



Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0: College Sustainability Plan Anne Arundel Community College

I. Best/promising practice(s) identified during the project.

- A. New Student Open House/Orientation: Offer a regular schedule of general student open houses/orientations for targeted noncredit occupational skills programs, using a shared college application with all appropriate paperwork and releases completed at one time. A new pre-screening process prior to admission, conducted at the open house/orientation, which includes TABE and career interest assessments, guides students to the right program as appropriate for skill level and career interest.
- B. Celebrate Student Success: Celebrate student success throughout the program rather than waiting until program completion. At Anne Arundel Community College (AACC), that means the use of digital badges and continuing education certificates of completion are awarded to successful students to mark their accomplishments and progress throughout their program of study. Digital badges reward students and build self-esteem by recognizing incremental skill attainment and continual achievement. Official transcribed continuing education certificates are issued to successful students after each course completion. Formal completion ceremonies celebrate program completion for students and their families. These students are often the first in their family to earn college credentials.
- C. Contextualize Adult Basic Education and Job Readiness Skills: Embed adult basic education and job readiness skills into the technical curriculum to increase retention and completion. Success in the classroom must translate into success on the job.
- D. Centralized Career Navigation Center: Establish a centralized career navigation center on campus that operates as a one-stop location for all wraparound student support services.

II. Rationale for institutionalizing the best/promising practice(s) identified above.

- A. Students may think they want to go into programs such as dental assisting or truck driver training until they get to the actual class. Instead of registering and dropping out of their “best guess” program, they are guided through the specifics of each career at the orientation and assisted to make the right choice up front from a variety of options. Pre-screening results in students being placed in the right program for them and/or providing them with individualized assistance. This step has a direct and immediate impact on increasing student retention and completion.
- B. Recognizing continual achievements helps build self-esteem and ties the students more closely to their own goals. It allows them to see more clearly how one skill builds on another. It doesn’t all happen magically at the end.
- C. Contextualized adult basic education and job readiness skills integrate education and training; are industry focused; and assist students to obtain academic, employability, and technical skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and in the labor market.

This type of integrated programming, supported by wraparound student services, has demonstrated success in increasing student persistence through the completion of their training by more than 20 percent over regular open enrollment classes.

Job readiness skills are key to initial job placement and continued career advancement. In the case of Dealer School, students must eventually become employees who show up on time each day, in uniform and prepared to work at 3 AM.

- D. A campus-based Career Navigation Center offers a centralized location for wraparound student support services and better utilization of trained staff. The center enhances partnership opportunities with community-based organizations and social services providers.

III. Fiscal implication(s) for institutionalizing the best/promising practice(s) identified above.

- A. The general student open house/orientation more effectively utilizes student time and money, and more efficiently leverages staff schedules to allow maximum interaction with potential students. Marketing efforts and dollars are also more efficiently leveraged. The cost to purchase the TABE tests and administer pre- and post-testing is minimal, but needs to be considered as part of operating costs.
- B. There are multiple digital badge programs available at various price points. Because AACC has the ability to produce an electronic transcript for noncredit students, we chose an open badge system which allows students to post their digital badges, as well as their college transcripts, on their Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Initial design and set up cost was \$9,500 for 6,000 badges. Ongoing cost is approximately \$7,500 per year. Other closed systems, which do not allow electronic posting of badges in various venues, are free.
- C. Adding additional curriculum to a program results in higher initial development costs and ongoing higher student tuition when tuition is based on course length. However, by providing additional training to faculty on how to implement contextualized learning in their classroom, it is often possible to achieve the same results without simply adding more hours. This is the approach taken by AACC wherever possible; the college is very price sensitive. Conversely, programs which can demonstrate higher level job placement numbers are deemed worth the investment by students and such programs attract and retain more participants, benefitting the institution in the long run.
- D. Exploratory discussions are currently being held with the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) and the county Department of Social Services to explore the establishment of a combined Career Navigation Center. Costs and integration timeline are yet to be constructed.

IV. Partnerships/sponsorships established during the project that should be continued.

AACC continues its partnership with Maryland Live! Casino as their preferred provider for table game dealer training. This is based in large part on the dealer skill levels and employment attitudes displayed by successful completers of the programs. Establishment of a schedule of open lab hours allows students to hone skills on their own time and has also helped with employment preparation. Maryland

Live! Casino offers “dealer auditions” right at the end of each program series. This partnership helps to ensure that students have an employment interview before they actually leave the college.

Our partnership model, in which the college invites area employers to have an active role in curriculum development and updates, using partner employees as instructors where appropriate, and having immediate job placement assessment done at the end of the program, will be piloted across an expanded set of occupational and trades programs.

In addition to the focus on learning in the classroom, the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 students have also received assistance from college staff on how to deal with life issues. This has led to exploratory conversations with the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation and the county Department of Social Services to discuss the establishment of a combined Career Navigation Center where potential clients could come to one location to receive initial assessment of their needs and abilities, training information, and immediate access to needed social services.

This approach to occupational training will also be folded into the newly formed MI-BEST initiative. Based on Washington State’s award winning I-BEST programs, ten community colleges in Maryland are now issuing continuing education certificates with clearly articulated learning outcomes based on contextualized learning. This type of program development is leading toward potential increased state and federal funding for continuing education student tuition. The MI-BEST model is currently part of a research study being done under the auspices of the federal Department of Labor Accelerating Connections to Employment grant.

V. Internal institutional collaboration during the project that should be continued.

The Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 project is a model program for actualizing AACC’s Strategic Plan, Student Success 2020. It not only directly addresses the three college Strategic Issues—Access, Success, and Resources—but, as articulated above, enhances all six of the current college mission goals.

- Goal 1: Excellence in Teaching and Learning Objectives
- Goal 2: Student Achievement and Success
- Goal 3: Access and Affordability
- Goal 4: Diversity
- Goal 5: Community Engagement
- Goal 6: Effective Management of Resources.

Like many community colleges nationwide, AACC is experiencing a softening in enrollment levels. What the college has learned from the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 grant will lead to new approaches to help the college reverse that trend. It will increase student retention and completion as well as their ultimate success. The new approach leads to immediate, as well as long term, increases in funding from multiple sources. It will help AACC clearly differentiate the college programming from what is offered by others.

The School for Continuing Education and Workforce Development (CEWD) at AACC is embracing less of a silo approach to occupational skills training to more of a shared departmental approach. The larger orientation sessions will involve marketing resources and staff from multiple areas. This will allow for the addition of student pre-testing and more efficient counseling, with fewer additional staff than if

each office is doing this alone and at different times with varying success. Additional costs are anticipated to be approximately \$80,000 for another Career Navigator for the programs.

VI. Integration timeline for identified activities.

Best practices from participation in the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project and new learning from the other college's Project Directors will be assessed for application. CEWD management is developing innovative strategies to increase student success rates and improve wage rates in training-related jobs.

Future integration outcomes include the realignment of the CEWD orientations to the shared departmental approach beginning March 2016. The marketing campaign and related costs are under development with the college's Public Relations and Marketing office.

The success of the digital badging platform, providing students with incremental rewards for their skill attainment and progress, is being incorporated throughout the college, both in continuing education, contract training as well as credit programming. In addition to the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 digital badges in Casino Blackjack Dealer, Casino Mini Baccarat Dealer, and Casino Carnival Games Dealer, badges are currently also issued in Cyber Analyst, Cyber Safety, A+ Customer Service, Interactive English: Intermediate and Advance, ESL for Food Service, Workplace Excellence skills, Yoga, Dental Assisting, Veterinary Assisting, and Web Graphic Design. Many more badges are in development for 2016. Contract renewal with Pearson Acclaim is under negotiation for year two.

Student completion ceremonies are now offered in most workforce training programs using the model developed in the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project.

The college continues to seek new opportunities for workforce training programming that aligns contextualized technical training with adult basic education in a high-demand, high-growth job area. Currently under development for implementation in 2016 are dental assisting, A+, and other basic computer certifications, as integrated training programs.

Conversations are underway for an implementation of a centralized Career Navigation Center to provide wraparound support services for all students. As planning and budgeting for this initiative is comprehensive, it is still in the initial phase and there is no real time line for the project yet.

The Walmart Foundation's support through the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project for the development of these best practices can expand the capacity of community colleges at a local, regional, and national level to enhance middle-skill job training opportunities and improve lives.