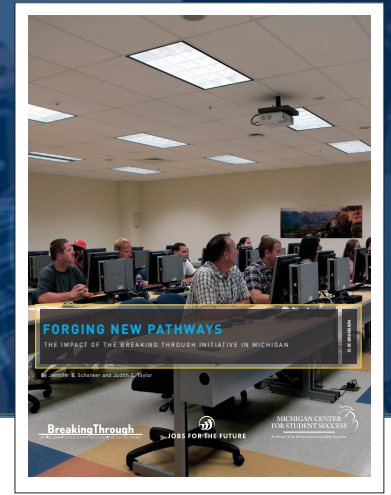


FORGING NEW PATHWAYS

THE THE IMPACT OF THE BREAKING THROUGH INITIATIVE IN MICHIGAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BY JENNIFER B. SCHANKER AND JUDITH C. TAYLOR
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BreakingThrough
HELPING LOW-SKILLED ADULTS ENTER AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE AND CAREERS


JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

**MICHIGAN CENTER
FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**
An Initiative of the Michigan Community College Association

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. 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.

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.

Forging New Pathways is available on the JFF website at <http://www.jff.org/publications>

Jobs for the Future works with our partners to design and drive adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy.

 **JOBS FOR THE FUTURE**

TEL 617.728.4446 FAX 617.728.4857 info@jff.org

88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110
122 C Street, NW, Suite 650, Washington, DC 20001

WWW.JFF.ORG

