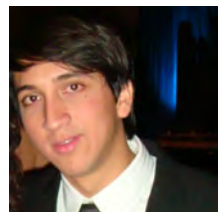
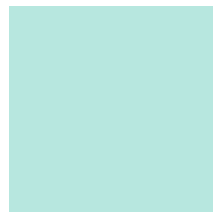
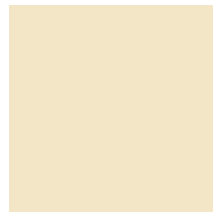
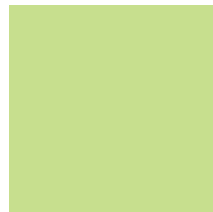


# Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community College Strategies for Success



# The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education

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The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) is a national network of 23 community colleges and other professional and research organizations that have joined forces to increase educational and workforce opportunities for immigrant students. CCCIE's mission is to 1) increase national awareness of the role of community colleges in immigrant education and 2) support the work of community colleges to strengthen and expand services for immigrant students including English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, college readiness, college completion, career readiness, and employment and advancement. We believe that ensuring educational access and success for immigrants and children of immigrants is critical to increasing U.S. college completion and workforce readiness.

National in scope, CCCIE receives financial support from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and is supported and hosted by Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York. CCCIE's work is guided by a Blue Ribbon Panel of community college leaders and experts in the field of immigrant education. Our key activities include: raising national visibility of immigrant education challenges and opportunities, sharing promising practices, and providing advocacy and outreach on critical education and career issues that impact immigrants at all skill levels.

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## Contact us!

CCCIE is eager to expand its membership and share resources to strengthen and expand programs for immigrant students. We invite your comments and feedback to this report and encourage you to join our mailing list, connect with an expert, share your resources, or submit a promising practice for review. Visit our website at [www.cccie.org](http://www.cccie.org) or contact us directly at [info@cccie.org](mailto:info@cccie.org). We can connect you with the people and programs that can help start or advance a community college initiative to increase opportunities for immigrant students.

## 2011-2012 Blue Ribbon Panel Members

Alamo Community College District, TX  
American Association of Community Colleges, D.C.  
Bluegrass Community and Technical College, KY  
Bunker Hill Community College, MA  
City College of San Francisco, CA  
City University of New York  
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Community  
Colleges, NY  
Johnson County Community College, KS  
LaGuardia Community College, NY  
Literacywork International, NM  
Miami Dade College, FL  
Migration Policy Institute, D.C.  
Montgomery College, MD  
National Community College Hispanic Council, CA  
Northern Virginia Community College, VA  
Palm Beach State College, FL  
Pima Community College, AZ  
Queensborough Community College, NY  
Rio Hondo College, CA  
South Texas College, TX  
Washington State Board for Community and  
Technical Colleges, WA  
Westchester Community College, NY  
Wilbur Wright College, IL  
World Education Services, NY

Download the report at  
[www.cccie.org](http://www.cccie.org)

# **Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students:** Community College Strategies for Success

by Jill Casner-Lotto  
Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education

November 2011

# Acknowledgments

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The author wishes to extend special thanks to the two BRP members, Heide Spruck Wrigley and Anson Green, who served as reviewers for this report. Their insights, expertise, and constructive comments during the research and writing phases have been especially valuable in shaping the report's findings. Special thanks are also due to copyeditor Colleen B. Litof, designer Janice Weiss, and CCCIE's Roberta Robinson who provided helpful feedback on the report draft. Finally, the author wishes to express her gratitude to Teresita B. Wisell for her guidance and contributions, both to this report and to CCCIE's important work to strengthen community colleges' role in increasing educational and career opportunities for immigrant students.

The findings and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education and do not necessarily reflect the views of the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

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# Executive Summary

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Community colleges serve as critical gateways for educating and training America's growing and increasingly diverse immigrant and refugee population. They provide an ideal venue for educating immigrants by offering English language instruction, academic and vocational programs, job skills training, civics education, and a range of academic, employment, and social support services. Providing access to higher education for immigrants is crucial not only for their personal success, but for the economic and cultural vibrancy of local communities and the country as well.

Yet many colleges today struggle to provide and sustain programs that effectively meet the needs of immigrants. This report examines the innovative strategies and promising practices of community colleges belonging to the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE). This national network of 23 colleges, professional groups, and research organizations is committed to increasing opportunities for immigrant students, and expanding immigrant education and training programs among community colleges across the country.

The report describes a Framework for Supporting Immigrant Student Success that identifies 11 key factors contributing to the innovative practices of CCCIE colleges. It also includes case study examples drawn from their experiences. The examples illustrate that CCCIE colleges are moving beyond isolated pilot projects to adopt a strategic systems approach that: successfully aligns immigrant education initiatives with other programs and departments, makes improvements at all organizational levels, and coordinates resources to serve immigrant students. While no one college is doing this perfectly, CCCIE colleges are committed to continuously improve their programs and initiatives.

The promising practices described in this report demonstrate how colleges are developing programs that align with the specific needs of their communities. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to the design of innovative immigrant education and training programs. But there are valuable lessons to be learned as colleges overcome challenges and open opportunities for significant change in the lives and economic prospects of immigrants and refugees.

## Supporting Immigrant Students: A Critical National Imperative

As the population ages and millions of baby boomers retire, immigrants and their children will account for much of the U.S. population and labor force growth over the next few decades. According to one estimate, immigrants and their children are expected to account for all workforce growth over the next 20 years. By 2030, nearly one in five U.S. workers will be an immigrant.<sup>1</sup> Ensuring educational access and success for the immigrant population is critical to increasing U.S. college completion, improving workforce readiness, and sustaining the nation's productivity in a highly competitive global economy. The immigrant population represents enormous potential, but significant challenges lie ahead to ensure that the potential is properly developed. Community colleges are well positioned to be critical change agents in this development.

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Note: This report focuses primarily on "immigrant students" who left their country and intend to settle permanently in the United States, as opposed to "international students" who attend college with a student visa and intend to return to their country of origin. The term "immigrant" also includes refugees and those seeking asylum.

## Challenges for Immigrant Students

In several ways, immigrant students share similar characteristics and face the same struggles as other community college students. Many are older nontraditional students who attend college part-time while juggling jobs and families. They often come from low-income backgrounds, experience turbulence in their lives, and have a difficult time marshaling the financial resources to pay college fees and tuition. Immigrant students also face unique challenges and needs as they learn a new language, navigate unfamiliar community college systems and community services, and acclimate to a totally new culture—all at the same time. Consider the following:

- Immigrant students who arrive in this country with low levels of education must acquire language and literacy skills (in English and, in some cases, in their native language) and fill gaps in academic knowledge. Many fail to progress through the necessary English as a Second Language (ESL) levels before reaching college-level programs. Those who progress through a series of ESL classes tend to lag in their reading comprehension, a gap largely resulting from limited vocabulary.
- In addition to navigating the community college system, immigrant students are tackling numerous tasks to get settled in a new country: finding housing and understanding rental agreements, enrolling their children in school, applying for a driver's license (if they have a car), locating medical care, getting legal help, navigating social services, or applying for jobs.
- Immigrant students growing up in linguistically isolated neighborhoods and speaking a language other than English at home may be behind their English-speaking peers. While bilingualism can be a benefit in many ways, the students' lack of exposure to both everyday English and academic discourse can create a disadvantage. This applies to both U.S.-born immigrants (Generation 1.5\*) and foreign-born students.
- Late entry, nontraditional immigrant students who come to community colleges from the adult education system (or from adult basic education/ESL programs within the college) are typically unprepared for the vocational training and academic rigor of community colleges and lack the skills of their English-speaking peers.
- Undocumented students\*\* who may have gone through high school unaware of their status, may be too afraid to identify themselves and unlikely to access community college systems. Financial aid is often the biggest barrier, since undocumented students are not eligible for Pell Grants. However, they may be eligible for private scholarships and state aid in some states, but are often unaware of available resources.
- Internationally educated, high-skilled immigrants may lack the level of English language proficiency to reenter careers in this country and face complex re-credentialing processes. They also lack the cultural knowledge about the professional world in the U.S. and may not know how to navigate professional networks. Despite their education and training, many remain unemployed or significantly underemployed.<sup>2</sup>

## Challenges for Community Colleges

Community colleges are well positioned to serve an increasingly diverse immigrant population, but they face significant challenges, including supporting and sustaining immigrant education programs with limited funds. Colleges must find ways to improve the learning gains of students entering noncredit ESL instruction and accelerate their transition to college-level programs. While a promising alternative to the traditional sequential approach is contextualized ESL instruction that assures both English language proficiency *and* preparation for

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\* Generation 1.5 students most often include those who were born in this country but have grown up speaking a language other than English at home and in their communities. They share characteristics of both first and second generation immigrants but may not fall into traditional categories of ESL students.

\*\* Several states have passed laws that provide undocumented youth access to a public college or university, including eligibility for in-state tuition.



college-level work or career training, the contextualized model is not easy or inexpensive to implement. The increased academic rigor of contextualized ESL often requires comprehensive support services to help students keep on track, and a high degree of coordination among various college departments and outside community partners is needed to make this work.

Other critical issues include: expanding ESL classroom capacity to meet demand, which, in turn, increases the need for more well-qualified ESL instructors; scheduling classes that can accommodate students' work schedules and family responsibilities; and providing differentiated ESL curricula and career pathways to accommodate the various English proficiency and educational levels of immigrant students. More comprehensive assessment procedures that reflect immigrant students' unique needs and strengths are a key prerequisite to developing more targeted curricula and student support.

Community colleges working alone cannot provide the comprehensive menu of services that immigrant students require to succeed in college. The colleges profiled in this report have found ways to support their initiatives often through a mix of private and public sector funds and by effectively leveraging resources through multi-sector partnerships. Multi-sector partnerships are critical to the success and sustainability of immigrant education and training initiatives.

The following framework is intended as a guide to help community colleges develop a strategy for launching and expanding innovative immigrant education practices.

## A Framework for Supporting Immigrant Student Success: 11 Key Factors

1. **Executive-level commitment and follow-through.** Community college leaders demonstrate their commitment by articulating a clear vision and strategy for serving immigrant students and by developing resources to turn the vision into reality. Programs are strengthened by linking immigrant education program goals to the overall college mission and strategic plan, building the organizational capacity for innovation, and facilitating the cross-departmental collaborations and community partnerships needed to successfully implement strategies at the ground level.
2. **Proactive outreach and a welcoming campus environment.** Proactive outreach leads to increased access and success for immigrant students. Community colleges reach out to public school systems, community agencies, and local businesses to teach staff, potential students, and parents about resources available to immigrants, and to help them use these services. Proactive outreach is particularly critical in the case of undocumented students who often lack access to available resources. Colleges are providing scholarship funds, connecting students with legal and financial resources, and working with student groups that actively support the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act.
3. **A community-wide needs analysis.** Understanding the changes in local demographics is critical to ensuring that college services align with the community's needs. The innovative programs that serve immigrant students are often preceded by a community needs analysis that captures labor market information, demographics, and specific immigration trends. This information allows the community college to respond through effective program design, curriculum development, and outreach.
4. **The redesign of ESL programs.** Colleges are rethinking and redesigning how and where ESL is taught. They are increasing the flexibility of class schedules and location, the alignment of noncredit and credit coursework, and the use of technology/multimedia-based programs. The traditional paths and delivery of ESL instruction are restructured to include a contextualized or content-based approach that accelerates the transition to a college degree or certificate program, vocational training, and careers, and offers a continuum of support services. Leading-edge colleges are designing more targeted and differentiated ESL programs and career pathways to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous immigrant student

body. The redesign of ESL programs transforms the way colleges operate because it is breaking down “ESL silos” and encouraging greater collaboration among ESL, academic, workforce development, and student services departments.

5. **Comprehensive and culturally sensitive assessment of immigrant student needs.** Assessment plays a pivotal role in immigrant education programs. When done well, it enables colleges to develop more effective and tailored responses. Traditional assessment processes, which rely heavily on standardized testing for class placement, have worked poorly for immigrant students. As an alternative, colleges are implementing more comprehensive assessment measures that use diverse approaches to measure proficiency, address cultural differences, and capture the full picture of immigrant students’ unique needs and strengths.
6. **A holistic, integrated approach to student support services.** Support services for immigrant students deploy an integrated approach that serves the “whole student,” in recognition of the academic and non-academic support services that often exceed customary assistance and counseling. Colleges are providing an integrated approach to immigrant student services through such ways as building ambassador-type relationships in the community, increasing coordination and centralization of services, and developing multi-sector partnerships that provide a continuum of support services.
7. **Focus on immigrant education outcomes, evaluation, and sharing data.** Colleges are increasingly collecting data on key variables that measure immigrant student progress in conjunction with student intent, and are using data to improve immigrant education programs and services. The programs are monitoring students’ educational and employment gains, and are showing quantitative improvements in enrollments, class performance, and certificate and/or degree completion. While employment outcomes are more difficult to track, some programs report increased job placements, promotions, and earnings. Colleges that forge strong partnerships between their ESL programs and institutional research departments, and that affiliate with third-party evaluators and national college completion initiatives, are making gains.
8. **ESL faculty professional development and participation in curriculum design.** Community colleges are adopting various strategies to increase the supply of qualified ESL instructors and improve their opportunities for professional development, such as training high-quality ESL instructors to meet the demand, encouraging faculty to help design ESL curricula, and developing teamwork among ESL, basic skills, academic and vocational skills faculty, and student services staff.
9. **Development of immigrant student leadership skills.** Community colleges that intentionally provide resources and involve immigrant students in campus life build leadership and advocacy skills and help students to become motivated, active partners in learning. A diverse immigrant student body enhances both classroom and extracurricular life for all students. Colleges help students develop leadership skills through their support for advocacy efforts, student government initiatives, and student clubs that promote immigrant integration. Colleges also provide opportunities for immigrant students to help each other, and the communities in which they live, through peer-to-peer mentoring, learning communities, and service learning.
10. **Meaningful, multi-sector partnerships.** Community colleges have developed diverse partnerships with various stakeholders including K-12 schools, four-year colleges, adult education systems, community- and faith-based organizations, employers, and workforce investment boards. The most successful community college partnerships serving immigrant students share several characteristics including an emphasis on: regular, face-to-face communications to build relationships and trust among staff members; effective management and leveraging of each partner’s resources and strengths; and a willingness of community colleges to entertain new ideas for serving immigrant students—even when those ideas come from outside academic circles.

11. **Emphasis on program replication and bringing best models to scale.** The CCCIE Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP) is committed to sharing promising practices and scaling up the best ESL and immigrant education models at their own campuses and at other colleges. Among the steps they are taking: sponsoring peer learning communities, offering faculty “train the trainer” workshops, and providing technical assistance to other community colleges and community groups. Several BRP members and their partner organizations also participate in national initiatives designed to strengthen and replicate programs for underserved community college students and low-wage workers—many of whom are immigrants.

## Recommendations for Action

We urge community college leaders and practitioners to use this report and the framework to start conversations and take action with key decision makers and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities represented by the growing immigrant population. Promoting initiatives to strengthen and expand immigrant education programs contributes to local, regional, and national economic growth. Colleges can benefit by reflecting upon and assessing how their own programs and services compare with each of the 11 key success factors described in the framework.

Recommendations for action for community colleges are offered in four broad categories:

- Developing an immigrant education strategy
- Building a community of supporters
- Redesigning ESL instruction and career pathways
- Empowering immigrant students as leaders

Policymakers and funders can play a valuable role in helping community colleges adopt strategies that better serve immigrants at all skill levels. Policies and resources that support workforce and education efforts for immigrants support critical national goals to improve economic growth, educational attainment, and college completion.

Recommendations for policymakers in the following key areas include:

- Reauthorizing and improving the alignment of the Workforce Investment Act Title I (workforce training) and Title II (adult education and literacy) to encourage integrated ESL, job training, and career pathways for all immigrants
- Revising financial aid policy to allow support for noncredit ESL
- Providing access to college and financial aid for all students
- Improving the quality of national demographic data collected on immigrant students
- Increasing government collaboration to improve programs and services for immigrant students

Areas for public and private investment include:

- Supporting community colleges’ outreach initiatives to increase educational accessibility for immigrant families
- Funding public awareness campaigns to inform community members about the contributions of immigrants and the role of community colleges in educating immigrants
- Supporting high quality research to expand the field of immigrant education and training
- Increasing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and collaborative research among community colleges and partner organizations

# The Framework in Action: At a Glance

Key Success Factor	Promising Practices
1. Executive-level commitment & follow-through	<p><i>Northern Virginia Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategic Vision 2015</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Westchester Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gateway Center</li> <li>• Home to Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education</li> </ul> <p><i>Bunker Hill Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Plans</li> </ul>
2. Proactive outreach & welcoming environment	<p><i>Palm Beach State College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kathryn W. Davis Global Education Center</li> </ul> <p><i>Rio Hondo College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus “safe zones” provide access for undocumented students</li> <li>• College-wide initiative builds community coalitions and increases scholarship opportunities</li> </ul>
3. Community-wide needs analysis	<p><i>Alamo Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Westside Education &amp; Training Center</li> </ul> <p><i>Wilbur Wright College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carreras en Salud (Careers in Health)</li> </ul>
<p>4. Redesign of ESL programs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve college readiness &amp; completion among incoming high school immigrant students</li> <li>• Accelerate college completion &amp; career readiness of less skilled, nontraditional adult immigrants</li> <li>• Improve employability and integration of refugees &amp; asylees</li> <li>• Support career reentry of internationally educated, high-skilled immigrant professionals</li> <li>• Prepare adult immigrants for U.S. citizenship &amp; civic participation</li> </ul>	<p><i>South Texas College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve Early College High School</li> </ul> <p><i>Northern Virginia Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathway to the Baccalaureate</li> </ul> <p><i>Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training)</li> </ul> <p><i>Alamo Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career EASE (Exploratory and Skills Enhancement)</li> </ul> <p><i>Montgomery College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult ESOL &amp; Literacy: Career Connections</li> </ul> <p><i>South Texas College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerated Career Pathways</li> </ul> <p><i>Miami Dade College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REVEST (Refugee/Entrant Vocational Educational Services Training)</li> </ul> <p><i>Pima Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee Education Project</li> </ul> <p><i>LaGuardia Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The New York City Welcome Back Center</li> </ul> <p><i>Westchester Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development Center</li> </ul> <p><i>Northern Virginia Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steps to Success partnership with Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) Training Futures</li> </ul> <p><i>City College of San Francisco</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders)</li> </ul>
5. Comprehensive & culturally sensitive assessment	<p><i>Alamo Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workbased English Solutions</li> </ul>

6. Holistic, integrated student support services	<p><i>Johnson County Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Links</li> </ul> <p><i>Bunker Hill Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Institute</li> </ul> <p><i>Palm Beach State College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Davis Global Education Center: Key-Partner Network</li> </ul>
7. Outcomes, evaluation & sharing data	<p><i>Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I-BEST students more likely to earn college credits, occupational certificates, and achieve point gains on CASAS test than control groups</li> </ul> <p><i>Miami Dade College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional Research department shares key performance data on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program, conducts student focus groups, provides evaluative feedback on special projects</li> </ul> <p><i>Johnson County Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving the Dream, Inc. collaboration helps International &amp; Immigrant Student Services to measure and achieve high levels of student and community group satisfaction with its outreach services</li> </ul> <p><i>Wilbur Wright College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carreras en Salud outcomes include high graduation, licensing, and placement rates among RN, LPN, and CNA graduates; and significant wage gains among LPNs</li> </ul> <p><i>Northern Virginia Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NOVA-NVFS Steps to Success-Training Futures outcomes include high graduation and job placement rates; and increased earnings, degree or certificate completion, and promotions among graduates</li> </ul>
8. ESL faculty professional development & participation	<p><i>Westchester Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Certificate Program</li> </ul> <p><i>Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I-BEST—Ongoing technical assistance helps basic and vocational skills faculty teams design, plan, and deliver instruction; collaboration with Student Services staff</li> </ul> <p><i>Miami Dade College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honors Bridge—ESL faculty, Honors Program faculty, and Service Learning staff work as a team in all phases</li> </ul>
9. Development of immigrant student leadership skills	<p><i>City College of San Francisco</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project SHINE student coaches and leaders</li> </ul> <p><i>Bunker Hill Community College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Ambassadors</li> </ul> <p><i>Rio Hondo College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students Without Borders</li> </ul>
10. Meaningful, multi-sector partnerships	<p><i>Alamo Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PATH (Postsecondary Awareness: Transition to Higher Education), a partnership of Alamo Colleges, San Antonio literacy agencies, ABE-provider school districts, and local Workforce Investment Board</li> <li>• Workbased English Solutions engages employers and local Workforce Investment Board</li> </ul> <p><i>Wilbur Wright College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carreras en Salud, a collaboration of Wright College’s Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Association House of Chicago, and the National Council of La Raza</li> </ul>
11. Program replication & bringing best models to scale	<p><i>Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I-BEST—Peer learning opportunities, Accelerated Opportunity initiative</li> </ul> <p><i>Miami Dade College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project ACE (Accelerated Content-Based English)—Curriculum Writers workshop, Completion by Design initiative, research and presentations</li> </ul> <p><i>Alamo Colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workbased English Solutions—Professional training and technical assistance to all five Alamo Colleges and other Texas community colleges, replication of I-Best and VESL models</li> </ul> <p><i>Wilbur Wright College</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replication of Carreras en Salud pathways model in manufacturing and Medical Assistant Program</li> </ul>



# Introduction

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A young student from Ecuador, who didn't speak a word of English when he first arrived in this country, is able to enroll in an accelerated community college program that provides flexibility, academic preparation, and the pathway to a four-year university where he now majors in mechanical engineering with a full scholarship. Political refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and other countries, are equipped with intensive workplace English skills, vocational training, and job search assistance from community colleges that help them launch new careers with area employers. And a doctor from Mexico gets technical training to enter the health care field as he continues to build his English skills, get his foreign credentials evaluated, and work towards attaining his physician's residency in the U.S.

For thousands of immigrants, community colleges across the nation serve as critical gateways to English language acquisition, postsecondary education, and workforce training. Providing access to higher education and training is crucial, not only to ensure immigrants' personal success, but to promote economic and social vibrancy and increase growth locally, regionally, and nationally. New Americans' educational needs represent a vast opportunity for community colleges. Yet many community colleges today struggle to provide—and sustain—effective programs that meet the language, academic, and career needs of an increasingly diverse and fast growing immigrant and refugee population. A growing number of pioneering colleges, however, have managed to transcend isolated pilot projects and adopt a strategic approach that successfully coordinates and channels resources to serve immigrants.

This report examines several innovative strategies implemented by colleges belonging to the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE), a national network of 23 community colleges, professional groups, and research organizations that share a common mission: to expand and strengthen programs and services for immigrant students at community colleges nationwide. These colleges are redesigning their systems and their approaches to community partnerships to support immigrants, and to improve educational and employment outcomes.

While CCCIE member colleges are making significant inroads, there have been few opportunities to share the most promising practices...and discuss the most difficult challenges. This report describes a Framework for Supporting Immigrant Student Success, which identifies the key factors that contribute to the innovations and promising practices at CCCIE colleges. It also provides case study examples drawn from their experience. The report is not intended as a comprehensive review of the many varied immigrant education and training programs at each of these community colleges. Rather, it provides a snapshot view of some of their most promising practices and identifies the common elements of success. The intent is to help educators, policymakers, and funders learn about innovative and replicable approaches to immigrant education and workforce training at the community college level.

The information for this report was obtained from interviews and materials provided by the Blue Ribbon Panel representatives of the CCCIE colleges and other member organizations. While the colleges demonstrate many or most of these key factors, no one college is doing this perfectly. The term we use to describe their efforts, "promising practices," is deliberate. The practices are evolving works in progress, and CCCIE colleges are committed to continuously improving their programs and initiatives. In many cases, the key factors overlap and support one another. For example, comprehensive assessment could be discussed in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) redesign and integrated student support services. But because assessment is fundamental in determining immigrant students' success, it merits its own discussion.

The framework in action illustrates that a strategic approach to immigrant education necessitates improvements at all organizational levels and in various departments of the colleges. Developing and sustaining these programs has not been easy, particularly in the midst of significant community college, state, and federal funding cutbacks. The colleges profiled here, however, have found ways to support their initiatives—often through a mix of college, foundation, and government funding sources. Community colleges cannot do this alone. Their ability to find new resources—and effectively leverage them through multi-sector partnerships—is highlighted as one of the key factors contributing to programs’ success and sustainability. At a time when immigration remains a controversial issue throughout the nation, it can be challenging to build support for community college initiatives that specifically address the needs of immigrant students. Yet college leaders note that these challenges are appeased as significant outcomes emerge and individual success stories of student accomplishments are shared throughout the college community. In addition, several of the practices that benefit immigrant students are the same as those that benefit the general student population.

## Supporting Immigrant Students: A Critical National Imperative

Immigrants accounted for nearly half the growth of the American workforce between 1996 and 2000<sup>3</sup>. And projections indicate that new immigrants and their children will account for all of the growth in the U.S. labor force over the next 20 years, as baby boomers retire and the population ages. By 2030, nearly one in five U.S. workers will be an immigrant.<sup>4</sup> Ensuring higher educational access and success for immigrants and their children is critical to increasing national college completion rates and workforce readiness—key factors enabling the United States to compete in the global economy and sustain economic growth. The nation’s immigrant population represents tremendous potential. But significant challenges lie ahead to ensure that the potential is properly developed.

The increase in the immigrant population has led to the emergence of a generally underserved population of English language learners (ELLs) in the nation’s K-12 public school systems. ELLs are the fastest growing student population in the country.<sup>5</sup> While a highly diverse group in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, educational background, and socioeconomic strata, ELLs as a whole are economically and educationally disadvantaged compared to their English-speaking counterparts: they are more likely to live in a low-income household and less likely to have a parent with a two-year or four-year college degree.<sup>6</sup> Incoming high school immigrant students from under-resourced schools in low-income communities often lack the academic skills needed to successfully transition to college-level work.

As the economy struggles to recover and jobs slowly return, many immigrants will find themselves ill-equipped to fill the jobs that will be in greatest demand in coming years. Researchers from Georgetown University note that by 2018, almost two-thirds of all jobs will require at least some postsecondary education.<sup>7</sup> In stark contrast, many adult immigrants have limited English proficiency, and many also are poorly educated. In 2005-2007, there were 10.3 million Limited English Proficient (LEP)\* adults age 16 and over with less than a high school education.<sup>8</sup> Most ESL students at the lower levels of English proficiency lack a high school diploma.<sup>9</sup> Many fail to progress through the necessary ESL levels before reaching college-level programs. Adult immigrants with limited education and English skills often face poor labor market prospects and numerous hurdles in accessing U.S. educational systems.

Yet, many immigrants are highly educated, with about one in three possessing either a U.S. or foreign college degree. In fact, the educational levels of immigrants fall at two extremes: While a much larger share of immigrants (28%) than U.S. natives (7%) had less than a high school education in 2007, the percentages of college graduates among immigrants (30%) and natives (33%) were similar.<sup>10</sup>

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\*The term Limited English Proficient (LEP), as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to individuals who report speaking a language other than English at home and who report speaking English “not at all,” “not well,” or only “well.” Those who report speaking English as their primary language at home and who report speaking English “very well” are considered proficient in English.



While underskilled immigrants face daunting barriers, highly skilled, foreign-educated immigrants—many who had professional careers in their home countries—also face significant obstacles. They often lack the level of English language proficiency, cultural knowledge about the professional world, and the networking skills needed to reenter, not only their careers, but any professional work. They also have difficulty gaining recognition in the U.S. for their previous education, credentials, and work experience. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that 2.7 million college-educated immigrants are unemployed or underemployed, working in low-wage jobs where their talents are underutilized.<sup>11</sup>

At both ends of the educational spectrum and from various walks of life—whether an incoming high school student, a doctor, nurse, engineer, migrant worker, or political refugee—immigrants turn to community colleges to help them further their education, prepare for citizenship, or launch new careers. This poses complex issues of how best to assess the needs and strengths of immigrants, and to develop programs that match their existing skills and cultural/educational backgrounds—and their aspirations—with the most appropriate ESL program, academic instruction, and career training.

## Community Colleges: Key Players in the Education of Immigrants

Community colleges serve nearly half of the nation's undergraduate students.<sup>12</sup> They play an increasingly critical role in providing the affordable higher education and advanced training required to satisfy employer demands and economic growth. About one in four community college students comes from an immigrant background,<sup>13</sup> while the percentages are much higher in states and communities with a large share of immigrants. With these ratios, the issues of immigrant education in community colleges demand urgent attention. Community colleges are especially well suited to meet the needs of these students, providing many with the most accessible and affordable path to higher education and meaningful careers. Community colleges are among the largest providers of adult ESL instruction in the country<sup>14</sup> and offer opportunities beyond ESL training as well: academic and vocational programs, job skills training, civics instruction, and a range of academic, employment, and social support services.

Nonetheless, community colleges must be better prepared in order to launch and expand innovative immigrant education and career training programs. We believe the framework and promising practices that follow can provide a pathway to success.



## A Framework for Supporting Immigrant Student Success: 11 Key Factors

1. **Executive-level commitment and follow-through** drive successful outcomes.
2. **Proactive outreach and a welcoming campus environment** improve college access and success.
3. **A community-wide needs analysis** that captures specific immigration trends, local demographics, and labor market information aligns college services with community needs.
4. **Redesigned English as a Second Language (ESL) programs** enhance learning and job placement. Initiatives include increased flexibility; ESL instruction and career pathways specifically matched to students' existing English proficiency and educational levels; a contextualized approach that accelerates the transition to college or a career; and integration of technology to extend learning beyond the classroom.
5. **Comprehensive and culturally sensitive assessment** equips colleges to address immigrant students' needs and builds on their strengths.
6. **A holistic, integrated approach to student support services** utilizes cross-departmental collaboration and community partnerships to provide both academic and non-academic resources and ensure student engagement.
7. **A focus on outcomes, evaluation, and sharing data** allows colleges to improve and expand immigrant education programs.
8. **ESL faculty professional development and participation in curriculum design** builds support and contributes to the development of high-quality, innovative ESL programs.
9. **Development of immigrant student leadership skills** motivates learning and promotes student integration into campus life and U.S. culture.
10. **Meaningful, multi-sector partnerships** with various stakeholders increase students' college and career readiness, and facilitates their transition to higher education and jobs.
11. **An emphasis on program replication and bringing best models to scale** strengthens the capacity of community colleges to improve educational and training opportunities.

# The Framework in Action:

## Key Success Factors and Promising Practices

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### Executive-level commitment and follow-through

**1** Community college leaders who are committed to advancing immigrants' education and career goals have proactively pursued success. Leaders have demonstrated their commitment by articulating a clear vision and strategy for serving immigrant students, and by developing resources to turn that vision into reality. They strengthen their programs by: incorporating immigrants' educational goals into the overall college mission and strategic plan; building the organizational capacity for innovation, then applying that to improve services; and facilitating the cross-departmental collaborations and community partnerships needed to successfully implement immigration education and ground-level workforce strategies.

#### Northern Virginia Community College: Strategic Vision 2015

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), located in Fairfax County, Virginia near Washington, D.C., is the second-largest community college in the United States and also one of the most internationally diverse, with a student body representing over 180 countries. President Robert G. Templin understands and emphasizes immigrants' contribution to Northern Virginia's economic growth. *NOVA 2015 Strategic Vision: Gateway to the American Dream* outlines the steps needed to meet the higher education and workforce challenges facing Northern Virginia by 2015. A major goal for NOVA—one that they see as critical to the region's economic success—is increasing access to underserved populations by forming strategic partnerships with community agencies that serve immigrants.

The *Steps to Success* partnership with the Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) *Training Futures* program has greatly accelerated achievement of the Strategic Vision 2015 goal to increase the college-going rate of underserved populations by 15% through its minority and new American outreach programs. The NOVA-NVFS alliance, selected in 2007 by the Aspen Institute's Courses to Employment Demonstration Project as one of six top-ranked college- and community-based organization partnerships, is creating a new workforce pipeline of trained immigrant professionals to help address a region-wide shortage of healthcare workers. ([www.aspenwsi.org/WSIwork-HigherEd.asp](http://www.aspenwsi.org/WSIwork-HigherEd.asp))

*"Immigrants have fueled the record population growth in Northern Virginia, and are a primary reason why our economy has remained relatively strong in comparison to other regions of the United States. Many of these immigrants look to NOVA as their gateway to the American dream."*

Dr. Robert G. Templin, President,  
Northern Virginia Community College

In 2008, NOVA also launched the American Dream Team Initiative. This large-scale project helps low-to-moderate income adults with limited English skills to achieve their career and educational goals by connecting with dozens of community-based ESL and social service programs. It also enrolls participants in the college's *Adult Career Pathways*, which includes customized ESL bridge programs that prepare immigrants for either higher education or job training programs. NOVA's partnership with an extensive network of faith-based ESL programs, social service agencies, one-stop job centers, and employers is helping to match the career development needs of ESL graduates with the staffing needs of area employers.

President Templin's strong endorsement of these programs, along with his presence at campus and community events, sends a powerful message about NOVA's dedication and commitment to immigrant education. He has participated in small group, classroom dialogues with immigrant students; honored their achievements in graduation ceremonies; and addressed community members on the challenges facing foreign-educated professionals and the role community colleges can play.

### Westchester Community College: The Gateway Center

The *Gateway Center*, a major 70,000 square foot facility that opened in the fall of 2010, is a testament to WCC's leadership and commitment to support educational opportunities for immigrants. WCC President Joseph Hankin and his executive team gathered community and state support for the Center, raising significant funding: Westchester County provided \$14 million, New York State added \$17 million, and the WCC Foundation raised an additional \$20 million from individual donors, corporations, and foundations.

Located on the WCC campus in Valhalla, a suburb just outside of New York City, the *Gateway Center* features a new and innovative learning environment provides programs and services to immigrant and native-born students and promotes activities that foster increased cultural understanding and awareness among all. By housing programs in one central facility, immigrant students can more easily gain the skills and competencies needed to integrate into society. Native-born students can benefit by understanding the richness of a multicultural community. Among the college's immigrant programs and services located at *Gateway*: a welcome center that helps new students navigate the campus; the English Language Institute, which serves nearly 4,000 ESL students annually; international and immigrant student services; business and modern language programs; and state-of-the-art computer labs. *Gateway* programs promote career development through a professional development center that provides workforce training (including ESL courses) to local companies and their employees, as well as centers for financial literacy and entrepreneurial studies that offer targeted curricula for English language learners. The *Gateway Center* provides a home and in-kind support for the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education.

*"The Gateway Center is at the heart of Westchester Community College's commitment to addressing the educational needs of the county's increasingly diverse population. With one in four Westchester residents born outside the United States, the Gateway Center will provide targeted programs for motivated immigrant and international students, as well as U.S. born students. The Gateway Center will position the college to respond to its evolving community with the most innovative interdisciplinary and multinational educational programs."*

Dr. Joseph N. Hankin, President,  
Westchester Community College

### Bunker Hill Community College: Action Plans

Under the leadership of President Mary L. Fifield, Bunker Hill Community College in Boston utilizes a campus-wide process for change and innovation, known as *Action Plans*, which represents a way for turning vision, insight, and new ideas into reality. The Language Institute at Bunker Hill, a unit that coordinates services and programs to meet the needs of ESL students, might never have evolved were it not for the *Action Plans* process. *Action Plans* illustrated how the Language Institute would advance the college's overall mission and strategic goals. Once approved by a campus-wide senior leadership group, the Institute (with support from a contingency fund earmarked for launching *Action Plans*) began a one year trial. The trial was successful, and the Language Institute became part of the operational budget.

Before the Language Institute, there was no centralized location where ESL students could access information and learn how to use available programs and support services. Today, thanks to *Action Plans*, the Institute is firmly integrated into the college's operations, and is guided by an advisory group comprised of representatives from the departments that provide programming and support services for ESL students.

## Proactive outreach and a welcoming campus environment

**2** Reaching out to immigrants and the community-based organizations that serve them increases college access and success for immigrant students. Community colleges actively engage K-12 school systems, community agencies, and local businesses to teach staff, potential students, and parents about available resources, and to help immigrants use these services. This kind of proactive outreach is particularly critical for undocumented students, who may be unaware of these resources, unfamiliar with the community college system, and afraid to identify themselves. Financial aid is often the biggest barrier, since undocumented students who are waiting to legalize their status are typically ineligible. Colleges have responded by providing scholarship funds, connecting students with legal and financial resources, and lending support to student groups that actively support the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act.

### Palm Beach State College: Dr. Kathryn W. Davis Global Education Center

The mission of the *Dr. Kathryn W. Davis Global Education Center (GEC)*, located in Palm Beach County in southern Florida, is to empower immigrants by offering them college scholarship funds, ESL programs, acculturation workshops and community service referrals. Funded in 2007 by a private donation from the philanthropic Dr. Davis, the Center has served 1,260 students to date. They represent more than 55 countries and include first-generation college students, new immigrants with differing degrees of formal and/or higher education, undocumented students and, in some cases, multigenerational family members.

*GEC* supports immigrant students and promotes community outreach by participating in the Key-Partner Network, a multi-sector collaboration that includes departments of Palm Beach State College, Palm Beach County School District (which offers adult education and services for limited English proficient [LEP] students), community and social service organizations, and business/workforce development partners. Initially, not all members of the Palm Beach State College community were on board with *GEC*. But that has changed, explains *GEC* director Dr. Jeannett Manzanero. “Progressively, after three years we have been able to highlight all the wonderful accomplishments of our students throughout the college community. Not only are more people open to our program, but they refer students to our Center for services,” she notes. Through the Center’s regular information sessions, community members and prospective students can ask questions and learn about *GEC* services. *GEC* also collaborates with state and county immigration coalition groups to sponsor awareness events and other opportunities to teach citizens about the benefits of the DREAM Act. “We help to dispel some of the myths still present throughout our community about the lives of undocumented youth, while promoting and supporting DREAM,” Manzanero says.

### Increasing Student Access to Higher Education

For certain undocumented youth who have graduated from high school and plan to complete two years of college or military service, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is a potential pathway to citizenship. Undocumented students who were brought here as children and legally attend and graduate from U.S. high schools often encounter steep obstacles when trying to access higher education, training, or jobs. First introduced in Congress in 2001, the DREAM Act, while drawing bipartisan support, has been the subject of considerable debate and discussion over the past decade. In the absence of federal legislation, several states have passed laws that provide undocumented youth greater access to higher education, including eligibility for in-state tuition. Joining many other youths from all over the country, Esteban Roncancio, an immigrant from Colombia and an honors student from Miami Dade College, testified before a Senate subcommittee in support of the DREAM Act. He wants to transfer to a university, but is not sure he can afford it. “I love this country. I’m ready to work hard and pay taxes and maybe start a business. I just want a chance,” he says.<sup>15</sup>

## Rio Hondo College: Achieving the Dream\*

Many undocumented students and their families might never venture onto a community college campus unless they felt welcomed. Rio Hondo College in Whittier, California, just outside of Los Angeles, proactively addressed this by creating “safe zones,” areas where students know they can obtain legal, financial, and instructional assistance. In 2008, President Ted Martinez, Jr. initiated the AB540 Taskforce, comprised of administrators, staff, and students and named after the California assembly bill that granted undocumented students eligibility for in-state tuition in October 2001.\*\* The taskforce evolved into *Achieving the Dream*, a broad-based effort to build coalitions, conduct community outreach, and increase educational access and scholarship opportunities for undocumented students.

Because of *Achieving the Dream*, the college has: strengthened its partnerships with the K-12 school system to inform students, parents, and counselors about opportunities at Rio Hondo; increased collaborations with four-year colleges to help students continue their educations; built stronger coalitions with a network of community advocacy groups; and started a special *Achieving the Dream* Scholarship Fund. The college also promotes Students Without Borders, a student-led club that actively participates in *Achieving the Dream*. Students Without Borders has organized a campus-wide conference for undocumented high school students, to help them launch educational plans and connect to community and educational resources.

### Supporting the DREAM: A Community College Leader and Immigrant Speaks Out

Eduardo J. Martí, Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges at the City University of New York, emigrated from Cuba 50 years ago. He speaks passionately and forcefully in favor of the DREAM Act. Testifying in support of DREAM at a September 2010 New York City Council meeting, he told council members: “I can speak to you on this topic from the heart. I am an immigrant. I came from Cuba 50 years ago on a visitor’s visa and had it not been for my ability to gain legal status by asking for political asylum, I could have easily been an undocumented student.” Martí emphasizes that the proposed legislation is not only about equity and opportunity for undocumented immigrants, it also makes economic sense for the nation. “Educating undocumented students enhances their potential contributions as taxpayers and skilled workers,” he says. Students most likely to obtain legal status under the DREAM Act could add \$1.4 trillion in taxable income to the economy over a 40-year period, according to a 2010 study by the University of California at Los Angeles.<sup>16</sup> Under the leadership of CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, community colleges in the CUNY system take steps to increase student access to private scholarships, provide legal assistance, and support student governments’ partnerships with such immigrant advocacy groups as the New York Immigration Coalition.

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\*Rio Hondo’s Achieving the Dream student access initiative refers to its community-level activities to support undocumented students, and is not affiliated with the national organization Achieving the Dream, Inc., working on both national and state levels to improve student outcomes.

\*\*California passed legislation in October 2011 that will allow certain undocumented youth to receive state financial aid for college. The new law, AB 131, known as the California Dream Act, will allow them to apply for Cal Grants, fee waivers at community colleges, and institutional financial aid at public universities, starting in 2013.

## A community-wide needs analysis

**3** The core mission of community colleges is to respond to local needs. Since resources are limited, their challenge is to determine how to prioritize, so that they achieve the greatest positive impact within their community. Understanding the changes in local demographics is critical to ensuring that college services align with the community's needs. The innovative programs that serve immigrant students are often preceded by a community needs analysis, which captures labor market information, demographics, and specific immigration trends that enable the community college to respond through effective program design, curriculum development, and outreach.

### Alamo Colleges: Westside Education and Training Center

The Economic and Workforce Development Division of Alamo Colleges in San Antonio, Texas actively engages community, business, and governmental leaders and organizations to assess the educational and workforce trends of the city's diverse and growing immigrant community. Proactive analysis of labor market information and demographics, which sometimes occurs at the neighborhood level, led to two important developments: opening the *Westside Education and Training Center (WETC)*, a community-based, immigrant education and workforce training facility; and hiring a subject matter expert who directs Alamo's immigrant education efforts and reports to the Vice Chancellor of Economic and Workforce Development Division. *WETC* is leading a multi-year initiative to deliver technical training in high-demand and emerging industries to 225,000 area immigrant residents. Before 2008, no institution in the San Antonio area strategically addressed this demand.

*WETC* is located in San Antonio's Westside, an area most concentrated with Spanish-speaking residents who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and underskilled. Over half of Westside residents lack a high school diploma, and the average per capita income is \$9,925. Community-based analysis indicates that San Antonio's LEP immigrant population is highly diverse, including a mix of underskilled workers, Generation 1.5 youth, and internationally educated and trained professionals who cannot reenter their careers in this country. *WETC* provides a full range of educational and training services, including comprehensive assessment, GED preparation, ESL services, Vocational ESL (VESL) technical training models, community-based support services, and a Welcome Back Center, part of the national Welcome Back Initiative ([www.welcomebackinitiative.org](http://www.welcomebackinitiative.org)), which is a program serving internationally trained healthcare professionals (see page 22).

### Wilbur Wright College: Carreras en Salud (Careers in Health) Partnership

*Carreras en Salud*, a collaboration of the college's Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Association House of Chicago, and National Council of La Raza, provides nursing and other allied health career pathways to immigrant students in Chicago's Latino communities. The healthcare field was chosen because it presents several unique characteristics: employment growth projections are the strongest and most consistent of any in the local economy; career paths and opportunities for advancement are possible for low-skilled employees; and there is significant demand for bilingual professionals. Also, although high-quality healthcare training is available at Wright College, it was not meeting the industry's needs for more graduates, particularly bilingual healthcare professionals, according to a 2010 report by Instituto del Progreso Latino and the other partners.<sup>17</sup>

The most significant finding of the sector analysis was the training gap between the Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) and advanced certificate Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) programs offered at Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center and Wright College, respectively. While Latino residents were hired from the CNA program, virtually no Latinos entered the highly respected and very successful LPN program at Wright College, the report notes. The program partners realize that Latinos represent "an enormous untapped labor pool that already [significantly populate] healthcare occupations, but are not able to take advantage of postsecondary or higher-skill occupational opportunities."<sup>18</sup>

## The redesign of ESL programs

**4** Community colleges face many challenges when addressing the ESL needs of immigrant students. Among the most critical issues: expanding classroom capacity, scheduling classes to accommodate students' work and family responsibilities, and structuring classes that will assure both English language proficiency *and* preparation for college-level work or career training. In response, colleges are rethinking and redesigning how and where ESL is taught. They are increasing the flexibility of class schedules and location, the alignment of noncredit and credit coursework, and the use of technology/multimedia-based programs that accommodate independent study. This restructuring, which includes a contextualized or content-based approach, accelerates the transition to a college degree or certificate program, vocational training, and careers.

The new emphasis on accelerated ESL career pathways occurs in response to the expansion of "late entry," nontraditional immigrant students who come to community colleges from the adult education system (or from adult basic education/ESL programs within the college). Typically, this group is unprepared for the vocational training and academic rigor of community colleges. Career pathways transition these immigrant students from adult ESL (or GED) to college-level academic and vocational programs by establishing strong bridge programs that build the academic, language, and literacy skills of immigrant students whose skills are not yet on par with their English-speaking peers. Students are introduced to specific career terminology and supported along a structured career path so they will be successful in vocational training or academic programs that prepare them for family sustaining jobs.

Leading-edge community colleges are designing more targeted and differentiated ESL programs to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous immigrant student body having different backgrounds, skills, literacy, and aspirations. Depending on student demographics, colleges have implemented comprehensive and integrated programs that combine ESL with a continuum of academic, employment, and social support services to:

- Improve college readiness and completion among incoming high school immigrant students.
- Accelerate college completion and career readiness of less-skilled, nontraditional adult immigrants.
- Support career reentry of internationally educated, high-skilled professionals who have earned professional degrees in their home countries and often have career experience.
- Improve employability and integration of refugees and asylees.
- Prepare adult immigrants for U.S. citizenship and civic participation.

Below are several examples of these tailored and diverse community college ESL programs.

### Improve college readiness and college completion among incoming high school immigrant students

#### South Texas College: Achieve Early College High School

STC's *Achieve Early High School* initiative is one of many and varied dual enrollment programs that give high school students the opportunity to prepare for college and earn credits, free of charge. Located in the Rio Grande Valley on the border between Texas and Mexico, STC currently enrolls over 30,000 students, most of whom are Hispanic and many from an immigrant background. Dual enrollment programs, which serve over 9,500 students, offer accelerated high school diploma and associate's degree programs, allow eligible high school students to earn college credits in academic disciplines and technical trades, and encourage the transition to four-year colleges. Most recently, STC has partnered with nine Early College High Schools. Students at these schools begin dual enrollment classes as early as the ninth grade. Participation in classes, activities, and support services at STC campuses gives them access to all college facilities. Preference is given to applicants who are from a low-income family, are the first family member to attend college, or are English language learners.



One particularly notable program, cited as a state-wide model, is the district-level Hidalgo Early College High School. This program prepares students for both college and career and technology education (CTE). All ninth and tenth graders take college-prep core academic courses. Eleventh graders can take general education college courses in science, math, social sciences, and humanities. Alternatively, they can enroll in CTE pathways in health, human services, and other skilled trades. Some of these career courses may not be transferable beyond community college. However, the classes lead to occupational certificates or degrees and serve as an incentive for students to continue their education, while also introducing them to professional terminology and networking—a key advantage for ESL learners.<sup>19</sup> In response to the needs of ESL learners, the districts and the college provide academic and support services, including tutoring and intrusive advising, required by students. Since they earn college credits at no cost to them and their families, ESL learners and recent immigrant students benefit from these types of programs.

### Northern Virginia Community College: Pathway to the Baccalaureate

*Pathway to the Baccalaureate* helps 6,000 low-income and immigrant students to transition from high school, to NOVA, and then to George Mason University and other four-year institutions. The program offers a student-centered approach, long-range college counseling and support services, and a guarantee of continuing support and financial assistance to complete a four-year degree. The introductory component of the Pathway program, recently dubbed “fast-track remediation,” focuses on strengthening English writing skills. While many of the students excel at speaking and listening English, they lack the grammar and sentence structure needed for college-level writing. If they pass this introductory English writing class, they avoid wasting time and tuition on a remedial English class that will not count toward a college degree.<sup>20</sup>

### Accelerate college completion and career readiness of less-skilled, nontraditional adult immigrants

#### Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges: Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

*I-BEST* operates in all 34 Washington State community and technical colleges. The *I-BEST* model, which after extensive testing is now being replicated or adapted at several community colleges outside the Washington State system, challenges the traditional notion that students in Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESL programs need years of remediation before they can master college-level work. The program integrates basic academic (ABE or ESL) and occupational skills needed for specific careers, and pairs ABE/ESL with professional-technical instructors in the same classroom to concurrently advance student gains. The *I-BEST* program is designed for intermediate-level English language learners (those at Federal Educational Functioning Level 3 and above). However, South Texas College (see sidebar on p. 20) and Alamo Colleges have both adapted “pre-*I-BEST* models” for adults at the beginning levels of English proficiency.

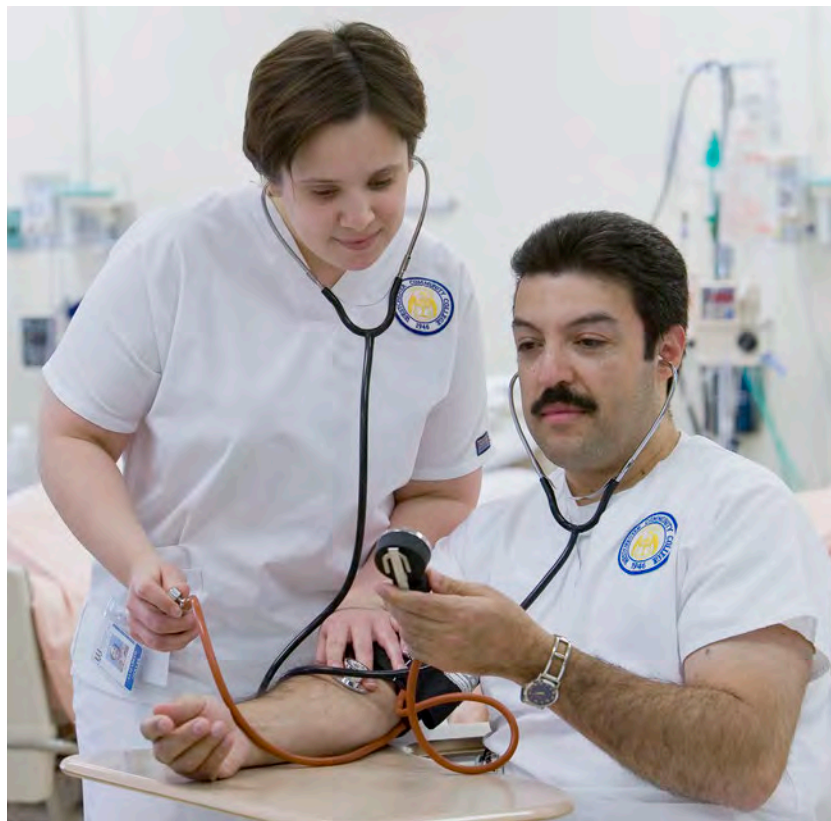
#### Alamo Colleges: Career EASE (Exploratory and Skills Enhancement)

*Career EASE* takes a different approach. Rather than enroll immigrant and underskilled students directly into VESL or *I-BEST* technical training courses, the Workbased English Solutions program provides students with a preparatory course called *Career EASE* (Exploratory and Skills Enhancement). *Career EASE* is a 60 to 80 hour industry-specific (currently, health services and green jobs) course that teaches college readiness, computer literacy, and basic skills and/or language development. The objective is not only to help students make informed college and career choices, but to prepare them for the rigors of technical training in specific industries. For students who have been out of school, in some cases for decades, the course helps them sharpen their academic skills, as well as those needed to handle increased coursework. Guest lecturers from the industry provide occupational overviews and individualized career guidance. Additionally, *Career EASE* helps the program advisor and educational case manager to identify what additional skills, language development, or support services students might need before starting technical training. This prepares students for a successful transition into college credit *I-BEST* training.

## ABE/ESL to Health Career Work Credentials: Learning in Two Languages at South Texas College

South Texas College's *Accelerated Career Pathways* program illustrates how the addition of "on-ramps" to the I-BEST model is addressing the dual language and career needs of beginning level ABE/ESL adult students who have low literacy skills in their native languages and lack a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) or high school diploma. The South Texas model compresses the time toward an occupational certificate by offering initial intensive ESL and Spanish classes for immigrants looking to pursue various career paths, including healthcare. South Texas, working alongside the local Workforce Investment Board, realized that healthcare workers who provide services in the ethnic communities of Starr and Hidalgo counties will be more effective and have greater opportunities if they are "bilingual," that is, fully proficient in English and Spanish. Students therefore take intensive English for Special Purposes, which emphasizes oral language skills, and Spanish for Professional Purposes, which teaches career-specific terminology and concepts.

Program designers know that concept knowledge acquired in the native language transfers to the second language. Therefore, the English and Spanish curricula are integrated to create deeper and stronger connections in the brain. The curriculum is cognitively challenging and emphasizes explicit teaching and task-based instruction, coupled with collaborative learning and student projects. Because students with limited education may not have the school-based academic skills needed to succeed, the curriculum integrates key aspects of "learning how to learn" and introduces strategies useful in analyzing and interpreting data and other forms of information.



## Montgomery College Adult ESOL & Literacy: Career Connections

Montgomery College in Montgomery County, Maryland, just north of Washington, D.C., offers *Career Connections*, a series of contextualized vocational classes in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). These classes prepare students to transition from adult ESL classes to noncredit vocational training in the fields of healthcare and building trades. *Career Connections* classes are highly structured, and integrate vocational training with career awareness, job search strategy, academic skills, and test preparation coaching. Students are screened for their interest in the vocation before being admitted, and have the opportunity to apply for scholarships to noncredit classes after they successfully complete the program. *Career Connections* is more intense and expects more of students than traditional ESL life skills classes. For example, classes meet three to four evenings per week and involve significant homework. The work pays off: in *Career Connections* classes, retention rates and gains in the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) basic skills test—particularly in the ESOL classes for healthcare jobs—far surpass those in traditional ESL life skills classes. *Career Connections* faculty and staff have started to apply some of these promising practices to the ESL life skills classes, and while gains are still not as high as in *Career Connections* classes, they are significantly improved over past years.

## Improve employability and integration of refugees and asylees

### Miami Dade College: Refugee/Entrant Vocational Educational Services Training (REVEST)

*REVEST* is used as a model statewide for adult refugee education programs. Since 1999, *REVEST* has provided English language skills, basic education, and vocational training to nearly 30,000 immigrant students and asylees from over 30 different countries, including Cuba, Haiti, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Other *REVEST* participants include political asylees, human trafficking victims, Amerasians, and legal permanent residents who adjusted from prior refugee, entrant, or asylee status. *REVEST* offers English language skills that can be readily transferred to a job, a college degree, or a certificate program. To reach the neediest communities, *REVEST* has established four strategically located outreach centers in parts of Dade County having a strong presence of eligible students.

Through collaboration with an extensive network of service providers, *REVEST* offers academic assessment, long-term advisement, service agency referrals, transportation and childcare subsidies, and assistance with translating and evaluating foreign-earned credentials. Vocational training options are available throughout Miami Dade College campuses. Many of *REVEST*'s vocational students have completed courses and earned state board certification in such health sciences/allied health areas as massage therapy, medical assisting, medical coder billing, pharmacy technician and practical nursing. The program, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Office of Refugee Resettlement, is administered by the Office of Refugee Services within the Florida Department of Children and Families.

### Using Technology to Boost Adult ESL Learning and Flexibility

Instituto del Progreso Latino's CYBER-ESL, a blended online ESL program piloted during the past two years and funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, offers a flexible, cost-effective solution for adult ESL learners. CYBER-ESL students use computers equipped with cameras and microphones, and access free resources on the USALearns website ([www.usalearns.org](http://www.usalearns.org)), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the California Department of Education's Office of Adult Education. Instructors assign lessons in the USALearns program, and supervise students through a series of weekly (or more frequent) phone conversations and video conferences via Skype. Students meet in person as a group with their instructor twice a month to take tests and clarify issues. Instructors maintain data on students' progress in writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills. At the end of the term, students are tested with the same instruments used in traditional ESL classes. "Real world" evidence shows that students in CYBER-ESL advance at equal or higher rates than students who take regularly scheduled ESL classes.

## Pima Community College: Refugee Education Project

*Pima's Refugee Education Project (REP)* in Tucson, Arizona assists newly arrived refugees with intensive job-related English language instruction, vocational training, and employability skills. A noncredit program that has existed since 1978, *REP* is located within the adult education program of PCC. It typically serves about 500 refugees a year, but this number spiked to nearly 700 in fiscal year 2010 because of a recent influx of refugees from Iraq and Bhutan as well as Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Burundi. *REP* offers English Language Acquisition for Adults (ELAA) classes at three levels: pre-literacy, beginning, and intermediate. Vocational ESL (VESL) classes are offered for refugee students at higher language levels. Close cooperation with the Refugee Integration Service Providers Network, comprised of over 50 organizations, has been critical to the success of the program. While Pima instructors provide ELAA classes, job developers at volunteer agencies help *REP* instructors select materials necessary for students to get into the job market faster and more successfully.

Support career reentry of internationally educated, high-skilled immigrant professionals

## LaGuardia Community College: The New York City Welcome Back Center

LaGuardia's *Welcome Back Center* is part of the Welcome Back Initiative, a national program that helps internationally trained healthcare professionals contribute their talent and experience to underserved communities in need of linguistically and culturally sensitive health services. Five of the nine *Welcome Back Centers* across the country are hosted by community colleges that work closely with a variety of community service organizations. The *NYC Welcome Back Center* at LaGuardia provides comprehensive services to help immigrant professionals rebuild their healthcare careers in New York State. Its services include personal career counseling; in-depth explanation of the New York State credentialing/licensing process; assessment of language skills and aptitude for alternative career pathways; referrals to appropriate services, such as English classes, test preparation courses, and training programs; and job placement, once immigrant professionals have the required credentials. The *NYC Welcome Back Center* leverages the job placement resources of the Workforce1 Healthcare Career Center, which provides a full range of career advisement, training, and job placement services to new job seekers and incumbents in the healthcare industry.

Referrals are regularly made to LaGuardia's Center for Immigrant Education and Training (CIET), which has led the way in New York State in adopting the I-BEST model from Washington State. For example, two I-BEST courses have been developed to help foreign-trained health professionals gain language and technical expertise while preparing for certification to become employed as either Medical Office Clinical Technicians or LPNs. In both cases, students at CIET achieved excellent course completion and pass rates on certification exams.

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Yezenia Martinez-Moreno, Colombia  
New York City Welcome Back Center,  
LaGuardia Community College

"The New York City Welcome Back Center gave me an opportunity to improve my quality of life and work toward my professional goal to become a mental health practitioner," says Yezenia Martinez, who worked as a psychologist in Colombia before coming to the United States. She joined the NYC Welcome Back Center in June 2009 and graduated from the Medical Office Clinical Technician Program at LaGuardia Community College. She is now certified as a phlebotomist and EKG technician and is in the process of validating her credentials to enter a Masters in Social Work program in New York City.



## IMPRINT: Tapping the Talents of Immigrant Professionals

The story of the engineer driving a taxicab or the nurse working as a nanny has become all too familiar. Many internationally educated and trained immigrant professionals often face major roadblocks when trying to reenter their careers in this country and end up unemployed or significantly underemployed in low-wage, low-skill jobs. Now a group of five nonprofit organizations with decades of collective expertise in this emerging field have joined forces to address the problem by forming a new national coalition, called IMPRINT or Immigrant Professional Integration. Supported by the J.M. Kaplan Fund, IMPRINT includes: the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, Upwardly Global, Welcome Back Initiative, Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, and World Education Services. The coalition collects and disseminates resources, advocates for effective policies, and shares best practices with organizations that serve immigrant professionals. Helping skilled immigrants advance into high-skill positions creates entry-level job openings for other workers, builds immigrant families' assets, and enables successful professionals to become powerful advocates in their new roles. For more information visit [www.imprintproject.org](http://www.imprintproject.org) or contact Jennifer Brennan, Director at [Jennifer@imprintproject.org](mailto:Jennifer@imprintproject.org).

### Westchester Community College: Professional Development Center

WCC's *Professional Development Center* delivered a yearlong English training program for members of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, one of Westchester County's largest pharmaceutical firms. The purpose of this program, funded under the State University of New York Workforce Development Grant, was to train top scientists and researchers who are non-native English speakers to have a better command of the English language. Language barriers in these types of industries might be regarded as an impediment to productivity and may keep back highly skilled professionals from attaining management roles. The English training program, which was jointly operated by WCC's English Language Institute and the *Professional Development Center*, worked to increase the language skills of these individuals.

### Northern Virginia Community College: Steps to Success-Training Futures Partnership

The *Steps to Success* program, run in partnership with Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) *Training Futures*, helps low-income workers stuck in dead-end jobs master the English language and cultural competencies needed to launch and advance new professional careers in healthcare and business administration. About 75% of program participants are immigrants, and many were employed as professionals (medical practitioners, lawyers, journalists, etc.) in their home countries. Through this community college-nonprofit workforce development partnership, participants in *Training Futures* are co-enrolled at NOVA and earn up to 17 college credits while pursuing a comprehensive six-month training program, including a three-week internship and supported job search.

Established in 1996, *Training Futures* offers a business immersion approach that resembles actual work practices. Students can access such comprehensive support services as counseling, accent reduction training, peer groups, mentoring from over 50 corporate volunteers, and individualized tutoring and coaching. In their seven years of partnership, both NOVA and NVFS have accelerated course completion and career advancement through such measures as offering more courses during evening hours at the *Training Futures* site, facilitating Pell Grant and other financial aid application processes, and increasing alignment of *Training Futures* curriculum with NOVA courses. By summer 2006, three years after the executive officers of NOVA and NVFS signed the *Steps to Success* partnership agreement, the NOVA faculty had evaluated and aligned the entire noncredit *Training Futures* curriculum with existing credit NOVA courses.

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Gladys Mejia, El Salvador  
Northern Virginia Community College

*“Living poor in America slowly beats your dreams down. I came to Training Futures to lift my dreams back up.”*

With this powerfully simple statement, Gladys Mejia introduced herself on her first day at the Training Futures short-term job training program, operated by Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA). Following Training Futures, which provided seven NOVA transfer credits, she landed a new job with benefits at an Arlington, Virginia professional association, and was able to support her two teenage daughters. The partnership between Training Futures and NOVA offered the opportunity to “make the jump from Training Futures to college,” she explained. One year later, she obtained a new NOVA Business Information Technology Certificate that she earned by taking three additional NOVA courses delivered at the Training Futures center during evening hours. The new certificate plus additional training will help Gladys advance her career. “One of the tremendous experiences of my life was when I walked across the stage at NOVA’s graduation, shook Dr. Templin’s hand, and got my NOVA certificate,” she recalls.

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Prepare adult immigrants for U.S. citizenship and civic participation

### City College of San Francisco: Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders)

*Project SHINE* is part of a national service learning initiative that combines ESL and literacy training with citizenship and civics preparation. The CCSF program, initiated in 1997 as a partnership with San Francisco State University (SFSU), helps immigrants and refugees navigate the complex path to U.S. citizenship.

Currently, over 200 CCSF and SFSU students—both immigrant and U.S. born—serve as volunteer coaches each semester in about 90 noncredit ESL, citizenship, and literacy classes as well as various for-credit classes. Student coaches help teachers in the classroom and work individually with immigrant adults to prepare them for the citizenship test, build their English language proficiency, train them in health literacy skills, and assist them with other needs. Since fall 2000, about 3,400 student coaches have helped about 44,000 immigrant and refugee students. *Project SHINE*, coordinated at the national level by Temple University in Philadelphia, operates at 31 colleges and universities in 16 cities across the country. The national Project Shine program is a 2011 winner of the E Pluribus Unum prize awarded by the Migration Policy Institute to honor exceptional initiatives that promote immigrant integration.



## Comprehensive and culturally sensitive assessment of immigrant student needs

**5** Comprehensive assessment plays a pivotal role in immigrant education programs, enabling colleges to develop more effective and tailored responses. Traditional assessment processes, which rely heavily on standardized testing for class placement, have worked poorly for immigrant students for several reasons. High schools in low-income immigrant communities may be under-resourced, so students lack the academic skills and test taking preparation needed to succeed in standardized tests. Older nontraditional students seeking job training or advancement opportunities may have been out of school for months or years, and are not only unprepared to take tests, but also are unfamiliar with U.S. college admissions, enrollment, and assessment procedures. If not assessed properly, immigrant students may be channeled directly to remedial classes based solely on a test score, and placed in a class that meets neither their English language needs nor broader academic and career goals. As an alternative, colleges are implementing more comprehensive assessment measures that utilize diverse approaches to measure proficiency, address cultural differences, and capture the full picture of immigrant students' unique needs and strengths.

### Alamo Colleges: Workbased English Solutions

*Workbased English Solutions*, a department in the Economic and Workforce Development Division supporting the five-college Alamo system, coordinates and delivers all technical training in high demand and emerging industries to underskilled and immigrant students. *Workbased English Solutions* employs a comprehensive assessment protocol that emphasizes transparency and uses many approaches to gather information about immigrants' skills and abilities. Their platform also acknowledges that information relevant to meeting academic and employment goals is equally important. This transparent process positions students as active decision makers in their education.

The protocol combines two broad areas: personal interview and objective testing. The personal interview is conducted bilingually (if the student is Spanish-speaking) and begins with a discussion of the student's career and educational aspirations. This well-structured pre-testing interview identifies the applicant's strengths, as well as potential barriers to standardized test performance. The interview also includes a discussion about the student's long-term goals; work-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies; educational and employment history; and any disability- and health-related needs.

The discussion of these issues helps the staff to better understand immigrant students' diverse educational and work history, which leads to stronger placement decisions. The interviewer uses a person-centered strengths approach to ensure the assessment interview is not focused on the individual's deficits. Because testing and assessment often create unnecessary stress for students, and may result in unreliable scores for immigrants who have never taken a standardized test, the interviewer reviews the entire assessment process with the student so they understand that placement decisions are not made solely on test scores.

After the personal interview, students select a desired course of study and take an in-depth assessment in English (writing, listening, reading) and mathematics. *Workbased English Solutions* uses the CASAS Employability Competency System of tests that are approved by the National Reporting System. Spanish language tests are administered to Spanish-speaking students to gain a deeper understanding of students' educational preparation. Interview and testing results are reviewed by a four-person staffing committee. This group makes placement decisions and provides direction to the educational case manager who meets with the students to discuss next steps. *Workbased English Solutions* emphasizes a "No Wrong Door Policy": it offers multiple "on-ramps" to industry-related ESL educational programs at different levels, depending on the student's skills and employment needs. Since participation in education and training programs is often challenging for immigrant students because of outside circumstances, the assessment process includes consideration for support services, participant demographics, barriers to employment, and work-family challenges.

## A holistic, integrated approach to student support services

**6** In addition to the financial and work-family pressures commonly faced by native-born community college students, immigrant students often deal with additional challenges, such as English language acquisition, cultural adjustments, citizenship issues, and unfamiliarity with the U.S. educational system and community support services. Support services for immigrant students deploy an integrated approach that serves the “whole student,” in recognition of both the academic and non-academic support services that often exceed customary assistance and counseling. Colleges are providing an integrated approach to immigrant student services through such ways as building ambassador-type relationships in the community, increasing coordination and centralization of services, and developing multi-sector partnerships that provide a continuum of support services.

### Johnson County Community College: Community Links

Located in suburban Overland Park, Kansas, just outside of Kansas City, Johnson County Community College has developed *Community Links*, an initiative of the International and Immigrant Student Services department. *Community Links* helps immigrant students develop everyday life skills so they can navigate campus and community services, and the work world. More than 75% of the staff are bilingual or multilingual immigrants. Through training sessions and online tutorials, immigrant students develop the skills needed to access unfamiliar community college systems and tackle a myriad of tasks outside the classroom: finding housing and understanding rental agreements, obtaining a driver’s license (if they have a car), establishing a bank account, locating medical and dental care, applying for a job, and getting legal help.

*Community Links* has developed an especially innovative approach to building support and trust in the community and paving the way for immigrant students’ integration. It has developed a network of specially trained community “ambassadors” who have the cultural awareness, sensitivity, and skills to work effectively with immigrant students. Local vendors are familiarized with customary buying and renting practices in other countries. The staff even work with nearby grocers to help them stock certain foods that are staples for immigrants. Business owners welcome the added customers *Community Links* brings to their stores. Connections are also maintained with a network of families interested in renting rooms to immigrant students and residents interested in developing their language skills.

“This kind of community outreach is the core of our program—setting up those ambassador-type relationships with community members who welcome immigrant students and offer to help,” says Julie Pitts, Director of JCCC’s International and Immigrant Student Services. “Establishing personal relationships based on trust with both community members and students is essential to our work. As a result, we’re increasing community members’ awareness and sensitivity to immigrant issues and are also building their respect for the college’s immigrant education goals.”

### Online Tutorials Help Students Navigate Campus and Community Services

Students at Johnson County Community College (JCCC) can access a range of online tutorials to help them navigate college systems and get acclimated to daily life. Modules, developed by International and Immigrant Student Services (IISS) at the college, cover topics such as cultural adjustment, community services acquisition, and self-advocacy skills. Students can learn how to apply for financial aid, negotiate renting an apartment, look for a job, and navigate the legalization and citizenship application process. The employment tutorial covers all aspects of the job search, including tips on networking, interviewing, and preparing a resume. As part of JCCC’s college-wide emphasis on program evaluation, IISS looks for 80% student satisfaction rates on these online tutorials before they consider students proficient in whatever they are learning. To date, students have achieved that goal consistently.



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Frank Gyamfi, Ghana  
Johnson County Community College



If you ask Frank Gyamfi what it takes to achieve school and work success, he answers readily: “Sheer hard work, motivation, advising, counseling—not to mention intelligence!” Combining studies and work has been rough at times, but it has not stopped Frank from pursuing his goal to become a pharmacist and help people when they are ill. As a student paying his own expenses, Frank attends Johnson County Community College with the support of the Federal Work Study Program and a financial aid book voucher to pay for textbooks. The work study program not only financially supports Frank, but it also connects him to the campus community. “Through Federal Work Study, I have worked closely with International and Immigrant Student Services (IISS) and have come across so many opportunities like campus kick-off, International Education week, International Scholarship dinner, and the International Club.” Through IISS, he has also strengthened his speaking skills, developed job search skills, acquired new marketing and customer service skills, and learned about different cultures. “There is no way I could have come this far without the valuable advice in life I get from a mentor, my boss at work, and the director of the International and Immigrant Student Services,” he adds. Frank plans to transfer to the University of Kansas after the spring 2012 semester to continue his pharmaceutical studies.

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### Bunker Hill Community College: Language Institute

There is a large international and immigrant student population, representing over 95 countries and 75 languages, at Bunker Hill in Boston. While the need for intensive English courses is critical, college officials realize that immigrant students can feel especially isolated if they are struggling to learn a new language, navigate an unfamiliar college system, and acclimate to an entirely new culture—all at once. The *Language Institute* coordinates academic programs and support services for ESL students. The intake process begins in the Assessment Center, where prospective students take placement tests and complete a short writing sample to determine the most appropriate starting level. Advisors orient the students to the various programs and services available to them, and help them develop an academic plan based on their individual needs and goals.

The *Language Institute*'s programming includes noncredit ESL classes for beginners, intensive English study for more advanced students, and specialized training and professional development courses, such as Language Enhancement for Business Professionals. The Institute also makes referrals to the Welcome Back Center, which helps students who were nurses in their home countries to become registered nurses in Massachusetts. Once assigned to the appropriate classes, ESL students can take advantage of extensive academic resources, including a multimedia, multipurpose Language Lab, where students practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills; the Tutoring and Academic Support Center, which provides one-on-one tutoring in all subjects; and the Center for Self-Directed Learning (CSDL), where students learn independently through a variety of instructional media and state-of-the-art web resources (CSDL staff monitors each student's progress). The *Language Institute* also provides career services, to address immigrant students' workforce and employment goals.

## Palm Beach State College: Davis Global Education Center

The *Davis Global Education Center (GEC)* operates as a one-stop education and resource information center for immigrants in Palm Beach County. The facility offers centralized services and a continuum of programs to support immigrant students and maximize their integration into—and contribution to—their community. Students receive part-time scholarships, and although scholarships are based mainly on financial need, students must maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA, meet with an advisor each term, and follow an improvement plan if they fall short in their performance. Students also must attend monthly acculturation workshops to better adapt to the U.S.

The comprehensive integrated educational and support programs draw on the strengths and resources of Palm Beach State College and community-based participants in the Key-Partner Network. This partnership includes representatives from various college divisions, Palm Beach County School District, community and social service organizations, and business organizations. A full range of educational programming includes such activities as English language and budget management programs; civics, leadership, and service learning experiences; and summer youth enrichment, which exposes future first-generation (as early as the first grade) college students to a variety of academic, artistic, leadership, and postsecondary preparatory activities in a college environment. Support services include guidance on healthcare, legal, childcare, transportation, employment and career counseling, and financial literacy assistance. A key factor that has enhanced the immigrant student experience is *GEC's* integration with other college student services, which has been facilitated under the direction of Campus Provost Dr. Maria Vallejo. Her support of communication and collaboration among many college departments—at least a dozen—has made the process of admissions, registration, testing, and advising easier and more welcoming for immigrant students and their families.



## A focus on outcomes, evaluation, and sharing data

**7** Community colleges have traditionally gathered very little data on the background of their immigrant student populations or on the outcomes they have achieved. And because the noncredit ESL and credit academic departments at community colleges often operate in silos, there is no coordinated effort to track the movement of immigrant ESL learners between the two sides. Additionally, community college information systems don't generally ask about or track immigrants' prior educational experience or credentials earned in their native countries—valuable data that would help more colleges understand the need to establish separate pathways as well as English for professional purposes for internationally educated and trained immigrants.

The community colleges profiled in this report are increasingly collecting data on key variables that measure immigrant student progress in conjunction with student intent. They are using that data to improve and expand immigrant education programs and community outreach services. The programs are monitoring students' educational and, in some cases, employment gains, and are showing quantitative improvements in enrollment, class performance, and certificate and/or degree completion. While employment outcomes are more difficult to track, some programs report increased job placements, promotions, and earnings.

Institutional Research (IR) departments are critical partners in these data gathering and sharing efforts. Colleges that have forged strong partnerships between their ESL programs and IR departments have enhanced their immigrant student ESL programs and support services especially well. Additionally, community colleges' affiliation with third-party evaluators and broad national initiatives allows those colleges to focus on outcomes and apply the promising practices and knowledge to their immigrant student populations. The examples below describe community college efforts to evaluate and improve immigrant education programs and highlight some of the educational and employment outcomes achieved to date.

### Washington State Board for Community and Technical College: Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

*I-BEST* is one of the most closely watched and studied programs, and has been extensively evaluated by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University. A 2010 study by CCRC shows that *I-BEST* students were 56% more likely to earn college credits, 26% more likely to gain an occupational certificate or award, and 19% more likely to make point gains on the CASAS basic skills test than non-*I-BEST* adult basic education (ABE) and ESL students.<sup>21</sup> The researchers note that over three-quarters of the *I-BEST* students were ABE-GED students, as opposed to ESL students. (Although some students who start in ESL levels transition into ABE level classes and are counted thereafter as ABE students.) When the researchers disaggregated the data, comparing outcomes for the *I-BEST* ESL student subgroup with the non-*I-BEST* ABE and ESL student control group, they found mostly similar results: the *I-BEST* ESL students were 39% more likely to earn college credits, 21% more likely to gain an occupational certificate or award, and 21% more likely to make point gains on the CASAS test than the regular basic skill students.

While the CCRC study shows that *I-BEST* participation has a positive impact on most educational outcomes, no effect is shown on two labor market outcomes: wages earned and average hours worked. CCRC notes that *I-BEST* participants may have not fared better than the control group because they were looking for jobs at the beginning of the 2008 recession. However, since *I-BEST* students are more likely than similar students to earn postsecondary credentials, and since workers with such credentials have historically had an advantage in the labor market, the researchers note that *I-BEST* students may fare better than students in the control groups as the Washington State labor market recovers.

### Miami Dade College: Institutional Research Department

Miami Dade's *Institutional Research (IR)* department tracks the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program, monitoring such key performance indicators as retention rates for students at each curriculum level, placement results after completion of the EAP program, and success in subsequent courses, compared with students who did not begin in EAP. EAP research results are posted on a special "focused research" page on the *IR* website. In addition, *IR* collaborates with other departments at MDC to conduct focus groups aimed at identifying ways to enhance student success. *IR* provides evaluative feedback for special projects geared at helping EAP students achieve success. One example is Project ACE (Accelerated Content-Based English), a fast-track program for EAP students with strong academic backgrounds that integrates language instruction with credit courses in psychology and library research. Project ACE is meeting the educational needs of immigrants who arrive in this country with degrees earned in their home countries. Retention rates for Project ACE students are almost 20% higher than for comparison students.

### Johnson County Community College: Achieving the Dream, Inc. Collaboration

JCCC's collaboration with the national organization, Achieving the Dream (ATD), has led to the adoption of student learning objectives in each department that are specifically linked to college-wide goals, to improve college graduation rates and career success. The IR department, which leads the ATD initiative, helps International and Immigrant Student Services (IISS) to measure satisfaction with the outreach effort among students and community organizations. IISS looks for satisfaction scores of 4.0 or higher (on a 5.0 scale) on all its support services and programming. In addition, its programming efforts must meet at least half the areas of educational need identified by students. To date, it has achieved these goals.

### Wilbur Wright College: Carreras en Salud Partnership

Since 2005, the *Carreras en Salud* program has helped low-skilled LEP immigrants to become bilingual and bicultural CNAs and LPNs, filling a much-needed healthcare service gap in Chicago. *Carreras en Salud* was one of six college and community-based organization partnerships exemplified as a national model program in the Aspen Institute's Courses to Employment demonstration project. As of summer 2011, *Carreras* has achieved significant cumulative outcomes: 85% cumulative graduation rate across all its bridge programs serving 1,836 participants; 94% licensing/certification and 94% placement rates for its 571 RN, LPN, and CNA graduates; and 150% average wage gain for LPNs starting from an average annual salary of \$18,720 as a CNA to \$46,800 as a LPN.<sup>22</sup> Winner of numerous awards, the program is cited as a national model by the Shifting Gears initiative ([www.shifting-gears.org](http://www.shifting-gears.org)) and by Excelencia in Education (<http://edexcelencia.org>). Shifting Gears is a systems-change effort in six states that was launched by The Joyce Foundation to strengthen postsecondary adult basic education and skills-development programs at the state level. Excelencia in Education is a nonprofit organization that links research, policy, and practice to support higher educational achievement for Latino and all students.

### Northern Virginia Community College: Steps to Success-Training Futures Partnership

The *Steps to Success-Training Futures* partnership, also selected as a national model in the Aspen Institute project, has achieved significant results. The majority of participants have gained ESL contextualized skills in healthcare and business office administration, landed new jobs, and earned increased wages. Key findings from a 2010 Aspen Institute study tracking outcomes for 253 participants from 2007 to 2010 include a: 94% completion rate of the Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) *Training Futures* program, one of the nation's top success rates for job training programs serving low-income workers; 84% completion rate of a median of 17 NOVA college credit hours while at *Training Futures*, more than a full-time semester course load; 84% job placement rate (that held even through the recession); and a 29% average wage gain for newly employed participants.<sup>23</sup> A follow-up unpublished 2010 survey conducted by NOVA and NVFS of 176 *Training Futures* program graduates found that two-thirds have earned promotions and almost 30% continued their career education and completed a degree or certificate program at NOVA or elsewhere.

## ESL faculty professional development and participation in curriculum design

**8** The need for more and better trained ESL instructors is well documented. The demand for adult noncredit ESL classes far outpaces their availability, and long waiting lists exist nationwide.<sup>24</sup> Many classes are taught by part-time faculty, who may lack specialized training and professional advancement opportunities. The Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy report, *Passing the Torch*, notes that even at most of the best practice colleges studied (except City College of San Francisco), part-time instructors are paid at half or less the rate of full-time faculty.<sup>25</sup> Many of the best practice colleges, however, provide instructors with healthcare and other benefits, professional development opportunities, and preferred candidate status when hiring for full-time positions. CCSF is cited for increasing the ratio of full- to part-time faculty, and accruing many benefits as a result. About one half of CCSF's ESL faculty are full-time.<sup>26</sup>

Community colleges are adopting various strategies to increase the supply of qualified ESL instructors and improve their opportunities for professional development, such as training high-quality ESL instructors to meet demand, encouraging faculty to help design ESL curricula, and developing teamwork between faculty and student services staff to teach contextualized ESL and help students succeed.

### Westchester Community College: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Certificate Program

The *TESOL Certificate Program* at WCC was created in response to three factors: increased demand for ESL teaching services, the need to provide training *and* extensive classroom teaching experience, and a growing interest in second careers. The program is offered through the WCC English Language Institute. One of the largest ESL programs in the region, the English Language Institute offers classes to nearly 4,000 students each year, and requires the hiring or rehiring of 65 to 80 adjunct instructors three times per year in advance of each term. WCC was finding that many of its applicants for ESL positions—even those with a master's degree in TESOL or graduates of certificate programs—lacked the right combination of experience and training. At the same time, WCC's continuing education staff noted an increase in the number of professionals seeking second careers in teaching, especially in the ESL field. Yet many could not afford to spend the time or money in a master's program, typically requiring two years of study.

One of the key strengths of WCC's *TESOL Certificate Program* is the integration of extensive, supervised classroom practice utilizing the college's multi-level ESL programs. The program offers 126 hours of intensive training, including fundamental theoretical knowledge and the opportunity to build a solid base of classroom skills through hands-on practice teaching. Classes are held at night to accommodate work schedules. Three sessions per year are offered, each lasting for 12 weeks. Some participants are international students with an I-20 visa issued by the college for this full-time program, while others pay their tuition with financial assistance provided by the local one-stop employment center. Most, however, are mature self-paying adults looking for a career change and/or an additional source of income. Since the training program began in the spring of 2010, 70 people have graduated; 25 of those have been hired to teach ESL at the college. Others have obtained adult ESL teaching jobs in other schools in the area or back in the student's home country.

### Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges: I-BEST

*I-BEST* pairs adult basic education (ABE) and vocational skills instructors in the same classroom to integrate basic skills and technical training. Basic skills includes instruction traditionally labeled as ABE, GED, and ESL that is delivered by a basic education instructor. This allows learners to develop academic skills in any or all of the three areas. Reflecting the demographics of Washington State, *I-BEST* students often speak several languages (in addition to English) and many *I-BEST* basic skills instructors have a background in ESL. The ABE and vocational skills instructors work together to design, plan, and deliver the instruction, overlapping in the classroom for at least 50% of the time. Basic and vocational skills faculty also work as a team with the staff of Student Services to design support services for students previously on the margins of academic achievement. Instructor teams participate in introductory workshops that demonstrate integrated team teaching and describe

the pros and cons of various models. Ongoing technical assistance and training help instructor teams to develop integrated learning outcomes that place equal value on academic and vocational skill achievement. Workshops also address team teaching and preparation elements, and provide examples of integrated instructional materials such as contextualized math modules.

The initial stages of the *I-BEST* program are challenging as faculty from both departments redevelop instructional materials, rethink how they teach, and consider how to adapt to this new approach. “Early adapters nevertheless find the results exciting and the opportunity to broaden and refine their craft personally rewarding,” notes Israel Mendoza, former director of the Washington State Colleges’ Adult Basic Education Office, adding that “early adapters” help others find their way. A 2010 CCRC field study, which examines how *I-BEST* is operating in all 34 Washington State colleges, recommends a system of faculty supports, particularly in the early stages of collaboration, to help instructor teams become cohesive units.<sup>27</sup>

### Miami Dade College: Honors Bridge

*Honors Bridge*, a special option for students in the top level (level 6) of the English for Academic Purposes program, provides an opportunity for highly motivated and academically strong ESL students to prepare for application to MDC’s prestigious Honors College. The driving factor behind the success of the *Honors Bridge* program is the willingness of the ESL and Honors Program faculty to work together as a team in all phases of the program, from planning the curriculum to participating with the students in service learning activities, which is a key component of the program. Operating in this fashion represented a major change from the norm. Traditionally, ESL faculty work in silos. In the *Honors Bridge* program, ESL, Honors Program, and Service Learning staff all work together. “It’s been excellent in terms of faculty and staff development and is obviously a win-win for our students,” says Malou C. Harrison, Dean of Students, Miami Dade College, North Campus. Every *Honors Bridge* student accepted into the Honors College has completed the rigorous program and gone on to complete their bachelor’s degree.

*“Educational opportunity is at the heart of every stable and prosperous community. Our aim should be to uncover the talent in every life, and allow that person to contribute to the community. We are a community enriched by immigrants in Miami, and the community’s college has been the doorway to a life of possibility. More than 170 countries are represented in Miami Dade College’s student population, and a broad array of programs allows them to begin anew with education as their foundation.”*

Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón, President,  
Miami Dade College

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### Fernando Villavicencio, Ecuador Miami Dade College

Fernando Villavicencio migrated to Miami from Ecuador and worked 15-hour shifts in a factory for three years to support his financially struggling mother before discovering and enrolling in Miami Dade College’s English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. In Ecuador, Fernando was an overachiever, winning national titles in science and mathematics while being actively involved in his community through volunteer service opportunities and church. When he first arrived in this country, he did not speak a word of English. The EAP program provided both flexibility and the academic preparation and pathway to the college’s prestigious Honors College. Fernando excelled academically and was a tremendously engaged student. He served in such leadership positions as Phi Theta Kappa Historian and Vice President of the Math Club, as well as in numerous community activities. While at school he continued to work long shifts at the factory. In April 2011, Fernando graduated with a 3.89 grade point average and was accepted to many high-profile universities. He now attends University of Wisconsin-Madison with a full scholarship, and is majoring in mechanical engineering.



## Development of immigrant student leadership skills

**9** As English language learners, immigrant students face unique challenges and needs as they navigate unfamiliar community college systems and acclimate to a totally new culture. But, given the opportunity, they become much more than “English language learners.” In fact, they blossom into student leaders, contributing their skills both on and off campus in many ways. Community colleges that provide resources and involve immigrant students in intentional ways build students’ leadership and advocacy skills and help them become motivated, active partners in learning. The variety of countries, cultures, languages, and experiences represented in the immigrant student body contributes to college diversity, enhancing both classroom and extracurricular life for all students. Students develop leadership skills by supporting advocacy efforts, participating in student government, and joining student clubs that promote immigrant integration. Colleges also provide opportunities for immigrant students to help each other and the communities in which they live through peer-to-peer mentoring, learning communities, and service learning.

### City College of San Francisco: Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders)

*Project SHINE* pairs student coaches with immigrants and refugees taking ESL and civic classes to prepare for the U.S. citizenship exam. It benefits the coaches as well by helping them build leadership and communication skills. Student coaches, many of whom are former ESL students, develop critical listening, interviewing, speaking, and writing skills as part of their tutoring and service learning assignments. After coaches finish a semester they are eligible for the *Project SHINE Leadership Program*. This provides a cadre of experienced volunteer coaches who help with: recruiting and mentoring new student coaches, classroom activities, fundraising, and events such as the Orientation and Reflection ceremonies. Eight out of the 12 CCSF campuses participate in *Project SHINE*, and there are currently more requests from faculty than coaches available to serve. As volunteer coaches transition out of the college, however, the Leadership Program helps to replenish a new source of qualified coaches to meet the growing demand from faculty. According to the CCSF Project SHINE program coordinator, Denise Maduli-Williams, the Leadership Program is vital to the success and sustainability of the CCSF Project SHINE initiative.

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#### Tracy Mak, China Project SHINE, City College of San Francisco

Tracy Mak joined Project SHINE in 2008 as a coach and the following semester became part of the Project SHINE Leadership Program. She currently serves as Vice President of Project SHINE and continues to participate as a coach. Project SHINE has given her the chance to overcome her shyness and be more confident in front of groups. “I joined because it was an extra credit opportunity, but most importantly I love to do volunteering work. Just to help those in need is such a great feeling at the end. What I like most about working in the classroom is working in groups or individually with students and doing translating,” Tracy says. Her major is nutrition, and she looks forward to becoming a nutritionist, focusing on weight and healthy eating. She believes what she is learning from Project SHINE will help her in her future career.



ESL Teacher Dominique Alary likes to have SHINE coaches help her when she teaches the lower level classes, especially literacy. Her classes are comprised of mostly Chinese speaking students and the students appreciate having someone in the class who can help translate some of the material into Chinese. “It’s great to have the SHINE coaches walk around and help students with any questions they might have,” she says. “They also work one-on-one with new students who have just entered the class, elderly students, and students who are struggling because of little or no previous exposure to the English language.”

## Bunker Hill Community College: Cultural Ambassadors

*Cultural Ambassadors* are a core group of immigrant, international, and non-immigrant students who serve as peer mentors, discussion group leaders, and ombudspersons for a diverse 13,000 member student body at Bunker Hill. Their mission is to encourage open and constructive discussion of difficult issues in the classroom and other campus arenas. Initially funded through a grant under the Ford Foundation's Difficult Dialogues Initiative ([www.difficultdialogues.org](http://www.difficultdialogues.org)), activities involving cultural ambassadors have become institutionalized and are making a difference on campus. *Cultural Ambassadors* help organize Bunker Hill's campus-wide Compelling Conversations events, which address religious, cultural, class, and political issues. They also organize monthly "Eat, Meet, and Greet" forums, which feature food, roundtable discussions, and outside speakers, all in an effort to inform students of critical issues and encourage them to meet and get to know one another. On a campus as large and heavily populated as Bunker Hill, these kinds of events go a long way in countering students' feelings of isolation and, at the same time, introducing them to a variety of cultures.

## Rio Hondo College: Students Without Borders

*Students Without Borders* is a campus organization that focuses on assisting and uniting so-called "AB 540 students" (unauthorized immigrants) and their allies, by helping students find the support and resources needed to continue their higher education. Serving this population can be challenging, since many undocumented youth and their families may be hesitant to identify themselves and visit the campus. This student-run organization has been a critical partner in the Rio Hondo Achieving the Dream initiative, which sponsors activities that educate, motivate, build coalitions, provide outreach, and expand resources—particularly scholarship funds—to undocumented students.

In April 2010, the Student Services staff and *Students Without Borders* jointly organized the first on-campus conference for undocumented high school students. The mission was to help these young people develop an educational plan and connect with the educational and community resources needed to make it happen. The conference included workshops about the DREAM Act, as well as information about how to access community and state colleges, apply for scholarships, and prepare educationally for transfer to a four-year university. The Student Services outreach staff worked closely with area high schools to invite the juniors and seniors who might be interested in attending. To help organize and lead the conference, *Students Without Borders* enlisted the help of numerous college and community partners, including student groups from California State at Long Beach and the University of California at Los Angeles, and representatives from such advocacy organizations as the Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights of Los Angeles and the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund. The conference attracted about 150 high school students and also helped Rio Hondo build stronger coalitions with its community and educational partners. *Students Without Borders* has also posted various resources on the Rio Hondo college website, including private foundation scholarship opportunities and resources available through the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.



## Meaningful, multi-sector partnerships

**10** No one organization can adequately provide the comprehensive menu of services that immigrant students require to succeed in college. Community colleges have developed partnerships with a variety of key stakeholders, including K-12 schools, four-year colleges, adult education systems, community and faith-based organizations, employers, and workforce investment boards. These multi-sector partnerships have been essential for increasing immigrant students' college and career readiness and assuring the transition to additional education, training, or jobs. The most successful community college partnerships share several characteristics, including an emphasis on: regular, face-to-face communications to build relationships and trust among staff members; effective management and leveraging of each partner's resources and strengths (particularly critical at a time of shrinking budgets); and a willingness of community colleges to entertain new ideas for serving immigrant students—even when those ideas come from outside academic circles.

### Alamo Colleges: Postsecondary Awareness–Transition to Higher Education (PATH)

*PATH* provides a multi-agency forum to create a seamless network of services for adult learners in the South Texas area as they transition from adult education programs to postsecondary education or the workplace. The Alamo College system joined *PATH* in 2006 to better understand and respond to the problems related to the transition of immigrants and underskilled students. Rather than compete with organizations that provide similar services, such as federally funded ESL programs, the Alamo College system seeks win-win alliances with a diverse network of organizations. Other *PATH* partners include the City of San Antonio Literacy Center Directors, the local Education Service Center, local independent school districts that provide Workforce Investment Act Title II ABE services, and Workforce Solutions Alamo, the local workforce investment board. The *PATH* partnerships have resulted in Alamo Colleges developing I-BEST training programs with three different Title II ABE providers. These partnerships leverage federal funds to offset contextualized basic skills training costs, keeping I-BEST tuition the same as that of non-I-BEST training programs.

### How Alamo Colleges Work With Business

The staff at Alamo Colleges' *Workbased English Solutions* believes that training programs for immigrants must be driven by employer demand and must provide immigrant students with access to career-building jobs. Training programs are developed where Spanish (by far, San Antonio's largest second language) is viewed as an asset to employment. For example, San Antonio's long-term care community has a high demand for Spanish-speaking CNAs who tend to Spanish-speaking residents. Employers often help develop the curriculum, and bilingual trainers from various industries are often engaged as instructors in technical programs to ensure that program design, curricula and language services align with the needs of businesses. Alamo Colleges also actively engages the local Workforce Investment Board, Workforce Solutions Alamo, to make certain that training programs align with occupations in demand and that students can access local job search and employment services. To support immigrant workers, Workforce Solutions Alamo has contracted with the Alamo Colleges to develop a Vocational ESL Weatherization training curriculum. This course is also offered at no cost on the workforce training provider system making it available to unemployed and dislocated workers.

## Wilbur Wright College: Carreras en Salud Partnership

*Carreras en Salud*, a partnership of Instituto del Progreso Latino, Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) of Wright College, Association House of Chicago, and National Council of La Raza, represents a model that has allowed each collaborator to utilize its resources in their respective areas of strength. As a part of the City Colleges of Chicago system, Wright College has successfully provided quality training and higher education through its allied health programs. Also, as a Hispanic-serving institution, Wright College is committed to practices that enhance diversity throughout all its programs. The knowledge and expertise of the Dean of Allied Health, Dean of Instruction, and Dean of HPVEC played a major role in the development, articulation, and delivery of the curriculum in every step of the pathway.

The two community-based organizations—Instituto del Progreso Latino and Association House of Chicago—have demonstrated excellence in the provision of career pathways for the Spanish-speaking immigrant population through bridge programs. These opportunities provide pathways to college and health care training, and ultimately lead to employment. These community-based organizations have had years of experience working with immigrants and have established high levels of trust within the immigrant community. As the fiscal agents of the grants, they have more flexible guidelines for delivery of such services as case management, transportation money, and other items. A management team, including two representatives from each organization, meets regularly to discuss daily operations, resources, expansion, replication, and other issues.

Community college experts and the community-based contributors jointly developed a contextualized curriculum, designing the articulation of the bridge programs to the college-level academic programs. The national organization, National Council of La Raza, has allocated staff and other resources to both community organizations and Wright College for development of funding and replication. An Employers' Advisory Group, comprised of health care representatives, provides advice, input, clinical experiences, and employment. In addition, local elected officials and community leaders are consistently informed of program progress, and they, in turn, actively seek out resources, partnerships, and funding opportunities.

*“The biggest challenge in making the Carreras en Salud partnership work has been the community college system accepting the input and expertise from others who are not in higher education. Community-based organizations have been allowed to recruit and come to our organizations, but they have not been regarded as equal partners in the provision of educational services. Through the Carreras en Salud model, all these partners come to the table, focusing with respect to each others’ areas of expertise.”*

Madeline Roman Vargas, Dean,  
Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center,  
Wright College

## Emphasis on program replication and bringing best models to scale

# 11

A growing number of community colleges are developing innovative strategies to serve immigrant students, yet few opportunities exist for colleges to share and disseminate the lessons learned. As members of the Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP) of the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, the community colleges featured in this report are committed to sharing promising practices and scaling up the best ESL and immigrant education models at their own campuses and at other community colleges. In addition, several BRP members and their partner organizations participate in national initiatives designed to evaluate, strengthen, and replicate programs for underserved community college students and low-wage workers—many of whom are immigrants (see sidebar on p. 38).

Several BRP members are creating peer-to-peer opportunities for sharing promising practices and building the capacity of colleges to improve and expand educational and training programs for immigrant students. Among the steps they are taking: sponsoring peer learning communities, providing faculty “train the trainer” workshops, and providing technical assistance to other community colleges and community groups.

### Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges: I-BEST

The *I-BEST* model has generated significant interest nationwide and is being replicated in several states. In an effort to expand the *I-BEST* program beyond Washington State, WSBCTC is creating opportunities for instructors and administrators in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois to exchange ideas, *I-BEST* practices, and challenges with each other. Conversations will be focused around defined topics and structured by the needs and input of participants.

*I-BEST* is also being considered for replication in 11 other states under the *Accelerating Opportunity* initiative, which is managed by Jobs for the Future in partnership with the WSBCTC, the National Council for Workforce Education, and the National College Transition Network. An unprecedented philanthropic investment in Adult Basic Education (ABE), *Accelerating Opportunity* is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and the Open Society Foundations. This multistate initiative seeks to fundamentally change the way ABE is structured and delivered at state and institutional levels. It also is promoting state and institutional policies to dramatically increase the number of individuals who complete credentials of value in the labor market.

The 2010 field study of *I-BEST* by the Community College Research Center offers some important lessons for other states and colleges interested in the model and highlights the most significant challenges, including finding enough funding for *I-BEST*, gaining sufficient financial aid support for students, coordinating the basic skills division and professional-technical departments, integrating basic skills and professional-technical classroom instruction, and finding best ways to collaborate the many different campus departments and offices.<sup>28</sup>

### Miami Dade College: Project ACE (Accelerated Content-Based English)

*Project ACE* is supported by the U.S. Department of Education Title V grant, which is designed to improve Hispanic-serving institutions. The expectation is that the grant activities will be institutionalized. At every step, *Project ACE* faculty and staff are building the program with sustainability and replication in mind, and have taken steps to ensure success. A Curriculum Writers workshop has increased the involvement and commitment of faculty throughout the college. *Project ACE* staff members are working diligently to unite colleagues from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, to increase student success. *Project ACE* has conducted and shared research about promising innovations like endorsement testing, a practice by which students demonstrate college readiness through methods other than high-stakes testing. Project dissemination is occurring through publications and presentations at a national and international level. Most importantly, *Project ACE* has established itself as an innovative program, and has garnered recognition from the Completion by Design team of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through the additional support of this and other initiatives, the momentum generated by *Project ACE* will continue.

## National Initiatives to Improve Community College Education and Workforce Outcomes

Many community colleges participate in broad-based national initiatives to improve college access and completion, increase postsecondary training opportunities, and open career pathways for students—especially underserved students and working adults, including immigrants. Below are some examples:

Achieving the Dream, Inc., is a national nonprofit funded by the Lumina Foundation. It involves 130 community colleges, 30 organizations, and 16 state policy teams working in 30 states to close achievement gaps and increase the attainment of degrees and credentials, especially for low-income students and persons of color. [www.achievingthedream.org](http://www.achievingthedream.org)

Breaking Through is national initiative that promotes and strengthens the efforts of 41 community colleges in 22 states to help low-skilled adults prepare for—and succeed—in occupational and technical degree programs. Funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and others, Breaking Through is a collaboration between Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education. [www.breakingthroughcc.org](http://www.breakingthroughcc.org)

Completion by Design is a five-year Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative that works with community colleges to significantly increase completion and graduation rates for low-income students under age 26. The Gates Foundation has awarded competitive grants to groups of community colleges to help transform their students' experience. [www.completionbydesign.org](http://www.completionbydesign.org)

Courses to Employment is the Aspen Institute's multi-year national demonstration project of six community college-nonprofit partnerships funded by the Mott Foundation. The initiatives are designed to support, strengthen, and evaluate sectoral employment approaches that connect low-income individuals to employment and advancement opportunities within targeted industry sectors. [www.aspenwsi.org/WSIwork-HigherEd.asp](http://www.aspenwsi.org/WSIwork-HigherEd.asp)

Early College High School Initiative is coordinated by Jobs for the Future and includes 13 partner organizations that have created or redesigned more than 230 small schools that blend high school and college. The initiative is funded by the Gates Foundation, along with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and other local foundations. [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org)

### Alamo Colleges: Workbased English Solutions

*Workbased English Solutions* provides professional development training and technical assistance to each of the five Alamo Colleges campuses and is leading the deployment of I-BEST and VESL models over the next two years. This training has also been provided to other Texas community college practitioners and administrators, such as representatives of Laredo Community College, who visit San Antonio for customized workshops. Because students often access multiple siloed systems, *Workbased English Solutions* provides technical assistance and training to federally funded ABE providers and other community-based organizations, to develop a systems approach to serving immigrant workers in San Antonio.

### Wilbur Wright College: Carreras en Salud Partnership

The Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) has replicated the *Carreras en Salud* pathways model in manufacturing, through its Computerized Numerical Control and Electric/Electronic Industrial Maintenance programs, and in the new Medical Assistant Program. An important tool in replication efforts has been the manual, *How to Build Bridge Programs That Fit into A Career Pathway*, produced by Instituto Del Progreso Latino and the other *Carreras en Salud* partners.<sup>29</sup> It provides a step-by-step guide and key components to building a program based on the *Carreras en Salud* model. HPVEC Dean Madeline Roman-Vargas also emphasizes the critical importance of having champions at the higher education level—those willing to support and advocate for programs in the midst of policy changes, reorganizations, and funding cutbacks. “It’s that support from the top, including the presidential level, that makes the difference. If the program runs into obstacles or gets stuck in any way, you need champions to protect it and assure its future sustainability,” notes Roman-Vargas.



# Recommendations for Action

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## What Community Colleges Can Do

The Framework for Supporting Immigrant Student Success is intended as a guide to help community colleges develop a strategy for launching and expanding innovative immigrant education practices. The colleges profiled in this report are committed to strengthening their programs to increase educational and career opportunities for immigrant students. By sharing their most promising practices, more colleges will benefit by reflecting upon and assessing how their own programs and services compare with each of the 11 key factors of success described in the framework. The report is a way to start conversations with key decision makers and stakeholders about how to best respond to the unique challenges and opportunities represented by the growing number of immigrant students. Below are specific recommendations for action:

### Develop an Immigrant Education Strategy

- Articulate explicit goals to serve immigrant students, and incorporate these as part of the college's overall strategic plan.
- Forge a targeted, intentionally focused ESL student academic and support plan around *completion*, to allow ESL students to fulfill their intended goals for further education or career preparation.
- Encourage innovation by setting aside funds that allow pilots to be developed and evaluated and, if successful, incorporated into the college's operational budget.

### Build a Community of Supporters

On campus...

- Link ESL and immigrant education efforts to various departments and strategic initiatives within the college, including workforce and economic development, developmental education, basic skills, four-year college and university transitions, academic affairs, and student services.
- Educate key community college constituencies (e.g. administrators, faculty, staff, and counselors) about both the importance of and the unique challenges faced by immigrant students.
- Articulate and share successful outcomes and contributions of immigrant students to dispel myths and raise goodwill.

In the community...

- Respect the expertise and leverage the strengths of community-based organizations and allow them to play meaningful roles (e.g. case management, job development, providing bilingual support, serving as an entry point to career pathways, etc.).
- Launch outreach campaigns to immigrant families informing them about postsecondary opportunities and resources.
- Organize public marketing campaigns to educate community members, lawmakers, media and employers about the role community colleges have played in the academic and career preparation of successful immigrants.

- Establish local consortia of secondary school ESL teachers and college ESL faculty to ensure seamless transitions from school to college.
- Coordinate outreach with state agencies and community-based organizations to target and inform internationally trained professionals about ESL and re-credentialing resources in high-demand professions.

### Redesign ESL Instruction and Career Pathways

- Improve collection of immigrant student data so that this information can be used to develop ESL curricula and career pathways to accommodate the major differences in immigrants' English proficiency and educational levels.
- Pay close attention to the process used to assess students who have ESL backgrounds with the understanding that standardized tests alone are insufficient indicators for proper placement. Include more comprehensive approaches (e.g. personal interviews, writing samples) that address cultural differences, reflect students' needs and strengths, and build on existing work experience and educational background.
- Offer high intensity/managed enrollment (12-24 hours per week) noncredit ESL instruction. These programs show greatly increased learning gains, compared both to national norms and to comparable low intensity programs offered at colleges and community organizations.<sup>30</sup>
- Integrate instructional technology to complement and extend ESL classroom time, allow students to build academic and language skills at their own pace, and better accommodate immigrant students' work schedules and family obligations.
- Increase hiring of and professional development support for ESL faculty.

### Empower Immigrant Students as Leaders

- Provide opportunities for students to share their expertise and help one another in the classroom as peer mentors and tutors, and as role models in the community to encourage college, high school and elementary immigrant students to focus on educational achievement.
- Offer experiences that will allow students to develop leadership and advocacy skills, including building support and advocating for increased access for all immigrant students, regardless of their status.
- Support adult immigrant students as heads of households and leaders/organizers in their communities by preparing and connecting them to jobs, continually aligning training programs to meet current employer demands, and promoting family literacy activities to encourage a college-going culture in immigrant families.

## What Others Can Do

Immigrants play a critical role in the economic and workforce development growth of the U.S. economy. Resources and policies that support workforce and education efforts for immigrants support economic growth, educational attainment, and college completion for one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population, thus ensuring a well-educated and skilled population that can fill the employment gaps left by the retiring baby boom population. Recommendations for action and investment by federal, state, and private funders include:

### Reauthorize and Refocus Workforce Investment Act

- Increase the alignment of Title I and Title II Workforce Investment Act policy and funding to better serve immigrants at all skill levels and prepare them for high quality postsecondary education and careers.

The current policy and funding streams do not reflect the growing body of evidence and practice showing that both low-skilled and high-skilled immigrants can benefit from differentiated ESL instruction and career pathways that integrate ESL, academic, and job skills training. While they are part of the same Act, neither Title I (workforce investment system) nor Title II (adult education and family literacy) currently provides explicit direction and guidance to encourage local workforce development partners to develop and fund job-related training programs to less skilled ESL students below the high school level.

Community college and one-stop career center assessment systems have mimicked a legacy system that silos services based on language proficiency. If students score below the high school level, or have limited English, they often can only access adult basic education (ABE) or basic ESL instead of a vocational ESL training program. Highly skilled immigrants are also underserved, since those who are not yet fully proficient in English but have higher levels of education are often placed into the same ESL program as much lesser skilled immigrants. WIA Title I and Title II should be revised to:

- Facilitate the integration and alignment between the training and employment services mandated in Title I and the adult education services mandated in Title II.
- Broaden Title I policy to encourage integrated ESL, job training, and career pathway opportunities to immigrants at all skill levels, including those below the high school level.
- Expand Title II policy beyond adult basic education and basic ESL services to increase immigrants' English language proficiency *and* preparation for postsecondary education or career-specific training.
- Increase co-enrollment in WIA Titles I and II to allow immigrant and other adult education students gain access to career counseling, job placement, and support services that promote successful transitions to postsecondary education and occupational training.<sup>31</sup>

### Revise Financial Aid Policy

- Improve the ability of student aid programs to support low-income, Limited English Proficient adults who often combine work and school. For example, immigrant students attending part time can deplete their Pell Grants if used for ESL courses offered through developmental education programs. The use of Pell Grants provided under the Higher Education Act should be expanded to include support for noncredit ESL instruction.

### Fund Awareness Campaigns

- Support community colleges' outreach initiatives to: 1) inform immigrant families about postsecondary resources and increase accessibility, and 2) educate community members, media, employers, and policymakers about community colleges' role in educating and training immigrants, as well as the contributions of immigrants toward promoting social vibrancy and economic growth.<sup>32</sup>



## Provide Access to College and Financial Aid for All Students

- Promote state policies that increase educational access for undocumented youth, including eligibility for in-state tuition and state financial aid.
- Support the passage of the DREAM Act to increase undocumented youth's access to higher education and provide a pathway to citizenship. Doing so is in the nation's best interest since it would help address the need for more college-educated workers, and would generate significant economic benefits.
- In the absence of DREAM Act legislation, support the development of resources (e.g. scholarship funds, information toolkits for community college staff and immigrant families) that would increase access for undocumented students.

## Improve National Data Collection on Immigrant Students

- Improve the collection of demographic information on immigrant students, including country of origin, prior educational attainment and credentials, and when they arrive in the U.S. English language proficiency should also be included. Current systems, including the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the surveys conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, do not regularly track or include these factors.

## Increase Government Collaboration to Improve Service Delivery for Immigrants

- Strengthen and expand cross-agency initiatives to address the varied challenges that immigrants face and coordinate information on the latest research and promising practices from the various federal agencies and programs that serve immigrant populations in community colleges, adult education, and job training programs (e.g. U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services). This will help providers better serve immigrants and meet employer demands.<sup>33</sup> The White House Domestic Policy Council's interagency task force on immigrant integration, which addresses integration needs at the federal, state, and local levels; and the New Americans-Citizenship and Integration Initiative, which is developing a national immigrant integration strategy, are critical first steps.
- At the state level, designate an office or individual that helps coordinate services and collects information from the field so that effective immigrant education and training models can be designed.<sup>34</sup>

## Support New Research to Advance the Field of Immigrant Education

- Increase funding for high quality research that supports the development, evaluation, and replication of promising practices such as:
  - Differentiated ESL models that combine academic and career training targeted to students at various educational and skill levels
  - Comprehensive assessment tools that enable colleges to collect more reliable student data and develop more tailored responses
  - Technology/multimedia-based programs (online ESL, videos, recorded lectures, etc.) that increase opportunities for learning, encourage independent study, and facilitate more flexible scheduling
  - Multi-sector partnerships that effectively leverage the strengths of key stakeholders, including community colleges, community-based organizations, elementary and secondary schools, four-year colleges, adult education systems, employers, and Workforce Investment Boards
- Increase opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and collaborative research efforts among community colleges and their partner organizations.

# Endnotes

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# Appendix

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