



Fact Sheet

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Community College Partnerships for Student and Career Success: Program Profile of *Carreras en Salud*

Postsecondary students with children often need an array of supports to succeed in their studies, which can require significant coordination among new and existing services (Conway, Blair, and Helmer 2012; Henrici n.d.; Miller, Gault, and Thorman 2011). Such supports might include financial aid, academic and career counseling, job placement assistance, transportation, housing, child care, and classes in English-as-a-Second Language. To more effectively provide an expanded range of student resources, community colleges often partner with local nonprofits, private businesses and foundations, and government institutions (Altstadt 2011; Bragg et al. 2007; Bray, Painter, and Rosen 2011; Conway, Blair, and Helmer 2012; Leutz 2007; Singh 2007; Wilson 2010). This fact sheet describes **Carreras en Salud** (“Careers in Health”), a career pathway program that scholars and advocates have elevated as a promising model for providing comprehensive supports through multiple partnerships with city colleges in Chicago.

Collaborations among local community colleges, nonprofit organizations, private employers, government agencies (Conway, Blair, and Helmer 2012), and the media (U.S. Department of Education 2010) are central to the operations of Carreras en Salud. Carreras began in 2005 as a joint program of the Instituto Del Progreso Latino in Chicago, Association House, the National Council of La Raza, and Wilbur Wright College—one of Chicago’s city colleges. Carreras is set up as a bilingual health care career pathway through community college coursework and licensing along with support services and resources so that individuals—98 percent of whom are women and over 90 percent of whom are women with children¹—are able to move up and into certified and higher paying health care positions. As of 2009, Carreras “had a licensing/certification rate of 95 percent for its 358 Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and Certified Nursing Assistance (CNA) graduates, and a placement rate of 100 percent for the 343 LPNs and CNAs. LPNs had an average wage gain of 150 percent, from an average annual salary of \$18,720 as a CNA to \$46,800 as an LPN” (Estrada 2010).

Each organization in the Carreras partnership plays a unique role. Association House provides case management during pre-LPN classes. The Humboldt Park Vocational Educational Center of Wilbur Wright College administers classes at different high school grade levels, depending on student readiness, for pre-LPN or CNA preparation; Wright also provides the coursework for students who transition to the LPN level. Harry S. Truman College, another city college, then provides Registered Nursing (RN) training for LPN students interested in further education.

Instituto Del Progreso provides bridge classes, including bilingual adult education in English-as-a-Second Language; General Educational Development (GED) preparation; and Spanish literacy. Instituto was able to add, through demonstration grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education, a bridge class that provides pre-Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) preparation to students who choose to then go on to become CMAs (MPR Associates 2010) instead of seeking an CNA-LPN-RN career pathway (Estrada 2010).

¹Data provided to IWPR by Instituto Del Progreso Vice President for Education and Programs Ricardo Estrada, Ph.D., May 8, 2012

For students taking classes within its facilities, Instituto provides free child care for children between 3 and 12 years old; students taking classes at other sites, such as at one of the city colleges, can request child care assistance through Instituto's Center for Working Families and, if eligible, can receive vouchers to pay another institution or a responsible individual for child care.²

Employer partners are also part of the Carreras system, providing clinical and practicum sites, practicum instructors, and job placement for program graduates. In addition, Spanish-language media and faith-based organizations in Chicago help with adult student recruitment to the health care career training and education programs (Bragg et al. 2007).

Carreras en Salud's set of support, training, education, outreach, and employment services offered through Chicago's city colleges and partnerships with other organizations provide a broad array of services to training and education participants. These coordinated services help city colleges reach low-income adults, and help adult students—including those who are student parents—improve their health care career opportunities.

²Data provided to IWPR by Instituto Del Progreso Vice President for Education and Programs Ricardo Estrada, Ph.D., May 8, 2012

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