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The Promise of the **College and Career Transitions Initiative**

CCTI, UTILIZING THE ORGANIZATIONAL WORK OF THE CAREER CLUSTERS PROJECT, DEVELOPED A COMMON DEFINITION FOR CAREER PATHWAYS AND **PROVIDED A TEMPLATE OUTLINING BOTH ACADEMIC AND CTE COURSE SEQUENCES IN A CAREER PATHWAY.**

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ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO SINGLE PROGRAM OR IDEA THAT WILL FIX THE ENTIRE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, findings from the national demonstration project College and Career Transitions Initiative (CCTI) demonstrate considerable promise of the role pathways can play in helping students find their way through education to work and on to their careers. Unlike the streaming of vocational models in many European and Asian countries, the CCTI model creates opportunities for students along pathways that lead to further education or careers. Many national systems of education are single-elimination tournament models where students are allowed only one failure and they are out of the competition.

The Issues

CCTI has been a five-year (2003-2008) project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), and administered by the League for Innovation in the Community College. The purpose of CCTI was "to contribute to strengthening the role of the community and technical colleges throughout the United States in easing student transitions between secondary and postsecondary education as well as transitions to employment, and to improve academic performance at both the secondary and postsecondary levels."[1]

The major objective of the CCTI project was to develop career pathways to "ensure that students meet both academic and career and technical education (CTE) expectations prior to entering postsecondary programs, thus eliminating the need for remediation at the college level."[2] A national panel developed five major outcomes for CCTI over the life of the project (see Table 1).

To accomplish the goals of CCTI, the League issued an RFP open to all community/technical colleges in the United States. Applicants were required to show the establishment of partnerships with secondary schools, employers and, if necessary, four-year colleges and state departments of education. In May 2003, 15 community college-led partnerships in five high-demand occupational clusters were selected to provide leadership in CCTI (See Table 2).

Impetus for Career Pathways

There have been numerous reports in the national media expressing considerable angst over the state of American education, and many of the dire pronouncements are not without some merit. Richard Kazis, senior vice president of Jobs for the Future, for example, notes that in the United States "an astounding number of students fail to complete high school." He explains further that 30 percent of entering high school freshmen leave school without a traditional diploma and that in some of the largest urban high schools 60 percent of ninth-graders drop out before earning a diploma.

High school graduation rates have continued to decline since the peak in 1970 of 77 percent, due to a variety of complicating factors that include the economy and the failure of education to serve the needs of immigrants, Latinos, African Americans, the disabled, and low socio-economic students.[3] Recent studies, for example, show that only 58 percent of Hispanic students and 53 percent of black students graduate on time with a regular diploma. These outcomes compare to 80 percent of Asian students and 76 percent of white students completing on time.[4]

Given the very evident crisis in American education, the basic question arises: How can individuals successfully move through our systems of education and into the workforce? Whereas the original U.S. model of "vocational education" apparently served the nation's workforce needs for more than 70 years: "the changing demands of the workplace are now requiring a significant system overhaul for us to meet employer needs by successfully transitioning students to college and careers."[5] With the failure of so many students in the U.S. educational system, the obvious way to begin this overhaul is to be certain students are provided a successful path through the system.

CCTI was proposed, therefore, as one of two major initiatives funded by OVAE over the past decade that emphasize strong partnerships between secondary and postsecondary education and employers. The first of the two initiatives was career clusters. This initiative was essentially led by the state CTE directors and focused on categorizing and defining all occupations by occupational cluster. This provided a critical component for CTE by addressing the needed organizational structures that defined CTE as an important part of all students' educational plans. CCTI, utilizing the organizational work of the career clusters project, developed a common definition for career pathways and provided a template outlining both academic and CTE course sequences in a career pathway. The template also details dual-enrollment opportunities and emphasizes the need to assess students' interests and achievement early and often.

The development and implementation of CCTI was also designed to follow and benefit from other CTE reforms—many which are continuing to contribute greatly to improving the educational transitions for students. Among these reforms are tech prep, curriculum integration, work-related experience, school-to-work, career academies, and career magnets. From

Table 1: **CCTI Outcomes and Indicators**

CCTI Outcomes	Indicators of Outcomes
Outcome #1: Decreased need for remediation at the postsecondary level	Remediation rates, total pathway enrollment
Outcome #2: Increased enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education	Number and percentage of students persisting in pathways, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data
Outcome #3: Increased academic and skill achievement at secondary and postsecondary levels	Placement and achievement tests, GPA, college-level credits earned, CCSSE
Outcome #4: Increased attainment of postsecondary degrees, certificates or other recognized credentials	Number of degrees, certificates, licenses, pathway vs. non-pathway degrees
Outcome #5: Increased entry into employment or further education	Transfer rates, job attainment, pathway vs. non-pathway achievement

Table 2: **Pathways Partnership Sites by Occupational Area**

Occupational Area	Community Colleges
Education and Training	Anne Arundel Community College (Md.) Lorain County Community College (Ohio) Maricopa Community Colleges (Ariz.)
Health Science	Ivy Tech Community College (Ind.) Miami Dade College (Fla.) Northern Virginia Community College (Va.)
Information Technology	Central Piedmont Community College (N.C.) Corning Community College (N.Y.) Southwestern Oregon Community College (Ore.)
Law, Public Safety and Security	Fox Valley Technical College (Wis.) Prince George's Community College (Md.) San Diego Community College District (Calif.)
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Lehigh Carbon Community College (Pa.) Sinclair Community College (Ohio) St. Louis Community College (Mo.)

Table 3: **CCTI Student Averages**

		CCTI Student Average	National Student Average[a]
Outcome 1: Remediation Placement Average	Math English Reading	39% 27% 25%	68% 62% 67%
Outcome 2: Enrollment and Persistence	Entrance Rate Re-enrollment Rates *(in all postsecondary)*	29% 58.3%	29% 58.3%
Outcome 3: Achievement	GPA - High School	3.00	2.60

Notes: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Beginning Postsecondary Students, 2001 follow-up (BPS:96/01), National Education Longitudinal Study, 2000 follow-up (NELS:88/00), Data Analysis System. National data calculations are not directly comparable statistically to CCTI data, but provide comparable trend analysis.

Table 4: **Summary Participation Totals of the 15 CCTI sites**

Student Enrollment	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Pathway Students in the 15 original CCTI sites	0	2,853	5,431 +90%	18,152 +234%	22,178 +22.2%
Collaboration Partners					
High Schools	0	40	55	67	80
Corporate	0	28	42	47	47
CCTI Colleges	15	15	15	15	15
Career Clusters	5	5	5	16	16
Pathways Developed	0	15	6	131	176
Network Colleges	0	0	150	170	175

the findings of this array of programs CCTI was implemented in a spirit of continuous improvement of CTE.

Outcomes of the CCTI Project

Consideration of the findings from the CCTI project focuses on the first two outcomes—Decreased Remediation Rates *and* Increased Entrance Rates and Persistence—because relatively few high school students had sufficient time to graduate from college during the five years of the project.

Decreased Remediation Rates

The first CCTI outcome was to decrease students' needs for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level (see Table 3). As noted above, students who are ready for college-level work succeed at much higher rates than those students who are unprepared. Although there is no single national estimate of the percentage of entering community college students who need remedial coursework, Stanford University's Bridge Project reported that 63 percent of students entering U.S. community colleges take at least one remedial course. California Community Colleges estimate that 50 percent of students need remediation. The state of Florida also finds that 78 percent of its community college students need remediation.

CCTI students demonstrated lower remediation rates and higher entrance rates than the national average. In summary, the most appropriate question when analyzing the CCTI outcome of decreased remediation is: Has enrollment in CCTI benefited students? On the basis of the reports from the CCTI sites and the descriptive findings, more high schools, colleges, students and parents are aware of the importance of remediating academic deficiencies early in high school when there is still time to make improvements. As we have found throughout the study this increased level of communication among institutional partners, students and parents is among CCTI's most promising outcomes.

Increased Entrance Rates and Persistence

In order for students to be successful in the transition from high school to college, obviously, they must enroll first and then persist. A major component of the CCTI model was, therefore, to encourage students to enroll in a pathway and then to persist in this pathway into the community college, the university, or on to employment. All the CCTI sites employed a number of recruitment and persistence strategies to assist students with their transitions through the educational pipeline. Providing high school students with additional counseling, early remediation testing, and simply bringing them to the community college campus all proved to be effective strategies to recruit and retain students in the career pathways.

Introducing students to the community college campus helped demystify the college experience, especially for first generation college attendees. As noted in Table 4, enrollment grew at a steady rate during the life of the project. The increases, particularly from 2005, were due both to the increase in high school and corporate partners and to improved counseling and recruitment activities by the community colleges themselves.

Table 4 also illustrates CCTI's continued expansion through the Network of Colleges (see last line in the table). In 2005 CCTI initiated the Network of Colleges as a way to recruit institutions not among the original 15 funded sites to form a national network led by the league that focuses on the outcomes of CCTI. The CCTI Network has continued to expand. One of the distinct legacies of CCTI will be the continued growth in Network Colleges beyond OVAE funding.

Components of CCTI's Success

The overall findings from the CCTI project address the four major components found essential to understanding the project outcomes: Leadership and Vision, Collaboration and Partnerships, Effective Institutional Research, and offering College Support and Structures.

- Leadership and Vision proved to be essential in assuring program implementation and sustainability for CCTI; some colleges faced particular challenges because of weak leaders.
- Good communication across institutional levels was also a key ingredient. Ineffective communication resulted in a lack of information provided to high school counselors and a poor understanding of student success in transitions across institutions.
- Effective Institutional Research showed that an effective system for assessment enabled institutional partners to understand if programs were working.
- Finally, most colleges and high school partners were assured, through additional funding and resources, the sustainment of CCTI after funding ended.

Conclusion

The clearest indicator of the legacy of CCTI is the integration of the pathway model into the mission statements and strategic plans of the CCTI colleges. This integration of the CCTI model has initiated a productive shift in faculty thinking related to supporting the transition of students along the educational pipeline. CCTI has had an immediate influence on how the 15 participating community colleges and their partners accomplish their educational missions as evidenced by the incorporation of the CCTI model into their mission statements and strategic plans. This institutionalization of CCTI will sustain the pathway model not only at the original CCTI colleges but also within the larger CCTI network, which has grown to over 175 network colleges.

The impact of CCTI as a demonstration project has been unique because it has created its legacy of an expanding network of colleges to sustain and extend the pathway concept after funding ends. Further indications of the influence of CCTI have also been legislative initiatives creating pathway programs at the federal and state levels. This larger and sustaining cultural impact of CCTI on the individual, college, state and national levels can be summarized best with the new expression at Maryland's Anne Arundel Community College: "Transitions is everyone's concern—or should be."

Adding to the promise of CCTI, the League for Innovation is continuing to assist community/technical colleges and their partners in secondary schools, four-year colleges, state departments and employers to lead in the improvement of student transitions from secondary to postsecondary and throughout life by the establishment of the national Center for College and Career Transitions Initiatives. The center will provide networking opportunities, technical assistance, consulting and leadership development in the area of student success through career pathways. Learn more about this new center at **www.league.org/ccti**. **T**

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References:

1 Warford, L. (2006). "Pathways to Student Success: Case Studies from The College and Career Transitions Initiative." Phoenix: League for Innovation in the Community College.

2 Hess, S. (2006) "A New Direction for Career and Technical Education." In Warford, L., "Education Pathways to Student Success: Case Studies from The College and Career Transitions Initiative." Phoenix: League for Innovation in the Community College.

3 Kazis, R. (2003). "Ready for Tomorrow: Helping All Students Achieve Secondary and Postsecondary Success: A Guide for Governors." Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association. p. 4.

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5 Hess. S. 2006, p. 1.