



Community College Efforts to Prepare Special Populations for the Workforce:

Older Workers, Dislocated Workers and Students with Disabilities

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Overview of Presentation

Research on Older Workers and Dislocated Workers

- Review of community college approaches to serving older workers*
- National study of community colleges and dislocated workers*

Research on Students with Disabilities

- National study of community colleges and students with disabilities*
- In-depth work with community colleges and universities in New Jersey and case studies of student experiences

**Conducted with support from the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.*

Research on Older Workers and Dislocated Workers

Aging, Disability and Employment

- Older workers – who make up an increasingly significant portion of the workforce – have lower unemployment rates than younger, prime-age adults, but have a more difficult time rejoining the workforce when they do lose a job.
- According to the Pew Center , unemployed older workers (55+) were the most likely of any age group to have been without a job for a year or more.
- The reemployment rate for displaced workers who were ages 55-64 was 39%. For displaced workers 65+, it was 23%. The reemployment rates for younger workers age 20-24 was 55%, and for prime-age displaced workers (25-54) of 53% (BLS 2010).
- As workers age, they are more likely to acquire a disability.

Sources: Pew Charitable Trusts (2012). Five Long-Term Unemployment Questions.

U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *News Release*. Worker Displacement: 2007-2009.

Study of Community Colleges and Older Workers

Motivation:

Older workers tend to participate in education and training at lower rates than younger workers.

Older workers bring potentially unique issues to community colleges.

- help older workers in making appropriate choices in their education and training
- how to offer additional services and supports that address their specific needs

Study of Community Colleges and Older Workers

Methods:

Analysis of the factors associated with the enrollment of older workers at community colleges

Review current community college initiatives targeting older workers

Review community college practices that might particularly benefit older workers, such as those that promote flexibility, improve labor market connections, and provide financial support

Study of Community Colleges and Older Workers

Research Questions:

1. What factors are associated with older students' enrollment at community colleges?
2. What strategies do community colleges use to serve the specific needs of older workers?
3. To what extent is there evidence that these strategies are effective in addressing the needs of older workers?
4. To what extent can these strategies be incorporated into on-going practices at a wide scale within community colleges?

Study of Community Colleges and Older Workers

The proportion of older workers enrolled at a community college is explained by several factors at the state level.

State level:

- ***Economic conditions push older students to community colleges.*** Unemployment rate is associated with older students' enrollment
- ***Competition with other higher education providers matters.*** Where they have a greater market share relative to other higher education providers, they are more likely to enroll a greater proportion of older students.
- ***State policy matters.*** Where state policy prioritizes community colleges in their workforce training funds, community colleges are more likely to enroll a greater proportion of older students.

Study of Community Colleges and Older Workers

The proportion of older workers enrolled at a community college is also explained by the college level context.

College-level:

Workforce programs draw older students. Colleges with a greater emphasis on workforce programs as measured by the percent of graduates in workforce programs versus transfer programs are more likely to enroll a greater proportion of older students.

Community College Initiatives for Older Students

- **AACC Plus 50 Initiative** Plus 50 started in 2008 with 13 colleges, then added 11 more. With support from Lumina, AACC added a completion phase, encouraging students to attain certificates and degrees to enhance their employability. The effort also emphasizes prior learning and experience credit for older students and uses “completion coaches.” In early 2012, AACC announced plans to expand Plus 50 to reach 10,000 additional older students at 100 community colleges who will participate in job training and work to complete degrees or certificates in health care, education or social service occupations.
- **USDOL Aging Worker Initiative (AWI)** 10 pilot areas, several including involvement of community colleges, are experimenting with strategies to improve the public workforce system’s ability to serve older workers. Pilot sites are using dedicated career navigators, offering short-term training for high demand industries, providing computer training and internships, and developing interactive websites.

Study of Community Colleges and Dislocated Workers

Motivation:

Dislocated workers are thought to bring unique needs to community colleges since many are older, have been out of school for a long time and are in need of job transition assistance.

Little research in the current economic environment has been done on the extent to which dislocated workers at community colleges have these specific needs and how community colleges are addressing them.

Study of Community Colleges and Dislocated Workers

Study of Community Colleges and Dislocated Workers

Research Questions:

1. How do dislocated workers come to enroll at community colleges?
2. To what extent do dislocated workers have unique needs compared to other community colleges students? How do community colleges address these needs?
3. How do dislocated workers select programs of study at community colleges? How do community colleges help guide these choices to help dislocated workers gain skills to become reemployed?

Findings will be available later in 2012.

Serving Dislocated Workers: Preliminary Findings

Based on interviews with officials from the 5 case study schools:

- **Outreach:** Colleges are partnering with local workforce investment boards (WIBs) and other community partners to reach out to dislocated workers.
- **Level of education:** Colleges are serving dislocated workers with higher levels of prior education than pre-Recession.
- **Funding innovative programs:** Colleges are increasingly looking to grants to serve the dislocated worker populations in their communities, but are struggling to sustain successful grant-funded programs after the period of the grant; some are turning to private-sector philanthropy to sustain these programs while others try to integrate lessons from the grant into campus programs/practices for the entire college community.

Serving Dislocated Workers: Preliminary Findings

- **Cohorts:** Colleges finding cohort groups provide support that can help dislocated workers succeed, but few cohorts specific to dislocated workers exist.
- **Remedial coursework:** Colleges are reporting that many dislocated workers need remedial coursework, which is both time consuming and expensive. Colleges are looking to contextualized basic skill remediation for dislocated workers and seeing positive results.
- **Lack of computer literacy:** Many dislocated workers need additional assistance working with computers.
- **Stackable certificates:** Colleges are finding that stackable certificates are well suited to the needs of dislocated workers, allowing them to develop new skills, go out into the labor market and practice, and then return for more advanced training

Serving Dislocated Workers: Innovative Examples

- **Central Piedmont Community College Emporium Math Courses** provide a modularized approach to remediation that allows students to improve areas of math they struggle in while avoiding those they have mastered. This customized remediation saves dislocated workers time and money.
- **Macomb Community College's Designers Helping Designers** was launched in January 2010 to return laid-off or unemployed designers to the workplace. Program is operated in collaboration with employer and workforce board partners and has trained over 200 individuals. The 64 hour training program includes non-credit and credit courses (which can be applied to an associate degree) and relies on the knowledge of those working in the field to provide unemployed designers the chance to update and strengthen their skills as well as network with each other.
- **Portland Community College's "Bridge to Healthcare"** is a one-term, non-credit course targeted to career-changers that integrates basic reading, writing, and math with an overview of high-demand health professions. Funding for the "Bridge to Healthcare" program is provided through a USDOL grant entitled Healthcare Oregon Pathways to Employment (HOPE), which is designed to assist Oregonians with getting short-term training in high-demand healthcare occupations.

Serving Dislocated Workers: Preliminary Findings on Academic Advising and Career Counseling

- Front-end advising is critical for dislocated workers, but few colleges have counselors specifically trained to work with this population, or have orientations specifically designed for them.
- Few colleges require students to meet with a counselor or advisor, often due to staffing constraints
- **Lorain County Community College's Adult Transitions Program** assists transitioning adults with up-front career exploration. Those who enroll in the optional program are encouraged to obtain career mentoring and advising upon enrollment and throughout their time in the program.
- **Central Piedmont Community College's ReCareering Center** helps dislocated professionals find new jobs using individualized assessments and competency-based methods. It also provides a support system to dislocated individuals.

Serving Dislocated Workers: Preliminary Findings on Access to Benefits

- **Access to Benefits:** Community colleges are setting aside resources to help students handle personal expenses (bus tickets, eyeglasses, etc.) to help them stay in school. Access to Benefits programs often involve partnerships with community based organizations and workforce boards.
- **Skyline Community College's SparkPoint Center** provides access to workforce training, financial literacy, and a range of comprehensive benefits (food, financial aid, etc.) in partnership with United Way, JVS and the CA Employment Development Department. Based on models developed with support from Annie E. Casey Foundation, the goal is to create a one-stop site for accessing multiple services related to career development, employment, asset building, and public benefits.
- **Macomb Community College's Benefits Access for College Completion** (BACC). BACC involves 6 pilot, led by the CLASP and AACC with funding from Ford, Kresge, Lumina Foundation, Open Society and Annie E. Casey Foundations.

Serving Dislocated Workers: Challenges

- **Communication between credit and non-credit sides of the college.**

Macomb Community College is striving to improve integration and alignment between noncredit and credit programs to create pathways for dislocated workers and other students to move from non-credit to credit more easily.

- **Tracking dislocated workers through the college and after graduation.**

Since 2009, Lorain County Community College and the Employment Network in Lorain Country have been using the **One Flow System**, a case management tracking system that allows the college to track the services dislocated workers and other students have received, what training they have started and where they left off if they did not complete their program. This enables the college to track progress and follow up with dislocated workers if necessary.

Research on Students with Disabilities

Community Colleges and Students with Disabilities

Motivation:

73% of community colleges report that less than 3% of their students have a disability – much lower than the expected incidence in the population.

Unaddressed disabilities may be a problem in students' ability to complete credentials.

To better understand the role of the community college in identifying students with disabilities and providing services for them, we study colleges that are reporting they serve higher numbers of students with disabilities.

Community Colleges and Students with Disabilities

Methods:

Case studies of 20 community colleges that enroll high numbers of students with disabilities (based on 2009 IPEDS data)

Reviews of college websites and interviews with community college staff who work with students with disabilities

Research Questions:

1. How do community colleges screen for disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, and/or encourage students with disabilities to self-report?
2. How do community colleges address disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, among students in their programs to help them progress towards completing credentials?

Findings will be available later in 2012.

Serving Students with Disabilities: Preliminary Findings

Based on interviews with 20 community colleges serving large numbers of students with disabilities:

- **Most common disabilities** : Learning disabilities were reported as the most common disabilities among the students they served. Many disability specialists stated that student's reporting of psychiatric/mental health issues and autism disorders were rising in recent years.
- **Undiagnosed disabilities**: Colleges reported that the students they feel are most likely to have their disability undiagnosed are **older non-traditional students**. Disability specialists believe this may be due to older students not having gone through k-12 system under the ADA law, and are less likely to have had their disability identified correctly. Colleges reported that these students also have the biggest challenge obtaining the necessary documentation to apply for accommodations, as they are more likely to be undiagnosed and struggle to afford assessment tests that can range from \$1,000-2,500.

Serving Students with Disabilities: Preliminary Findings

- **Among those least likely to self-report: Military veterans.**
- After realizing the college was seeing a large number of veteran students who appeared unwilling to use counseling or disability services, **Greenville Technical College** launched the **Wounded Warrior Project**. This program allows vets to receive one-on-one tutoring with tutors who are also trained as professional counselors. They have found veteran students more willing to utilize counseling assistance when combined with tutoring services.

Serving Students with Disabilities: Preliminary Findings

- **Encouraging use of Assisted/Adaptive Technology:** Colleges are encouraging students to use assistive technology when appropriate, with the goal of easing the transition from college to the workforce, where they may be less able to receive personal note taking or reading accommodations .
- **Cuyahoga Community College District Technology Learning Center:** Allows students to work with full-time technology specialists. The Center encourages the use of technology that promotes independence and ability to function on their own after college and into the workforce. If a student comes in and needs a reader, the Center tries to encourage the student to use software that reads for them, versus getting a personalized reader or note taker.

Serving Students with Disabilities: Preliminary Findings

- **Encouraging Strong Partnerships with Faculty:** Colleges reported that strong partnerships with faculty allow faculty to more easily refer and identify students who are struggling, who may have an unreported or undiagnosed disability. These partnerships also provide faculty members with different techniques in assisting students with disabilities.
- **Cuyahoga, Foothill, Fulton Montgomery, Greenville Technical, and Springfield Technical** offer workshops, orientation trainings, and/or “lunch and learns” to educate faculty members on various disability topics.
- **SUNY College of Technology at Canton, Greenville Technical College, Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, and Southwest Wisconsin Technical College** have early identification warning systems that allow faculty members to refer students who are either struggling in class or absent for an extended amount of time. The disability office then receives a daily referral report they use to check-in with those students.

Overview of Heldrich Center Research on Students with Disabilities in New Jersey

- DiscoverAbility NJ – a strategic plan to create a comprehensive employment system for people with disabilities.
- Background on Disability Demographics for College Students
- “Braiding Funding and Intertwining Efforts: How Non Profit, Post Secondary Educational Partnerships Assist Students with Disabilities to Complete Post Secondary Education and Find Employment: A Case Study Approach”
- Business and Post – Secondary Education Summit on Disability Employment (Heldrich Center: November 2011) – Summary of Findings
- Challenges and Opportunities

DiscoverAbility NJ

- DiscoverAbility NJ is New Jersey's comprehensive employment Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funded through a grant from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
- Since 2008, DiscoverAbility NJ has actively worked to support the goals surrounding increased job and career opportunities for people with disabilities in New Jersey.
- The DiscoverAbility project's focus on how students with disabilities navigate education and entry into the job market is part of the Heldrich Center's continuing contribution to research and data about the employment of people with disabilities.

Disability Statistics – United States 2011

- **36 million people (12%) in the USA have a disability**
Of these:
 - **5.6% are between 18-34 years of age**
 - **12.7 % are between 35-64 years of age**

Source: US Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>.

- **2.3 million undergraduates with disabilities in the USA. Of these:**
 - **54% are between 15-23 years of age**
 - **20.1 % are between 24-29 years of age**
 - **25.9 % are 30 years of age and older**
 - **47.2 % attend 2-year colleges**

Source: US Dept. of Education NCES Post secondary Student Aid Study, 2008.

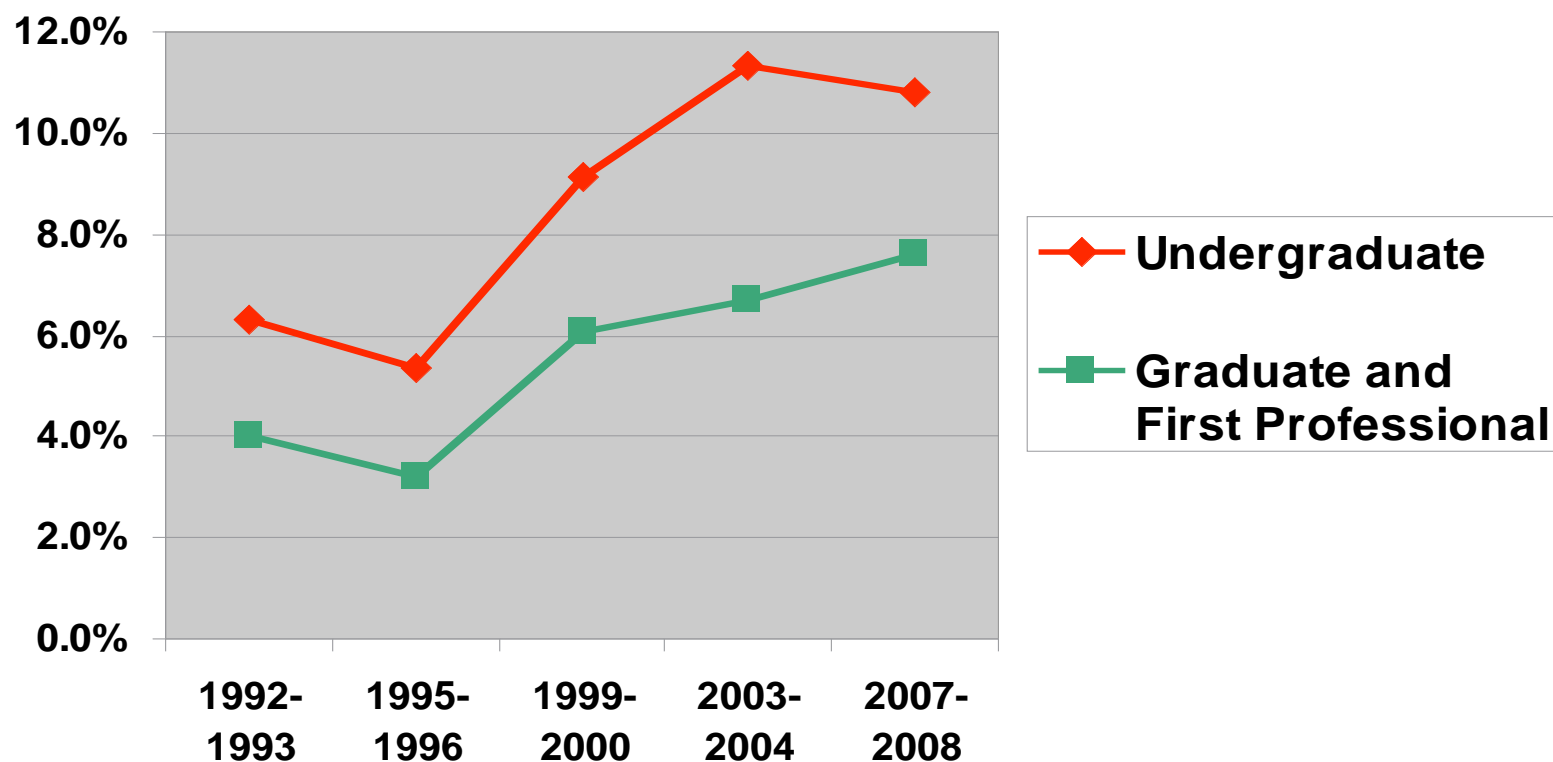
Students with Disabilities at Community Colleges:

- “Top five disability categories at community colleges: learning disabilities, emotional or psychiatric conditions, orthopedic or mobility impairments, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and health impairments.”

Barnett, Lynn and Dendron, Carol . Enriched and Inspired: Service Pathways to College Success (A report from Project Reach: Service Inclusion for Students with Disabilities) American Association of Community Colleges (2009).

“National data trends show that the reporting of learning disabilities grew significantly in the 1990s.”

Percent of Disabled Students Enrolled in Postsecondary Institutions



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study

Students with Disabilities at College

- According to the US Department of Education in 2011, “About one-third (37 percent) of institutions reported working, either formally or informally, with the state vocational rehabilitation agency regarding students with disabilities to a minor extent. An additional 26 percent reported working with the state vocational rehabilitation agency to a moderate extent.”

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

“Braiding Funding and Intertwining Efforts: How Non Profit, Post Secondary Educational Partnerships Assist Students with Disabilities to Complete Post Secondary Education and Find Employment: A Case Study Approach”

- To date, there has been sparse research and information on which factors contribute to the success of students with disabilities in completing post secondary education and locating employment. This project is exploratory and its purpose is to highlight promising practices at post secondary institutions that educate students with disabilities as well as to identify hypotheses for future research.
- The methodology for this study uses a retrospective “look back” at students who have successfully completed an associates or bachelors degree or a career certificate and involves interviews with graduated student exiters, site visits with colleges/universities and cross-site learning meetings, development of financial and service case studies of individual participants and the development of operational case studies of colleges and the services offered to students with disabilities.

College Student Exiter Study

- Five colleges in New Jersey were selected to participate: (Rutgers University, New Jersey City University, Raritan Valley College, Burlington County Community College & Mercer County Community College.)
- A major focus of the study is the examination of how the braiding of different resources and funding streams sustain efforts in assisting post secondary students with disabilities in developing a career map/plan that will lead to employment.
- Each college/university will be surveyed to determine the packaging of different resources and funding streams to sustain efforts to assist students with disabilities in developing a career map/plan that will lead to gainful employment.

College Student Exiter Study

- Data is being collected on resources needed to fund the following program elements: case management services; pre-college training; remedial coursework; financial aid; motivational support; mental health services; campus services such as offices of disability and/or career services; social services/entitlement programs and emergency supports.
- Student Exiters with disabilities are being interviewed to better understand their attitudes about their college experience.
- The results of the study will be published as part of a white paper series with the Heldrich Center on Workforce Development and the Kessler Foundation to be published in late 2012.

Initial Impressions from Conversations with Students:

- The students that have successfully completed their education share a determination and persistence that is very strong.
- Each of the students interviewed shared how the support they received on campus and from mentors outside of school was a key factor which contributed to their persistence and success.
- Students felt that faculty for the most part graciously made accommodations, but that it would be helpful for faculty to understand more about how a disability impacts an individual in the classroom.

Business and Post Secondary Education Summit on Disability Employment – November 2012 at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Employment at Rutgers University.

Background:

Office of Disability and Career Office professionals were invited from all the post secondary schools, along with other stakeholders in New Jersey to participate in a dialogue with professionals from four high growth industries: Technology, Health Science, Hospitality Management and Finance.

Focus Groups' Recommendations:

- Self-advocacy skills are key for people with disabilities to develop before they graduate.
- It is important that the person with a disability understand his/her skills and abilities as well as their need for accommodation.
- Matching the abilities and interests of the person with a career choice is as critical to success as is persistence.
- A better understanding of accommodations by industry could reduce the barrier to hiring people with disabilities.
- Networking with external organizations is essential to not only learn about job opportunities, but to also learn how technological adaptations work in various job settings.
- Partnerships between colleges and other organizations (i.e. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and other community service providers) are important to get ideas and financial support for technological innovations.

Focus Group Recommendations (continued)

- There is a need to build appropriate expectations for persons with disabilities and their families regarding career development. There was concern that some career paths might be overlooked.
- Professional related training and educational requirements to work in the healthcare industry is as diverse as the employment opportunities available in this field.
- Some of the health related professions such as Technicians, Dental and Medical Assistants do not require a 4-year degree and may be a good job fit for nontraditional students.
- The hospitality management industry needs soft skills. “Hard skills” can be taught, but “you can’t teach caring”. Employers can train workers in customer service skills, serve safe certifications & security.
- Exposure to an industry while in college, using “training sites” to practice skills in setting, career days, job shadowing, internships and job sampling were all recommended.

The Challenge Facing Community Colleges:

- “Approximately 45% of undergraduates with disabilities are enrolled at public two-year institutions, according to National Postsecondary Student Aid Study data (NCES, 2008)”
- “The American Association of Community Colleges conducted a national survey in 1996... that found that only half of the community college students who reported having a disability used disability support services (Barnett 1996)”

Employment Issues & Some Ideas

- Youth Employment Rate for Ages 20 to 24: With a Disability 31.4%; No Disability 61.0%

Current Population Survey (CPS), U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (March 2011)

- “Postsecondary students with disabilities must know the nature of true perseverance if they are to enter the job market successfully and benefit from a strong start to their careers.”

Nicholas, Robert, Kauder, Ronnie, Krepcio, Kathy, Baker, Daniel. *Ready and Able: Addressing Labor Market Needs and Building Productive Careers for People with Disabilities through Collaborative Approaches.*

- “Work-based learning and mentoring experiences are critical to helping students with disabilities explore different accommodations, as well as provide opportunities to practice disclosing their disabilities and requesting accommodations from employers.”
- “People with disabilities at every educational level cope with preconceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes among employers, managers and co-workers.”

Nicholas, Robert, Kauder, Ronnie, Krepcio, Kathy, Baker, Daniel. *“Ready and Able: Addressing Labor Market Needs and Building Productive Careers for People with Disabilities through Collaborative Approaches.”*

Questions and Discussion

- **What has been your experience with older workers, dislocated workers, and students with disabilities on your campus?**
 - **Promising Practices?**
 - **Challenges?**
 - **Suggestions?**
- **Other questions, comments?**

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