

## **Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0: College Sustainability Plan Maricopa Community Colleges**

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

- A. Use the Brighter Futures grant to insert resources and support where most needed by the targeted student population. The flexibility of the grant creates the ability to make a difference where it counts the most.
- B. Involve financial aid and student personnel early in the process to create a program infrastructure. This will avoid delays in implementing payment and creating reimbursement mechanisms that are vital to student success and persistence in the program.
- C. Involve multiple programs within the college to broaden the scope of the program and the number of students served. The student data obtained from individual programs and from across the program can be used to make a data-driven argument to sustain the program.
- D. House the project within a college's Workforce Development Unit to take advantage of the existing personnel, support structures, and connections with industry.

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

- A. Student services personnel have identified payment for certification exams as a financial barrier that can prevent students from gaining industry credentials. By creating mechanisms within the existing student processing and financial aid systems, a process now exists to seamlessly continue the program.
- B. Many students who register for programs need to make the first tuition payment before they can begin classes. However, student support specialists report that students can struggle with this payment if their financial aid has not been secured at that point. This can result in the loss of a student who is otherwise prepared and ready. If the Brighter Futures mechanism exists, it can help students overcome this barrier.
- C. Data is critical to sustaining decisions. The Brighter Futures project, although limited in the numbers of students involved, can provide a robust set of performance data for a college to make a continued support, continued funding decision.
- D. By housing the project within the college's Workforce Development Unit, the Brighter Futures project leveraged existing personnel resources. This allowed all of the grant's funds to be used for student support and established a sustaining infrastructure site for the project.

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

- A. The college must make a commitment of personnel resources to sustain the program but these resources already exist within the existing program staff, and the existing financial aid and student

support services personnel. Therefore, there is no increased financial burden in terms of personnel costs

- B. In some cases, such as creating a purchase order with a certification agency, a college must front the cost of a block purchase of certifications exams tests. In the absence of a grant, it is not yet clear how to manage these upfront costs.
- C. By using a reimbursement model, a student can first pay for a certification exam and then seek reimbursement. Although this may impose a temporary financial burden, it could solve a college's ability to prepay these costs.
- D. By using a college's existing programs, the marketing costs can be folded into existing program marketing budgets at no additional cost. However, tuition support may not be possible within the college's existing budget.

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

The District's Workforce Development office acted as the sponsor of the project, providing the management and administrative support. This was a natural place to house the project and provided a central point for coordination and data collection. Each college and skill center also sponsored the project by donating the time of the program and student services personnel.

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

The most significant partnership developed was the intra-district partnership that was created. Using a ONE Maricopa approach, teams for six different units—three colleges, two skills centers, and the District Workforce Development office—collaborated to share ideas, processes, and marketing approaches to make the program a success. Each successful aspect, such as marketing or program design, was freely used and modified by all of the partners. In addition, a key partnership between the colleges and skill centers was established to provide for marketing and pathways to serve students across a large geographic region.

#### **VI. Integration timeline for identified activities.**

October-December 2015: Establish a district-level Brighter Futures project taskforce.

January-March 2016: Analyze program data to identify sustainable aspects that can be supported by the outcomes.

April-June 2016: Approach internal and external funding sources (such as industry associations) to invest in the scaling up the program.