these activities merging seamlessly with Breaking Through program design.

College staff pointed to two additional purposes, both with potentially wider relevance and neither of which were part of the original Breaking Through strategies. One is to help candidates become clear about what they want before they jump into a program that could potentially overwhelm them. This is based on the recognition that many would-be students who come to them do not really know what they want, what they can do, or what the college offers. At Grand Rapids Community College, director George Waite said most of his clients had just lost well-paying jobs requiring few skills and wanted other jobs just like those, which was not going to happen. He and his staff spend a lot of time upfront

to get the clients comfortable with that fact, and then move on to match their skills and interests to programs. Investing time and resources upfront paid off in terms of committed students.

Second is the perception that it is important in an institutional environment of limited resources to do some screening for “readiness” in order to allocate scarce training slots to students who are ready to meet the program’s challenges. “Readiness” in these programs consists of a combination of personal management skills (e.g., do they have the alarm clock, child care, and transportation needed to show up on time for class?) with a commitment to sticking with the program.

At Lake Michigan College, the program model includes several upfront components that require some perseverance and problem-solving skill (see *the college profile in the appendix for details*). None of these gentle screens permanently disqualify applicants, however. For example, once applicants figure out how to handle child care, all they have to do is come back. In fact, the staff believes these tasks give candidates simple successes that are otherwise in short supply, generating an investment in the intensive program to come. (On a related note, the center at Grand Rapids Community College will be a test site for the GRIT Scale, an assessment of the ability to “stick with it,” which has been found predictive of success in certain institutions.)

LESSONS FROM BREAKING THROUGH FOR CREDIT-LEVEL COLLEGE PROGRAMS

- > **College preparation includes a wide range of skills and is not optional.** None of the Breaking Through programs visited for this research offered optional courses or material. Any subject considered important (e.g., study skills) was wrapped into the package required for all students in a particular program.
- > **Assessment resulting in a career plan.** In almost all Breaking Through programs, students know what they want to become (e.g., a nurse, a machinist, a computer repair specialist) and have a clear sense of how to get there. This sense of direction improves student retention and persistence rates. The Breaking Through colleges worked closely with students to identify career aspirations and map the steps needed to accomplish them.
- > **Intrusive advising/assistance with problem solving.** David, a student at St. Clair County Community College, was the first to admit that he had a hard time accepting advice from program staff. His identity was badly bruised and the idea that he should seek out help was foreign. He is a perfect example of why advising has to be “intrusive.” David was very clear that the ongoing advice he received was essential to his college success.
- > **Instructional material presented in easy-to-digest chunks with frequent opportunities to demonstrate success, at least in the early stages.** The Lake Michigan College Breaking Through programs start with “opportunities for easy success.” According to Juanita from St. Clair County Community College, her program enabled her to build confidence step by step, and this was essential to her success.
- > **Academic remediation linked to career goals.** The career link explains to low-skilled students why they have to master academic material that seems impossibly distant from their current lives or may trigger earlier memories of failure. This is “contextualizing” broadly construed. For example, Lake Michigan College is implementing a computer-based/self-paced remedial instruction program (KeyTrain®) that will give each student options connected to her or his career goal. For example, a button will say, “Click here if you want to be a CNA (or machinist, etc.),” triggering practice math problems presented in the appropriate context.

MTEC students' lack of clarity about goals and commitment is not too different from the state of mind of many students on the for-credit side of the college. In fact, the MTECs' offerings are usually much simpler to identify and follow through on, especially compared with the confusing course catalogs at so many colleges. It is not difficult to imagine that traditional students could benefit from some upfront assistance and supportive screening as well.

INCUBATING STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGIES

The intensive upfront strategy is an example of another unexpected development: the belief among some administrators that Breaking Through strategies might help for-credit students—and help colleges improve retention and credential attainment rates. One administrator said, “I view the MTEC as an incubator, a venue for rapid prototyping. We look to the MTEC for tested ideas we can adopt.”

The Destination Success program at Jackson Community College provides an early taste of what this might look like. The program provides rapid remediation for very low-skilled students (seventh grade and below). The designers, led by Charlotte Finnegan, are drawing on several sources of inspiration, including Achieving the Dream, but clearly consider Breaking Through a major source.

Briefly, the program screens for committed students. It is self-paced, using proprietary software, and the instructors function primarily as facilitators and advisors. Before beginning the programs, students have been assessed for career interests and aptitudes, and the college will introduce closer connections with technical programming in the next phase. Staff designed this experiment to start small and move ahead carefully.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The Michigan Center for Student Success is using this Breaking Through research as a springboard to further activities in support of increasing success for low-skilled adults in the state's community colleges. Based on the key findings from the statewide survey and the results of the qualitative look at the colleges, the center recognizes several needs:

Enhance the capacity of colleges to align career pathway curricula with trends in local and regional labor markets and effectively engage employers to ensure that college programs result in credentials of value.

- > Support regional efforts to establish Workforce Intelligence Networks that include colleges, employers, Michigan Works! agencies, and other stakeholders.
- > Support the use of traditional and real-time labor market information tools in selected regions by providing technical assistance to develop new programs in emerging career fields, realigning curricula in response to changing occupational skill requirements, disseminating job postings to students, and incorporating LMI data into employer and faculty feedback circuits.

Increase alignment and student mobility between noncredit and for-credit offerings to create authentic career pathways.

- > Establish a peer-learning network of college leaders committed to improving student mobility between noncredit and credit career and technical programs.
- > In selected colleges, support pilot programs to create career pathways that combine noncredit and credit coursework leading to entry-level employment in addition to opportunities for further education.

Increase the ability of colleges to provide upfront and ongoing guidance to students, including assistance with career identification, career-specific advising, academic acceleration, and career placement services.

- > Provide specialized training and technical assistance for student services personnel in identifying "best fit" careers for students based on interest, aptitude, and location preferences.
- > Provide specialized training and assistance for academic and student services personnel to effectively evaluate students' prior learning and accelerate their progress toward a credential.
- > Establish a peer-learning network of faculty (credit and noncredit) committed to contextualizing developmental reading, writing, and math skills in career-specific coursework.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study align well with other policy initiatives in Michigan and nationally. Driven by influential funders including Lumina Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation, the completion agenda is focusing attention on low success rates in community colleges, especially for lower-skilled students. In addition, the controversy swirling around “gainful employment” highlights what many see as a key value of community colleges: the ability to respond to local and regional labor needs with local workforce development programs. Michigan’s 2012-13 community college budget includes a formula for performance funding that rewards degree completion as well as college activities that add strategic value to communities, including partnerships with employers and workforce development agencies and programs designed to assist low-skilled adults in the transition to college.

The Michigan Center for Student Success is responding by developing a new initiative, Michigan Pathways to Credentials, that will build on the experiences of Breaking Through to develop comprehensive career pathways programming at six colleges across the state. Pathways to Credentials will leverage lessons learned from Breaking Through and Achieving the Dream, as well as from emerging initiatives such as Credentials That Work, Project Win Win, and others, to support colleges that seek to transform processes related to recruitment, enrollment, instruction, advising, and ongoing support for adults in career pathways programs. The lessons learned from the pilot colleges will be disseminated throughout the state through a broad-based learning network, the Michigan Student Success Network.

APPENDIX I: BREAKING THROUGH COLLEGE CASE STUDIES

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The starting point for Breaking Through at Grand Rapids Community College was the Career Advancement Program, launched at the MTEC before Breaking Through in response to requests from Michigan Works! CAP represented a collaboration of college departments, including job training (School of Workforce Development) and developmental education (School of Arts and Sciences), along with the local Michigan Works! agency. According to George Waite (workforce development) and Linda Spoelman (arts and sciences), “When CAP began, we had to do a lot of learning about each other’s programs. As time went on, we figured out that we were doing a lot of the same things, but calling them by different names.”

CAP evolved to incorporate Breaking Through strategies and featured an intensive orientation, life/work/study skills, and contextualized curricula delivered by a team of developmental education instructors and noncredit instructors. There was also intense career exploration, pathway mapping, and matching of student skills/interests to careers with high job placement rates. Michigan Works! and college counselors provided students with supports.

According to Spoelman, CAP focused on “people who’d lost jobs at factories and just wanted to do that type of work again. That wasn’t going to happen. Our job was to help them figure out what their skills were and then find the path that matched. College per se was not our goal; our goal was to find what was right for them.”

CAP features were incorporated in Grand Rapids Community College’s design for the U.S. Department of Labor’s Pathways Out of Poverty initiative. Locally known as “Pathways to Prosperity,” it created green career pathways for low-skilled students through the combined efforts of the

college, local employers, and community agencies. In 2011, a new Job Training Student Success Model was developed based on CAP and Pathways Out of Poverty features. At present, the college is redesigning all job training (noncredit workforce development) programs, and all will include intensive assessment and coaching support.

GRCC’s for-credit welding program, which has a 7 percent completion rate, will be redesigned based on Breaking Through principles. The CAP team is planning to take it over, wrapping CAP support features around the technical instruction. “We think we’re seeing a national trend, doing what we do for noncredit on the for-credit side,” says Waite. “There will be resistance, even with all our data. But I think we’ll get there. This is what keeps me coming to work.”

JACKSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

While Jackson Community College was not one of the original Michigan Breaking Through colleges, it quickly incorporated some of the principles to assist a hard-to-serve population. The origins of the Breaking Through story at JCC lie in a review of institutional data conducted by college officials. The review led to an alarming conclusion: Students who entered with skill levels around or below the seventh grade wasted significant time and resources while amassing big loans, and they usually dropped out before earning any college credentials. The college felt it was doing them a disservice to admit them to programs they would almost certainly fail to complete.

This view was supported by a subsequent review of community-based resources to identify programs to which these individuals could be referred. It found that local community-based organizations could not absorb more participants.

The ball was back in JCC's court, and after more than a semester of planning, it launched Destination Success in January 2012. Destination Success is a pilot to see whether the college can use Breaking Through strategies to accelerate students' progress relatively quickly. In effect, Destination Success is an experiment in whether Breaking Through principles, along with Achieving the Dream and staff experience, can lessen the time and resources that low-skilled adults and young people need to become college ready.

Destination Success is devoted to improving math, reading, and writing skills. It had a shoestring budget for its first semester, with most of the funds going to pay several highly motivated adjunct instructors. The program is building on lessons learned in an earlier experiment called Rapid Review Math, a 15-hour, individualized review of math concepts key to pre-algebra and essential for accelerating college readiness. According to JCC Title III Director Charlotte Finnegan, one of the moving spirits behind JCC's attention to low-skilled adults and young people is:

We had 19 students in Rapid Review Math last summer, and about 26 percent scored high enough in the post-test to bump up into the next higher level of math. More than 80 percent scored higher in the post-test; 14 of the 19 enrolled in math this fall and all but two passed. Destination Success was launched based on the concepts underlying RRM. The same math faculty are involved who set up RRM.

Destination Success is not fully implemented. Career preparation—a key element of Breaking Through—is one example of the work to come. In the future, Destination Success students will take the Discover Career Assessment. To assist in the transition to college-level work, Finnegan says that the next target is placement testing—preparing students for the COMPASS test.

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

Lake Michigan College is located in Benton Harbor, a city that has had more than its share of

economic trouble in recent years. LMC students bring significant challenges—as well as strengths—and the college has evolved a structure designed for program completion. Virtually all short-term certificate programs are offered in the Breaking Through model.

What that means is that all short-term training programs are delivered in a context that includes customer service training, KeyTrain® for academic skills, National Career Readiness and other certificates, test prep, college and career readiness, career assessment, dedicated advisor/support, and access to Michigan Works! support for food, transportation, and other needs.

All programs include an orientation, which has gradually developed to become a program component in its own right. It includes program requirements such as drug testing or fingerprinting that candidates must complete before they can register. It also includes test prep and testing because a number of LMC's technical programs have established minimum test scores on WorkKeys. Finally, a required course combines elements of student success courses and job searching (e.g., resume writing, professional email composition, basic computer skills).

Many of these program elements originally were offered concurrently with technical training. To a certain extent, funding issues have driven this reconfiguration, moving many elements to orientation: It is more economical to offer the success course up front rather than concurrently with training programs. The decision to move orientation upfront was in part informed by the belief among college staff that developing a student's commitment and sense of responsibility before the program starts ultimately leads to greater student success. The course is self-paced and generally takes between one week and one month to complete.

Leslie Kellogg, dean of Technology, Health Sciences and Business, described the MTEC as an incubator for new career programs and new support services. Because the Workforce Training Institute is not constrained by the rules and traditions of the

for-credit programs, it can experiment, enabling the college to see what works, what fits, what's succeeding, how it can be adapted for the credit side. In a synergistic relationship between the for-credit and the noncredit sides, the MTEC is a site for "rapid prototyping."

The college is paying attention. Its adult enrollment is very high—64 percent of its fall 2011 first-time college goers were at least 22 years old—so the MTEC/Breaking Through innovations seem especially relevant. But it is also true, as president Robert Harrison said, that the college has a high number of underprepared students entering from Benton Harbor's high school. "The Breaking Through model opens up doors for all students," he said. "The question is how do we go to scale in a way that's affordable?" Perhaps the answer will be found in what can happen before students enroll in classes, something like the distinctive entry point that the LMC MTEC has developed.

MACOMB COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Like a number of colleges participating in the Michigan Breaking Through network, Macomb Community College used state grants to fund several pilots based on Breaking Through strategies. However, the vulnerability of these "boutiques" to the uncertainties of soft funding prompted the college to reexamine a "change model" based on scaling up pilot programs. Instead, the college is undertaking a fundamental restructuring to address one of Breaking Through's major goals: create clear pathways to postsecondary education credentials and degrees. Macomb's goal is: *one college* in which noncredit students will have access to many regular college services and that incorporates both Achieving the Dream and Breaking Through insights. No more "noncredit side" and "for-credit side."

The first step was to detach noncredit workforce programs from the old administrative structure and attach them administratively to their logical for-credit department. This included reassigning relevant staff. For example, CNA training is now in the health care department.

Remediation continues to be a challenge: Most noncredit students have academic deficits. At present, the college is attempting to accelerate students' progress through the college's Learning Center. It is also counting on emerging Achieving the Dream innovations in developmental education, including revisions in scheduling and the curriculum for developmental mathematics.

Another challenge is advising and support. A major goal is to integrate noncredit students into the college's systems for for-credit students. Staff members are creating program plans for noncredit students that will reside on the regular system, Datatel, to support advisors and counselors. They will also teach noncredit students how to use Web Advisor.

Macomb officials caution that their ambitious restructuring is in its early stages. Many challenges must be addressed and new ones are certain to arise, but it is an exciting time.

MOTT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Mott Community College was the first Breaking Through college in Michigan. It is located in the city of Flint, which gave birth to General Motors but has been bleeding jobs and population for decades. The Workforce Education Center at Mott has long been involved with the human fallout, people with limited skills and employment histories seeking advancement through new skills and careers. Like other MTECs, the MCC Workforce Education Center has served this population primarily through noncredit offerings. From the beginning of its participation in Breaking Through, Mott's focus has been creating connections to the for-credit college for students in noncredit workforce development.

Robert Matthews, now Executive Dean of Workforce Development at MCC, has led these efforts since 2005. He is a man on a mission: enabling his workforce development students to participate in and benefit from the college's excellent for-credit programs. Implicit in this mission has been the goal of convincing colleagues that his students are just as capable as those on the for-credit side. As he said

recently, “The fact is that our certificate students are actually doing college-level work.”

Using protocols developed to connect career and technical programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels, Mott’s articulation agreements clarified for-credit course requirements and ensured that noncredit programs provided students with needed prerequisites. *(More extensive documentation can be found in the The Breaking Through Practice Guide.)*

More recently, thanks in part to a Pathways Out of Poverty grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Workforce Division has collaborated with the Technology Division to develop a second approach: “blended certificates” that combine credit and noncredit courses in several occupational areas. All the work to create blended certificates is done by administrators behind the scenes and is invisible to students.

Mott is developing these noncredit-to-credit pathways one program at a time. According to one administrator, development of the blended certificates, for example, means that the noncredit programs must use teachers whose credentials match those in their respective for-credit programs, the course materials have to match, and individual performance assessments often have to be developed.

As in several other Breaking Through colleges, the Student Success Committee at Mott is looking for examples of effective programs and strategies. One place they are looking is the Workforce Education Center’s success in advancing students’ skills and in completing postsecondary technical credentials.

ST. CLAIR COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

St. Clair County Community College—or SC4, as it’s known locally—established its AWARE (Adults Who Are Returning to Education) program, inspired in part by participation in Breaking Through peer learning meetings. AWARE is for adults who wanted to attend college but whose academic skills are too low. As with so many programs relying on soft

funding, its target population shifted with the funding source (sometimes WIA-eligible, sometimes just wanting to go to college), but its goal—college preparation—remained constant. Patricia Leonard, dean of Students and Grants at SC4, summarized the program design as incorporating “most Breaking Through elements: intrusive support/wraparound services; focus on career direction and development of skills for life and college success; acceleration through developmental education; competency-based, extensive assessment; NCRC certification; and flexibility for student schedules via open-entry/exit lab.”

To a certain extent, Doreen MacDonald, who oversaw the instructional component of AWARE, could draw from experience directing an ongoing program, Adult Learning Lab (ALL), which had been operating for a number of years before Breaking Through came on the scene.

ALL continues to operate at SC4, but the college has no funding for AWARE. While it operated, it opened the door to college for many people who would otherwise not have dreamed of going. Two of them, Juanita and David, talked about their experiences during a recent site visit. Both eloquently touched on almost every theme that inspired Breaking Through.

Juanita and David both lost jobs that paid well but required few skills. Both were tested at their local One-Stop Career Center, where staff discouraged them from thinking ambitiously. One was told, “You flunked the test”; the other was told, “You’re not college material.” However, both succeeded in the nurturing atmosphere of ALL, and then transitioned to AWARE’s more collegiate environment. The program raised their academic competencies to college level and inculcated college success skills. An “intrusive” navigator (Dean Leonard’s words) helped them with personal, academic, and career development. Both Juanita and David then matriculated at SC4. They said they have encountered friends from their old jobs on campus and realized that AWARE gave them an edge. “We knew what we were doing and they didn’t.” Both graduated with Associate’s degrees in business in spring 2012.

APPENDIX II: MICHIGAN BREAKING THROUGH STATEWIDE SURVEY TEMPLATE

1. Please provide the name, title, and contact information of the individual completing the survey.

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

2. Has the college set explicit goals for increasing educational attainment of students?

Yes / No

Comment:

3. Does this include awarding of credentials with a specific focus on high-demand industries with jobs in the regions?

Yes / No

Comment:

4. Please indicate the level of the college's focus on recruiting and retaining lower-skilled adult students.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

5. Please indicate the types of programming the college offers that is suitable for lower-skilled adults:
(Please check all that apply)

- Developmental education course
- Certificate (credit) programs with few or no prerequisites
- Noncredit workforce development programs leading to industry-recognized credentials
- Noncredit adult education courses for literacy development (ABE)
- Noncredit adult education courses for GED preparation
- Other
- None

Comment:

6. Please indicate the level of collaboration and communication among administrators, faculty, counselors, and other key staff to ensure cohesive curricular connections across programs for lower-skilled adults.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

7. Please indicate the level at which the college currently collects data about its strategies, programs, and outcomes for lower-skilled adults.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

8. Does the college have the ability to track students into the labor market to determine employment and other economic outcomes (e.g., wages)?

Yes / No

Comment:

9. How are programs for the lower-skilled adult population funded or supported at the college? (Please check all that apply.)

- College general funds
- Student-paid tuition and fees (including Pell and other financial aid)
- Employer-paid tuition and fees
- Workforce Investment Act funds
- State or federal grants to the college (including Carl Perkins funds)
- Private foundation grants to the college
- Other

Comment:

10. What strategies has the college developed to sustain funding for effective programs that are helping to advance lower-skilled adults?

II. INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND SERVICES

11. Please indicate the level to which the college has developed clear road maps (plans, guides) for all students to chart their goals and the course to and through the identified career pathway programs.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

12. Please indicate the level at which the curriculum in pre-college courses (ABE, ASE, GED, ESL, developmental education) and workforce training is aligned with course content and credentials throughout the career pathway.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

13. Does the college have any bridge programs that help students to get to credit-level pathways?

Yes / No

Comment:

14. Please indicate the level at which the college is promoting noncredit-to-credit articulation.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

15. Please rate the level of effort to align adult education and developmental education.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

16. Please indicate the level to which the college promotes credential attainment for low-skilled adults.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

III. ACCELERATED LEARNING/TIME TO COMPLETION

17. Please indicate the level to which course content (reading, writing, math) is contextualized to a sector or occupational focus to help students learn more and faster.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

18. Does the college offer any "intensive" courses focusing on addressing particular skills gaps and/or offering more content in less or the same amount of time?

Yes / No

Comment:

19. Has the college created any courses that integrate basic skills instruction with occupational training?

Yes / No

Comment:

20. Are short-term credentials offered that can "stack" to high certificates or degrees?

Yes / No

Comment:

21. Please indicate the level to which the college utilizes prior learning assessments to reduce time to completion for lower-skilled adult students.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

IV. LABOR MARKET PAYOFFS

22. Please describe the extent to which the college is engaged in local or regional efforts to link education and training to economic development.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

23. Please indicate the extent to which employers are actively engaged in curriculum development and/or program delivery for the identified pathways.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

24. What resources have employers offered? (Check all that apply.)

- Internships
- Staff as instructors
- Curriculum/instructional materials
- Location or equipment
- Guaranteed interviews for students
- Employment
- Other
- None

Comment:

25. Please indicate the extent to which students are engaged in hands-on and work-based learning opportunities in identified career pathways.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

26. Please indicated the extent to which the career services office regularly connects with employers to assist with career or job placement for students.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

27. Please indicate the extent to which services such as career planning and job placement assistance are available to lower-skilled, low-income students who may need to work while pursuing their education.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

V. COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

28. Please indicate the extent to which diagnostic assessments are used to identify learning needs for lower-skilled adults, including cognitive functioning, learning disabilities, or other forms of disability.

1 2 3 4

(1= "not at all" and 4= "very much")

Comment:

29. What student supports are included in programs for lower-skilled adults students in the college? (Please check all that apply.)

	CREDIT STUDENTS ONLY	NONCREDIT STUDENTS ONLY	BOTH CREDIT AND NONCREDIT STUDENTS	NOT OFFERED
Academic support, such as learning labs or tutoring				
Career guidance				
A "navigator" or "go to" person who can help students overcome obstacles to completing their education				
Supports to address life challenges, such as health care, child care, and transportation				
Innovative sources of financial aid (beyond Pell or student loans) that can cover students' tuition, fees, books, and/or other educational expenses				

30. Does the college work with community partners to provide any of the services listed above?

Yes / No

Comment:

31. Does the college have a regular process to reengage students who stop out or leave prior to completion of a credential?

Yes / No

Comment:

32. What aspects of an adult-friendly learning environment are offered to lower-skilled adult students? (Check all that apply.)

- Flexible students
- Use of technology
- Hybrid courses
- Distance learning
- Courses in convenient location or work-based sites
- Other
- None

VI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 33. What professional development does the college offer to faculty or staff teaching or serving lower-skilled adults in the identified career pathways courses?
- 34. What are the capacity gaps that your faculty and/or staff have in implementing programs that help to advance lower-skilled adults?

VII. POLICY QUESTIONS

- 35. What obstacles to serving low-skilled adult students have you encountered related to policies within the college?
- 36. What obstacles to serving low-skilled adult students have you encountered related to state or federal policies?
- 37. We are seeking promising practices that can be recommended to other community colleges in Michigan. In your estimation, what is/are your college's most promising practice(s) and/or program(s) for promoting student success for low-skilled adults?
- 38. Please describe the extent to which the college's effective programs for lower-skilled adults have been "scaled," including the percentage of lower-skilled adult students participating in these programs.
- 39. Do you have any final comments on anything not already discussed?

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