

*THE ROLE OF
COMMUNITY
COLLEGES IN
STATE ADULT
EDUCATION
SYSTEMS*

A NATIONAL ANALYSIS

BY VANESSA SMITH MOREST

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM
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for a project of the

Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

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IN STATE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEMS:
A National Analysis**

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FOREWORD

The Role of Community Colleges in State Adult Education Systems is the third of eight resource papers to be published by CAAL in its task force study of the role and potential of community colleges as service providers in adult education and literacy.

The report is national in scope and reveals that neither adult education nor community college systems are adequately aware of the large role that community colleges play as a service provider in adult education and literacy across the country. Among its many findings are that the nation needs to develop a more thorough understanding of the community college role through more appropriate and extensive data collection and research.

Findings are scattered throughout the report. Readers who want a quick summary of the main conclusions and recommendations will find them beginning on page 26.

This publication and the CAAL Community College Study project are made possible by funding from various sources: the Ford Foundation, Household International, the Lumina Foundation for Education, the McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., the Nellie-Mae Foundation, Verizon, Inc., and several individual donors. In this time of extraordinarily tight funding, CAAL deeply appreciates this support.

Resource documents still to be published in this series include three statewide case studies (Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon) and two more national studies (one on developmental education, the other on ESL). The papers will be rolled out over the next few months. In the fall, the project will culminate in a major task force report and recommendations. Readers who wish to comment on this paper or any aspect of the study are welcome to e-mail the project study director, CAAL Senior Vice President Forrest Chisman, at forrest@crosslink.net.

CAAL's Web site, www.caalusa.org, lists task force members and project goals, and makes available in pdf form the publications in this series as well as all other CAAL publications.

Gail Spangenberg
President, CAAL

INTRODUCTION

This report brings together information on adult education and literacy gathered from several sources, including interviews with state directors of adult education across the country and the National Reporting System (NRS). The overarching aim of the report is to examine the structure of adult education in the United States with special attention to the role of community colleges.

For many students, community colleges are the single most important providers of access to postsecondary education. These colleges typically enroll more immigrants, more first generation college goers, and/or more individuals with significant personal responsibilities (such as small children and multiple jobs) than four-year colleges and universities. To meet the needs of their diverse student population, the colleges provide a broad spectrum of programs, from liberal arts degrees designed for transfer, to vocational certificates and short workshops.

A team of researchers at the Community College Research Center of Columbia University (CCRC) addressed a number of questions in this study, including:

1. How many community colleges provide adult education services, how many students do they serve, and how does the scope of community college involvement in adult education compare to that of other adult education service providers?
2. Are there differences in the demographic profiles of adult education students served by community colleges compared to those served by other types of providers? Are there demographic differences in states or areas where community college service is most common, compared to the rest of the nation?
3. There is a perception that community colleges serve higher-level learners, leaving those that are hardest to serve to other agencies. Is this perception correct? How do the basic skills levels of adult education students served at community colleges differ from students served by other providers?
4. How do states fund adult education at community colleges? What proportions of federal, local, and state funds are used for adult education? Are there financial incentives or disincentives for community college participation?

5. How involved are community colleges in providing adult education related to the employment services supported by Title I-B of the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA)? Are there differences among states?

This research is exploratory and readers must keep two important limitations in mind in interpreting the findings:

First, the research consisted primarily of interviews with state adult education officials and analysis of data provided by them. The way these sources portray the community college role in adult education is incomplete or perhaps occasionally inaccurate. There are two reasons for the lack of precision:

1. The information gathered by most state adult education officials on student and program characteristics is limited to categories needed to meet reporting requirements for federal/state grant funding for adult education under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act and under related state policies. State adult education officials often do not collect complete information about the extent and nature of community college adult education services that are funded from other grant or formula-driven sources, or about the extent of cross-subsidies colleges may provide in support of adult education.
2. They also are not likely to have information on the full range of instructional or support services that colleges or other types of providers may offer to adult education students. Thus, in order to thoroughly describe the role of community colleges in adult education in the nation, it would be necessary to conduct additional research beyond the scope of this study.

Second, because approximately one third of the state officials did not respond to attempts to contact them, direct data from some states was unavailable. However, the various means described in the methodology section made it possible to pull together basic information from 40 states (80 percent of the total).

Our research confirms that the role of community colleges in adult education is both large and not well understood. Data collected by state adult education officials does not allow for detailed analysis by provider, and state directors were frequently unable to offer specifics about community college involvement. This is understandable, given the organizational and financial complexity of community colleges.

The next section of the paper begins by describing the methodology used to collect data on adult education. Subsequent sections will describe the findings on each of the five research questions. The report finds several important differences between states emphasizing community college involvement and those that do not, although further analysis at the institutional level is required before attributing these differences to the fact that community colleges play a larger role in some states than others.

I. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from three major sources for this report. The primary source was interviews with state directors of adult education. Attempts were made to contact state directors in all 50 states. Of these, 34 were interviewed.¹ Two state directors declined to participate² and 14 state directors did not respond to our attempts to contact them. Interviews with the state directors lasted 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted by one of four CCRC researchers. The questions asked in the interviews are provided in Appendix B of this report (on page 32). Interviewers took notes on the responses of informants. These notes were analyzed using QSR N5, software for qualitative research, that allows for coding the responses to each question. Coded responses are discussed throughout this report, and in some instances responses are summarized using tables.

In addition to interviewing state directors, the research team asked states to send hard data on adult education enrollments and staffing.³ The list of data requested is provided in question 17 of the interview guide (Appendix B, page 32). These data are integrated into the report. Data from five states were obtained from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)⁴ to avoid duplication of their efforts in a study conducted earlier for the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy [CAAL] (CASAS, 2003). Finally, in a few instances we used information from state reports and the Internet to supplement collected data. This was done for several states to reduce the number of missing cases in categorizing community college involvement in higher education used to answer questions 2 and 4.

Subsequent to the initial data collection, the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC) contacted the state directors of adult education to

¹ States providing interviews: AL, AR, AZ, CA, CT, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, ME, MN, MS, MT, NC, NE, NH, NM, NV, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, SD, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI.

² One state director declined to participate because he had already contributed to research funded by CAAL; another declined because she thought that participation in research was an inappropriate use of public funds.

³ States providing hard data: AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, ME, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, NE, NH, NM, NV, NY, OH, PA, RI, SD, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, WV.

⁴ The states are: CA, CT, HI, IA, OR.

request additional information for this study. NAEPDC asked state directors to verify the data already collected, to gather data from additional states, and to determine whether the data on student enrollments provided by directors in previous contacts were unduplicated headcounts. According to members of the CAAL Task Force on Community Colleges in Adult Education and Literacy, some states had difficulty with the U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System (NRS) in 2001-2002, resulting in duplicated headcounts. A total of 15 states responded to this request and none of these states reported that their headcounts were duplicated. Data for three additional states were added⁵ at this time because they responded to the NAEPDC request.

By one or more of these methods, data were obtained from 40 states. However, six of these states did not provide the number of adult education enrollments in community colleges. Thus, in analyses involving the number of community college enrollments as a variable, only 34 states could be included.

For this study, enrollments are defined as students in ABE, ESL, and ASE and are unduplicated headcounts during the 2001-2002 school year. The enrollments reported by Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania differ from their NRS enrollments, indicating that they may have used a broader definition of adult education. Since the state directors were asked to break down their estimates by providers – a calculation that they do not have to do for NRS – it was necessary to accept the numbers supplied. For example, Maine does not enroll adult education students in community colleges and has by far the largest discrepancy. The state director there said that “because the portion of our overall system funded by the Adult and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) is so small – about 11,000 students of the 125,000 served in total – and because data was not collected to that degree of specificity for the rest of the programming, it would be grossly inaccurate to report the AEFLA/NRS data as a representative picture of the totality of adult education in Maine.” [Becky Dyer, personal communication, 6/19/03]⁶

⁵ The states added were: CO, MI, VT.

⁶ Maine data reported in Table 2 were collected by NAEPDC and reflect the higher number.

These sources were supplemented with federal NRS data on programs supported by the federal/state grant program, Title II of WIA. NRS data for race, enrollments by program, federal allocations, and staffing were used.

The next section of this report describes differences in the structure and governance of adult education systems, including community colleges.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

1. How many community colleges provide adult education services, how many students do they serve, and how does the scope of community college involvement in adult education compare to that of other adult education service providers?

Adult education is comprised of many narrowly defined programs. In all states, this includes Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE or GED preparation), and English as a Second Language (ESL), since these programs are required for federal funding. However, state adult education officials also have responsibility for other programs such as EL/Civics and Family Literacy. Appendix A (page 30) lists the programs that each state official claimed responsibility for managing in the research interviews. This information is important because the primary source of data for this study was interviews with state directors who discussed adult education in terms of their roles in managing these various programs. Although NRS data was requested on ABE, ASE, and ESL only, some state officials may have supplied data that included other programs for which they have responsibility. Aside from cross-checking different sources of information, we have no way to determine whether this was the case.

Governance

Adult education is under the governance of different entities in different states. Some states have placed responsibility for these programs with their higher education or community college systems; others have placed it with their K-12 systems or departments of labor.

Table 1 indicates the department in which responsibility for adult education resides by state. Two-thirds of the 50 states manage adult education through their K-12 departments of education. These states account for a disproportionate 72.5 percent of adult education enrollments. Thirteen states and 24 percent of adult education enrollments are under the governance of postsecondary education agencies – usually community or technical college systems. The remaining five states (3.6 percent of enrollments) are administered

through departments of labor. This information masks the actual complexity of the systems, a topic that is addressed in greater depth in other reports written for CAAL. For instance, governance does not necessarily dictate service delivery. Even in those states where governance is the responsibility of postsecondary education agencies, other agencies such as school systems and CBOs may be among the funded providers.

Table 1: Administration of Adult Education

K-12 Department of Education (total=32)			
Arizona	Louisiana	Nebraska	Pennsylvania
California	Maine	New Hampshire	Rhode Island
Colorado	Maryland	New Jersey	South Carolina
Connecticut	Massachusetts	Nevada	Texas
Delaware	Michigan	New York	Utah
Florida	Minnesota	North Dakota	Virginia
Hawaii	Missouri	Ohio	Vermont
Indiana	Montana	Oklahoma	West Virginia
Department of Postsecondary Education (total=13)			
Alabama	Iowa	Mississippi	Oregon
Georgia	Kansas	New Mexico	Washington
Idaho	Kentucky	North Carolina	Wisconsin
Illinois			
Department of Labor (total=5)			
Alaska	South Dakota	Tennessee	Wyoming
Arkansas			

Within the past two decades, a number of states have moved the governance of adult education from their K-12 systems to their postsecondary systems. Arkansas moved adult education to its community college system in 1981, Mississippi in 1992, and Illinois in 2000. New Mexico and Kentucky both made this transition during 2003. In 2003, Kentucky moved the management of adult education to an agency (Kentucky Adult Education) of its Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE). Community colleges are also under the aegis of CPE, but they are governed by a separate agency – the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Wyoming and South Dakota have gone in the opposite direction in recent years. In 2002, Wyoming moved responsibility for adult education from their Community College Commission to the Department of Workforce

Services. However, community colleges remain the largest providers of adult education in the state.

Service Provision

Adult education is provided by a variety of agencies and organizations. The most common are school districts, community and technical colleges, public and private four-year colleges and universities, community based organizations (CBOs), other private nonprofit agencies, corrections facilities, libraries, and housing authorities.

Table 2 shows the scope of community college involvement in adult education in each state providing data. The first column under “Providers” shows the total number of providers in each state. *Providers* is defined for the purposes of this table as the entity to which federal and state grant funds for adult education are awarded by the state’s adult education authority. In some cases, these providers subcontract to other agencies. For example, colleges may subcontract to CBOs or school districts to offer some services. As a result, delivery of adult education may not be carried out solely by the agency to which federal/state funds are provided. In addition, some providers join with others to submit consortia grant proposals.⁷ In this research, it was not possible to determine the percentage of students served by either subcontracts or consortium arrangements.

The second and third columns under “Providers” show the degree of community college involvement in adult education. For the 39 states reporting this information, an average of 27 percent of adult education providers are community colleges, ranging anywhere from 0 to 100 percent. The third column shows that in Iowa, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington, all community colleges are involved in providing adult education. The total number of community colleges in this sample providing adult education services is 492. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were 1,101 community colleges in the country in 2001-2002 (NCES, 2002, Table 243). Therefore, using just the states in this study, at least 45 percent of all American community colleges

⁷ Forrest Chisman, personal communication, 1/13/04.

are offering adult education. If the remaining 11 states were included, this figure would doubtless rise to over 50 percent.

The final two columns show the total adult education enrollments for the 34 states⁸ from which data was collected, and the proportion of those enrollments that are in community colleges. These states reported that, on average, 33.4 percent of their adult education enrollments were at community colleges. However, this average is not particularly useful because there is so much variation. Of these states, 12 enroll 50 percent or more of their adult education students at community colleges: Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. (In subsequent sections of this report, these states will be compared with the other states.)

Based on these data, it is apparent that community colleges are major providers of adult education. Of the 2,323,361 students enrolled in the states that provided data on both total enrollments *and* community college enrollments (33 states), 737,835 (32 percent) are enrolled at community colleges.

It is very difficult to estimate the proportion of all community college students that are adult education students based on these figures because adult education students are almost always counted as noncredit students. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) estimates that there are 5 million noncredit students at community colleges nationwide. Therefore, the community colleges enrollments identified by this report (which are representative of just over half the states) could account for around 15 percent of community college noncredit students, assuming that the AACC's estimate is accurate. If states that have significant adult education enrollments but are missing from this estimate were included (such as Washington and Texas), it is fair to conclude that a large proportion of community college noncredit enrollments are adult education students. Even if the additional 5.4 million students estimated by the AACC to be

⁸ 30 states reported data; 3 were inferred on the basis of having no community college providers; 1 state only gave the percentage of community college enrollments.

enrolled in credit courses at community colleges were taken into account, adult education at community colleges remains significant in scope – approximately 7 percent of total enrollments.

Table 2: Providers and Enrollments in Adult Education by State, 2001-2002

State	Providers ²			Enrollments ³	
	Total Number of Providers in the State	Percent That Are Community Colleges	Percent of All Community Colleges Providing Adult Education	Total State Enrollment	Percent Enrolled at Community Colleges
AL	48	37.5	66.7	19,745	52.0
AR	87	24.1	90.5	39,521	24.9
AZ	36	22.2	42.1	32,740	60.0
CA	223	7.2	14.4	526,955	12.6
CO	35	22.9	100	15,053	33.0
CT	76	1.3	8.3	32,470	0.0
FL	93	18.5	60.7	410,346	30.0
GA	42	71.4	88.2	111,514	67.8
HI	11	0.0	0.0	11,065	0.0
IA	15	100.0	100.0	19,367	100.0
ID	14	21.4	75.0	10,264	42.3
IL	112	34.8	79.6	132,521	81.4
IN	95	2.1	66.7	44,492	2.0
KS	33	63.6	95.5	10,725	82.8
KY ¹	100	13.0	68.4	33,807	26.5
MA	151	7.9	80.0	26,179	12.4
ME	126	0.0	0.0	115,987	0.0
MI	250	6.0	57.0	82,957	
MN	56	0.0	0.0	42,039	0.0
MO	44-47	21.5	71.4	61,336	7.8
MS	32	46.9	93.8		
MT	20	25.0	62.5	4,420	8.2
NC	85	68.2	100.0	151,408	98.7
NE	20	30.0	85.7	13,342	70.7
NH	35	0.0	0.0	6,761	0.0
NM	29	69.0			
NV	8	50.0		5,517	71.9
NY	165	7.9	29.5	204,827	14.9
OH ¹	136	5.9	20.5	59,758	4.4
OR	18	94.4	100.0	26,314	100.0
PA	143	9.1	68.4	68,494	15.8
RI		0.0	0.0		0.0
SD	17	0.0	0.0	3,419	8.2
TX	52	42.3	33.3		
UT	52				
VA ¹	111	4.0	17.0	32,418	10.6
VT	4	0.0	0.0	5,685	0.0
WA	51	66.7	100		
WI	31	51.6	94.1	34,232	94.0
WV	91	8.8	66.6	10,640	2.7

¹Original data collected from state officials during summer 2003 differed considerably from revised numbers generated by NAEPCD:

KY: 100, 9.0, 50.0, 77,843, 16.8

OH: 132, 4.5, 17.6, 61,522, 3.3

VA: 156, 1.3, 8.3, 38,659, 1.7

² Providers are defined for the purposes of this table as the entity to which federal and state grant funds for adult education are awarded by the state's adult education authority.

³ To the best of our knowledge these are unduplicated and fit the NRS definition of enrollments.

Source: State directors of adult education

2. Are there differences in the demographic profiles of the adult education students served by community colleges, compared to those served by other types of providers? Are there differences in the demographic profiles of states or areas where community college service is most common, compared to the rest of the nation?

Demographics

No states provided data about the racial composition of adult education enrollments at community colleges. It is possible that some community college systems collect these data, but it is more likely that the information would have to be collected directly from individual institutions. Given that the research team was unable to disaggregate the data to analyze community college enrollments, the best that can be done here is to assess NRS data for broad differences in demographic profiles. It is important to point out that it was not possible to include Texas and New Jersey (which have large language minority communities) in this analysis, because they did not submit data on their overall community college participation in adult education.

Differences were found at the state level in the demographic profiles of states with high levels of community college participation in adult education.

Table 3 shows the proportion of community college enrollments overall by racial composition. States enrolling 50 percent or more of their adult education students in community colleges are identified as “high” while the remaining states are identified as “low.”⁹ High community college enrollment states account for around 19 percent of adult education enrollments in the country, low enrollment states account for 52 percent, and missing states account for 29 percent. The table shows a statistically significant difference of 12.1 percent more Hispanic students in high participation states ($F=3.475$, $p=.071$). This is the only demographic in which an important difference in racial distribution exists.

⁹ High states: AL, AZ, GA, IL, IA, KS, NC, NE, NV, OR, WI, WY. Low states: AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, HI, ID, IN, KY, ME, MA, MN, MO, MT, NH, NY, OH, PA, RI, SD, VT, VA, WV.

A possible explanation is that states with higher community college participation have larger Hispanic populations overall. But, as Table 4 indicates, there are no significant differences overall in the demographic profiles of these states.¹⁰ Another explanation is that states with larger community college involvement in adult education are offering more ESL as opposed to other programs.

On average (Table 5), a larger proportion of students in high community college participation states are enrolled in ESL as opposed to ASE and ABE programs (6.7 percent more), although the difference is not statistically significant ($F=1.056$, $p=.312$). This finding is consistent with the finding that a larger proportion of Hispanic students are being served in high community college enrollment states, but the results based on these states are not statistically significant; more information is needed to draw a conclusion.

The data does indicate, however, that in states where community colleges are major providers of adult education, more Hispanic students are enrolled than in states that have lower adult education enrollments in community colleges. This difference does not appear to be related to the amount of ESL that the states are providing or to the general demography of the states. One possible explanation for the difference may have to do with community colleges themselves; they enroll relatively large numbers of Hispanic students in general.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, Hispanic students are the fastest growing ethnic group at community colleges (Phillipe, 2000, p. 38). An analysis of race/ethnicity by provider would, therefore, yield useful information because it is possible that community colleges are enhancing Hispanic access to adult education.

¹⁰ Editor's Note: Tables 3 and 4 are from different sources (the NRS and the U.S. Census) that characterize racial/ethnic groups differently; however, these differences do not affect the conclusions drawn from the data here.

Table 3: Comparison of Racial Composition of Adult Education Students Overall and by Proportion of Community College Enrollments, 2000-2001

	Low C.C. Participation N=23	High C.C. Participation N=12	Difference	Missing N=15	Total N=50
White	51.8	42.2	-9.6	40.1	46.2
Black	14.3	17.3	3.0	24.1	17.9
Hispanic	20.7	32.8	12.1*	23.5	24.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	9.7	5.7	-4.0	6.0	7.6
American Indian	3.4	2.1	-1.3	5.9	3.8

* Significance level: $p \leq .10$

Source: NRS data, FY 2000

Table 4: Comparison of Racial Composition of States by Proportion of Community College Enrollments

Percent of Individuals					
	Low C.C. Participation N=23	High C.C. Participation N=12	Difference ¹	Missing N=15	Total N=50
One race identified²					
White	82.3	80.8	-1.5	74.1	79.5
Black	6.7	10.1	3.4	14.6	9.9
Hawaiian and Pac. Is.	0.5	0.1	-0.4	0.1	2.7
Asian	3.9	2.0	-1.9	2.3	2.9
American Indian	1.1	1.3	0.2	3.0	1.7
Other	2.8	3.9	1.1	3.7	3.3
Hispanic (all races)	6.6	8.5	1.9	9.0	7.8

¹ No differences are statistically significant at $p \leq .10$.

² States averaged 97.6% of respondents reporting one race (s.d.=2.9%)

Source: Census 2000

Table 5: Comparison of Enrollments by Program and Proportion of Community College Enrollments, 2000-2001

Percent of Students					
	Low C.C. Participation N=23	High C.C. Participation N=12	Difference ¹	Missing N=15	Total N=50
ESL	26.2	32.9	6.7	26.1	27.8
ABE	45.1	48.3	3.2	47.5	16.6
ASE	24.7	18.8	-5.9	26.3	23.7

¹ No differences are statistically significant at $p \leq .10$.

Source: NRS data, FY 2000

3. There is a perception that community colleges serve higher-level learners, leaving those that are hardest to serve to other agencies. Is this perception correct? How do the levels of adult education students served at community colleges differ from students served by other providers?

For many students, whether or not they have completed high school, community colleges are the primary entry point into postsecondary education. For the purposes of this report, state officials were asked several questions about community colleges: Do adult education students at community colleges differ in important ways from the students served by other providers? What information exists on whether community college adult education students are more likely than those taught by other providers to transition into postsecondary education? How are postsecondary transitions defined and measured by the states? What are the current state policies or initiatives aimed at improving transitions to postsecondary education?

Student Differences Among Providers

Almost every state official interviewed said that there are no systematic differences between the adult education students served by community colleges and those served by other providers. In particular, state officials talked about the absence of differences in the socioeconomic status and educational levels of the students. Officials interviewed in two states, Maine and Utah, reported that community college adult education students tend to be at a higher level than those served elsewhere because they must pass placement tests in order to enter community college programs. In addition, an official from North Carolina noted that CBOs generally do not deal with higher level students in her state. Conversely, an official in Kansas reported that community colleges are serving an equal share of students with lowest levels of education, and they are also the largest providers of ESL, particularly at the lowest levels.

Among other things, these responses suggest a lack of insight on the part of many state officials. They appear to know very little about the differences among service providers with respect to the *needs* of students being served. In part, this inability to perceive

differences in the population groups served by different provider types may be due to the fact that the states rarely conduct analyses on differences among the service providers. But it may also be an artifact of policies aimed at avoiding duplication of service within service areas.

In many states, funding is awarded to programs on the basis of their ability to reach potential students within particular geographic areas, rather than giving support to multiple providers that serve the same populations in different ways. Presumably, this is a function of the limited funding available for adult education, but in some states it may also reflect an interest in making sure that providers do not select out populations they would rather not serve. For example, in Massachusetts, all providers are required by the state to provide a sequence of classes from ABE to GED so that none can avoid responsibility for educating students who are the most difficult to serve. In Illinois, area planning boards look at the distribution of services and schedules to make sure that duplication is being avoided.

Transitions

One potential difference between adult education students at community colleges and those learning from other providers might be that the former are more likely to continue their education by transitioning into postsecondary degree programs. There is little evidence either for or against this proposition.

Although there is a measure defined by the National Reporting System (NRS) for transitions to postsecondary education or job training, only one of the state officials interviewed acknowledged breaking this information down by type of provider. The state director from Alabama reported higher postsecondary transitions rates for community colleges than for school districts and CBOs. Officials from Nebraska and Pennsylvania were willing to speculate that community college students were more likely to transition, but neither could base their judgments on data. In Nebraska, most students receive

information on postsecondary transitions, regardless of provider. The Texas official interviewed considered community colleges to be the most natural fit for students seeking to transition.

The research interviews suggest that little is known about the rates at which students transition from adult to postsecondary education or job training. The NRS requires states receiving federal funds to report on the outcomes of students who have the goal of entering postsecondary education or job training. Hence, even NRS reports do not precisely identify transitions to postsecondary programs. In addition, for NRS reporting purposes, most states report student outcomes only for the year in which the students enrolled. Students state their goals when they first enroll for services. This means that ABE and ASE students reporting their proximal goal of finishing high school, rather than the more distal goal of entering college, may not be tracked for transitions into postsecondary education for NRS reporting purposes. The methods used by states to calculate postsecondary transitions are given in Appendix C (page 35).

More than half of the state directors interviewed for this study reported that postsecondary transitions are a priority for their adult education programs. However, these state directors also informed us that they perceive a new federal emphasis on increasing transitions to postsecondary education. Therefore, reports that this is a state priority may be interpreted in the context of the interest these programs have in responding to perceived federal concerns.

Table 6 lists interview responses to questions about transitions initiatives and policies by state. Few states reported explicit policies aiding transitions. Among those that did, several reported that they offer a semester of college credit for GED completion or provide some college credit for courses taken through adult education. Most states reported only initiatives rather than policies, and many of these were still under development. Initiatives included offering college study skills classes, working out specific articulation agreements between institutions, and many others. The limited role of research in these efforts is noteworthy. Most state directors indicated that there are

major problems with the way postsecondary transitions are reported, and they have no mechanism in place for evaluating the effects of pilot programs.

Table 6 : Postsecondary Transitions Policies and Initiatives

State	Policy Priority	Description of Policies and Initiatives
AL	X	Currently has no specific state policy regarding postsecondary transitions. However, future RFPs will require transitions to be part of proposals. Community colleges currently show higher success in postsecondary transitions than school districts and CBOs.
AR		In the future, plans to look more closely at community college roles in transitions.
AZ	X	Working with all programs on transitioning into credit classes.
CT		Paying attention to this because it is a reporting requirement under WIA.
GA	X	The Department of Education (K-12), Department of Technical and Adult Education, and the Board of Regents (colleges and universities) have formal written mechanisms to allow a student to transfer credits, transition from high school to 2-year and 4-year colleges, and participate in dual enrollment.
KS	X	Kansas has made a major push to move adult learners into postsecondary education and training programs. An informal study of transitional services revealed that school districts and CBOs are just as good at transitioning students as community colleges, so the state decided to examine this issue more closely. Clients are offered special support and counseling services to assist with adapting to college demands. Community colleges are trying to raise awareness regarding postsecondary transitions through specific incentive programs – e.g. scholarships to GED completers that pay for the first semester or the first year. In southwest Kansas, three community colleges have an articulation agreement that allows ESL completers to become eligible to receive college credit once they are enrolled.
KY	X	Ongoing initiatives: (1) Provided money for three pilot sites to work with the community and technical colleges to create plans and strategies to increase number of GED grads transitioning. (2) Go-Hire communities (P-16 councils): Provided \$30,000 seed money to counties or regions to provide aligned system from P-16. (3) 12 projects presently involved with transitions. Examples include one-line courses and receiving credit for remedial coursework.
LA	X	Technical college system trying to establish early emphasis in accordance with the reauthorization of WIA.
MA	X	Funding eight transitions pilot programs to help ABE students or former ABE students transition – trying different models to see what works (these are at community colleges). Every program that is funded must do community planning – all grantees must bring together community people with interests in adult education because students need more than just educational services often. Seeking to institutionalize these linkages.
ME	X	Spent a lot of time with the MES Foundation on transitions. Memos of understanding to align (since 1995-1996 providers have agreed to use the same placement tests). Individual programs develop articulation agreements with colleges. Some adult education programs are explicitly called transitions programs (these teach basic skills).
MN		Improving postsecondary transitions is a new, unstated goal for Minnesota although not yet formal policy.
MS	X	Community colleges offer free tuition for the first semester of postsecondary education to students who receive their GED through a community college.

Table 6 : Postsecondary Transitions Policies and Initiatives

State	Policy Priority	Description of Policies and Initiatives
MT		No initiatives at this time.
NC	X	Since most programs are located at community colleges, transitioning is already thought to be strong.
NE		A priority only to the extent that it is being introduced by the federal government. Postsecondary transitions have been discussed, but there are no programs with specific funding support.
NH	X	New England Literacy Resource Center in Boston is a consortium of six states. Operates with a grant from Fannie Mae and runs adult education to postsecondary transition programs. New Hampshire has two centers. The other 28 are spread around the other states (ME, VT, CT, MA, RI).
NM		No transitional programs.
NV		Becoming a focus as a result of federal policy.
NY	X	Trying to offer GED on SUNY campuses. Currently there are three pilot programs running in Yonkers and Buffalo. CUNY offers GED on community college campuses, but uses a different curriculum than SUNY.
OH		No transitional programs.
OR	X	One of 100 core benchmarks of the state is how many people at age 25 have a GED or high school diploma. Another benchmark is how many people have access to postsecondary education and training. Currently the local directors are meeting and they are surveying about what local authorities are doing regarding transitions.
PA		Transitions to postsecondary education has not been a stated goal, although some individual programs see it as a goal. They are following the new federal guidelines as a blueprint.
RI		No transitions at all into postsecondary yet. Sees transitions from ABE to postsecondary as unrealistic. The state currently has a pilot transition program – working to bridge skills from adult to postsecondary education. They are experiencing resistance from community colleges that do not want their remedial classes bypassed (remedial education is an important source of funding for RI community colleges).
SD		No policies right now. But, they are looking at some pilot projects to avoid students having to take remediation when they get to postsecondary education. They have been doing professional development to make sure that teachers are clear with students. One program involved developing transitional skills (study skills, organizational skills). This is something that they have been doing with WIA incentive money.
TX	X	There is a push within the state to associate adult education more closely with higher education. Also seen as way to address skills gap.
UT		About 15 percent of adult education students transition into postsecondary education – but this is not every student’s goal. Improving postsecondary transitions might be viewed as one of Utah’s goals but other goals are equally important, including high school completion, GED attainment, and workforce needs. The state has no specific policy oriented toward improving transitions. Each student completes a student education occupation plan – why going to school, goals. All outcomes treated as equally important (i.e. no special emphasis on postsecondary transitions).
VA	X	Transition goals are articulated by each program.
WI	X	Although curriculum in the state was originally designed to be aligned (mapping all the way backwards from advanced courses to adult literacy), getting students to stay in programs long enough to take advanced courses is a big problem.

4. How do states fund adult education at community colleges? What proportions of federal, local, and state funds are used for adult education? What financial incentives or disincentives are there for community college participation?

Financing

Adult education officials in most states appear to know little about the specifics of how community colleges finance adult education. This made it difficult to collect the data necessary to answer question 4, given the scope of this study. (The best sources of information on community college financing of adult education are likely to be the providers themselves.)

As adult education providers, community colleges in most states receive allocations that are similar to those received by other types of providers. However, community colleges in some states benefit from the fact that they receive all or some of their state funding in the form of full-time equivalency (FTE) reimbursement for serving adult education students. This arrangement may result in state formula funding that is significantly larger in some states than adult education funding provided in other states, and, in part, it ties adult education funding levels to those of colleges. In some states, FTE funding is at the same level as funding for credit programs, and in other states it is at a lower level.

Among the states funding adult education in whole or in part on the basis of FTE are Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, North Carolina, and Oregon (ECS, 2000). California funds adult education at the noncredit reimbursement rate, which is half the credit rate. In Pennsylvania, there is disagreement about whether community colleges should receive FTE funding for adult education students, and a state investigation of the practices of several community colleges is being conducted (Interview, 10/03).

Many of the state officials interviewed reported financing incentives and disincentives that help shape community college involvement in adult education.

Of the handful who believed they understood community college financing well enough to answer the question, seven (Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, and Nebraska) said that community colleges were no different from other adult education providers. These people did not perceive any particular motivation to participate or any lack thereof.

Officials from Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, and Oregon reported that community colleges in their states do have financial incentives to offer adult education because of FTE reimbursement policies. North Carolina and Oregon may be two states with especially strong incentives for community college participation because of relatively generous FTE reimbursement for adult education. In addition to being able to increase their general education funds with the state FTE funding generated by adult education students, community colleges in North Carolina are also able to draw revenues for serving a percentage of certain target populations (e.g. disadvantaged students) and for issuing a certain number of GED and adult high school diplomas.

Officials interviewed in California, Illinois, and Virginia described financial disincentives for colleges to provide adult education. California reimburses colleges for adult education service at the rate for noncredit courses, which is about 50 percent of the rate for credit courses. This disincentive should be seen in perspective, however, since many states do not provide any state reimbursement for funding noncredit courses.

In Virginia, community colleges are responsible for matching the funds used for adult education, making these programs potentially costly to the colleges. In Illinois, in the past, community colleges received a lower state FTE reimbursement for adult education courses than for credit courses, although they also received other forms of state funding for adult education. This system of funding is now being revised. Finally, Texas is a state that, according to the state official interviewed for this study, deserves further attention because community colleges there have not strongly contributed to adult education – although certain colleges in the state have large adult education programs, including those in Austin, Dallas, and El Paso.

There are also nonfinancial incentives and disincentives for community college participation in adult education. They should not be overlooked. Community colleges have greatly increased the scope of their services in the years since the Truman Commission's report in 1947 declared public two-year colleges to be responsible for responding to all the educational needs of their local communities (cited in Bogart, 1994). One of the established missions of most community colleges is pre-collegiate education for adults (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin all reported that the strongest incentive for community colleges to offer adult education is that it is part of their comprehensive mission.

Although the comprehensive mission of colleges may provide an incentive for them to offer adult education services, there is also a strongly held perception at some colleges that adult education should not be part of their role. Developing a better understanding of the conditions under which colleges provide adult education is worthy of further investigation.

5. How involved are community colleges in providing adult education related to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I-B workforce development programs? Are there differences among the states?

Adult Education and Workforce Development

The association between adult education and workforce development differs considerably from state to state. During interviews, we found that state officials hold strong views about whether adult education should be preparing students for jobs or for postsecondary education. For example, in South Dakota, where adult education is managed by the department of labor, the state official interviewed indicated that the primary goal of adult education programs is to prepare adults to enter directly into secure, productive work rather than postsecondary education.

Interviews with state officials suggest that current relationships between adult education programs and WIA Title I-B workforce development programs are generally weak. One official observed that in his state there is “not a complete disconnect, but it is not great either.” The most important locus of association is at the One-Stop Employment Centers. However, the One-Stop Centers described by state officials interviewed are managed fairly autonomously, and the amount of adult education they offer can be inconsistent, even within states. For example, Arizona, California, Virginia, and Indiana officials all reported that only some of the One-Stop Centers in their states were partnering effectively with adult education. In Indiana, only two adult education providers out of ninety-five sit on local Workforce Investment Boards.

Interviews with state directors indicated that most community colleges play a limited role in adult education provided through Title I-B consortia. Community colleges will sometimes house One-Stop Centers, but this does not mean they regularly provide adult education to One-Stop clients. In California, it was reported that only 14 percent of community colleges in the state participate in WIA. In North Carolina, community colleges both administer adult education and house One-Stop Centers. But the official

interviewed in that state indicated that only a small number of One-Stop clients are referred to adult education. Few states were able to report the actual number of One-Stop clients enrolled in adult education, and even fewer could break that number down by service provider. Where they are reported, the numbers are very small. For example, the state official interviewed in Arizona reported that 845 of 32,000 adult education students (about 2 percent) were referred from One-Stop Centers, and the state official in Montana reported that 110 of 5,636 adult education students (again, about 2 percent) were referred from the One-Stop Centers there.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community colleges account for 34 percent of the adult education enrollments in states participating in this study. Although adult education remains primarily the responsibility of K-12 systems across the country, an increasing number of states are placing responsibility for administering adult education with their community colleges. Based on the data gathered by this study, it is not clear what effect this has on adult education programs. However, the large and growing role of colleges in providing adult education service indicates that it is important to develop an in-depth understanding of what that effect may be.

States in which high numbers of adult education students are served by community colleges enroll more Hispanic students than do other states. A possible reason, although the data collected in this study does not prove this, is that those colleges offer more ESL services.

Although state directors generally believe that community college adult education students are similar to those enrolled by other providers, the findings of this study suggest that differences may exist in some states. A more detailed analysis of program offerings as well as the NRS data on student levels and outcomes may help to identify other ways in which governance or provision of adult education by community colleges influences service delivery, management, student outcomes, and other important variables.

Although community colleges play a large role in adult education, there is evidence from this research, as well as other CCRC research on community colleges (Bailey and Morest, 2004), that the adult education and community college systems have not devoted the time or resources necessary to optimize their relationship. Personnel in both systems may not be aware of the large role that the colleges are already playing in adult education for a number of reasons.

1. Although adult education enrollments comprise a significant percentage of total community college noncredit enrollments (15 percent), the percentage apparently is not large enough to establish adult education as a priority for many college leaders. (Total fall credit enrollment in community colleges in 2000 was about 5.7 million [NCES, 2002, Table 173] and noncredit enrollments were another 5 million or so. Adult education enrollments at community colleges are probably around one million.)
2. Because adult education programs are usually classified as noncredit, they may be overshadowed by credit earning degree and certificate programs that usually generate larger revenues for colleges.
3. Neither community colleges nor adult education systems collect data on their students sufficient for many kinds of program evaluation.

State adult education officials ought to know more than they presently appear to know about one of their largest provider organizations. In only a few states – such as Oregon, Iowa, North Carolina, and Washington – were adult education officials found to have substantial knowledge about adult education at community colleges. Although this study asked state officials for various types of information about the scope of community college involvement in state systems relative to other providers, those officials were not able to provide even basic breakdowns of race by provider.

One topic on which it is highly important to develop a more thorough understanding of the role of community colleges in adult education is the contribution the adult education system makes to postsecondary transitions. At present, states collect and report this information with considerable inconsistency. Because the percentage of students making transitions to postsecondary education reported by most states is based only on those who report postsecondary education as a goal, the results neglect potentially large numbers of adult education students who make transitions after achieving their proximal goals of acquiring high school diplomas or jobs. In many states, students are not tracked

longitudinally. As a result, the only data available about their future educational attainment is limited to their status at the end of a single year of enrollment.

Since its inception only a few years ago, the NRS seems to have successfully moved adult education systems in the direction of collecting reliable data on enrollments. But there was considerable difficulty acquiring data for this report because the NRS does not require states to categorize enrollments by provider. Clearly, more needs to be known about the roles of the various provider organizations that offer adult education.

This report should serve as a call to government, researchers, colleges, and other interested parties to identify more fully methods of data collection and forms of data so as to enable fuller, deeper analysis. It should also underscore the need for additional resources to support that work on an ongoing basis.

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Appendix A

Descriptions of Adult Education by State ABE Directors

State	ABE	GED and Adult Secondary	ESL	Vocational and Workplace Education	Other
AL	X	X	X	X	Preemployment training (soft skills, leadership skills, teamwork, etc.); short-term technical training; and retraining for adult and displaced workers
AR	X	X	X	X	Educational services for students 18 or over
AZ	X	X	X	X	Educational services for students 16 or over; citizenship test prep
CA	X	X	X	X	Citizenship; home economics; parent education; adults with disabilities; health and safety; older adults
CT	X	X	X		High school diploma programs; Americanization/citizenship
FL	X	X	X	X	Family literacy; adults with disabilities; citizenship
IN	X	X	X		HS diploma; literacy
IL	X	X	X	X	Citizenship (vocational and citizenship are not federally funded); some HS credit programs
KS	X	X	X		
KY	X	X	X	X	Family literacy; corrections education
LA	X	X	X		Even Start; migrant education (for children); EL/civics
MA	X	X	X	X	Even Start; adult secondary diploma; workplace education
ME	X	X	X	X	Educational services for students 16 or over; enrichment; Even Start
MI	X	X	X	X	16 years or older with below high school competencies
MN	X	X	X	X	Family literacy; citizenship
MS	X	X	X		Adult literacy; family literacy
MT	X	X	X		Family literacy; computer literacy; EL/civics; lifelong learning; correctional facilities
NE	X	X	X		EL/civics
NC	X	X	X		Compensatory education for mentally retarded adults
NH	X	X	X		
NM	X		X		
NV	X	X	X		Educational services for students under 17 lacking basic skills
NY	X	X	X	X	
OH	X	X	X		Family literacy; workplace literacy
PA	X	X	X	X	Workplace literacy; distance education programs
RI	X	X	X		
SD	X	X	X		
TX	X	X	X		Even Start; EL/civics

State	ABE	GED and Adult Secondary	ESL	Vocational and Workplace Education	Other
UT	X	X	X		All educational services for adults 18 or over without high school diploma
VA	X	X	X		
WI	X	X	X		Remediation (through technical colleges)

Appendix B

Interview Guide

July 1, 2003

Structure of Adult Education

1. How do you define adult education in this state – i.e. which programs are included? GED? ABE? ESL? Others?
2. Which state organizations have responsibility for adult education? Probe: Department of Labor? Department of Education? Other organizations?
3. What types of institutions and agencies are providers of adult education – e.g. community colleges, school districts, private providers such as CBOs, other public agencies?
4. Are the ESL programs run under the state’s adult education program offered for college credit, noncredit, or some combination of these? What percentage of adult education do you think is offered for college credit?
5. How is adult education funded by the state? Go through each of the program types (#1) and provider types (#3) and find out: (a) which state organization is responsible for funding, and (b) how much funding is given per student. [There is an issue here about whether adult education is funded on the basis of FTE, headcount, or some other method. Be sure to clarify this point.]

	Method of funding	Amount of funding
Programs:		
• GED		
• ABE		
• ESL		
• Other		
Providers:		
• Community colleges		
• School districts		
• Other postsecondary		
• CBOs & other private agencies		
• Other public agencies		

6. With respect to community colleges, how does the mechanism for funding adult education differ from college-level regular credit-bearing college courses? What

about other types of noncredit (e. g. continuing education)? Do you think that the state provides incentives or disincentives for community college involvement?

7. How does adult education relate to WIA in this state? Are there any connections in terms of funding or service providers? What proportion of adult education funding comes from WIA in this state? How is this distributed across different types of providers (please provide percents)?

Context of Community College Role in Adult Education

8. We are trying to better understand what clientele the community colleges would consider to be their adult education market niche in your state. Do you have a sense about the educational levels of adult education students served by community colleges in this state compared with other types of adult education providers? What about the socioeconomic status of community college adult education students compared with other providers?
9. Is improving the rate of transition to postsecondary education a goal for your state?
10. If so, how is it a goal? Is there a specific policy or initiative associated with increasing the number of postsecondary transitions? Probe: What is the state doing to make that happen (i.e. what's the focus of current efforts)? Examples might include GED completion or developing a seamless, competency based curriculum that links adult education to community colleges.
11. How many people make this transition from adult education to postsecondary education in your state? Probe: How is this calculated?
12. Do more students make the transition from adult education programs that are taught at community colleges than at other providers?
13. Are state budget cuts affecting adult education in your state? Probe: Which programs? How large are the cuts? What are the implications (particularly for community colleges)?
14. Are federal budget cuts affecting adult education in your state? Explain.

Scope of Adult Education

15. One aspect of our research involves making comparisons across states regarding the scope of adult education in terms of number of students and providers. For this, we will need statistics on adult education enrollments in your state. Are you the best person to speak with about this? If not, whom should we call?

16. What are the data collection cycles for your state – in other words, do you collect data by school year, calendar year, etc.? What is the most recent data available? (Assuming this is 2002 data, is it calendar year or school year?)
17. Following is a list of the data we are looking for:
- Total adult education providers funded by the state, broken down by provider type (i.e. community college, CBOs, K-12 systems, etc.).
 - A list of all providers and their contact information.
 - Total students enrolled in adult education statewide.
 - Total students by provider type (i.e. community college, CBOs, K-12 systems, etc.) AND program type (GED, ABE, ESL) – for example: total adult education students enrolled at community colleges; total ABE students at community colleges; total ESL students at community colleges; total GED students at community colleges.
 - Total welfare recipients, incarcerated students, and One-Stop clients served by each provider type.
 - Full-time and part-time adult education teaching staff by provider type.
 - Full-time and part-time adult education administrative staff by provider type.

Appendix C

Methods of Determining Postsecondary Transitions

Source: Interviews with State Officials

State	Method of determining postsecondary transitions
AL	According to the latest report card, 31 percent of those in adult education who expressed transitioning to postsecondary education as a goal did so. Calculation is based on a cohort that started GED program two years ago. Students are asked to indicate intentions on intake.
CT	Not sure.
FL	Students indicate intent upon entry. CBOs and school districts also encourage students to consider transitions to postsecondary education as part of the counseling component.
GA	The percentage is calculated according to NRS guidelines for the percentage of adult learners with a goal of advanced education or training that entered postsecondary education or training; students entering postsecondary education/training divided by students with goal of advanced education/training.
IL	Not sure.
IN	Not sure.
KS	Kansas does not have a database for Regents universities, so there is currently no way to track students who leave adult education, enter a community college, and then transfer. In the process of creating a statewide database.
KY	Tracking GED students into postsecondary. Data match of GED grads with those enrolled in KY institutions within two-year period.
MA	Not sure.
MN	No data. Community colleges do not collect data, but they are planning to ask incoming GED students about aspirations in the future.
MS	1,300/year – think there may be more that are not being counted. Calculated through registrars office audit reports.
NE	Students indicate goals upon intake, and adult education administrators follow up with a survey. They can also data match with community colleges to see if students followed through with this goal.
NH	Only people who are identified in this category are people who say that they are planning to go on to postsecondary education. They only track these students – about 150 of them, but they have 9,000 students in the system. If student doesn't report transition as their primary goal, they aren't tracked. Most people say they want a high school diploma.
NY	Success rate: Last year, 4,200 students stated they intended to enter postsecondary education after obtaining the GED. 2,057 achieved this goal. Students are asked to state their goals during the intake process. Seeking job placement, retaining a job, improving skills, obtaining a GED, and transitioning to postsecondary education are some commonly stated goals
OH	Providers required to track students after leaving programs, use a survey. Survey data entered into data reporting system. Currently have data matching program with GED office and job and family services department; possibly entering into an agreement with national student data clearinghouse.
OR	State has been reporting transitions into certificate and degree programs. Most states include developmental education, but Oregon did not. Now they will start reporting on developmental education.
PA	Providers are required to report the number or percentage of adult learners who indicate a goal of postsecondary transition. Pennsylvania has "no good way of gathering data." At this point.
SD	Most students go to work. The ones that have postsecondary as a goal are followed. They do a data match and try to track what's going on with GED grads. There hasn't been a good analysis of this, but they are gathering data.

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