

Resources

Career Pathways: An Overview & Best Practices

Original compiled by Portland Community College, October 2003

List additions: WSBCTC January 2005

What is a Career Pathway?

A Career Pathway is a series of connected or “chunked” education courses with internship work experience and enhanced student services that enable students to take advantage of the “window of opportunity” of Training Unemployment Insurance (TUI) to upgrade their skills and to combine school and work to advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training.

Career Pathways target jobs critical to the local economy. They are designed to create educational “stepping stones” for advancement of workers and job seekers, particularly those stuck in low-wage jobs, and a supply of qualified workers for employers. As such, career pathways help ensure that investment in education and training pays off in enhanced economic development.

Features of a career pathway include:

- **“bridge” programs** that prepare educationally disadvantaged students to enter credit-based academic courses often by teaching developmental or basic skills in the context of occupational skills
- **“chunked” curriculum** where certificate and degree coursework is grouped into smaller sets of courses that can be taken in one to two terms that prepare students for a discrete occupation leading to their career and educational goal
- **“roadmaps”** that graphically outline the “ladder” for an occupation or career and identify the courses and curriculum “chunks” needed for career advancement showing the connections between education and training programs and jobs in a given industry or sector
- **enhanced “wrap-around” student services** that including career assessment, advising, and tutoring to enhance student success as well as job search skills training and job placement assistance
- **credentials** for specific occupations, such as “Employment Skills Training” (EST) certificates, that inform employers of a student skills and provide for easy articulation of credits across programs and educational institutions
- **conveniently scheduled and sequenced classes** to meet the needs of working adults
- **outreach** to community-based organizations and other groups that serve students underrepresented in higher education.

Career Pathway benefits include:

Access for all students, regardless of educational or skill level: For example, English language learners will have access to coursework that will help them prepare for jobs as technicians in the microelectronics industry, as will college graduates recently laid off from the sales jobs they held for many years, as will high school seniors.

Multiple entry and exit points tied to jobs: Fewer students are using the community college as a link in a linear educational pipeline where they move from high school diploma to associate’s degree to bachelor’s degree to work. As more and more students are blending education and work or returning to school after periods of no school, just work, they are accessing education as a cycle. Students frequently enroll in college to take only the classes they need to get a job, returning for more

classes when they want a better job, and so on. Yet they are often unclear about which courses lead to which jobs. By “chunking” the curriculum into sets of courses with discrete employment outcomes, students will be able to enter and exit a degree or certificate program at clear, but various, points in their educational cycle rather than completing the entire program at once.

Linked to employer needs: The determination of which courses are grouped together is based on current and ongoing labor market analysis of employer demand and research on the skill sets business requires for various jobs within an industry. Ability to offer an employer recognized credential for less than 1-year or 2-year program.

Uses existing curriculum to build toward degree completion: In the past, many job seekers have built their basic or occupational skills through non-credit offerings. When they want to enroll in a certificate program, or take a few courses of a degree program, they find that none of the classes they took before count toward their academic goal. A career pathways system integrates non-credit and existing credit courses to create a seamless system for students to move from pre-college to credited academic programs.

Easily understandable: The college catalog is impressive, but overwhelming to most students and many staff. The development of “roadmaps” which graphically show the various routes a student can take to achieve employment outcomes makes the alternatives clear to both staff and students.

Meets students’ life needs: Students need educational options that allow them to blend work, family responsibilities, and school. Career pathways recognize that a high percentage of community college students work by providing more delivery options (distance education, weekend college) as well as repackaging existing two-year curriculum into a logical sequence of shorter options. Pathways also provide the “wrap-around” student services that enhance student planning and informed decision making and increase student success in achieving both academic and employment goals.

Flexibility: Integral to the career pathways system is a “rolling” or continuous improvement research and development design. This makes the system adaptable to changes in the labor market and feedback from students, staff and business about appropriate skill sets, employment outcomes, and curriculum delivery.

REPORTS

A Bridge to Community College Career Programs for Adults with Poor Basic Skills.

By Davis Jenkins and Stephanie Sommers. University of Illinois at Chicago. April 2004.

<http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/about/bios/documents/A%20Bridge%20to%20Community%20College%20Career%20Programs%20for%20Adults%20with%20Poor%20Basic%20Skills.pdf>

Breaking Through: Helping Low Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers.

Jobs for the Future. By Marty Liebowitz and Judith Combes Taylor. Jobs for the Future. November 2004.

Summary: http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/BreakingThrough_ExecSum.pdf .

Full report: <http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/BreakingThrough.pdf>

Building a Career Pathways System, Executive Summary

Building a Career Pathways System (unabridged report)

Workforce Strategy Center. August 2002

www.workforcestrategy.org/publications/Career_Pathways.pdf

Building Bridges to College and Career

Workforce Strategy Center. January 2003

www.workforcestrategy.org/publications/Contextualized_basic_ed_report.pdf

Building a Career Pathway System: Promising Practices in Community College-Centered Workforce Development

Workforce Strategy Center. Fall 2002

www.workforcestrategy.org/publications/Career_Pathways.pdf

Built to Last: Why Skills Matter for Long-Run Success in Welfare Reform

Karin Martinson and Julie Strawn. Revised April 2003.

http://www.clasp.org/publications/BTL_report.pdf

Community College Excellence Awards

MetLife Foundation with Jobs for the Future.

<http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/MLBroch.pdf#search='Metlife%20Foundation%20Community%20College%20Excellence%20Awards'>

Community Colleges and the Equity Agenda: What the Record Shows

Thomas Bailey, James Jacobs, Davis Jenkins and Tim Leinbach Teachers College, Columbia University.

April 2003. www.tc.columbia.edu/ccrc

<http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/about/bios/documents/Community%20colleges%20and%20equity%20agenda.pdf>

Credentials Count: How California's Community Colleges Help Parents Move From Welfare to Self-Sufficiency

CLASP. Anita Mathur with Judy Reichle, Chuck Wiseley, and Julie Strawn. May 2002.

http://www.clasp.org/publications/credentials_count_final.pdf

From Jobs to Careers: How Community College Credentials Pay Off for Welfare Participants. By

Anita Mathur, Judy Reichle, Julie Strawn, Chuck Wisely. CLASP. May 2004.

http://www.clasp.org/publications/Jobs_Careers.pdf

Jobs For All: Can it be a Reality

By Marlene Seltzer. November 2001

<http://highway1.tv/workingvisions/jobs4all.htm>

Learning at Work in a Work-Based Welfare System: Opportunities and Obstacles

JFF (Jobs for the Future). By Judith Comes Taylor. April 1997.

Executive Summary:

http://www.jff.org/jff/kc/knowledgecenter.html?start%3Aint=40&topiclist=1001&topicitype=&p_primarytopic=1001

Lessons Learned: The MetLife Foundation Awards

The MetLife Foundation, Richard Kazis, Leslie Haynes, and Martin Liebowitz. January 2002.
<http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/BettOut.pdf>

New Roles for Community Colleges: Expanding Economic Opportunity

By Sibyl Jacobson and Marlene Seltzer.
<http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/Newroles.pdf>

Opening Doors: Students' Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College

MDRC, Lisa Matus-Grossman, Susan Gooden, Melissa Wavelet, Melisa Diaz, Reishma Seupersad. July 2002
http://www.mdr.org/Reports2002/opendoors_perspectives/jugglingwork.pdf

Opening Doors to Earning Credentials: Curricular and Program Format Innovations that Help Low-Income Students Succeed in Community College

MRDC, Jobs for the Future, Richard Kazis, Marty Liebowitz. March 2003.
<http://www.mdr.org/Reports2001/OpeningDoors/ngafinal.pdf>

The Language of Opportunity: Expanding Employment Prospects for Adult with Limited English.

By Heide Spruck Wrigley, Elise Richer, Karin Martinson, Hitomi Kubo, Juile Strawn. CLASP. August 2003.
Policy Brief: http://www.clasp.org/publications/LEP_brief.pdf .
Full text: http://clasp.org/publications/LEP_report.pdf

The Potential of Community College As Bridges to Opportunity for the Disadvantaged: Can It Be Achieved on a Large Scale?

Davis Jenkins. University of Illinois at Chicago. March 2003.
<http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/about/bios/documents/The%20Potential%20of%20Community%20Colleges%20.pdf>

Whose Job Is It? Creating Opportunities for Low Income Adults to Advance to Better Jobs

Chapter in *Workforce Intermediaries for the 21st Century*. Editor: Robert Giloth
By Nan Poppe, Julie Strawn and Karin Martinson. Temple University Press, publication forthcoming, 2003
Advance article: http://www.clasp.org/publications/Adv_chapter.pdf

Work-Related Learning Guide for Family Literacy and Adult Education Organizations

JFF (Jobs for the Future). August 1999.
<http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/AdLitGuide.pdf#search='WorkRelated%20Learning%20Guide%20for%20Family%20Literacy%20and%20Adult%20Education%20Organizations'>

ARTICLES

Credentialing Success Story for Maryland Community Colleges

National Council for Occupational Education, Pat Stanley President of Frederick Community College
Spring 2002

Identifying and Selecting Industry – Validated Occupational Certifications

National Councils for Workforce Education, Rick Spill Director of Special Projects National Skill Standards Boards, Dave Osman Coordinator, NSSB Certification and Apprenticeship Database Project National Skill Standards Board. Summer 2002

BEST PRACTICES

Cabrillo Community College (Santa Cruz, California)

www.careerladders.net

Career Ladders Project

Central Piedmont Community College (Charlotte, NC)

www.cpcc.cc.nc.us/pathways

Pathways to Employment

LaGuardia Community College (Long Island City, NY)

www.workforcestrategy.org/careerpathways.html

College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment Program

Macomb Community College (Clinton, MI)

www.macomb.cc.mi.us

MacComb Industrial Network

Manufacturing Training Institute

Maricopa Community College (Phoenix, Arizona)

www.dist.maricopa.edu/hcies/hcc1.htm

Health Care Core Courses

Medical Assistant information

Nursing Career and Technical Programs

National Retail Federation

www.nrf.com/content/foundation/rcp/main.htm

Retail Careers, Sales and Service

Portland Community College (Portland, Oregon)

www.pcc.edu/cp

Career Pathways, Professional Technical Training

Career Pathways, Vocational Training for Non-Native Speakers

Red River College (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada)

<http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue>

Software Development Diploma

Sinclair Community College (Dayton, Ohio)

www.sinclair.edu/departments/adult

Adult Re-entry & Special Programs

Valencia Community College (Orlando, Florida)

<http://wp.valencia.cc.fl.us/aim/aim.htm>

Academics in Motion