



**TRANSITIONAL COLLEGE READINESS  
PROGRAMS IN CONNECTICUT:  
ADULT EDUCATORS AS PARTNERS**



Connecticut Association for Human Services

Transitional College Readiness  
Programs in Connecticut:  
Adult Educators as Partners

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# Transitional College Readiness Programs In Connecticut: Adult Educators As Partners

## FOCUS ON THE LOWEST PERFORMERS

For the past three years, Connecticut has been implementing an ambitious reform plan for the remedial education system at the state's community colleges. The reform creates a new, tiered structure to better serve students with specific teaching models and services, opening the door to new partnerships between community colleges and local adult education providers. In this report our focus is on a specific group of students, those that test at or below eighth-grade level and who will be served by these new partnerships under the new transitional programs. The main objective of the new programs should be ensuring that students advance to college-level credit bearing classes, as this must continue to be the overarching goal of development education in Connecticut's community colleges.

Until the passage of PA 12-40 in 2012, Connecticut's community colleges provided non-credit fee-based remediation courses to students based on pre-enrollment assessments. Many students never advanced beyond these courses; less than half of the students who enrolled in basic skills math classes passed the course in 2007. Only 8 percent of students who needed remediation earned a credential (that is – completed their education and received a certificate or degree in three years).<sup>1</sup>

Under the new law, community colleges are now required to partner with adult education providers

to meet the needs of students placing at or below the eighth-grade level in English or math skills. These students often require targeted services and academic strategies to enable them to enroll in intensive or embedded level developmental classes at the community colleges (see *2012 Public Act 12-40*, page 3).

“Transitional college readiness program” is the term applied by legislation in 2014 to denote this third tier of remediation programs to prepare students who need substantial support as a first step towards enrolling in credit-bearing classes. The goal of the new transitional college readiness programs is to effectively prepare students to pursue postsecondary education. In this report we will review the initial efforts undertaken by community colleges and adult education providers to achieve this objective, and how the new system can help students move up to either more advanced remedial classes or full credit-bearing courses.



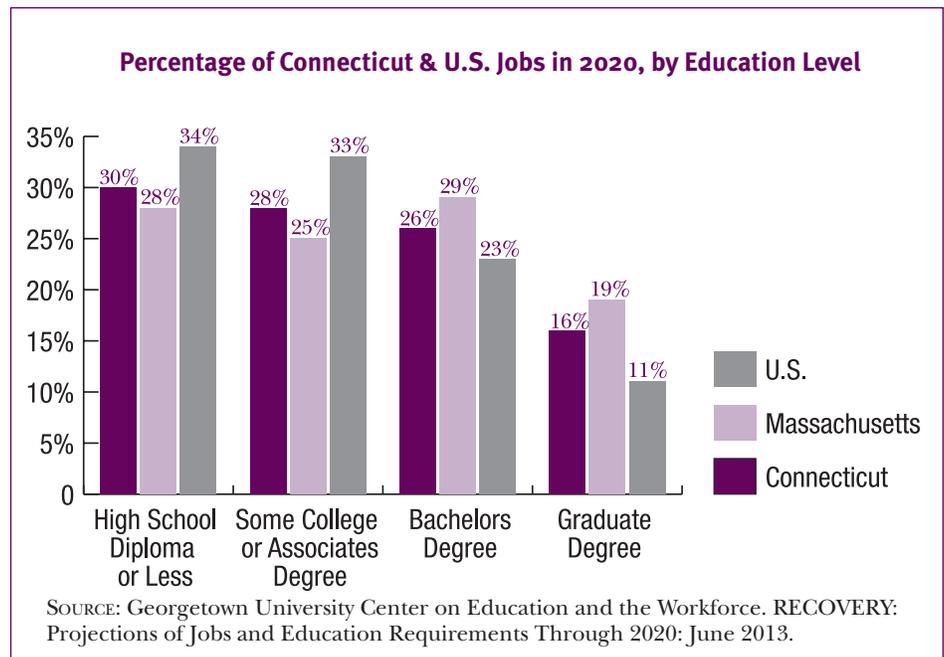
## POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS KEY TO PERSONAL SUCCESS AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Educating our workforce is an economic necessity for state residents and Connecticut's economic future. According to the Connecticut "Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education", Connecticut's economy will require a workforce in which 70 percent of workers have some education beyond high school by 2020.<sup>2</sup> Currently 65 percent of workers are at that level.

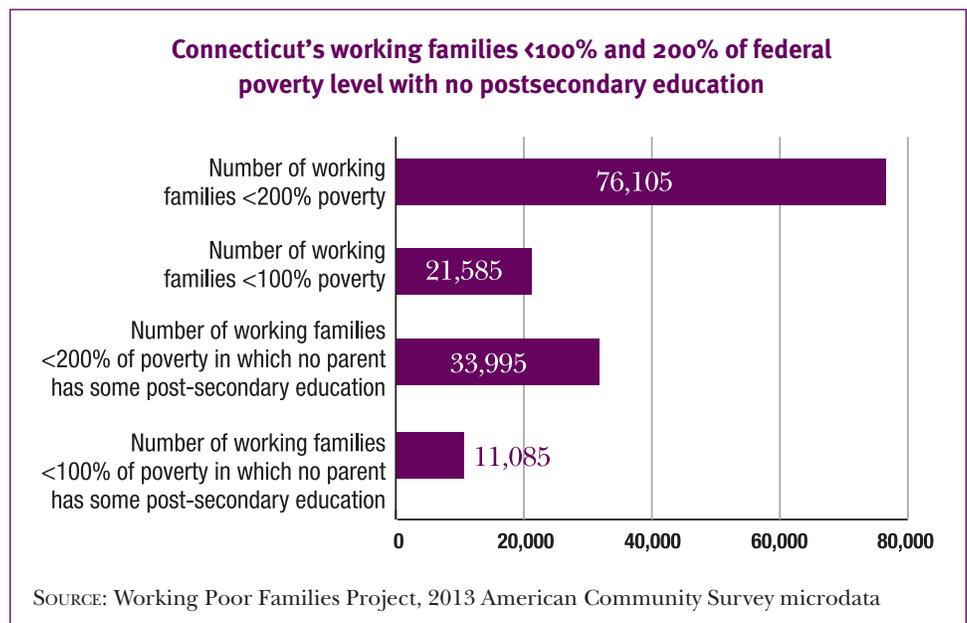
To ensure an educated workforce in 10 years, Connecticut needs 300,000 additional postsecondary graduates, with the highest employment needs in biosciences, healthcare and precision manufacturing.

Two major factors stand in the way of this goal. First, too few individuals are attending college, especially among low-income males, minorities and older adults with high school diplomas or GEDs. Second, fewer enrollees are completing college, due to inadequate academic skills necessary to complete a rigorous college curriculum. Additionally, Connecticut's Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education notes that the projected number of students graduating from high school in Connecticut will decline over the coming decades due to population loss among young people.

Connecticut currently ranks sixth of the 50 states in college enrollment for adults age 25 – 49.<sup>3</sup> In order



to have a workforce in 2025 with the requisite number of postsecondary graduates, Connecticut must enroll a significantly larger percentage of its adult population, drawing largely from previously underrepresented groups. 51 percent of working families living below 100 percent of poverty do not have a parent with some postsecondary education. Of those families in the state living below 200 percent of poverty, 45 percent do not have a parent with postsecondary education. These are the students that community colleges need to serve, both to enroll and graduate.



**2012 Public Act 12-40: An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion:**

- Reform remedial education delivery at state universities and community colleges.
- Three tiers of developmental education defined as:

– **Embedded Level**

College-level instruction with embedded developmental support designed for students with 12th grade skills (or close to that) who are approaching college readiness but require some remediation; college-level components must be numbered 100 or higher

– **Intensive Level**

A single semester of developmental education or an intensive readiness experience for students below the 12th grade level; if structured as a course, must be numbered below 100.

– **Transitional Strategies**

Strategies for students with eighth grade skill levels or below developed by groups from colleges and universities in each geographical region of the state.

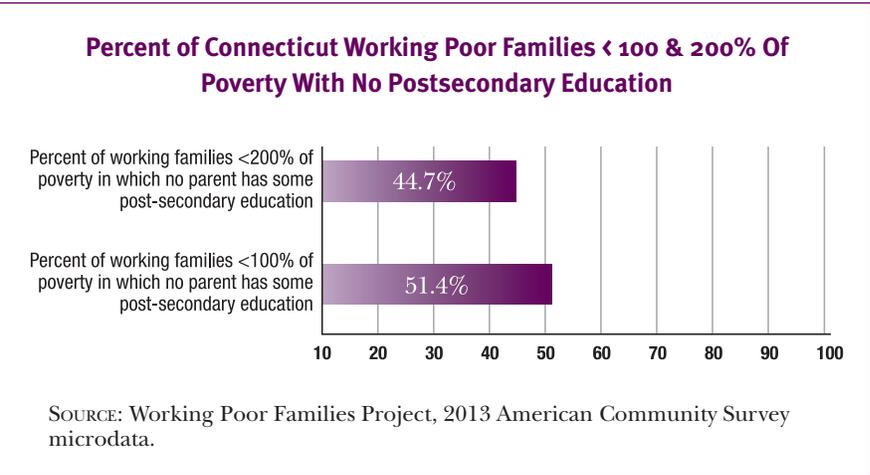
**2013 Pilot Programs**

- Community colleges developed and/or adapted models to include embedded tutors and/or to use software-based instruction
- Some models were part of an existing multi-state effort preceding legislation.

In fall 2013, the total enrollment at Connecticut community colleges was 56,976, of which 12,981 students, or 23 percent, enrolled in English or math remediation.<sup>4</sup> These students enrolled in postsecondary education for the opportunity to improve their economic future, but their skills were below those needed to earn college credit. Effective programs must be in place to meet the needs of these students, while at the same time allowing community colleges to develop the programs and curriculum needed by Connecticut’s employers.

Prior to passage of PA 12-40, students in need of remediation enrolled in non-credit, remedial education courses, sometimes of long duration, based on their assessment scores. These enrollments often resulted in students using up limited federal Pell Grant financial aid, dropping out if not successful, and running out of financial options in the process. Remedial education needs have

taxed the postsecondary education system while underserving the needs of this population of learners. With the reform, low-level students will now rely on partnerships with adult educators to access remediation without facing a financial



burden. When implemented effectively, this initiative can become a pipeline for successful community college enrollments.

## 2014 PA 14-217 Section 209 Remedial Support for Higher Education Students

- Requires colleges and universities to provide support to eligible students under the tiered system.
- Delays from fall 2014 to fall 2015 requirement for community colleges to provide transitional remedial support.
- Allows Board of Regents and State Dept. of Education to enter into MOUs to provide transitional college readiness programs.

## 2014 Fall College Transitional Strategies Program Roll Out

Four community colleges partnered with adult education providers to establish college transition programs:

- Gateway Community College and New Haven Adult Education
- Housatonic Community College
- Manchester Community College and Manchester Adult Education
- Three Rivers Community College and New London Adult Education, Norwich Adult Education.

Four non-partnering community colleges served students on campus with modified remediation courses:

- Asnuntuck Community College
- Capitol Community College
- Naugatuck Valley Community College
- Middlesex Community College

Four community colleges established partnerships in spring 2015 (along with the four colleges with modified programs.)

- Northwestern Community College and Foothills Adult Education
- Norwalk Community College
- Quinebaug Valley Community College
- Tunxis Community College

## FALL 2014 START-UP

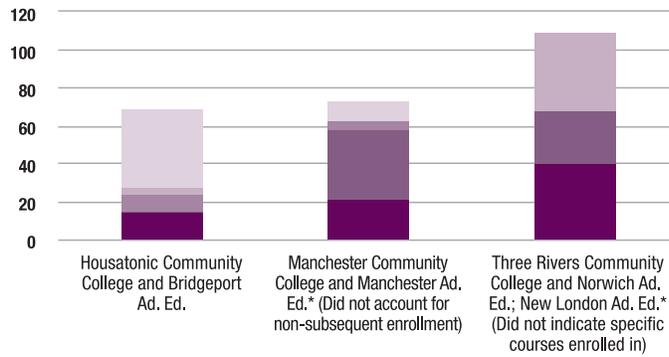
Legislation passed in June 2014 allowed the community colleges to enter into memoranda of understanding with adult education providers to deliver transitional college readiness programs. Upon successful completion, students can seamlessly enroll directly into the partnering college. In July 2014, the Board of Regents (BoR) requested community colleges to submit proposals that included transitional college readiness programs in partnership with adult education providers. Start dates were as early as August 2014, with all colleges having to adopt the model no later than fall 2015.

Since August 2014, transitional college readiness programs have rolled out incrementally as partnerships between community colleges and adult education providers have developed. Some community colleges not running programs with adult education providers in fall 2014 served students with modified remediation programs on their campuses, while others committed to planning for spring 2015 roll outs.

In fall 2014, four community colleges launched partnership transitional programs with an adult education provider. Three of these were part of the 2013 remediation pilots. Five community colleges ran modified remediation programs, with a total enrollment of 884 students, which represents about 7 percent of students needing remedial education in all community colleges. The three remaining community colleges planned for spring 2015 transitional programs with adult education providers. Some of the five community colleges running modified programs also rolled out a spring 2015 program; some waited until fall 2015.

Out of the 884 enrollees, 394 (44 percent) completed successfully with a “C” or better, with 194 (50 percent) of those subsequently enrolling in an *intensive level course*, and 32 (8 percent) enrolled in an *embedded credit level class* (see *2012 Public Act 12-40*, page 3).<sup>5</sup> 94 (22 percent) moved directly into a credit level math or English class). The remaining 20 percent did not enroll in the following semester at

### Fall 2014 Summary #s for Community College & Adult Education Partnerships



Category	Housatonic Community College and Bridgeport Ad. Ed.	Manchester Community College and Manchester Ad. Ed.* (Did not account for non-subsequent enrollment)	Three Rivers Community College and Norwich Ad. Ed.*; New London Ad. Ed.* (Did not indicate specific courses enrolled in)
# Enrolled in Subsequent For-Credit College Course	41	10	0
# Enrolled in Subsequent Embedded Course	4	0	41
# Enrolled in Subsequent Intensive Course	8	4	0
Completed, did not enroll	2	37	27
Did not complete	14	22	41

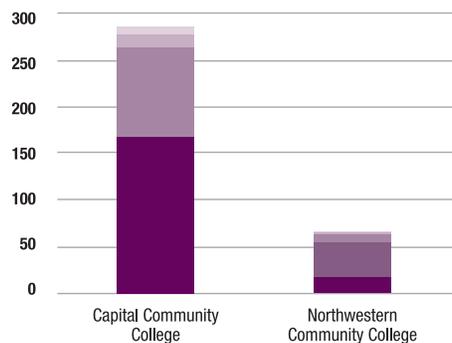
SOURCE: Fall 2014 Transitional Strategies Report, Revised March 2, 2015

Strategies program (14 percent) progressed into credit bearing English and math courses at the community college level.<sup>6</sup> Transitional college readiness programs in partnership with adult education providers had a slightly greater success rate for students that completed the program and enrolled in credit courses (45 percent) compared to the modified community college programs (39 percent).<sup>8</sup>

From this data, four issues for student success are evident: student

persistence in transitional remediation programs; tracking completers and non-completers; successful completers who do not continue; and the number of students who successfully complete and enroll in credit-bearing courses. We review how the new transitional programs are tackling these issues in the following section.

### Community Colleges with Modified Transitional College Readiness Programs



Category	Capital Community College	Northwestern Community College
# Enrolled in Subsequent For-Credit College Course	7	1
# Enrolled in Subsequent Embedded Course	15	2
# Enrolled in Subsequent Intensive Course	97	9
Completed, did not enroll	0	37
Did not complete	166	17

SOURCE: Fall 2014 Transitional Strategies Report, Revised March 2, 2015

a community college, and their status is unknown.

Community college/adult education partnership programs enrolled 251 (28 percent of the 884 students), with 166 (66 percent) successfully completing. Modified programs at eight community colleges enrolled 662 (75 percent) students with 270 (41 percent) successfully completing.

Ultimately, 126 of the 884 original students who enrolled in a partnership or a modified Transitional

### PROGRAM MODELS AT A GLANCE

The transitional college readiness program, developed in partnership with adult education providers, is intended for students whose skills assessment places them at or below eighth grade in English and/or math. This level indicates potential for difficulties in intensive level developmental classes. The

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), contracted by the BoR in January 2015, released an analysis of the summer and fall 2013 developmental education pilots in the community colleges.<sup>9</sup>

The report reviewed available student enrollment, completion and achievement data for both strategies and surveyed community college deans, faculty and staff about their knowledge and perception

## Transitional Strategies Education Models

### Boot Camps (no cost to students)

Math or English

3 – 6 weeks depending on program

1 or 2 days/evenings per week

3 hours per day

Tutor support on site

Includes First Year College Experience course (3 credits)

**Purpose:** raise Accuplacer test score and place into Embedded English 101 or English 101 (credit bearing, course fee)



### Semester Long Program

English and Math (no cost to students)

Covers full semester (12 – 16 weeks) offering math and English remediation

Meets 3 – 4 days a week

1 – 2 hour sessions

Lab and tutor support on site

Includes First Year College Experience course (3 credits)

**Purpose:** re-test in Accuplacer to place into remedial Intensive English or Math (non-credit bearing, course fee) or Embedded Support English or math (credit bearing, course fee)

of the implementation of the programs. Although limited to college faculty, since the adult education partnerships had not yet been implemented, it is noteworthy that faculty found that students enrolled in the transitional remediation level required greater academic services as well as services outside of the usual community college offerings, such as behavioral health counseling and social services.<sup>10</sup> Interviewees said that such services are not available at the community colleges to the extent required by students. To this end, they noted that partnering with adult education providers to deliver transitional college readiness programs would incorporate professional educators with experience working with this student population. It was clear from CWEALF's report that more counseling services are needed.

The programs launched in fall 2014 used either a boot camp model or a full semester model. The boot camp model is for students who place at a low level in skills assessment, but based on other multiple assessments, may benefit from a short durational program to reach at least the intensive level of developmental classes. The full semester model is for students who require more time and a slower pace. These classes run for the same duration as

for-credit college classes. Boot camps can be two to three-weeks long, with three to four running during a semester. In addition to providing English and/or math remediation, each model provides a three-credit First Year Experience course at no cost to the student.

The boot camp model utilizes self-paced, computerized instruction programs for skill development, such as MyFoundations Lab or MyMathLab, designed to improve academic preparedness and accelerate learning in reading, writing, ESL skills and mathematics with instructor support. Boot camps are skill specific and short term, requiring students to be self-motivated and computer literate. Boot camps are co-taught by college faculty and adult education instructors. The full semester models use a combination of software, such as MyFoundations, MyMath Lab or ALEKS.<sup>11</sup> The full semester model also uses lectures co-taught by community college and adult education staff, one-on-one tutor support, textbooks (varies per institution), and small groups.

Of the four colleges using modified transitional strategies programs, Capital Community College (CCC) and Naugatuck Valley Community College

(NVCC) used the Boot Camp model. CCC used computerized instruction such as ALEKS and Skills Tutor.<sup>12</sup> NVCC diagnosed a student's academic status and provided individualized diagnostics to support the student's growth and academic progress. Tutoring was available in the two colleges. Twenty-two (18 percent) enrolled in subsequent credit courses.

**Transitional strategies** were designed to emphasize process writing, reading comprehension, critical assessment and reading response writing. 48 percent of the students in the English classes successfully completed the courses. The math curriculum included a review of arithmetic and elementary algebra and incorporated MyMathLab. 18 percent of the students successfully passed the course. Concepts of the Freshman First Year experience were woven into the program. Students were encouraged to attend the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) for at least three hours per week.

Of the four partnership Transitional Strategies, Gateway Community College (GCC) partnered with New Haven Adult Education and used the boot camp model, with computerized instruction (MyMathTest, Aplia, and MyFoundationsLab). Eight students enrolled in GCC's Transitional Strategies program due to a change in the original posted schedule, with two placing into a higher level class, but no information is provided regarding credit status.

Housatonic Community College's (HCC) partnership offered classes co-taught by a college professor and an adult education instructor. Tutoring, case management, bus tokens and technology support were provided. Three students who demonstrated low skills with no improvement were referred to the Disability Specialist. Out of 61 enrollees, 45 (74 percent) enrolled in subsequent credit courses.

Manchester Community College (MCC) and Manchester Adult Education provided two programs on the college campus as well as programs onsite at adult education locations in Manchester and

Vernon to 71 students. Ten (14 percent) enrolled in subsequent credit classes at MCC.

Over a 12-week session, Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) offered Transitional Learning Communities (TLC) designed to address substantial gaps in math and/or English skills. TRCC worked closely with Norwich and New London Adult Education to identify instructors for teaching, tutoring, and consultation. All students became a part of the structured learning community with support services including intensive one-on-one advising, embedded tutoring, and access to career and counseling. Forty-eight students enrolled in



credit-bearing courses concurrently with TLC (other than First Year Experience) such as Criminal Justice, Architecture and CAD. Professional development opportunities were offered to all TLC instructors and staff. College and adult education providers collaborated on course redesign, an implementation plan, hiring, training and disseminating program information. Out of 86 fall 2014 enrollments, TRCC reported 41 (48 percent) students enrolled in the spring 2015 semester, but they did not distinguish credit level enrollments. Fourteen students also enrolled in TRCC's winter 2015 term "Jump Ahead" boot camp.

In both models (boot camp and transitional strategies), adult education providers identified their teaching staff and community colleges reviewed and approved them for hire. The state requires adult education teachers to have an Adult Educator's Certification; community college

adjuncts are required to have a master's degree in the content area. Compensation for both is the same. Each partner hires a coordinator to act as a liaison for recruitment, student issues and meetings. Some locations did not have coordinators on board at the start of the fall 2014 classes, but were in place later. The value of coordinators as liaisons for students, providers and instructors is recognized by adult education providers and community college partners, as the liaisons are able to observe and interact on multiple levels.

Colleges were to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding with each adult education provider, based on guidelines from the BoR. Courses were to be co-taught, utilizing adult education instructors and tutors, and community college instructors and tutors. Most programs provided instruction at the adult education sites, while others provided boot camps at the community colleges. Community college faculty taught the First-Year Experience course on-site to acclimate students to the environment.

Identification and referrals of students to the transitional college readiness programs were to be a collaborative effort established by the BoR guidelines. Multiple assessment measures, identified by the BoR, are used to indicate students at or below the eighth grade level in basic math or English skills, requiring remediation before enrolling in credit courses for English or math. Each community college was to identify three measures. For both models, successful completion is a grade of "C" or better.



## Multiple Measures for Student Assessment Fall 2014

- **CLEP (College Level examination Program) & DANTES (Defense Activity for Non Traditional Education Support)** – subject matter tests taken in lieu of classes to earn between 3 – 6 credits
- **ACT (American College Testing) Scores** – Advance Placement Classes for high school students
- **SAT (Scholastic Assessment Testing) Scores** – tests to assess students readiness for college
- **Accuplacer** – suite of tests that determine knowledge in math, reading & writing
- **Accuplacer WritePlacer** – essay portion of Accuplacer
- **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium** - measures progress towards college and career readiness aligned to the Common Core Standards
- **Local Challenge Essay** - This is a sample of each students writing; a one-hour timed essay mandatory for all students who place below English 101 on the Accuplacer Non-Cognitive Skills Questionnaire Assessment of skills that are not cognitive, such as memory, attention, planning, language and thinking skills. Non-cognitive skills include emotional maturity, empathy, interpersonal skills and verbal and non-verbal communication. Non-cognitive skills influence the overall behavior of a person.
- **Student Interview**
- **Local Math Exam**
- **High School Transcript**

**Note:** Institutions have until no later than Fall 2015 to determine which of these agreed upon multiple measures are most appropriate for student placement at the individual institutions.

## ESTABLISHING A PARTNERSHIP

All adult education providers, regardless of start dates, participated in an initial meeting with their participating community colleges in July and August of 2014 to introduce the program and the intended partnership. Due to the short ramp-up time, however, follow-up communication with adult education providers was limited. Adult education providers had to repeatedly contact their partnering community college to request updates on program progress, start times, hiring needs and enrollments, or whether the program was starting on time.

An important component to establishing a partnership is professional development. Professional development is a valuable tool used in higher education to provide program leaders and instructional staff the opportunity to collectively meet and discuss curriculum development, student needs, program goals, objectives and outcome expectations. It is an opportunity to review and discuss resources assigned to the program and to share professional knowledge regarding best practices, professional experiences and potential outside resources.

For a newly launched program such as the transitional college readiness program, professional development establishes a unified goal and the means to attain it, while laying the groundwork to collectively address program improvements and day-to-day issues. This can have an important bearing on successive program planning. Unfortunately, the tight timeline for the fall 2014 rollout meant that professional development was not readily available prior to the start of classes or during the program.

## INSTRUCTIONAL COLLABORATION

The short ramp-up time for the fall 2014 partnership prevented partner collaboration regarding the selection and use of instructional resources. Community colleges did not make

materials available to adult education providers in advance, in an effort to start programs on time. Adult education providers noted that not having instructional materials available before the start of classes caused some planning difficulties for their instructors and students.

## RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT

Recruitment of students for transitional college readiness programs occurred primarily at the community colleges' general enrollment sessions. Only Asnuntuck Community College utilized adult education providers as a resource, contacting more than 40 Enfield Adult Education graduates in two informational sessions.



During recruitment efforts for the transition programs, most community colleges had counselors available to discuss options for students scoring below admission score criteria. The score interpretation for admission varies from school to school and is not transferable among schools. This means that each community college may assign different scores indicating remediation requirements for embedded, intensive and transitional levels. Without a standardized interpretation of placement scores, a student's score at one community college does not necessarily translate into the same placement at another community college. Additionally, non-standard score interpretation among the community colleges prevents comparative measurement on a statewide basis. Assessment and placement practices for all partnerships reflected room for improvement. Although multiple assessment measures are

required, all adult education providers were only aware of the Accuplacer score as a placement indicator. Furthermore, the correlation between Accuplacer score values and student skill deficiency were not available to adult education providers, which affected instructional planning and preparation.

learning and life experiences can negatively impact adult learners as well, requiring greater attention and support than needed by non-developmental students. One adult education provider had three students become homeless during the program, necessitating greater focus on providing services to first secure their well-being, and secondly, help them find a long-term solution to the many other issues caused by their homelessness.



### ***Adult Education Providers Feedback***

The rollout of the fall 2014 Transitions Program followed a pilot period in 2013 that included two community college partnerships: Gateway Community College and New Haven Adult Education, and Manchester Community College and Manchester Adult Education. These two partnerships continued in fall 2014 along with Three Rivers Community College partnering with Norwich Adult Education and New London Adult Education.

### ***Non-academic Barriers***

Non-academic barriers such as class scheduling conflicts, child care, transportation and mental health issues can be important factors that negatively impact students' success in postsecondary education programs. Most of the partnership remediation programs did not offer alternatives to daytime classes or provisions to address childcare and transportation issues, with boot camps and semester-long programs running in the late mornings or afternoons for two- to three-hour sessions.

Providing social service counseling is another critical need for this program. Adult education directors cited the need for social service and mental health counseling to be available on-site for students enrolled in the Transitions Program.<sup>13</sup> The added burdens of job, family and social barriers affect adult students' ability to focus and succeed in postsecondary education opportunities. Prior

This section of the report is devoted to adult education providers' feedback on the fall 2014 rollout regarding participation in program design and implementation and suggestions for improvement in the areas of referrals, enrollment, data collection and student services. The most critical shortcomings for fall 2014 were collectively identified by adult education providers as their lack of involvement from the program's beginnings in determining program models, identifying instructional materials and resources, and providing input regarding non-academic needs for developmental adult students. Adult education providers noted a lack of an effective recruitment effort to adequately provide enrollment numbers at the partnership locations. These are perceptions by adult education providers and are not meant as a reflection on the intent of the partner community colleges.

## ***Non-Involvement in Partnership Program Development***

Adult education directors associated non-inclusion in program development and selection of materials and resources as a disregard for their professional contributions in the area of adult learning and education. Furthermore, they felt their non-inclusion minimized the specialized professionalism adult educators bring to the realm of developmental education. Community colleges have noted that there are a greater number of students assessing into remediation classes; and this is stretching their abilities to provide effective classes. At the same time, community colleges are being financially stretched to try and provide coursework for students who are college ready.

To this end, using adult education providers to fill this void seems a natural connection. As a learning community, the population of remedial learners is in an educational void which is not served by public education either through adult education services, since they have high school diplomas or GEDs, or community colleges due to low academic skills. Adult education providers have a critical role in the advancement of skills and access to postsecondary education for low-skilled adult learners.

Lack of inclusion in material selection and

determination led to difficulties at some locations, as the instructional material provided by the community college was not appropriate for all skill levels. Adult education instructors had to identify and source other instructional materials from their own resources for individual students, delaying instruction. Instructors reported that these students became discouraged because they were unable to use the original material. Whether or not the delay in provision of materials and resources was due to the short ramp-up time, this factor may have contributed to some students leaving the program.

## ***Access to Student Data and Assessments***

Adult education providers repeatedly noted their inability to review student data, such as educational experience, demographics and assessment scores, prior to the start of class, which hampered their work when preparing instructional activities.

Adult remediation classes are made up of a varied group of learners with different characteristics such as educational and work experience, job status, economic level and age. For some learners, previous failed attempts at postsecondary education reinforce pre-conceived ideas about their competency and expectations for future success. Low-income adults with low skill levels and limited prior education present a population unfamiliar

with positive learning experiences, requiring skill remediation, non-academic support services and non-academic preparation for postsecondary education. Dislocated workers who have lost jobs due to closures or position eliminations may require re-training in a new field that exposes skill deficiencies. Adults over 50 may bring unique needs associated with age, such as learning, age-related health conditions and potentially lower mental capabilities. Adults responsible for dependent care may have needs for flexibility in scheduling and



unexpected absences. Not having information on the circumstances that bring students to remedial classes or assessment scores that reflect literacy and numeracy skill levels prevents instructors from effectively matching student needs to instructional resources and materials, and other supports. English language learners bring a dual set of determinations regarding language barriers and literacy levels in their own language. One or both of these determination may require specialized supports and instructional planning.

*Compared to the needs of traditional postsecondary students, adults in remediation classes have a greater desire to visit and scope out the program, their peers, staff, support options and the environment.*

### ***Referrals and Enrollments***

Referrals and enrollments were another area of concern for the adult education providers. According to the fall 2014 Transitional Strategies Report discussed earlier, 884 students enrolled in Transitional Strategies courses or programs at 12 community colleges in fall 2014. As previously noted, the fall 2013 total enrollment at state community colleges was 56,976, of which 12,981, or 23 percent, enrolled in English or math remediation. Using the 2013 remediation enrollment figures as a guidepost, fall 2014 Transitional Program enrollments of 884 represents about 7 percent of students needing remedial classes. Given past data, this seems far too low. Unfortunately, lack of data regarding the correlation of scores to placement and ultimately individual progress, the

non-standardized interpretation of scores, and multiple means to assess skill deficiencies prevent an informed analysis of these numbers.

### ***Suggestions from Adult Educators***

Adult education providers noted that an orientation program for students, instructors and staff from both partners prior to the start of the classes would enhance the program. Compared to the needs of traditional postsecondary students, adults in remediation classes have a greater desire to visit and scope out the program, their peers, staff, support options and the environment. Having an opportunity to meet with students as a class and individually prior to the start of the program would give both instructors and students time to understand and acclimate to the program.

At all interviews, adult education providers noted that as the program progressed, and roles and responsibilities became clearer, day-to-day relationships between adult education coordinators and community college liaisons evolved into positive working relationships. As educators and staff from both partners interacted with each other and developed a better working relationship, the shared focus became apparent. The instructors and faculty who work day-to-day with the program participants recognized their shared commitment to the students enrolled in the developmental programs. They also shared frustration at not being able to meet all students' needs adequately due to budget constraints or lack of planning. The establishment of these relationships reinforces the value of professional development for this initiative.

Adult education providers were in agreement regarding the need for professional development to enhance the collective knowledge base and to help foster the creation and sharing of best practices. For a new program, it is vital to glean as much qualitative data as possible to provide continuous improvement.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While Connecticut's Transitional Strategies Program is new, the following recommendations are intended to provide feedback and guidance to support a sustainable educational initiative. The legislation passed in June 2014 requiring community colleges to partner with adult education services gave fall 2015 as a deadline for implementation. Up until this time, community colleges were to provide a modified Transitional Strategies program or to roll-out in spring 2015. By fall 2015, all community colleges must partner with an adult education provider to offer a Transitional Strategies Program. PA 12-40 was instrumental in raising the awareness of how deep our remediation needs really are.

### *System Recommendations*

Consistent, informative data collection must be an integral part of this program to effectively identify and recommend effective programs to achieve successful enrollment of Transitional Strategies students into college credit courses and support continued funding. To accomplish this, community colleges should collaborate to establish program strategies that are consistent across all colleges. Establishing a correlation between student success and specific program strategies is key to effective enhancements and improvements.

The ability to align strategies to successful outcomes provides a mechanism to introduce results-based accountability to evaluate the program. This requires agreement among the community colleges on assessment and placement strategies, as effective data cannot be collected if varying determinants are used to assess academic skill levels, placement and success. Currently, students enrolled in the adult education partnership Transitional Strategies programs are not tracked in Banner, the student tracking system used by state colleges and universities. Since schools use different numeric coding for CRN (course resource number), they feel this is not feasible. However, without the ability to determine the number of students who enroll,

drop out, successfully complete, or have made progress but need additional instruction, there is no way to measure the success of this initiative. The numbers reflected in this report are from unofficial counts generated by the adult education providers in a narrative to the partnering community college. As a policy recommendation, the BoR could designate a CRN code for the Transitional English and math courses.

This underscores the need, especially for this program, to standardize assessment, placement determination and CRN assignment to be able to accurately capture data on this population. Although the BoR has identified ten assessments, (see *Multiple Measures for Student Assessments*, page 8), each community college continues to use varying measurement tools to determine skill level. As inconsistent measurement tools will not provide valid evaluative data, the BoR should issue recommendations narrowing down the number of assessments in use, establishing common standards and best practices. The use of multiple assessments should be streamlined so that all community colleges place and evaluate students using similar benchmarks.

In addition to the multiple measures identified by the BoR, the Comprehensive Adult Student



Assessment Systems (CASAS) is an effective tool to determine accurate remediation placement. CASAS specifies student skill needs which assists in placement and determination of instructional resources. This assessment tool can determine a



tracked to provide effective and efficient remediation. The fall 2014 Transitional Strategies program roll-out enrolled 884 students with eighth grade skills or less. Recruitment and retention efforts are key to increasing the numbers to be served and, more importantly, moving them successfully into credit-bearing courses based on a career pathway. Not until these programs are fully deployed will the needs of these students be fully met.

student's need for short or long-term remediation, aiding effective remediation placement.

### ***Partner Development***

A dedicated full-time leadership position for the Transitional Strategies Program at each college is important to creating stability within the program. Committed staffing for the program demonstrates permanence and commitment. A full-time leadership position would be able to collaborate with existing community resources to provide non-academic needs without encumbering the budget. Increasing the number of non-academic counselors available to students is another recognized need.

Future program planning should incorporate student needs that are currently not within the purview of this program, such as English Language Learners (ELL). ELL students, who are proficient in their native language, are often erroneously placed in remediation when a language barrier is the issue, not their literacy skills. Additionally, ELL students with both literacy skill deficiencies in their native language as well as a language barrier bring another level of need to the program not currently addressed.

As noted previously, of the students enrolling in fall 2013, 12,981 enrolled in remediation courses, or 23 percent of the total enrollment. This is a significant number that needs to be successfully

Community colleges need to include adult education providers in the determination of resources and materials for instruction and placement, and goals and outcomes for programs, as well as general informative and planning sessions. Adult education providers need to have access to students' placement data, academic history and pertinent information to prepare and plan for the variety of levels and needs of transitional adult learners. Regular meetings of community colleges and adult education partners are important in pre- and post-program periods to determine what worked, and what did not work, and how the partners can improve. Professional development is necessary as a means to identify unexpected issues that require different or additional support and to begin to develop best practices through discussion and sharing.

### ***Non-Academic Barriers***

Community colleges need to allocate funding or resources for childcare and transportation to alleviate barriers for attendance and persistence. Class flexibility, including Saturday and evening classes, needs to address barriers confronting working adults and other non-traditional adult students. Motivational strategies, such as career pathways and contextualized learning, should be highly considered to assist and motivate students

to plan their academic path, while addressing realistic personal goals and barriers.

### ***Best Practices***

Following the recommendations above on improved data collection, the BoR should work to establish a set of best practices following a comprehensive program evaluation and review. The current framework has given community colleges a significant amount of flexibility to implement reforms, bringing forward several innovative program designs. Once implementation is fully underway, the BoR should be proactive sharing results and outcomes, encouraging community colleges to learn from each other and adopt the most successful program models.

### **CONCLUSION**

Fall 2015 is the real benchmark semester Connecticut's community colleges need to prepare for. The fall 2014 Transitional Strategies Program roll out identified real-time issues in the program that were addressed as other partnerships rolled out in spring 2015. With the passage of PA 12-40 and subsequent legislative and administrative changes, Connecticut is making strides in working to ensure that community college students who need remedial education can advance toward a degree or certification. The inclusion of adult education providers as partners with community colleges is an important and necessary step, but it is just a beginning. The size and scope of needs of the remedial education population requires continued commitment, evaluation and implementation of promising practices.

Adult learners who are not eligible to enroll in credit-bearing college courses in English or math often come with a wide range of needs. Some adults require a nudge to bring outdated skills and learning styles up to speed, while others may require one semester or one year. The reform initiative



has opened new strategies to address remedial needs that require dedicated collaboration to be successful. Suggestions in this report are intended to assist in the establishment of a viable program that will grow to meet the remedial needs for this population and expand to provide career pathways and alignment. Bringing together two educational sectors, community colleges and adult education providers, is challenging but necessary. It combines each sector's skills and expertise, which can lead to better outcomes for students and highlights the shared vision of both educational sectors.

The collaboration is just beginning. There are many facets to the transitional college readiness program yet to emerge that will require discussion and cooperation to bring about a sustained progressive remediation program. Community colleges and adult education providers need to focus collectively on the goal of helping students advance beyond remedial education to credit-bearing classes, and to the ultimate goal of educational and economic opportunity for all people in Connecticut.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Higher Education (2008) “Higher Education Counts: Achieving Results” Hartford, CT
- <sup>2</sup> “Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education”, Connecticut Planning Commission for Higher Education, February 2015
- <sup>3</sup> Source: NCES, IPEDS, Fall 2009 Enrollment File; ef2009b Final Release Data File. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.
- <sup>4</sup> Board of Regents report, 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> Data was collected from the community colleges via narratives. Therefore, these were not in a standardized format. There were many variations on what data was reported and how it was interpreted. Some narratives were more expansive on how instruction was set up and delivered, and the design of the program. Lack of standardized and consistent data collection impedes a more accurate interpretation of the results reported.
- <sup>6</sup> Including embedded classes.
- <sup>7</sup> Naugatuck Community College was excluded due to unreliable/incomplete data.
- <sup>8</sup> Fall 2014 Transitional Strategies Report, Revised March 2, 2015.
- <sup>9</sup> Brakoniecki, L., Fitzgerald, K., Pritchard, A. (2015) “An Analysis of Summer and Fall 2013 Developmental Education Pilots in Connecticut Community Colleges” CWEALF. Hartford, CT. Available at <http://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/12-40-eval.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> [www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/12-40-eval.pdf](http://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/12-40-eval.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> ALEKS assesses the student’s current course knowledge by asking a small number of questions (usually 20-30). ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) is a web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system.
- <sup>12</sup> SkillsTutor is a cloud-based, digital, personalized assessment and instruction tool to increase student achievement.
- <sup>13</sup> CWEALF’s analysis noted the need for increased support services for developmental students. Staff who were interviewed noted the lack of counselors specializing in mental health issues available to this student group.





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