



Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0: College Sustainability Plan Miami Dade College

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

A. Development of a Cohort Model

- Customized Training. This model helps, in particular, to satisfy companies' demands and workforce drive learning.
- Specific and Efficient Training. This direct option benefits cohort participants who have similar needs, interests, experiences, and goals. This supportive model seems to boost the completion rate.
- Lower Tuition Cost. Flat rates can be negotiated with the Continuing Education department as part of predictable revenue and no marketing effort per course programmed.

B. Intensive Case Management Approach

- Opportune and Timely Intervention. This allows for intervention and assisting students during critical times in their educational journey to avoid dropping out of the program.
- Focusing in a Group with Similarities and Common Purposes. This allows for easier monitoring and intervention to solve issues affecting advancement.

C. Support Services

- Continuous Contact. This helps to develop a relationship between the program and participants via intensive interactions by phone, email, and face-to-face meetings.
- Crisis Intervention and Referral Program. This allows immediate access to social service and community-based organizational programs to help participants.

D. Computer-Based Training and Service Learning

- MCD's computer-based training allows students to set up their own training schedule at their own pace.
- Gaining experience increases opportunities for job placement.

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

- A. The Back-to-Work Center has a computer lab open to program participants. Equipped with a computer-based training program, it includes tutorials for Microsoft Suite, Word, and Excel; typing; and customer service. Most participants from the community do not have the training to search for jobs via the Internet. We offer basic skills and help them learn to apply online and use email in their job search. Resume writing, interview skills, and job preparation training serve as pathways to job placement. Participants have much easier access to EFM (Employ Florida Marketplace) to search for a job.
- B. The Back-to-Work Center is seen as a place for resources and information, from domestic violence to applying for financial aid. The department has grown to become a place of confidence, advising, and referrals on matters related to everyday living in poverty (e.g., housing, food, free training programs).

- C. Interaction with participants in the program becomes a long-term relationship. Even when they finish schooling, get a job, and continue with their lives, they often still come for financial information, from stolen identity to how to create credit. The program has a wealth of information—flyers, booklets, books, magazines, and internet links—to facilitate solving issues relevant to them. The program has quarterly contacts with social service program in the county to update the availability of assistance.
- D. The Back-to-Work Center offers, at no cost, the opportunity to access the Internet to search for jobs and services for those who are disoriented and disenfranchised. Some participants are unable to search for ways out of poverty because they have limited or no opportunities to access the Internet, update skills, and obtain information about the marketplace. Some of them are unable to find the orientation needed to prepare them for work. Even more, they may lack the experience to work in this country. The Service Learning program has proven that volunteering provides updated experience and validates previous experience as well as assistance to learn skills necessary in the job market.

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

- A. When the program was established and functioning with the first Walmart Brighter Futures Project in 2009, it had already overcome a multitude of hurdles that could have limited service to students. Years of experience have made it possible to reach an efficient operation and establish a name in the community as an effective program.
- B. The Back-to-Work program is fully operational and counts with an approved in-kind in transportation of \$121,512 through October 2016. This transportation disadvantaged program has been a key issue to assist students and community participants to improve their financial situation with mobility to the college and their workplace.
- C. This program would have a greater impact as an umbrella of support for other grants in the college, since experience is relevant to success. Students need to overcome barriers to education and jobs. Through courses in Continuing Education, participants in the ESL program learn English, prepare for the GED, obtain certifications, and gain employment while still receiving support from the program. Often, participants who did not believe it was possible to become a college student realize they want to have a career and apply for financial aid.
- D. The fiscal implication for institutionalizing the Back-to-Work Center are salaries and benefits associated with the Program Coordinator, Database Coordinator, and Computer Lab monitor, as well as the cost associated with office expenses. Most of the cost related to the program is already covered by MDC; there is no set up cost or initial cost since the program is fully operational already.

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

- A. The partnership with the Miami Dade Transit Transportation Disadvantage Program was established in 2001 with 25 transportation tokens worth less than \$100 a month at that time. Today we are receiving tokens with an annual value of \$121,512 to help hundreds of low-income students to utilize public transportation to come to college, search for a job, or get to work.

- B. MDC partners with Senior Community Service Employment Program (UNIDAD) to provide volunteers to train in areas of computer and office skills. This partnership provides for 40 hours of paid training to participants in our program.

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

- A. There is a partnership with MDC's Hospitality Institute to provide training to low-income, low skilled individuals in the community.
- B. Continuing Education Department at Miami Dade College.
- C. Partnership with Financial Aid, New Student Center, and Registration at MDC.
- D. Partnerships with other grant programs (e.g., TRIO, TRANCOM, SINGLE STOP) with computer training components and transportation issues.

VI. Integration timeline for identified activities.

- A. There was an initiative to turn the Back-to-Work Program into an umbrella support service to other grants and social services available in MDC campuses. This initiative could be revived in the near future to help other grant programs to succeed.
- B. From December 2015 to January 31, 2016, the Back-to-Work Center will continue the conversation to extend services with the help of internal financial support (MDC) and approach other funding sources within the community and college to invest in sustaining the program.