BREAKING THROUGH

ACHIEVING AMBITIOUS GOALS

Case Studies of Scaling-Up Programs for Advancing Low-Skilled Adults

DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE • LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE • OWENSBORO COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE
PAMLICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE • TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By Barbara Endel and Nate Anderson, with Jeremy Kelley

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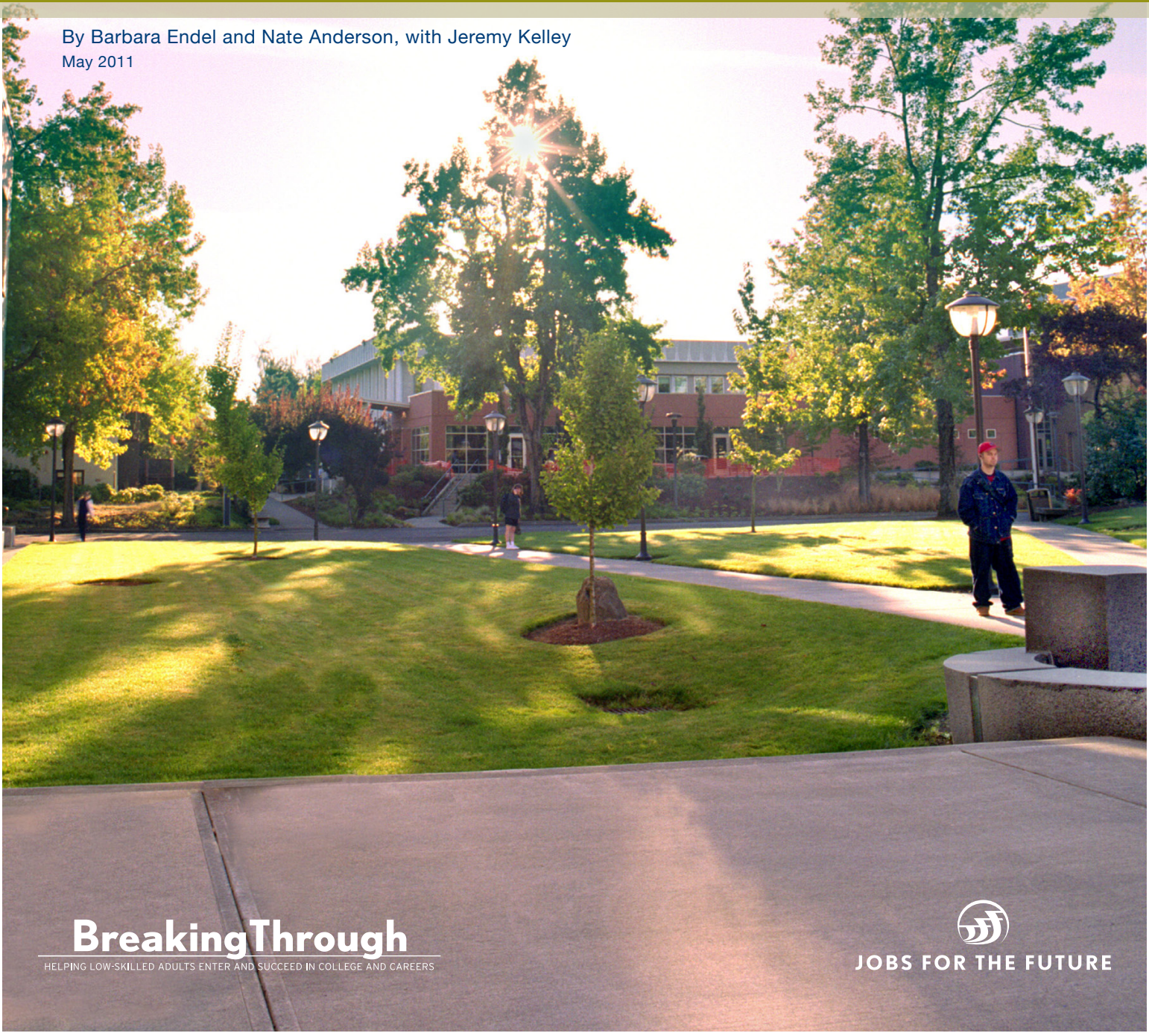

BreakingThrough
HELPING LOW-SKILLED ADULTS ENTER AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE AND CAREERS

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

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Jobs for the Future develops, implements, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers.

BreakingThrough

HELPING LOW-SKILLED ADULTS ENTER AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Breaking Through promotes and strengthens the efforts of 35 community colleges in 18 states to help low-skilled adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. Counteracting high attrition rates in Adult Basic Education and developmental education programs, *Breaking Through* colleges improve outcomes by focusing on strategies that create effective pathways through precollege and degree-level programs and that result in college completion. The initiative is proving that low-skilled adults can advance through remediation and credential programs within a reasonable time and with reasonable success.

COVER: Courtesy San Jacinto College North

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Nate Anderson, a senior project manager at Jobs for the Future, works on several state and national *Breaking Through* initiatives. He provides technical assistance to *Breaking Through* colleges in Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, and Washington, as well as to the cohort of Tribal Colleges. He also manages a three-state project developing state and system policy frameworks for improving college outcomes for low-skilled adults. Before coming to JFF, he taught English in Japan as part of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching program. Mr. Anderson holds a B.A. from Bowdoin College, a Master's in Japanese history and Asian Pacific studies from the University of Toronto, and a Master's in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A college credential is essential for individuals seeking to earn family-supporting wages. And yet, over 90 million Americans face considerable barriers in obtaining the basic academic skills necessary to enroll in college-level courses. Research, combined with the challenges experienced daily by those in the workforce development field, has led us to expect—and even accept—that nothing will change this situation for a large proportion of millions of men and women.

What if we started doing things differently? What if we set and reached ambitious goals? What if the efforts and organizational structure of community colleges differed—in striking ways—from what is typical now? What might that success look like?

Attaining significantly better outcomes requires transformations in policy and in practice, but it begins with a commitment: to believe in and support the advancement of low-skilled, low-literacy students to and through college-credential programs. That is what *Breaking Through* set out to do when Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education launched the initiative in 2004. Transformational change begins with an institutional affirmation to help all students enter and succeed in college, especially those with the most need.

SCALING UP SUCCESS

As *Breaking Through* proceeded, Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education recognized that a small number of community colleges within the initiative had many program elements in place to effectively advance low-skilled adults toward credentials. What would it take to scale up these elements to support the advancement of more low-skilled adults? How does a college significantly expand an exemplary program, both in the number of students involved and in the systems, processes, policies, and relationships enabling scale-up to touch far more areas of the institution and community?

In 2009, five community colleges received $40,000 grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to scale up their *Breaking Through* programs. JFF prepared the case studies in this report for practitioners, policymakers, foundation staff members, and others interested in strategies to advance low-skilled adults to increasingly higher levels of learning.

The case studies illustrate how *Breaking Through* promotes scale and impact along a number of fronts, using data to stimulate institutional change and ensure that students progress along their pathways toward credentials or degrees. *Breaking Through* colleges commit to collecting data on several core indicators and to taking part in comparison-group analyses in order to measure impact.

Selected Indicators on Impact at the Scaling Up Colleges

> Durham Technical Community College: 66 percent of *Breaking Through* students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9 based on TABE scores, versus 56 percent of a comparison group. In math, 52 percent of *Breaking Through* students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9, versus 41 percent of the comparison group. In reading, 63 percent of *Breaking Through* students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9, versus 48 percent of the comparison group.

> Lake Michigan College: 94 percent of *Breaking Through* scaling-up students completed the initial program they enrolled in, versus 62 percent of those in a comparison group; 94 percent completed a College Success course with a grade of C or better, versus 21 percent of the comparison group.

> Owensboro Community & Technical College: 36 percent of *Breaking Through* students completed all phases of a career pathway; 26 percent earned a certificate.

> Pamlico Community College: 84 percent of *Breaking Through* students completed Phase 1 of the career pathway, passing three GED tests; 66 percent of *Breaking Through* students completed the GED, or Phase 2 of the career pathway.

> Tacoma Community College: 31 percent of *Breaking Through* students earned college-level credits within two quarters, versus 4 percent in the comparison group.

Durham Technical Community College, Durham, North Carolina

Encouraging Persistence and Progress

Durham Tech's *Breaking Through* model focuses tightly on the pathway from Adult Basic Education to developmental education. Integrated with developmental education and the academic side of the college via career pathways. *Breaking Through* encourages persistence and academic progress among ABE students.

The college's *Breaking Through* model includes several innovative components:

> A financial incentive program rewards students who pass milestones identified as achievements critical to continued student progress and success.

> A robust advising structure is built around dedicated staff, individual counselors, and *Breaking Through* alumni serving as student mentors.

> A network of relationships with the local Workforce Investment Board and various community-based organizations improves student recruitment and disseminates information about the college's programmatic offerings.

Scale-Up Approach

> Durham Tech has enhanced the financial incentives component of its *Breaking Through* program by identifying alternative funding streams—specifically, private donations. The growth and sustainability of *Breaking Through* are affected most by the availability of financial resources. Creative solutions like this are an absolute requirement for continued success.

> Durham Tech has strong working relationships with its local Workforce Investment Board and with many community-based organizations. These linkages provide important referrals of prospective students to Adult Basic Education. This relationship enables the college to significantly expand its programs, while also creating opportunities for unemployed/dislocated and nontraditional students to take advantage of the college's offerings.

> *Breaking Through* at Durham Tech has cultivated high-leverage communications efforts locally, including gaining significant news coverage.

Lake Michigan College, Benton Harbor, Michigan

Making a Difference in a Hard-hit Region

Lake Michigan College's *Breaking Through* model is designed to create a pipeline for low-skilled adults into postsecondary career and technical programs via the Community and Business Services Division located at the college's Michigan Technical Education Center. M-TEC houses the college's noncredit, corporate training, Adult Basic Skills training, and occupational/technical skills credit and noncredit training programs. *Breaking Through* transitions typically unemployed adults into "workers who study" by providing noncredit training in a career pathway. It facilitates students' access to an integrated career development curriculum, wraparound supportive services, and opportunities to become better prepared academically and to enter credit-bearing postsecondary programs. The primary training areas (career pathways) are in allied health, trades and technologies, and business and computer information.

Scale-Up Approach

> Lake Michigan College has added pathways in the construction trades, energy, and green technologies, significantly broadening the number and types of students affected by *Breaking Through*.

> A special state-funded grant provides occupational training for 52 Adult Basic Education students; a contract with the Workforce Investment Board has provided basic academic and computer skills training for 146 students.

Owensboro Community & Technical College, Kentucky

Breaking Through the Traditional Paradigm

Owensboro Community & Technical College's *Breaking Through* model is an integrated set of instructional and support services. It has three primary components:

> Training HQ: Quick Jobs for Lasting Careers engages underskilled/underserved workers in a multifaceted delivery modality, including career exploration, foundational skill development, and short-term, open-entry program options that provide postsecondary credentials aligned to local labor market data. Training HQ offers a number of career paths within health care, information technology, manufacturing, welding, and other skilled trades. It uses the *Breaking Through* key strategies to improve student outcomes.

> SkillTrain is the college's branding and learner-friendly name for Adult Basic Education. The program encompasses services ranging from addressing low literacy through college readiness and transition offerings.

> Stackable credentials (certificates, diplomas, and Associate's degrees) span the college's robust occupational training programs.

Scale-Up Approach

> OCTC is expanding career pathways and programs of study originating in the Workforce Solutions center, the college's entry point for short-term, customized, occupational skills training. For example, allied health has an explicit pathway-transition plan for students who enter via Workforce Solutions and then move into degree programs.

> A satellite training center in an adjoining county replicates the *Breaking Through* model.

> OCTC leverages various funding streams, such as a U.S. Department of Labor Community-Based Job Training manufacturing grant, to provide access for students with no other means of entry to the college, as well as to optimize opportunities to provide learner supports.

Pamlico Community College, Grantsboro, North Carolina

Providing New Career Pathways to More Students

Pamlico Community College's *Breaking Through* model is distinctive in two ways. First, the college seeks to use *Breaking Through* strategies with its entire student population (about 700 students). Second, PCC has integrated its credit and noncredit departments into one instructional division. This integration eliminates the "silos" found in many community colleges.

Scale-Up Approach

Scaling up *Breaking Through* at Pamlico has focused on three areas:

> The college reaches out to community-based organizations and the county's One-Stop Career Center to recruit students.

> It offers intensive student support services to enhance retention, including paid peer mentors and one-on-one tutoring.

> It is developing career pathways.

As the core of its scale-up strategy, Pamlico opened a Student Success Center that provides a wide array of supportive services. These include assessment, tutoring, peer mentoring, advising, and targeted interventions based on the unique needs of each student.

Tacoma Community College, Washington State

Making I-BEST Better

Tacoma Community College's *Breaking Through* initiative began as part of a Washington State pilot program, the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model. The Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges developed I-BEST to address the changing needs of employers and students. It tested traditional notions that students must first complete all levels of Adult Basic Education before they can advance in workforce education and training programs. In Washington's 34 community and technical colleges, I-BEST pairs workforce training with Adult Basic Education or English as a Second Language so that students learn literacy and workplace skills at the same time. Adult literacy and vocational instructors work together to develop and deliver instruction. Colleges provide higher levels of support and student services to address the needs of nontraditional students.

Tacoma Community College used key *Breaking Through* strategies to develop and enhance I-BEST pathways. It offers integrated pathways for advancing basic-skills students into college-level coursework leading to careers in five fields: accounting; early childhood education; medical office; office professions; and human services. Additional pathways are under development.

Scale-Up Approach

Tacoma Community College's *Breaking Through* scale-up efforts are enhancing the I-BEST model:

> Tacoma revised the Transition to College course and added online education components.

> The college revised higher-level ABE and ESL curricula to align with higher levels of developmental education and English for Academic Purposes. The college plans to make this expansion part of its regular program of studies and has made formal curriculum revisions.

These revisions, approved by the college's curriculum committee in 2010, are the first steps toward developing formal and seamless accelerated pathways from Adult Basic Education through developmental education and English for Academic Purposes.

The scaling-up project facilitated cross-disciplinary conversations and exploration that led to the beginning of a more structured alignment. As a result, students beginning in an Adult Basic Skills program have a clear, accelerated pathway to college-level coursework, with opportunities to bypass the lower levels of developmental studies and English for Academic Purposes. Since completing the scaling-up project, the college has gone further: it is revising course prerequisites in developmental studies and EAP to include completion of the Adult Basic Skills program as sufficient for entry into higher levels of developmental math, English, reading, and EAP. Except for developmental math, all divisions housing developmental studies and basic skills now fall under one department: Transitional Studies.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Adults face multiple barriers in acquiring the skills they need to enter and succeed in college. The statistics are familiar. Ninety-three million Americans—over 40 percent of the adult population—lack the literacy levels necessary to take college-level, credit-bearing coursework. Education and training programs discourage all but the most determined low-skilled adults from completing a path to college, and few financial incentives would lead them to invest the time needed to become eligible for postsecondary education. Research on outcomes, combined with the challenges experienced daily by those in the workforce development field, has affected both our expectations and our aspirations. We have come to expect—and even accept—that nothing will change this situation for a large proportion of these millions of men and women.

What if we start doing things differently? What if we set and reach ambitious goals and reports begin to herald outstanding efforts? What if the research begins to show low-skilled adult learners making major learning gains, attaining credentials, and entering family-sustaining jobs? What if the efforts and organizational structure of community colleges differ—in striking ways—from what typically happens now?

What might that success look like?

Attaining significantly better outcomes requires transformations in policy and in practice, but it begins with a commitment: to believe in and support the advancement of low-skilled, low-literacy students to and through college-credential programs. That is what *Breaking Through* set out to do when Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education launched the initiative in 2004. Transformational change begins with an institutional affirmation to help all students enter and succeed in college, especially those with the most need.

The overarching aim of *Breaking Through*-redesigned career pathways is to ensure that more students earn credentials or degrees that have value in the labor market. This goal is based on the core belief that postsecondary credentials are the gateway to family-supporting wages, and a critical step toward enabling many Americans to escape from transgenerational poverty. Improving the postsecondary educational successes for millions of students will ultimately mean a more equitable and vibrant U.S. economy.

The concept of doing things differently drives *Breaking Through*. The initiative envisions a model in which community colleges thoughtfully and purposefully set up the conditions, resources, and staffing to ensure that:

> Every student succeeds and seizes opportunities to advance into and succeed in career pathways.

> Every student earns a high-quality credential or degree.

- Programs are restructured to remove barriers to student success and provide a "clear line of sight" for students to transition from Adult Basic Education to occupational/technical degree programs and ultimately earn marketable credentials.
- A wide variety of wraparound and support services are available and tailored to the needs of all learners.
- Instructional systems are redesigned to accelerate learning and provide contextualized, engaging coursework and other educational experiences.
- Programs are designed with labor market needs in mind, preparing students for employment that results in family-supporting wages.

This vision is becoming a reality in *Breaking Through*.

THE BREAKING THROUGH INITIATIVE

Breaking Through promotes and strengthens the efforts of innovative community colleges across the country to help low-literacy adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. The goal is to strengthen postsecondary outcomes for low-income adults by focusing on strategies that create more effective pathways through precollege and degree-level programs.

Early in the initiative, *Breaking Through* research identified four barriers that account for the lack of success among low-skilled adult students, and it made recommendations for overcoming these barriers:

Education and training programs for adults discourage all but the most determined from completing a path to college.

Recommended strategy: Reorganize colleges to establish links among programs so that low-income students can easily navigate them for advancement.

Most adult remedial programs proceed at a slow pace without considering the sense of urgency to move quickly that many adults feel.

Recommended strategy: Accelerate the pace of learning so that students complete programs faster.

Many adults with low literacy skills face multiple barriers to success, yet few precollege programs provide support to overcome those barriers.

Recommended strategy: Provide comprehensive supports that help students develop realistic plans and remain enrolled in and attending school, particularly through difficult transition points.

There are almost no financial incentives for low-skilled adults to invest the time needed to become eligible for college.

Recommended strategy: Assure a labor market payoff by offering students intermediate credentials, jobs, and other quick economic rewards.

Since 2004, these recommendations have been central to the efforts of all 35 *Breaking Through* colleges.

SCALING UP SUCCESS

As *Breaking Through* proceeded, Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education recognized that a number of community colleges within the initiative had many program elements in place to effectively advanced low-skilled adults toward credentials. However, in many cases these elements were taking root only in small-scale, cohort-based programs. What would it take to scale up these elements? How does a college significantly expand an exemplary program, both in terms of the number of students involved and in terms of the systems, processes, policies, and relationships enabling scale-up to touch far more areas of the institution and community?

In summer 2009, through a competitive process, five community colleges received $40,000 grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to scale up their *Breaking Through* programs:

> Durham Technical Community College, Durham, North Carolina;

> Lake Michigan College, Benton Harbor, Michigan;

> Owensboro Community & Technical College, Owensboro, Kentucky;

> Pamlico Community College, Grantsboro, North Carolina; and

> Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, Washington.

JFF prepared the case studies that follow to aid practitioners, policymakers, foundation staff members, and others interested in strategies to advance low-skilled adults into increasingly higher levels of learning. The case studies highlight a diverse collection of colleges, ranging from Pamlico, the smallest community college in North Carolina, with just over 700 students, to Tacoma, an urban institution with more than 15,000 students.

Achieving Ambitious Goals highlights the many successful models and strategies employed by innovative community colleges within the *Breaking Through* initiative to scale up their efforts to help low-skilled adults prepare for and succeed in attaining technical and occupational credentials. These five colleges have demonstrated practices that fundamentally change the way we structure foundational learning and pathways toward credentials for Adult Basic Skills and other noncredit-bound students. Along with the other innovative community colleges participating in *Breaking Through*, they have created viable career pathways that have greatly improved the ability of low-skilled adults to earn postsecondary credentials.

Further, these case studies illustrate how *Breaking Through* works to ensure scale and impact in a number of ways, including using data to promote institutional change to help students progress along pathways toward credentials or degrees. *Breaking Through* colleges commit to collecting data on several core indicators and to taking part in comparison-group analyses in order to measure impact.

Because the colleges are engaged in the research and design of innovative models and practices, a strong measurement component is embedded within each college's data plan. The colleges all commit to measuring and evaluating their various interventions and to codifying practices that work (and identifying those that do not). In this way, the colleges and the field both benefit from knowing what seem to be the most effective strategies and components.

JFF's Eight Elements of Scale

Historically, scale has been defined in one-dimensional ways, focusing on numbers of students, sites, or partners. Jobs for the Future provides a multidimensional framework of scale-up for *Breaking Through* colleges to consider as they explore ways to expand their impact:

Programmatic Growth: Develop strategies that ensure that student recruitment, progression, and completion in *Breaking Through* pathways happen for a large number of students. Scale-up efforts must significantly increase the number of students served, and not just in one or two courses.

Internal Partnerships: Engage partners in multiple departments across the college. This engagement is to promote deep institutional ownership and shared responsibility for ensuring all students succeed, not just the best prepared students.

External Partnerships: Connect with external partners, including other colleges, employers, Workforce Investment Boards, and community organizations. Strong relationships improve the diversity of students engaged and strengthen alignment.

Communications: Determine an intentional strategy for reaching out to internal and external partners, as well as to college leadership and faculty engaged in non-*Breaking Through* programs. This facilitates an environment in which *Breaking Through* approaches can be used across the campus.

Sustainability: Construct a sustainability plan with long-term goals in mind. A long-term plan for sustainable funding is essential because growth happens over a long period of time.

Data: Develop a systematized data-collection protocol, and generate data and reports to promote and support continuous improvement.

Policy: Collaborate with college and community stakeholders to construct an institutional policy plan. Begin with an audit to identify which policies most affect the *Breaking Through* model. Then develop a plan for removing policy barriers to support growth, or revise policies that constrain the ability to scale up the model.

Leadership: Solicit support from the college's senior leadership, board of trustees, and faculty leaders and routinely report progress and information.

Several *Breaking Through* colleges also participate in *Achieving the Dream*, a national student success initiative that began in 2004. The centrality of data for continuous improvement and in engaging key college and community stakeholders to discuss the implications is a core value emanating from that initiative. The *Achieving the Dream* data model has directly influenced many *Breaking Through* colleges, resulting in a more sophisticated approach to data collection and evaluation as a standard of practice.

These colleges demonstrate that we need to intensify national efforts to educate our nation's most underprepared students. We believe that the *Breaking Through* movement can and will change the way America's adult education system approaches entry-level skill building and the creation of viable pathways leading to credentials.

DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Encouraging Persistence and Progress

Location:
Durham, North Carolina

Enrollment:
8,000 credit students; 18,000 noncredit students

Key college contact:
Christine Kelly-Kleese, Dean, Student Engagement and Transitions, kleesec@durhamtech.edu

Website:
www.durhamtech.edu

Summary:
Breaking Through is integrated with developmental education and the academic side of the college via career pathways. It uses financial incentives and intrusive advising to encourage persistence and academic progress among Adult Basic Education students.

DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BREAKING THROUGH MODEL

Durham Tech's *Breaking Through* model focuses tightly on the pathway from Adult Basic Education to the academic side of the college via career pathways. *Breaking Through* encourages persistence and academic progress among ABE students.

The college's *Breaking Through* model includes three innovative components:

> A financial incentive program rewards students who pass key milestone points identified as critical to continued student progress and success.

> A robust advising structure is built around dedicated staff, individual counselors, and *Breaking Through* alumni serving as student mentors.

> A network of relationships with the local Workforce Investment Board and various community-based organizations improves student recruitment and disseminates information about the college's programmatic offerings.

SCALE-UP APPROACH

Durham Tech implemented several key strategies as part of its *Breaking Through* scale-up efforts:

> The college has enhanced the financial incentives component of its *Breaking Through* program by finding alternative funding streams—specifically, private donations. The program's growth and sustainability are affected most by the availability of financial resources. Creative solutions like this are absolutely required for continued success.

> Durham Tech has strong working relationships with its local Workforce Investment Board and many community-based organizations. These linkages provide important referrals of prospective students to Adult Basic Education. This relationship enables the college to significantly expand its programs while also creating opportunities for unemployed/dislocated and nontraditional students to become knowledgeable about and take advantage of the college's offerings.

> *Breaking Through* at Durham Tech has cultivated high-leverage communications efforts locally, including gaining significant news coverage.

The Incentive Model at Durham Technical Community College

1.	**Enroll in Adult Basic Education** > Peer Mentoring > Career Planning > Contextualized Curriculum	
2.	**Progress in ABE** > Level Completion in Reading, Math, and Language	**Incentive** > $50-$300 Cash
3.	**Attend Required Information Sessions and Workshops (4)**	**Incentive** > $20 Cash/Workshop
4.	**Enroll in the AHS/GED Program** > Adult High School Diploma or General Education Development	**Incentive** > $100 Bookstore Voucher
5.	**Progress in the AHS/GED Program** > Complete at least six weeks	**Incentive** > $50 Cash
6.	**Take College Transition Course** > Career Planning > Orientatio to College > Placement Testing > Study Skills and Time Management Instruction	**Incentive** > Tutition-Free College-Level Course Certificate
7.	**Graduate from AHS or GED Program**	**Incentive** > Tuition-Free College-Level Certificate > $100 Cash
8.	**Enroll in a College-Level Program or Complete an Occupational Extension Program**	**Incentive** > $75 Cash

BACKGROUND

Durham Technical Community College joined *Breaking Through* in 2006 with support from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation. The college's four campuses in Durham and Orange counties serve a broad educational mission, encompassing the advanced postsecondary education and workforce training needs of nearby Research Triangle Park, as well as providing adult literacy and basic-skills instruction for adult learners.

The regional economy depends heavily on education, health care, and manufacturing. Durham County is home to several major employers, including Duke University, IBM, Nortel Networks, and Fidelity Employer Services. The population of Durham Tech's service area is generally younger, better educated, and growing faster than that of North Carolina as a whole. The county unemployment rate was 7.7 percent in January 2011, compared to the state rate of 10.5 percent. Yet within the city of Durham, home of the college's main campus, the poverty rate is nearly 25 percent above the national average, consistent with many cities with an urban core.

TARGET POPULATION

Durham Tech's *Breaking Through* model targets low-skilled unemployed or underemployed adults who initially place at the Adult Basic Education level. The initiative targets two pathways: students may pursue either the Health Technologies or Industrial Technologies career pathway from ABE to GED or Adult High School and into a college transition course or noncredit career training.

Impact

- *Breaking Through* students transitioned from Adult Basic Education to Adult Secondary Education at higher rates than their non-*Breaking Through* counterparts. For the 2009-10 program year, students made the following gains:
  - In language, 66 percent of *Breaking Through* students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9, versus 56 percent of the comparison group based on TABE scores.
  - In math, 52 percent of *Breaking Through* students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9, versus 41 percent of the comparison group.
  - In reading, 63 percent of *Breaking Through* students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9, versus 48 percent of the comparison group.
- The persistence rate for all *Breaking Through* students from fall 2009 to spring 2010 was 62 percent, versus 53 percent for a random sample of non-*Breaking Through* students. Over the same period, the persistence rate for scaling-up students was 80 percent.
- The three-year graduation rate for *Breaking Through* students is 10 percentage points higher than that of non-*Breaking Through* students: 35.5 percent of *Breaking Through* students graduated by the end of the third year, versus 25.8 percent for the comparison group of fall 2007 ABE students who tested at the 6.0 to 8.9 grade level.
- 27 percent of *Breaking Through* graduates of Adult High School or GED enrolled in and completed at least one college-level for-credit course, versus 21 percent of non-*Breaking Through* graduates.

KEY INNOVATIONS

Student Support

"We understand the critical need to create authentic relationships with our students and step in when they need advice or support to help them persist," says Christine Kelly-Kleese, Dean of Student Engagement and Transitions. "In addition to faculty and staff, *Breaking Through* students benefit from guidance they get from peers who have walked the same path before them."

Persistent and dynamic student advising is at the heart of Durham Tech's success with *Breaking Through*. In addition to intensive, hands-on, individualized advising provided by the college's regular support-services staff, Durham Tech employs three *Breaking Through* graduates as student mentors. These mentors are students at the college, and thus limited to working fewer than fifteen hours a week. Even so, they play a critical role in demonstrating an understanding of the barriers facing members of the *Breaking Through* cohort and in supporting their success. Unlike many traditional advisors, the student mentors speak from personal experience about how they overcame the considerable challenges facing the typical *Breaking Through* student. They serve as living proof that the strategies they recommend can work. This peer-advising strategy has increased motivation on the part of *Breaking Through* students.

Financial Incentives Model

Through a donation made by a college supporter, Durham Tech implemented a financial incentives program to promote success for *Breaking Through* participants. Students may earn up to $735 in incentive awards as they progress. For advancing from Adult Basic Education to enrollment in academic courses, students earn up to $100 each time they complete what the college has deemed a high-impact milestone, such as advancing a grade level in their TABE scores or finishing ABE. For example, students earn $50 for advancing one level in ABE reading, math, or language (a maximum of $300 total for advancing two levels in each subject area). For enrolling in the GED program or Adult High School, they earn a $100 book voucher. Students also earn book vouchers and tuition credit for up to two academic courses once they take the college transition course, complete the GED or Adult High School diploma, and transition into a college-level program of study.

Many of the incentives are awarded during public ceremonies. College staff members believe that these events serve a dual purpose: they celebrate student success and promote the advantages of becoming a *Breaking Through* student.

Durham Tech recognizes the value and necessity of sustaining the *Breaking Through* program. To achieve this continuity, the college is seeking dedicated funding to support *Breaking Through* and to award scholarships for student recognition. And to support this effort over the long term, the college is establishing an endowment through the DTCC Foundation. This endowment would earmark earnings generated from contributions of principal to be used

for student success initiatives that are part of *Breaking Through* or similar initiatives. The college will make prospective donors aware of the successes of *Breaking Through* students, encouraging supporters to provide financial support for this life-changing work.

Data Collection and Analysis

Breaking Through has a strong relationship with the college's Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Planning Department. Data collection and analyses are integrated into *Breaking Through*, and Durham Tech is a leader among *Breaking Through* colleges with respect to utilizing data-driven decision making in the design of its programs. Institutional research staff assisted with developing a Microsoft Access front-end interface that links directly with the North Carolina Community College System's student unit-record database. *Breaking Through* staff can quickly and easily collect relevant student data, construct comparison groups, and generate informative reports.

This commitment to using institutional data for college transformation in *Breaking Through* was influenced heavily by the national *Achieving the Dream* initiative, which the college joined in 2004. *Achieving the Dream* promotes the core principle of identifying and analyzing key data indicators to spotlight ways to increase student success. Durham Tech has scaled up its data analysis to increase the impact of its *Breaking Through* model.

Durham Tech has donated the Access file and related instructional documents to the *Breaking Through* library of tools and resources. These resources are available to any *Breaking Through* college at no cost.

STRENGTHS

Leadership: Dean Kelly-Kleese serves as the director of *Breaking Through*. As dean of Student Engagement and Transitions, she can engage in high-level conversations across departments, promoting collaboration. She has also helped to guide the college's participation in *Achieving the Dream*, and she recently launched a new *Gateway to College* program designed to give young people who have recently dropped out of high school the opportunity to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. Therefore, the leadership and positional authority for this work have been instrumental in integrating (rather than diffusing) several key initiatives that have enhanced the college's overall improvement effort.

In fall 2010, Student Engagement and Transitions also launched *Project Degree*, an initiative for developmental education students built on learning communities. This effort is informed by the *Breaking Through* incentives model, and *Breaking Through* students who move from basic skills into developmental education may participate in *Project Degree*. In fact, a *Breaking Through* student is part of the first *Project Degree* cohort.

This type of dual role—where one individual or office directs initiatives with overlapping goals and designs—is highly effective as colleges engage in resource-intensive, grant-supported programs. Durham Tech has combined *Achieving the Dream* and *Breaking Through* in ways

that improve efficiency and combine design elements for higher levels of student outcomes. The ongoing support and engagement of Durham Tech president William Ingram and the board of trustees has also helped ensure the continuation of the program.

Celebrating Success: Staff believe that their success at moving students through Adult Basic Education is not due to any one programmatic feature but instead to a collegewide culture of success they foster among *Breaking Through* students. For example, as earlier noted, incentives are awarded to students as part of a public ceremony celebrating student achievement. This generates publicity for the program and encourages new students to join and succeed in *Breaking Through*. As one student remarked after a ceremony recognizing her completion of the program, "It was the first time anyone had ever clapped for me."

In addition, *Breaking Through* alumni who serve as student mentors provide public examples that college is a real possibility for low-skilled adults. This reinforces the college's focus on student success.

Program Publicity: Durham Tech recognizes and understands the extraordinary value of creating and sustaining publicity for the program. The college actively promotes relationships with local communications outlets and has received consistent coverage. This commitment to communications and public relations reinforces recruitment efforts and visibility to cultivate resources for the incentives program.

CHALLENGES

Funding: Durham Tech has found success in circumventing some of the funding challenges that community colleges face. Some of this is due to grants. For example, an upcoming North Carolina expansion of *Breaking Through*, supported by the Walmart Foundation, provides an opportunity to continue this work with further funding to support education and workforce development for low-skilled adults. Additionally, demonstrated success through *Breaking Through* has convinced the college to support a permanent *Breaking Through* coordinator, paid out of institutional funds. This permanent hire institutionalizes the initiative and enhances its sustainability.

However, Durham Tech still faces challenges associated with the cost of the financial incentives. Despite the relative modesty of the incentives, their continuation is contingent upon support from donors and lacks year-to-year stability.

Staffing: As a byproduct of Durham Tech's active involvement in multiple student success initiatives, *Breaking Through* staff sometimes find themselves overextended. This condition is a reflection of "initiative fatigue," an issue that Jobs for the Future staff have observed at other colleges. High-performing and successful colleges, willing to innovate in terms of models or delivery systems, often receive opportunities and invitations to seek additional funding from a variety of sources. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for staff to ensure that various interventions are tested and measured, while at the same time they operate high-volume programs.

One possible solution would be to discuss related initiatives in the context of preparing memoranda of understanding or other grant agreements for new projects. This would help align the various projects and make it easier for the college to benefit from efficiencies of scale. Colleges are also undertaking strategies to create cross-functional "grant implementation" teams to ensure integration and efficiencies among various departments.

Employer Linkages: A systematic college effort to engage local employers to address credential/degree needs, including up-to-date information about job and skill demands, has yet to take place. Currently, offerings are based on limited local data or career pathways dictated by state-level initiatives. Durham Tech has not incorporated them into a stackable certificate model. The college has used software from Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc., to conduct an annual survey of employers' workforce needs, but the company's license has expired, further challenging Durham Tech's ability to analyze the regional labor market. The college is aware of the importance of developing robust employment data, and a committee is seeking ways to improve workforce alignment.

LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

Financial Incentives: Offering cash and award incentives to students, especially low-income students who are multitasking between work and school, can encourage progress and completion. Durham Tech has demonstrated that payments need not be large, nor does a financial incentive program need to cost the college a lot to effectively promote increased student success.

Motivational Incentives: By building a culture of success, celebrating student accomplishments, and clearly rewarding demonstrated persistence, Durham Tech uses *Breaking Through* to promote student outcomes in a number of nonmonetary ways. Early indications are that these approaches, combined with other key strategies, pay dividends in increased student retention and persistence.

Data-driven Decision Making: Building on lessons from *Achieving the Dream*, Durham Tech has integrated significant data analysis into its program evaluation process. This has yielded a robust database on *Breaking Through* students, as well as impressive data on early outcomes from the program.

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

Making a Difference in a Hard-Hit Region

Location:
Benton Harbor, Michigan

Enrollment:
7,000 credit and noncredit students

Key college contact:
Jenny Schanker, Chair of Transitional Studies,
schanker@lakemichigancollege.edu

Website:
www.lakemichigancollege.edu/wti

Summary:
By targeting all of its noncredit students with wraparound support services and an integrated career development curriculum, Lake Michigan College uses *Breaking Through* models to offer more career pathways to more students in a region suffering from devastating unemployment and underemployment.

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

BREAKING THROUGH MODEL

Lake Michigan College's *Breaking Through* model is designed to create a pipeline for low-skilled adults into postsecondary career and technical programs via the Community and Business Services Division of the college's Michigan Technical Education Center. M-TEC, located in a separate building just off the main campus, houses the college's corporate training, Adult Basic Skills training, and occupational/technical skills credit and noncredit training programs. *Breaking Through* transitions typically unemployed adults into "workers who study" by providing noncredit training in a career pathway. It facilitates access to an integrated career development curriculum, wraparound supportive services, and opportunities for students to become better prepared academically and to enter credit-bearing postsecondary programs. The primary training areas (career pathways) are in allied health, trades and technologies, and business and computer information.

SCALE-UP APPROACH

Lake Michigan College has two primary scale-up strategies for its *Breaking Through* initiative:

> Program expansion: The college has added pathways in the construction trades, energy, and green technologies, significantly broadening the number and types of students affected by the initiative.

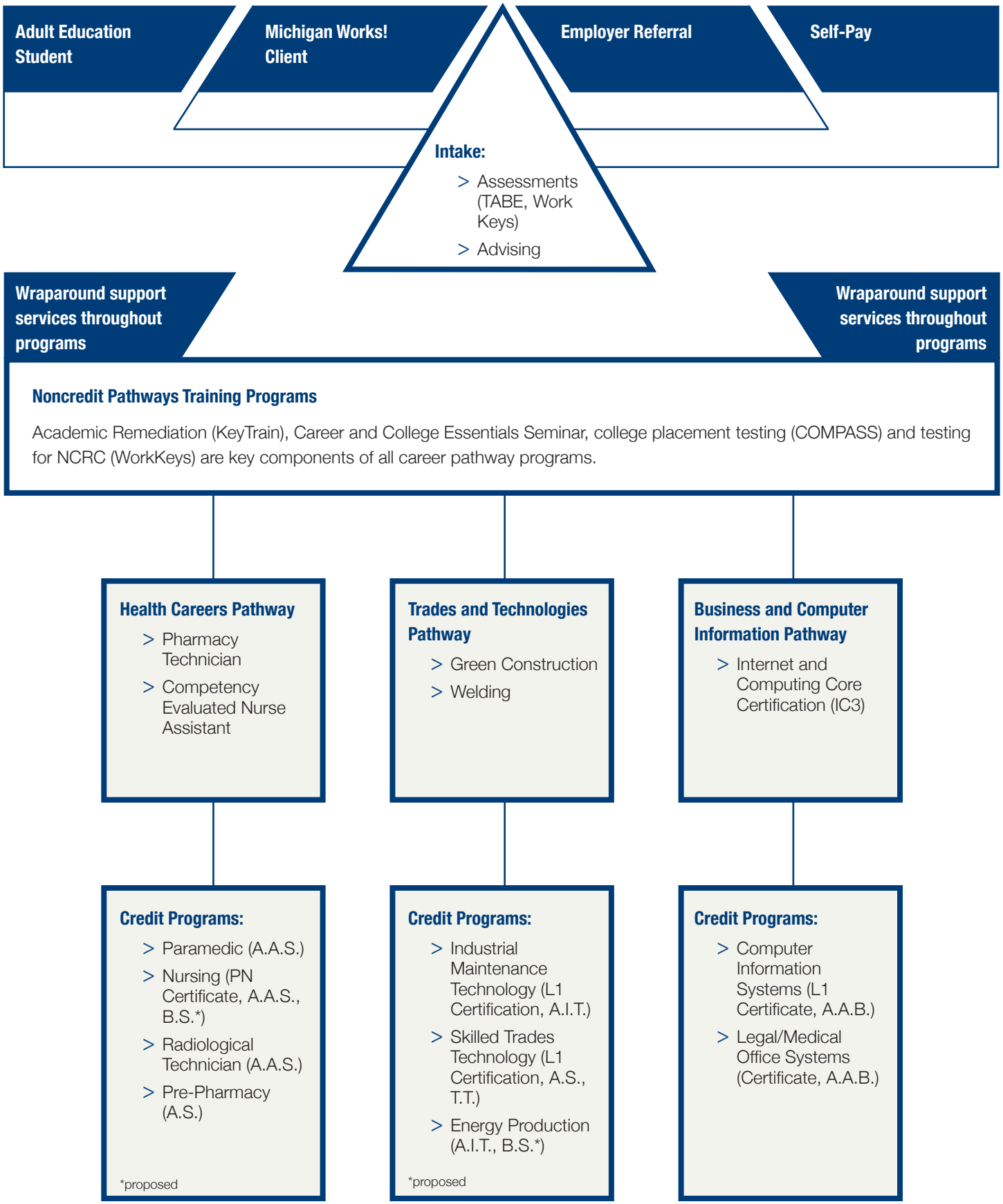
> Leveraging additional funding streams: A special state-funded Workforce Investment Act grant provides occupational training for 52 Adult Education students, and a contract with the Workforce Investment Board has provided basic academic and computer skills training for 146 students.

BACKGROUND

Lake Michigan College became a *Breaking Through* college in 2008 as part of the Mott Foundation-funded Michigan *Breaking Through* network. Located in Benton Harbor, it serves Van Buren and Berrien counties (which have a combined population of 240,000) in the southwest part of the state, while also drawing students from seven neighboring counties.

Benton Harbor's economy is emblematic of Michigan's, with double-digit unemployment (11.1 percent in the Niles-Benton Harbor Metropolitan Statistical Area in December 2010), the closing of manufacturing plants, and a crumbling infrastructure. The college is regarded

Lake Michigan College's Breaking Through Model



as a vehicle of opportunity in an economically compromised region. This makes the *Breaking Through* initiative especially important for connecting unemployed and dislocated workers to training and careers with sustainable wages.

TARGET POPULATION

Lake Michigan College's *Breaking Through* model targets unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers, Adult Education students, and employer referrals. However, the overall approach is for all noncredit students to be part of *Breaking Through*, including Michigan Works! clients receiving TANF, WIA, and No Worker Left Behind funding and students who pay tuition themselves or use employer-provided tuition assistance.

Impact

> Since 2009, Lake Michigan College has offered 25 *Breaking Through* programs, including welding, certified nursing assistant, and pharmacy technician training, as well as road construction apprenticeship. To date, 249 students have completed these programs; 90 percent have earned a National Career Readiness Certificate of bronze or better.

> 45 percent of *Breaking Through* students demonstrated gains in reading; 43 percent showed gains in mathematics.

> 94 percent of *Breaking Through* scaling-up students completed the initial program they enrolled in, versus 62 percent in a comparison group; 94 percent completed a College Success course with a grade of C or better, versus 21 percent of the comparison group.

> 39 percent of the *Breaking Through* cohort who completed the first phase of the career pathway reenrolled in a credit or additional noncredit program.

KEY INNOVATIONS

Integrated Academic and Skills Training with Support Services

"We have really used the *Breaking Through* model here to integrate our services in ways we never thought of before," says Jenny Schanker, Chair of Transitional Studies. Lake Michigan College previously offered skills training, customized training, and student supportive services separately and did not necessarily integrate the college's offerings well. Now the *Breaking Through* process has become the college's standard practice in delivering noncredit career pathway training to every student entering the M-TEC, the college's noncredit training portal.

Breaking Through staff designed a system that provides incoming students with core academic skill building leading to occupational training with integrated support services (e.g., career exploration, job-readiness preparation, and other college and career essentials). The model also adds intentional transition points into for-credit courses to facilitate a career pathway to a degree, if that is a student's objective. When considering the design of the college's model and the enhancements that *Breaking Through* has provided, there is clear evidence that the college has developed a more holistic system of training and career pathways for students.

Foundational Credential and Employability: The National Career Readiness Certificate

Every student in the college's *Breaking Through* model takes a WorkKeys test before and after participating in the initiative. Scores on this test correspond with the bronze, silver, gold, and platinum levels on the state-endorsed National Career Readiness Certificate, a foundational credential that documents workforce-readiness skills, with assessments in reading for information, locating information, and applied math. The college has integrated this component into *Breaking Through* to support the employability of students. Increasingly, employers are accepting the National Career Readiness Certificate, and every public high school junior in Michigan now takes WorkKeys.

Breaking Through uses WorkKeys as a pre-test and post-test indicator of student progress, which helps the college assess student readiness for various workforce programs. *Breaking Through* students who complete the program have a competitive advantage in the labor market because the National Career Readiness Certificate is a portable companion credential to a college certificate or degree.

Exemplary Workforce System Partnership

Lake Michigan College collaborates closely with Michigan Works!, the local WIA One-Stop Career Center. The relationship includes funding and investments for clients to complete a variety of career pathways in high-demand fields. It also includes data-sharing agreements, the use of the Michigan Works! Business Intelligence Division for labor market data and analysis, and the participation of Michigan Works! staff in the college's programming and advising.

The relationship between the college and Michigan Works! began with leadership from Lake Michigan College president Robert Harrison, who led the effort to position the college as the primary service provider for the One-Stop Center. The partnership is enriched in that each organization includes the other in its strategic plans. This connection is the primary referral pipeline through which *Breaking Through* students enter the college.

STRENGTHS

Scale-up: Lake Michigan College has both ramped up existing *Breaking Through* pathways and developed new avenues for program growth that go beyond the plans with which the college joined the initiative. The *Breaking Through* team has reached out to new community partners and funders to help expand efforts, and this cross-funding leverage has proved successful and sustainable. The college's model combines noncredit courses with career-specific courses and uses the National Career Readiness Certificate and a college success workshop with soft-skills training as the basis for student advancement.

Relationship with Michigan Works!: The college's relationship with Michigan Works! goes beyond student referrals and contract training. The two organizations collaborate on the design and delivery of programs and services that assist students in earning credentials and preparing to find employment, contributing to improving the region's economic health.

Network building: In February 2010, Lake Michigan College hosted three intensive workshops on *Breaking Through* for the staff of the college and the local One-Stop Career Center. Participants included LMC advisors and Michigan Works! career counselors. Workshop topics included case-study discussions, an exploration of the culture of poverty, and resources available to students through a variety of funding streams. This networking enhanced communication and working relationships between college and WIB personnel, as well as improving student services.

Lake Michigan College hosted an event for all Michigan community colleges to promote the *Breaking Through* model and build a more extensive statewide *Breaking Through* network. This event illustrated ways to structure career pathways and integrate career planning for students entering through noncredit basic-skills or occupational training.

Leveraging resources effectively: The college has undertaken an entrepreneurial approach to leveraging resources to support the scaling-up effort in several ways:

> The creation of a collegewide Student Success Steering Council to integrate the college's participation in various national initiatives (e.g., *Achieving the Dream* and *Breaking Through*);

> The integration of activities funded by a state Adult Education WIA grant into the overall *Breaking Through* model; and

> The integration of Michigan Works! funding and investments into the model as a key strength to support sustainability and scale-up efforts.

Program promotion: Lake Michigan College has developed communications strategies and outreach materials that clearly support strong student recruitment and community visibility. The college has initiated several open houses at the M-TEC training center and designed various brochures and websites.

CHALLENGES

Credit considerations: Lake Michigan College has made great strides in overcoming the barriers to smooth student transitions into for-credit coursework. However, students in some *Breaking Through* programs go through rigorous training (e.g., a 630-hour green construction program), yet they do not always earn college credit, even if they get a job. Many colleges face this issue: how to bridge noncredit and for-credit offerings.

True career pathways: While the college's overall *Breaking Through* model is strong and elicits results, each program of study needs a "road map" with intentional course sequencing. There is no clear pathway for students beyond the entry certificate programming. The college

needs to map the primary curricular programs into seamless career pathways, with clear next steps for students beyond the initial credential. This will require additional expectations and training with *Breaking Through* advisors, financial aid, and other supportive services to help students understand the next set of steps.

Stronger connection to employers: While college programming responds to changing labor market conditions, the link to employers remains couched in fairly traditional "advisory" terms. A more intensive career-pathways approach could ensure a stronger role for employers and stronger job-placement connections, alleviating student anxiety about getting jobs. The link to the National Career Readiness Certificate could serve as a central component in a more active effort to place program graduates in jobs and to reach out to employers.

LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

Leadership: Lake Michigan College president Robert Harrison previously served in the college's workforce development division and has a keen understanding of the value of *Breaking Through* and, more broadly, workforce development training. Thus, the college has assigned a high priority to the initiative and implemented several policies that have aided in creating effective integration strategies. Leadership also comes from the dedicated and highly competent staff administering the program. *Breaking Through* at Lake Michigan College exemplifies how strong leadership can push an initiative to a high level of performance.

Vision: The staff administering *Breaking Through* at Lake Michigan College also manage the college's participation in *Achieving the Dream*, another national initiative with a focus on success for community college students. The crossover of concepts and strategies is apparent in the design of programs and support services that cut across the initiatives, including a case management approach to advising and efforts to increase the effectiveness of developmental education.

Level of integration: Lake Michigan College has combined Adult Basic Skills, occupational training, and supportive services into a model that aids all students, enhancing retention and success.

Commitment to skills certification and a link to the job market: The college consistently uses labor market data from Michigan Works! to ensure that programming supports and leads to job placement.

OWENSBORO COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Breaking Through the Traditional Paradigm

Location:
Owensboro, Kentucky

Enrollment:
6,328 students

Key college contact:
Cynthia Fiorella, Vice-President of Workforce and Economic Development, cindy.fiorella@kctcs.edu

Website:
http://www.octc.kctcs.edu/Workforce_Solutions.aspx

Summary:
Owensboro Community & Technical College applies *Breaking Through* concepts to all Workforce Solutions programming, rebranded its Adult Basic Education program as a SkillTrain Center, and offers underskilled/underserved workers training tailored to the local job market, with the added benefit of embedded postsecondary credentials that support progress along a career pathway.

OWENSBORO COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

BREAKING THROUGH MODEL

Owensboro Community & Technical College's *Breaking Through* model is an integrated set of instructional and support services. It has three primary components:

> Training HQ: Quick Jobs for Lasting Careers engages underskilled/underserved workers in a multifaceted delivery modality that includes career exploration, foundational skill development, and short-term, open-entry program options that provide postsecondary credentials aligned to local labor market data. Training HQ offers a number of career paths within health care, information technology, manufacturing, welding, and other skilled trades. It uses the *Breaking Through* key strategies to improve student outcomes.

> SkillTrain is the college's branding and learner-friendly name for Adult Basic Education. The program encompasses services ranging from low literacy through college readiness and transition.

> Stackable credentials (certificates, diplomas, and Associate's degrees) span the college's robust occupational training programs.

SCALE-UP APPROACH

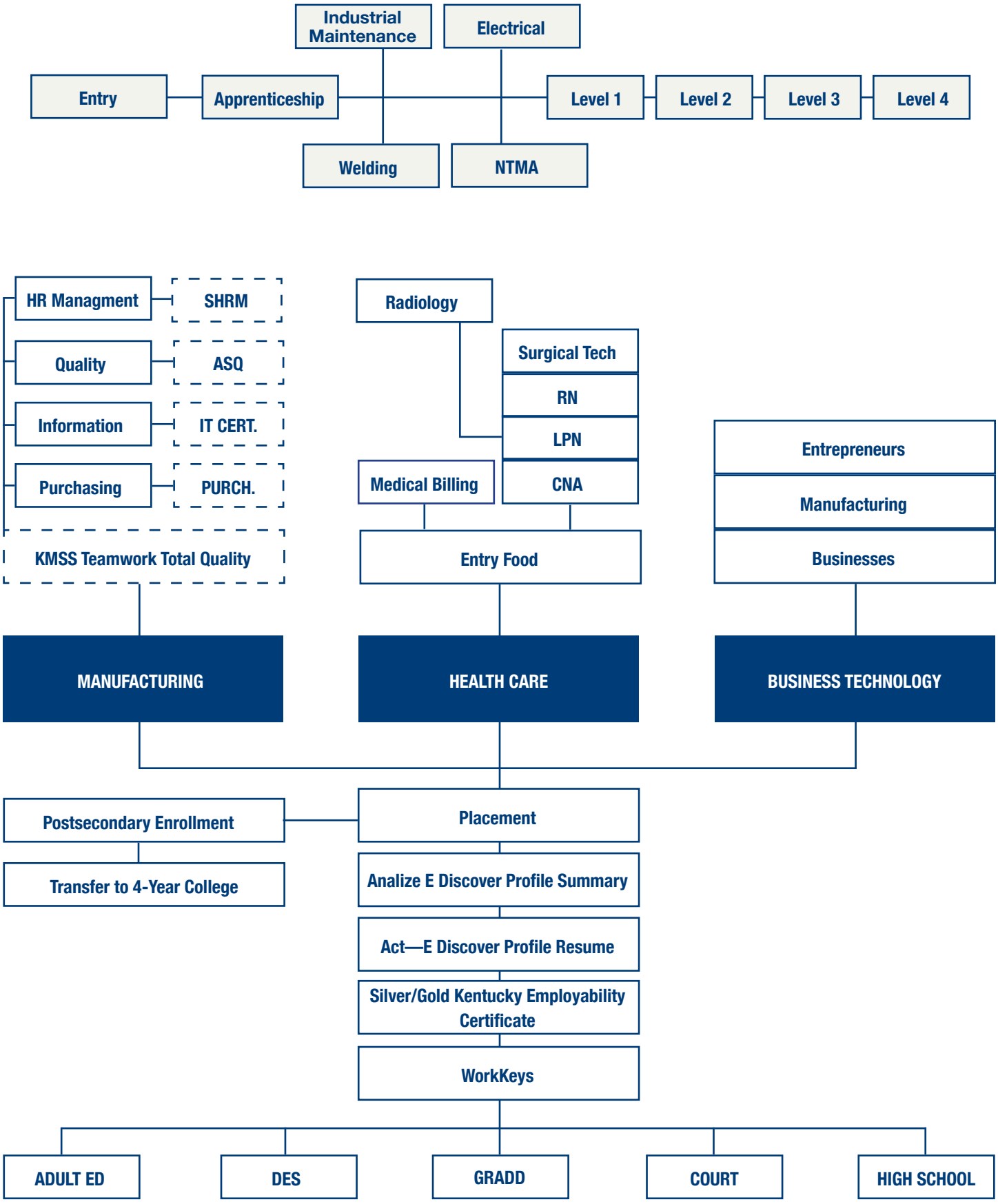
Owensboro Community & Technical College has three strategies for scaling up its *Breaking Through* model:

> OCTO is expanding career pathways and programs of study originating in the Workforce Solutions Center, OCTC's entry point for short-term, customized, occupational skills training. For example, allied health has an explicit pathway-transition plan for students who enter via Workforce Solutions and then move into degree programs.

> A satellite training center in an adjoining county replicates the *Breaking Through* model.

> OCTO leverages various funding streams, such as a U.S. Department of Labor Community-Based Job Training manufacturing grant, to provide access for students with no other means of entry to the college, as well as to optimize opportunities to provide learner supports.

Owensboro Community & Technical College Multiple Career Pathways Model



BACKGROUND

An original member of the *Breaking Through* initiative from 2004, Owensboro Community & Technical College is located in Owensboro, Kentucky's third-largest city. The town and college sit along the Ohio River in western Kentucky. The economy, founded on mining, logging, river transport, and manufacturing, is in transition, having lost 1,700 jobs between November 2008 and November 2009. However, Owensboro's unemployment rate declined recently, from 11.0 percent in February 2010 to 8.8 percent in November 2010.

OCTC's workforce development and academic offerings are complemented in the city by a campus of Western Kentucky University (a regional four-year public postsecondary institution) and two private four-year colleges, Kentucky Wesleyan College and Brescia University. The four colleges have forged strong relationships and articulation agreements with one another to meet the community's educational and training needs.

TARGET POPULATION

Owensboro Community & Technical College has identified several target populations for outreach: individuals pursuing GED/ESL instruction; students wishing to enroll in occupational/vocational training; unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers; and individuals referred from the local One-Stop Career Center. More important, OCTC's approach is to consider all students who enter via Workforce Solutions as part of *Breaking Through*. The college does not view *Breaking Through* as a separate or pilot project or one serving a single cohort of students.

Impact

- In 2010, 155 students participated in *Breaking Through*.
- 89 percent of OCTC's *Breaking Through* students progressed from the first to the second term, versus 81 percent of students in a comparison group.
- 85 percent of the students who progressed enrolled in the first Career Pathways class; 68 percent enrolled in the next-in-sequence Career Pathways class.
- 90 percent of the students who progressed completed their first Career Technical course with a grade of C or better.
- 36 percent of *Breaking Through* students completed all phases of a Career Pathway; 26 percent earned a certificate.

KEY INNOVATIONS

Use of Breaking Through Concepts as a Standard Delivery System and Modality

"It's the way we do business now," says Cynthia Fiorella, OCTC Vice President of Workforce and Economic Development. "It's not a model; it's a delivery system. We are delivering courses and services in nontraditional ways for the benefit of all our students."

According to *Breaking Through* staff, the college previously compartmentalized its various divisions. The Adult Basic Education office was not well connected to occupational training, which was not well integrated with the college's credit and academic programs. With *Breaking Through*, OCTC created a holistic delivery system, with all services and most training programs located in the same complex. Now, when students enter the Workforce Solutions alternative delivery programs, each receives a skills assessment and is then directed to appropriate services and instruction.

By reorganizing into a more integrated unit, the college can better assess students, identify funding, and ensure that students progress through Adult Basic Education and seamlessly into certificate programs. Students receive services to build or refresh their core skills when needed. Support services (e.g., advising, tutoring, career planning) are available on site, and students can seamlessly transition from Adult Basic Education into stackable certificate programs and career pathways when ready.

Branding Adult Basic Education as SkillTrain

Kentucky, like several other states, delivers Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, and GED services through some of the state's community and technical colleges. However, many students feel a stigma attached to entering ABE programs. Negative ideas about what it means to be an ABE student can be a powerful barrier, preventing those who need foundational learning from entering a program. To counteract these negative perceptions, OCTC has rebranded its ABE program as SkillTrain, a positive label designed to encourage enrollment and success.

SkillTrain is delivered within the Workforce Solutions Center. OCTC believes that ABE is the foundational element of its *Breaking Through* model and has deeply integrated it into the fabric of the college and at the Workforce Solutions Center. Students feel as if they are in college while enrolled in ABE-related services. SkillTrain students see the program as the start of a sequenced career pathway, which is particularly important for nontraditional students and dislocated workers.

A central characteristic of the college's *Breaking Through* career-pathways model is the initial assessment of students with the TABE test. Depending on the outcome of this assessment, students may need foundational academic skills building. This includes options for one-on-one and small-group instruction, as well as self-study options using supplemental developmental software programs, such as KeyTrain, that are effective and well liked by *Breaking Through* students and instructors.

Training HQ

Training HQ offers traditional delivery options in compressed or flexible scheduling formats, as well as a hybrid option of computer-delivered, self-paced training programs for selected occupational tracks when students enter the *Breaking Through* system. Efforts are made to build on the synergies gained through learning-community cohorts, while also providing busy adults with scheduling options (e.g., nonstandard or rolling enrollment windows). The training is competency based, enabling students to make considerable progress toward career goals as they acquire new skills. The college also makes a considerable effort to ensure that career pathways lead to employment by utilizing information from the local Workforce Investment Board about what jobs are in demand. In focus groups, students (including dislocated workers with poor computer skills) have indicated that Training HQ learning options are easy to use.

Stackable Credits

OCTC places a high value on attaching as much credit as possible to learning and learning outcomes, even for programs that have historically been thought of as noncredit. As a result, OCTC's *Breaking Through* model makes it possible for students engaged in courses or programs that are shorter than the standard academic semester to receive partial credits. Additionally, these partial credits and associated credentials can all "stack" toward the award of the next credential or degree within their *Breaking Through* tracks.

STRENGTHS

Institutionalization: *Breaking Through* staff have expanded the model's core concepts to influence the entire college and provide extensive career and growth opportunities for more students. The allied health pathway and manufacturing pathways begin with certificates that stack into four-year degrees based on a 2+2 articulation agreement with the local campus of Western Kentucky University.

Breaking Through has also influenced OCTC's utilization of student support services. For example, the allied health pathway deploys extensive support services across the learner's course continuum, not just when a student is in Workforce Solutions programming. Once enrolled in degree-program courses, allied health students have access to learning cohorts, tutoring, and a retention specialist.

Courage to replicate and expand: OCTC developed a satellite-learning center in adjoining Hancock County. The center, which is managed by Workforce Solutions, is intended to replicate the main center's success and to deliver similar services. It targets dislocated workers, other unemployed/underskilled individuals, and current manufacturing sites with training needs. The college will phase in occupational skills training, short-term certificate options, and services meeting other needs. Most important, this expansion into another county is a tangible example of how OCTC is reaching more students with the procedures, policies, and programming that have made *Breaking Through* standard throughout the college.

CHALLENGES

Expand into more for-credit programs: While OCTC has developed a robust allied-health career pathway extending from the GED level to a Bachelor's degree, it intends to sequence more programs of study that transition students from short-term training programs into degree programs. A supportive state-policy environment and an engaged state community college system office are expected to help OCTC surmount this challenge.

Strengthen job placement: While its overall *Breaking Through* model is strong and eliciting results, OCTC wants to strengthen the last step of assistance: helping more students better prepare for job searches when they complete a program of study. This commitment to job preparation and placement will be easier, given that Workforce Solutions is central to the college's employer-based activities and training. *Breaking Through* staff have long-term relationships with employers that the college could leverage to support job placement. This strategy will require a commitment to hire staff dedicated to connecting exiting students with regional employers.

LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

Standardize practices: OCTC has integrated support services, instruction, programming, and various funding sources to create a standardized continuum, with multiple entry and exit points. This model proved successful enough in its pilot allied-health and manufacturing contexts that faculty are implementing similar models for other career pathways.

Bridge the short-term training (for both for-credit and noncredit students) to degree programs one at a time: This responds to seemingly intractable college issues: how to assign credit to historically noncredit programs, and how to help students bridge the great divide between the two. OCTC has undertaken the task by developing the sequence in one program at a time, working out all associated support services and academic policies.

A key OCTC strategy to align short-term training and degree programs involved a joint effort of three key college programs: Representatives of Workforce Solutions, Student Services, and Academic Affairs met regularly to build a pathway model that could begin with a student acquiring a GED, lead to an Associate's degree at OCTC, and then lead to entry into a Bachelor's degree program at Western Kentucky University. The vice presidents of Workforce Solutions, Student Services, and Academic Affairs were deeply involved in this initiative and brought in other college staff (e.g., the financial aid director) as needed to work through barriers to providing seamless transitions from one part of the pathway to another. This effort required no special funding yet led to several policy changes (e.g., implementing contextualized learning models across more of the allied-health curriculum). This is further evidence that breaking down the silos of the Student Affairs and Academic Affairs divisions can result in more effective services that lend additional academic and supports to students.

Branding: Marketing and recruitment into entry-level programs can be supported by strong branding. With significant success, OCTC has marketed the SkillTrain/Adult Basic Education program and Training HQ to dislocated workers and unemployed community members, instilling a sense of pride about participation.

PAMLICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Providing New Career Pathways to More Students

Location:
Grantsboro, North Carolina

Enrollment:
700 students

Key college contact:
Gregory Gallagher, *Breaking Through* Director,
ggallagher@pamlicocc.edu

Website:
www.pamlicocc.edu

Summary:
Pamlico Community College has provided new career pathways to more students by integrating credit and noncredit departments, establishing a Student Success Center, and offering mentoring and other intensive supports to all students.

PAMLICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BREAKING THROUGH MODEL

Pamlico Community College's *Breaking Through* model is distinctive in two ways. First, the college seeks to use *Breaking Through* strategies with its entire student population, about 700 students. Second, Pamlico has integrated its credit and noncredit departments into one instructional division. This integration eliminates the "silos" found in many community colleges.

SCALE-UP APPROACH

The *Breaking Through* scale-up at Pamlico has focused on three areas:

> The college reaches out to community-based organizations and the county's One-Stop Career Center to recruit students.

> It offers intensive student support services, including paid peer mentors and one-on-one tutoring, to enhance retention.

> It is developing career pathways.

As the core of its scale-up strategy, Pamlico opened a Student Success Center that provides a wide array of supportive services. These include assessment, tutoring, peer mentoring, advising, and targeted interventions based on the unique needs of each student.

BACKGROUND

Pamlico Community College is located on an isolated peninsula in the midcoastal region of North Carolina. The county has 13,000 residents, with poverty rates in some areas well above the national average. The economy is tied to fishing, agriculture, tourism, and the service sectors—there is no industrial or manufacturing base. There are only three fast-food franchises, and no community hospital. Over 48 percent of the county's residents commute to jobs outside the county.

Pamlico is the smallest among North Carolina's 58 community colleges. It is an important local resource, providing workforce education and training, programs of study leading to Associate's degrees, and access to transfer to four-year institutions. Pamlico joined *Breaking Through* in 2006 along with other *Breaking Through* grantees of the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation. In addition to foundation and private-sector support, Pamlico received "Ready for College" funding from the U.S. Office of Adult and Vocational Education.

Pamlico Community College: Breaking Through Model*

PATHWAYS	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4 (CERTIFICATE)	PHASE 5 (DIPLOMA)	PHASE 6 (ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE)
Academic Prep	ABE	GED	Developmental			
Career Prep		HRD				
Fire Fighter			Fire Fighter I & II			
Health Care		CNA I	CNA II EMS Phlebotomy EKG Medical Coding, etc.	Medical Asst. Transcription	Medical Assisting	Medical Assisting EDT Associate
Cosmetic Arts			Esthetics Technology Manicuring Technology	Cosmetology		
Electronics				Elect/Electronics Tech.	Elect/Electronics Tech.	Elect/Electronics Tech.
Criminal Justice				Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice
Education				Early Childhood Early Childhood Teacher Asst	Early Childhood	Early Childhood
General Occupation				General Occ. Tech Horticulture	General Occ. Tech Horticulture	General Occ. Tech Horticulture
Environmental						Environmental Sci. Tech. Environmental Mgmt.

*Merged noncredit, occupational training, and academic programming into one instructional division under the vice president for curriculum.

All programs begin with intake: assessment, orientation, career exploration, counseling, goal setting

TARGET POPULATION

Pamlico Community College's *Breaking Through* population is the entire student body: for-credit, noncredit, and ABE students, as well as a small number of individuals referred to the college by the Job Link and Small Business Center, two community-based social service agencies. Pamlico's efforts focus on students referred to the Student Success Center: individuals pursuing GED/ESL instruction and students with a need to build their foundational learning before entering developmental education courses. Additionally, the Success Center welcomes and assists students in college curriculum courses.

Impact

> In 2010, 32 students were designated as part of *Breaking Through*. However, *Breaking Through* interventions, programs, and support services have an impact on all Pamlico students.

> 69 percent of Pamlico's *Breaking Through* students persisted from the first term to the second. An additional 16 percent of *Breaking Through* students reenrolled in subsequent terms.

> 84 percent of students in *Breaking Through* completed Phase 1 of the career pathway, passing three GED tests.

> 66 percent of *Breaking Through* students completed the GED, or Phase 2 of the career pathway.

> 9 *Breaking Through* students enrolled in postsecondary education.

> 13 percent of *Breaking Through* students placed into English 085 (the first level of developmental English), versus 9 percent of students in a comparison group.

KEY INNOVATIONS

Collegewide Commitment to Integration

"We have defied conventional community college organizational structure and integrated our noncredit and credit divisions in order to remove the silos and make student transitions a higher priority," says Greg Gallagher, coordinator of Pamlico's *Breaking Through* initiative. The college's commitment to integration is founded on practicality and a desire to improve student outcomes. This strategy is a smart resource allocation; at the same time, it provides a holistic structure that brings student services together with basic-skills training, academic programming, and occupational programming for the benefit of all students. A second major *Breaking Through* innovation was to designate a full-time student success coordinator to implement the program and administer the work.

Use of Student Mentors

Pamlico leaders believe that the first ten days of college are a critical time for determining whether a student will succeed. College can seem overwhelming and challenging to most students, particularly those new to the college. To address that, the college hires several

degree-pursuing student mentors each semester, and they are responsible for connecting with *Breaking Through* students. The mentors provide peer-to-peer relationships that are vital for *Breaking Through* retention efforts. Mentors offer personal support, tips about college expectations, and information about available support services and resources.

Student Success Center

Pamlico is an anomaly in that student success centers are typically found on large campuses with more resources. Nevertheless, as part of its scaling-up efforts, Pamlico remodeled a section of its main building into such a facility. The space has ten computers for use in administering assessments to new students. Furthermore, the center has access to a computer lab in an adjoining room for larger-scale needs. The computers can also be used to support the ability of the college to redesign courses that take advantage of online resources, such as those available through Pearson Education's MyMathLab. All students have access to the Student Success Center as a contact point for various services, such as tutoring, mentoring, or supplemental instruction with the additional computers.

STRENGTHS

Scaling-up efforts: The college has centralized several key functions within the Student Success Center, including academic support, assessment services, advising, mentoring, and career counseling. All first-year college students (credit, noncredit, and basic-skills) are required to use the center, which also engages in community-based recruiting and offers financial aid services for basic-skills students through the college's foundation. Usage rates for the center are high, and staff report that students have found it helpful. Many of these students are seeking to bypass or accelerate some of their required developmental courses. Currently, the Student Success Center serves primarily developmental education students, plus a few GED- or credit-seeking students.

Dedicated staff: When resources are scarce, a college may assign two or more staff-intensive, grant-funded projects to a single person. Not so with Pamlico, where a full-time director is actively engaged in the administrative and operational aspects of *Breaking Through*. Nor is the initiative the sole responsibility of the staff in the Student Success Center or the Adult Basic Skills area. Many non-*Breaking Through* instructional and student support staff and college administrators regard the initiative as part of their work because it contributes to the success of all students.

CHALLENGES

Noncredit to credit: Pamlico seeks to ensure that all students who engage in rigorous training or other credentialing courses earn college credit. Ultimately, the *Breaking Through* model will assign credit in a way that maximizes every student hour and tuition dollar. That is, students in most of the *Breaking Through* programs earn some type of credit that "stacks" toward the next credential, making it efficient. Often students fail to understand that if a

program of study does not yield college credit, they may have to repeat courses when they later decide to pursue additional education or training.

Measuring interventions: The college is engaged in an intensive set of *Breaking Through* strategies, including modularized, contextualized, and self-paced instruction along with wraparound student services. To date, though, administrators have not collected enough data on the impact of each of the design components on student outcomes. The college wants to ensure that it evaluates the various interventions and strategies, such as peer mentoring, tutoring, new curricular offerings, and recruiting strategies, to determine which yield the most promising results, especially given the ambition of this scaling-up model. Pamlico has identified four core outcome indicators: GED-to-college curriculum rates; accelerated developmental mathematics; English placement; and student course-to-course progression.

LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

Complete scale-up: Pamlico Community College's ambition is noteworthy. The college is attempting to reach its entire student population with a wide array of support services and academic interventions: student mentor/tutors; collaboration between instructors; student advisors; and the Student Success Center. The goal is to identify students experiencing academic problems and get them back on track through testing and counseling based on the *Breaking Through* strategies. The college's data indicate that 45 percent of *Breaking Through* students transition into for-credit courses. PCC will continue to monitor the progress and level of success of the initiative.

Strong community partnerships: In a county of just 13,000 people and with limited resources, PCC has partnered with local social service agencies to recruit students who have traditionally not seen themselves as "college material." Two social service agencies—Job Link and the Small Business Center—collaborate with the college, and their referrals have led several students to enter PCC via the *Breaking Through* door.

Creating one instructional division: Pamlico has undergone a major restructuring process to merge its noncredit and occupational training together with its academic programming into one instructional division under the vice president for curriculum. Since the vice president can make wide-ranging, executive-level decisions, he can react quickly and definitively to issues that would otherwise require action from a number of senior staff or from a committee. For example, the vice president has at times unilaterally approved curricular or scheduling changes on short notice when they have had good potential to improve student success.

The college's senior leadership made the decision to break down historic silos in order to ease the transition of students from noncredit to for-credit classes. PCC president Cleve H. Cox has remarked, "I want students to simply progress without stigma attached to basic skills or developmental education."

TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Making I-BEST Better

Location:
Tacoma, Washington

Enrollment:
15,000 total students, 1,000 ABE/ESL students

Key college contact:
Kim Ward, Associate Dean for Transitional Studies, kward@tacomacc.edu

Website:
http://www.tacomacc.edu/academics/adultbasicskills/careerpathwaytrainingprogramsi_best

Summary:
Tacoma Community College expanded its I-BEST and other Adult Basic Education programs to better prepare adult students for continuing on a degree pathway and to better prepare all individuals for a transition to college.

TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BREAKING THROUGH MODEL

Tacoma Community College's *Breaking Through* initiative began as part of a well-known Washington State pilot program that was linked to the statewide rollout of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model. The Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges developed I-BEST to address the changing needs of employers and students. I-BEST tested traditional notions that students must complete all levels of Adult Basic Education before they can advance in workforce education training programs. In Washington's 34 community and technical colleges, I-BEST pairs workforce training with ABE or English as a Second Language so students learn literacy and workplace skills at the same time. Adult literacy and vocational instructors work together to develop and deliver instruction. Colleges provide higher levels of support and student services to address the needs of nontraditional students.

Tacoma used key *Breaking Through* strategies to develop and enhance I-BEST pathways while expanding the population of students served beyond its traditional I-BEST cohort. It offers integrated pathways for advancing basic-skills students into college-level coursework leading to careers in five fields: accounting; early childhood education; medical office; office professions; and human services. Additional pathways are under development.

SCALE-UP APPROACH

Tacoma Community College's *Breaking Through* scale-up efforts are enhancing the I-BEST model to include a revised Transition to College course, with online education components. In addition, the college revised higher-level ABE and ESL curricula to align with higher levels of developmental education and English for Academic Purposes. TCC plans to make this expansion part of its regular program of studies and has made formal curricular revisions. These revisions, approved by the college's curriculum committee in 2010, are the first step in developing formal and seamless accelerated pathways from ABE through developmental education and EAP.

The scaling-up project facilitated cross-disciplinary conversations and exploration that led to the beginning of a more structured alignment. As a result of this work, students beginning in Adult Basic Skills programs have a clear, accelerated pathway to college-level coursework. They have opportunities to bypass the lower levels of developmental studies and the EAP program, which seeks to improve students' ability in written and spoken English and to prepare them for the culture of U.S. college classrooms.

Tacoma Community College's Medical Office Professional Pathway

Medical Office Clerk Certificate

BUS 102, CU 105, HIM 130, MO 100, MO 106, MO 143

The following additional courses are recommended for I-BEST students: CU 91, CU 100, HD 101

Total = 17 credits

Jobs: office clerk, medical secretary, file clerk, receptionist, and information clerk

Salary range: $11-$16 per hour

Medical Registration and Admissions Speciallist Certificate

In addition to Medical Office Clerk certificate, students will take CU 110, HIM 131, MO 241 (if moving to next certificate, students will wait to take MO 241)

Total = 24-29 credits

Jobs: Patient registrar, patient care representative, admisisons representative, patient services reprentative

Salary range: $12-$14 per hour

Medical Billing Specialist Certifcate

In addition to Medical Office Clerk certificate, students will take BUS 110, CU 110, ENGL$ 101, HIM 131, MO 139, 147, 148, 159, 241 and a minimum of 3 elective credits from CU 110, 230, HIM 140, 170, 220

Total = 52 credits

Jobs: Medical biller, insurance specialist, physician specialty coder

Salary range: $12-$18 per hour

Medical Office Assistant Certificate

In addition to previous two certificates, students will take BUS 110, BUS 164, ENGL& 101, MO 139 and a minimum of 3 credits elective from CMST& 101, CU 202, 203,210, HIM 150, 160, 1810, 214, 255, MO 159, 241

Total = 53-54 credits

Jobs: Medical receptionist, patient scheduler, medical insurance verification, patient coordinator

Salary range: $12-$17 per hour

Medical Office Professional AAS Degree

In addition to previous three certificates, students will take BIOL& 170 or 175, CMST& 101, CU 203, CU 210, ENGL& 102 or 103, MO 140, MO 159 and electives of 10 credits, one of which must be designated as a multicultural

Total = 94-95 credits

Jobs: Medical office manager, unit manager, unit coordinator, unit secretary, surgical scheduler, hospitalist

Salary range: $12-$18 per hour

Medical Office Professional is one of Tacoma Community College's five integrated career pathways.

Since completing the scaling-up project, the college has gone a step further, revising course prerequisites in developmental studies and English for Academic Purposes to include completion of the Adult Basic Skills program as sufficient for entry into higher levels of developmental math, English, reading, and EAP, essentially bypassing college placement testing and skipping at least one step along the pathway to college-level coursework. In addition, the college has initiated changes to the organizational structure of the divisions that house developmental studies and basic skills. All but developmental math now fall under one department, Transitional Studies, under the leadership of its associate dean.

The expected outcome is that students will be better prepared for academic courses beyond I-BEST and/or for basic skills and shorter pathways through not only developmental education but also the EAP program.

BACKGROUND

Tacoma Community College, which joined *Breaking Through* in 2005, is located in Tacoma, Washington. It serves the city of Tacoma (population 200,000) and the Pierce County portion of the Kitsap Peninsula, with satellite campuses in Gig Harbor and in Tacoma public schools.

The city's economy was founded on railroad and seaport industries, both of which have declined over the years. Also, the city's unemployment rate more than doubled in the current recession, from 4.6 percent in October 2007 to 11.2 percent in February 2010, declining a bit to 9.1 percent in Novenber 2010. With an estimated 162,000 functionally illiterate adults in Pierce County, TCC's Adult Basic Skills department offers a variety of services for individuals wishing to improve basic reading, writing, math, conversation, employment, computer literacy, and life skills.

TARGET POPULATION

The college identified several *Breaking Through* target populations: individuals pursuing GED and ESL instruction; individuals with high school diplomas or GEDs and low basic skills; students and workers seeking a professional/technical certificate and in need of basic-skills training or ESL instruction; and low-literacy students who wish to enter postsecondary academic instruction.

KEY INNOVATIONS

"Although our success rates with I-BEST were high, not all students were functioning at college-level post I-BEST, which slowed momentum and impacted students' ability to continue on the identified professional technical pathway in many cases. Furthermore, we had a large percentage of our basic-skills population for whom existing I-BEST programs were not the desired pathway. These individuals were more likely to transition to developmental education, and faced lengthy pathways through to the college level. We knew, if we raised the bar in our existing basic skills programs as well as for our I-BEST students, that we could shorten this pathway. This would essentially enhance our I-BEST model and make it work more effectively for our Breaking Through students, those in I-BEST and in traditional basic skills programs."

— Kim Ward, TCC Associate Dean for Transitional Studies

Impact

> 66 percent of the students achieved gains in reading, versus 39 percent of those in the comparison group.

> 56 percent achieved gains in listening, versus 36 percent of those in the comparison group.

> 62 percent of ESL/ABE students transitioned to English for Academic Purposes or developmental education within two quarters of completing the transition course, versus 22 percent of those in the comparison group who completed the transition course.

> 31 percent earned college-level credit within two quarters, versus 4 percent of those in the comparison group.

> The number of students completing the GED increased by 8 percent.

> The cohort of *Breaking Through* scaling-up students completed the revised remedial sequence for career pathways at higher rates than those in an historical comparison group: 45 percent of the cohort completed mathematics, versus 29 percent of the comparison group; 91 percent of the cohort completed reading, versus 76 percent of the comparison group.

> 71 percent of *Breaking Through* students demonstrated gains in reading, based on pre- and post-assessment test scores; 65 percent showed gains in mathematics.

I-BEST was primarily designed to enable students in Adult Basic Education Level 4 through Level 6 to progress through ABE and occupational training. TCC found that although the I-BEST pathway enabled *Breaking Through* students to begin working on college-level pathways sooner, students were not adequately prepared for the academic rigors of the courses that followed the initial certificates. Furthermore, some students were interested in career pathways other than those that were supported through TCC's I-BEST program. As with the I-BEST students, these students were not adequately prepared for the transition to college or were transitioning into the lowest levels of developmental education, lengthening the path to a degree. In response to this finding, TCC has worked on two key innovations.

The Transition to College Course

TCC revised the Transition to College course to better prepare I-BEST and other basic-skills students for the expectations of college-level coursework. This innovation provided a key connection for students engaged in foundational skill building, helping them better prepare for and advance to the occupational training offered through I-BEST. It also better prepared those not targeting an established I-BEST pathway but rather intending to transition to developmental or college-level coursework.

Comprehensive Gap Analysis

TCC conducted a comprehensive gap analysis between the higher levels of ABE and ESL, and it compared these with developmental English, reading, math, and English for Academic Purposes. This gap analysis led to an overhaul of the ABE and ESL curricula and realignment from one level to the next. The emphasis was placed on adjusting the higher levels in an effort to scale up the expectations in the program and, again, to better prepare students

for transition. This involved close collaboration with four academic divisions, because the programs are housed in separate areas of the college.

Engaging college leaders was important, particularly in the area of curricular alignment and working to develop shorter pathways. The scaling-up project was first presented at instructional administrators' meetings as a way to develop buy-in from leaders in all of these areas. Because the various departments were housed in four divisions, this was critical in getting the right faculty to the table. The college had already acknowledged that these areas needed to collaborate more closely; the research for the national *Breaking Through* initiative generated a great deal of forward momentum and provided a strong foundation for these conversations.

STRENGTHS

Enhancing an existing curriculum: I-BEST had focused on career readiness; through revisions in the Transitions to College course, TCC spent considerable energy on college-readiness-focused curricular changes to better prepare I-BEST and other ABE students for developmental education and then for college-level coursework. TCC now strongly recommends that all ABE students take the revised Transitions to College course, which includes the student-support component of the *Breaking Through* model. It focuses on helping students improve their ACCUPLACER scores and introduces students to the expectations of the college environment. The course includes academic preparation and Web-enhanced and online instruction.

Early data indicate that I-BEST students are transitioning to college at a much higher rate than non-*Breaking Through*/non-I-BEST students. They also perform at a level comparable to that of traditional college students. Furthermore, regarding several of the gateway courses that tend to have low completion rates, students who have taken them as part of the I-BEST model outperform traditional college-level students.

Full-time student support position: Initially, TCC offered limited support services to I-BEST students. Since the advent of *Breaking Through*, I-BEST has provided substantial student support services at TCC, which has devoted staff to coordinating and delivering them. The student-support staff position began as half time, then moved to three-quarter time, and in 2010 became full time. In addition, the college is using grant funds for an additional half-time advisor to provide intensive support to students engaged in a pilot project that is expanding the I-BEST model to developmental reading and English.

Pathway-focused curriculum: The revised basic-skills curriculum addresses content overlaps, with the goal of shortening the amount of time students spend taking developmental coursework. For example, students had said that the English for Academic Purposes curriculum took too long, requiring four levels of developmental coursework. Better articulation of the levels shortens the time to completing the pathways by a full academic quarter. The process undertaken to achieve this change included a gap analysis to identify misalignments and ways in which advanced students could jump levels of developmental education or EAP.

Collaboration across departments: ABE, developmental reading and English, EAP, and developmental math were housed in four different divisions, with little communication among them. Through facilitated meetings and observations of GED, developmental education, ESL, and EAP classes, faculty discussed ways to better align the content of their courses. These discussions included a critical analysis of course content, instructional materials, pedagogy, and evaluations of student work. Significant improvements resulted, including the standardization of course goals, revisions in course descriptions, and the selection of textbooks. The meetings also helped begin a pedagogical shift throughout TCC, emphasizing clear transitions into post-program pathways as a priority for each department.

The scaling-up effort also validated the need for closer collaboration among programs serving underprepared adults, and likely influenced the decision to merge all but one of TCC's "precollege" programs into one department. An opportunity for restructuring presented itself at the end of the 2010 program year and resulted in moving all but developmental math under one division administrator, the associate dean for transitional studies (previously the associate dean for basic skills). The newly aligned precollege programs are all housed in one division, which better positions them to collaborate and to develop seamless pathways from one program to the next. Furthermore, the *Breaking Through* strategies, which have become a part of the fabric of TCC's basic-skills programs, can more easily be expanded into these other areas. The newly formed department, renamed Transitional Studies, is part of the larger Arts, Humanities, and Social Science Division.

CHALLENGES

Financial aid: Applications for Washington State financial aid entail a long, cumbersome process. In particular, the deadline to apply for aid for September classes is in May, but *Breaking Through* students tend to enroll just before classes begin. Financial aid is one reason many students delay making a transition to college, or fail to do so altogether. Another challenge is that most I-BEST programs offered at TCC start in the fall and run through the entire program year. Because the programs are built on a cohort model, students must plan ahead in order to prepare for the fall-quarter start date. Those who have not planned far enough in advance often have to wait a year before starting. The department is currently working with the professional/technical programs that serve I-BEST students to explore alternative start dates for them, which will offer options for students not ready to start in the fall.

Student recruiting: Many potential *Breaking Through* students believe they must master English before they can begin any courses at TCC, even ABE courses. This misperception has hampered recruiting, and the college is exploring strategies for reaching out to its target populations. In addition, TCC has had a difficult time establishing strong referral processes and partnerships with the local One-Stop Career Center and Workforce Investment Boards, limiting referrals that could bolster student recruitment. This is due in part to the fact that the local partners have set goals and benchmarks not closely aligned with those of the college, which focus on serving low-skilled adults in career-pathway programs. The college

has signaled that it wants to strengthen its relationship with the local One-Stop Center, which represents a significant population of dislocated and unemployed workers who would greatly benefit from the *Breaking Through* initiative and the transition into I-BEST and similar programs.

LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

Partnerships and cross-disciplinary conversations: By partnering with different divisions, TCC aligned and contextualized the curriculum in order to shorten the pathway to and through remedial coursework and/or professional/technical degree programs. Although I-BEST shortened the pathways for those basic-skills students enrolled in I-BEST, progress was delayed once students reached developmental studies or EAP.

When these developmental programs were housed in various divisions of the college, it was difficult to apply the model at the next levels. The intent of the innovations was to create better opportunities for students continuing on the pathway to begin at higher levels in developmental studies or EAP, bypassing the lower levels of instruction and creating a workaround alternative to the long developmental sequence.

***Breaking Through* expansion to developmental education:** Since the formal end of the *Breaking Through* scaling-up project, TCC has launched another grant-funded pilot that expands the I-BEST model to developmental reading and English. Not only is the developmental sequence contextualized, it has also been accelerated, so students take fewer credits and courses in developmental reading and English, compared with those enrolled in the traditional sequence.

Timing and leadership: Innovations like these at TCC start slowly and take a commitment from leadership. It takes at least a year if not more to fine-tune them and gain momentum. It is also critical to engage innovative faculty and staff from the beginning, which is essential for catalyzing the interest of others on campus.

Shifting emphasis: Originally, TCC's Basic Skills program emphasized I-BEST as the primary pathway to a credential for basic-skills students. Now there is much more emphasis on preparing for and achieving transitions to college via I-BEST and other pathways. The curriculum is more focused on preparing students for academic success and taking the next step. Expectations have been elevated, and full-time faculty who have worked on this project are mentoring other adjunct faculty to promote consistency throughout the program.

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

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