



Implementing the Retail Management Certificate Program: Best Practices at Community Colleges in the Walmart Brighter Futures 3.0 Project

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Walmart Brighter Futures 3.0: Accelerating Career Mobility for Incumbent Retail Employees

The purpose of the League for Innovation in the Community College's Walmart Brighter Futures 3.0 (WBF 3.0) project was to scale further the Retail Management Certificate (RMC) program being offered at community colleges in 14 Western states in cooperation with the Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC). The League identified 12 colleges to expand the RMC footprint and enhance delivery options for incumbent retail workers.

Three overarching goals provided the framework for the three-year WBF 3.0 project. Each goal supported the project's effort to provide incumbent retail workers with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that employers require their employees to have in order to receive wage gains and move into management positions. Participants who successfully completed the program received a credential from the college as well as the industry certification from WAFC.

- Goal #1 was to develop a pathway approach in retail management that builds on the successes of the WAFC's RMC initiative. The WAFC RMC program was created by the industry for the industry with assistance from community colleges. The industry-supported, eight three-credit credential ensures that employees learn the most relevant, in-demand skills that will lead to career advancement and/or increased wages.
- Goal #2 was to develop deeper community college engagement in the RMC initiative. This was accomplished by recruiting new community colleges to the initiative. Selected colleges embraced the pathway approach and accessible learning via face-to-face, hybrid, and distance learning formats. Additionally, competency-based education (CBE) models began to emerge at several participating colleges.
- Goal #3 was to increase the number of employers engaged in the RMC initiative. This was accomplished by working with industry partners to identify employers who have regional and national footprints that enable the initiative to push beyond the states already engaged.

Since 2000, over 150 community colleges have been approved by WAFC to offer the RMC, establishing a community of practice in retail management education. Based on the collective experiences of the partner colleges, best practices emerged to guide institutions in implementing and sustaining the RMC program. From the outset of the WBF 3.0 project, the 12 colleges were encouraged to use the list of best practices as a blueprint to implement their RMC programs.

Over the three-year project, participating colleges incorporated identified best practices to varying degrees into their programs. Their replication of exemplary practices has contributed to the overall success of employee and employer engagement in WBF 3.0.

The League, in cooperation with the WAFC, is committed to sharing the best practices that lead to a successful RMC program. This guide includes descriptions of practices implemented at the colleges during the WBF 3.0 project period (starting on page 4).

Participating Colleges

Alexandria Technical & Community College, MN

Anne Arundel Community College, MD

Austin Community College, TX

Central New Mexico Community College, NM

College of Lake County, IL

Milwaukee Area Technical College, WI

Moraine Valley Community College, IL

Nashville State Community College, TN

San Jacinto College, TX

Sinclair Community College, OH

Umpqua Community College, OR

Wayne County Community College District, MI

Pathway Model – College Best Practices

Retail Management Certificate: An industry-driven dual certificate pathway that unifies a credit-bearing college credential and industry certification

Attracting/Retaining Industry Partnerships

- **Tuition: Direct bill** option with easy-to-read single invoice for employer
- **Dedicated program website**
- **Cohesive, streamlined process for student admission and registration**
 - User-friendly processes with plain terminology vs. “academic speak”
 - Real-time registration support and technical problem resolution
- **Single point of contact**
 - For program development and problem resolution
 - For student registration questions/concerns
- **Master schedules** (courses in recommended order) **and block registration**
- **FERPA waiver** to provide grades and progress reports for industry direct bill partners (course grade of C- or better required)
- **Placement tests and prerequisites waived** (to eliminate barriers)
- **Flat-rate tuition** (across geographic boundaries) to simplify cost, affordability, and budget projection for employers
- **Leveraged funds** to minimize tuition cost for employers
- **Consistency in course design** and grading standards
- **Communication and marketing at start-up** in plain language rather than academic terms
- **CEO engagement** supporting employees enrolled in the program
- **Advisory board** to maintain employer engagement

Supporting Student Success and Completion

- **Dedicated faculty, staff, and Retail Management Certificate (RMC) advisor**
- **Prior learning assessment/credit** for prior experience/learning
- **Transcript review** (including preliminary unofficial review to establish first class)
- **Orientation session** within, or just prior to, first course, using same platform
- **Availability of student support outside of traditional campus hours**
- **Active advising/mentoring/tutoring throughout course of study** to ensure successful start-up and ongoing student engagement
- **Multiple course formats**
 - 100% online, hybrid, traditional, cohort
 - Competency based/adaptive learning format that allows for accelerated course completion
 - 8-course fast track option for quick completion
- **Free** (included in tuition) **or low-cost textbooks** in multiple formats: OER, digital, subscription, rental, e-book (e.g., Lumen Learning, Cengage Unlimited)
- **Academic and career pathway planning**
- **Industry certificate application/paperwork completed and provided** by college to student upon successful completion final RMC course

Best Practices

Attracting/Retaining Industry Partnerships

Tuition: Direct Bill

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC used a direct bill system for its RMC program. When an employer from the retail industry wanted to enroll students, they set up a direct bill account with our accounting department. An attribute was assigned to each enrolled student so the accounting department was aware that the student's bill would be paid by the employer. At the completion of each term, employers were sent a comprehensive bill that included charges for each student and how many classes they completed. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkel](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC utilized the Banner Student Management System, which supported the use of a closed cohort for the RMC program. This structure allowed the college to record the tuition liabilities for each student per term. The finance office, working in conjunction with the RMC office, then prepared tuition invoices by retail partner. A single invoice was sent to each retail partner with a list of term-by-term tuition charges broken down by individual student. This direct bill invoice simplified the operational program management for the retail partners and streamlined the WAFC tuition reimbursement application. The result was less operational time required by retail partners and more time dedicated to recruiting and coaching RMC students. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Dedicated Program Website

Umpqua Community College

UCC developed a dedicated [RMC program website](#) to provide program information, registration instructions, textbook information, and a step-by-step process for students to register in each successive course after agreeing to accept the next class. The website's direct link to program information eliminated prospective students' need to search through the main college website. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Cohesive, Streamlined Process for Student Admission and Registration

Alexandria Technical and Community College

ATCC ensured a streamlined, student-focused admissions and registration process by,

- Dedicating an RMC Advisor and Admissions Specialist to serve as the go-to contact for participants;
- Waiving the \$20 admissions fee for employees pursuing the RMC;
- Waiving the college entry test (Accuplacer) in lieu of the Employer Acceptance Form;
- Accepting participants while waiting for records of high school graduation and/or college transcripts;

- Reviewing transcripts for prior course credit; and
- Utilizing a 3rd party billing specialist for RMC employer groups. (Contact: [Kristin Daby](#))

Central New Mexico Community College

Two avenues were established at CNMCC to admit students into the RMC program. The first avenue was employer-led and involved the employer's HR representative directly:

1. A list of students approved by the employer was sent to the Program Manager at least three weeks before the term began.
2. The Program Manager sent students a welcome email with steps to get the process started as well as contact information for the CBE Coach.
3. Students enrolled at CNMCC.
4. Students returned commitment forms, including an Agreement of Financial Responsibility, Class Expectations and Policy form, and Authorization for Release of Educational Records to Employer form, to the Program Manager.
5. Students registered for the first RMC program course.
6. The CBE Coach sent students an email including more information about getting started.
7. Students were required to complete an online learning management system (LMS) orientation program before beginning coursework.

The second avenue was student-led, with students contacting the CNMCC Program Manager directly by filling out an online interest form or sending an email. Once the Program Manager obtained approval from the employer for interested students to participate in the program, steps 2-7 above were followed. (Contact: [Kalyann Pirkl](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC converted all college requirements and program language into plain terminology on its dedicated website. A concerted effort was made to use terminology that is common or familiar to the general public. The website provided links and information for support and problem resolution. Most importantly, the website directed students to the RMC Program Coordinator's email and cell phone number. Support was provided seven days a week, 364 days a year.

Through the RMC Program Office, UCC provided a one-stop center for recruitment, questions, partner program development, billing, admission, registration, advising, and problem resolution. This level of support ensured consistency and a better understanding of the unique needs of the working adult student population. It also provided the data and understanding necessary to answer questions and to guide students within the parameters of each individual retail partner program. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Single Point of Contact

Anne Arundel Community College

A main factor of AACC's program success was having a single point of contact who provided consistent support for employers, students, and staff. External and internal customers knew that if they had a question or concern, they could contact this one person for an accurate and complete response about anything related to the program (e.g., admissions, application process, registration process, textbooks,

course schedules). Customers appreciated not having to call several individuals to arrive at a solution. (Contact: [Dawn Carter](#))

Austin Community College

A dedicated staff member assisted RMC students with admission and registration processes, testing accommodations for those outside of the Austin metro area, textbook acquisition, and graduation deadlines. The staff member was in regular contact with students by email and phone during the program. The dedicated staff member also worked with colleagues throughout the college to assist in the progress of the students on matters such as degree audits. The Department Chair ensured that students were taught by instructors who had real-world experience, and those instructors also maintained regular contact with RMC students. (Contact: [Mary F. Rincon](#))

Central New Mexico Community College

There was a single point of contact for CNMCC's RMC program from the beginning—the Program Manager. Among other duties, the Program Manager

1. Worked with students to get initial paperwork completed;
2. Registered students for all classes;
3. Prepared and sent all invoices and WAFC reports;
4. Maintained contact with employers regarding any student issues and billing;
5. Worked with the Enrollment Strategist to prepare program marketing materials;
6. Facilitated all onboarding meetings with employers;
7. Tracked student progress through courses with the CBE Coach; and
8. Facilitated Q&A sessions with new students. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Milwaukee Area Technical College

MATC identified a part-time staff member to serve as a single point of contact for industry participants. This staff member assisted the business contacts, business employees (students), and MATC faculty and staff with soliciting employer participation (recruiting), determining cohort class schedules, registering participants, ordering textbooks, and following up with students whose attendance was not consistent or those who had additional interest in MATC programs. This individual also acted as a liaison between the students and their respective human resources representatives to ensure passing grades. Finally, the staff member processed necessary paperwork to issue the WAFC's industry certification (RMC) to students upon successful completion of required courses. Having a single point of contact assured student success through intrusive advising and advocacy. (Contact: [Stefanie Patti](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC operated the RMC program on a closed cohort basis, thus allowing it to be separated from the traditional college registration process. Students were not required to file a FAFSA, conduct the traditional student orientation, or meet with a traditional advisor. Instead, the college created the RMC Program Coordinator/Advisor position. This staff member, working in conjunction with the RMC Program Clerk, provided a single point of contact for admissions, registration, class scheduling, and problem resolution. The program developed an in-depth understanding of and relationship with each employer and student, and gathered information was used to guide each student's term-by-term plan development. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Master Schedules and Block Registration

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC offered the eight RMC program courses in the order recommended by WAFC. Students were registered by the CNMCC team for classes, which were offered in seven-week blocks. If students finished a course before the seven-week time period, they were eligible to register for the next course ahead of schedule. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Milwaukee Area Technical College

MATC created a master schedule for the RMC program that was aligned with industry need. Specifically, the college engaged industry partners by collaborating with them to tweak schedules as necessary to accommodate student/employee busy times and to help promote student success. MATC offered all eight courses in the RMC online in eight-week sessions and block-enrolled each cohort in each successive course. As each cohort moved through the courses, MATC was flexible with the sessions and built in more weeks during the stores' busiest times (e.g., holidays). The workload remained the same, but the schedule was stretched out to offer students time to focus on their jobs when their employers needed them the most. (Contact: [Stefanie Patti](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC offered all eight RMC courses each 10-week quarter. This allowed students on a regular track to complete the program in eight consecutive terms, or two years. A fast-track option was also available, allowing two courses per term and completion within one year. The courses were offered in a prescribed sequence to provide incumbent worker students with a student success track that paralleled the academic learning track. The college worked with each retail partner to provide block registration along with the option for the college to manage the operational aspects of registration for partners with limited staffing. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

FERPA Waiver

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC required students to sign a number of documents upon admission into the RMC program, including a FERPA form. By signing this form, students granted the college permission to release information, including name, class enrollment, student ID number, course performance, and financial documents/information, to their employers as a condition of admittance. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Sinclair Community College

SCC used a FERPA waiver to enable both the faculty member and the academic coach to communicate with students as well as employers. This waiver proved extremely helpful when a student was struggling in a course and the college had to involve the employer to make contact. For example, some students had life issues that prevented them from progressing; by reaching out to the employer, the college was able to proactively get the students to a place where he or she could complete or withdraw from a course without penalty. (Contact: [Dennis Brode](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC had an extensive FERPA compliance program, including an Information Release Form. This form was required from each RMC student who wanted to participate in their employer direct bill tuition payment option. Students not wishing to release their information participated by personally paying their own tuition. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Placement Tests and Prerequisites Waived

Central New Mexico Community College

From the beginning of program implementation, CNMCC waived the two courses considered prerequisites in the RMC program on the assumption that students entering this program have typically been working in industry for a while and already have the knowledge, skills, and abilities obtained in those classes. CNMCC also waived the placement test requirement for this group of students because of their previous work experience. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkli](#))

Moraine Valley Community College

MVCC had an existing inventory of eight courses that was crosswalked to meet the competencies of the RMC program. These courses had no prerequisites, so placement testing was not necessary. Not having prerequisites in the existing courses led to reduced costs to earning the credential as well as greater acceleration to completion. (Contact: [Michael Crehan](#))

San Jacinto College

SJC requires every student to take placement tests, even though the state of Texas does not require placement testing for students to start school. College leadership approved waiving this requirement for RMC students. However, when a student chose to continue his or her education beyond the RMC (e.g., to complete an A.A.S.), the placement test was required at that time. The college specifically selected courses that would be approved by WAFC (aligned with the WAFC learning objectives), but did not have prerequisites attached. (Contact: [Heather Rhodes](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC waived college placement tests for RMC program participants based on the belief that incumbent working adults have met the foundational requirements of the program. The first class in the series was designed to help students assess their readiness and either continue or opt out. The college considered it a best practice to remove barriers to entry, allowing students to try the program rather than asking these working adults to face a battery of placement tests for what is a specialized program. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Flat-Rate Tuition

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC charged a reduced rate per course inclusive of tuition, books, and fees for all RMC students, regardless of their residency status. This flat rate was part of the college's MOU with the WAFC, and the college has no plans to change it in the future. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkli](#))

College of Lake County

CLC originally intended to provide a tuition rate that increased gradually from course #1 to course #8, but instead elected to institute flat-rate tuition. In the end, it was easier for both employers and CLC to set a flat tuition rate for the duration of the program. In addition, tuition was offered at a discounted rate, enabling employers to maximize the use of their budgets to send more employees through the RMC program. (Contact: [Eric Kurtz](#))

San Jacinto College

Like many community colleges, SJC has in-district and out-of-district tuition rates. To provide a competitive tuition rate and remove the barrier of cost, college leadership requested a flat tuition rate for all RMC students, regardless of whether they were in district. The college board approved the request, and SJC established a flat tuition rate per course, specific only to the eight-course RMC program. (Contact: [Heather Rhodes](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC operates in the State of Oregon, which has an independent Board of Education governance model. The college has a long history of working with major employers and large companies for customized programs of study. Working in conjunction with the WAFC, UCC mapped the cost of the RMC classes and signed an MOU with WAFC to provide a flat rate per course, inclusive of tuition and all associated fees. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Leveraged Funds

Milwaukee Area Technical College

MATC applied for and received a \$250,000 Workforce Advancement Training grant through the Wisconsin Technical College System and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. This grant funded training for incumbent workers that led to an opportunity to upskill and receive a promotion or higher wage. The grant required industry interest from the local workforce, which was received in writing. In addition, as part of the grant application, MATC leveraged the award from the WBF 3.0 project in its application to provide all eight classes required for the RMC at a reduced cost for participants. (Contact: [Stefanie Patti](#))

Consistency in Course Design

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC used a backward design approach for RMC courses. Along with information provided by the WAFC, teams of subject matter experts, instructional designers, and administrators developed all eight courses to be made up of a series of competencies (four to six for each course). A final assessment for each competency ensured student mastery as courses progressed. This process allowed for consistent design, and students were able to use their prior knowledge to complete many of the assessments more quickly. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkle](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC developed a process for ensuring consistency in course design, delivery, and grading. The RMC Program Coordinator, working in conjunction with the Business Department Chair, developed course

student learning outcomes, syllabus construction, course flow, assignment structure, rubrics, and point allocations for each RMC course. The college used the Canvas LMS and a master shell structure. RMC instructors were selected by the Business Department Chair after an interview to ascertain their course certifications and willingness to work in the closed cohort model. Both full-time and part-time instructors were asked to forgo some level of academic freedom in support of a larger goal: overall student success. Using the master course model and consistent design, each of the courses had a similar flow, feel, and workload. In addition, rubrics were utilized for all subjective grading to ensure consistency. Both the Business Department Chair and the RMC Program Coordinator were certified in Quality Matters, the model used in the course structure. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Communication and Marketing at Start-Up

Alexandria Technical and Community College

ATCC contacted a wide range of retailers, including grocery, apparel, hardware, sporting goods, and general merchandisers, through graphic flyers, postcards, and informational documents to announce and promote the RMC program. Customized letters were used to inform and engage employers who could benefit by taking advantage of the WBF 3.0 grant to enroll members of their workforce.

(Contact: [Kristin Daby](#))

Austin Community College

ACC sought out students from all retail industry segments in the Austin area to participate in the RMC program. The college planned and executed many recruiting strategies, including meeting in person with several local retail HR teams, delivering multiple information flyers to over 300 retail locations, having impromptu discussions with retail management while onsite, displaying signage/posters in retailer employee break rooms, conducting on-campus recruiting events, collaborating with the WAFC team to engage retail members in the area, updating the ACC RMC website, making personal calls to retailers and state and national trade associations, and sending several email campaigns to retail contacts. ACC also offered several cohort and customized programming opportunities to local retailers who had corporate offices in the Austin area. The local retail employees/students who enrolled in the RMC program became ambassadors within their companies to help recruit other students. (Contact: [Joy Nicholas](#))

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC developed a flyer for students that did not use academic terms. For instance, the RMC description on the flyer read, "CNM's Retail Management Certificate is the first of its kind to be offered entirely via a self-paced, accelerated format with few prescribed deadlines." The flyer also included upcoming program start dates, a description of who should take the program, a list of the eight courses, and contact information for the Program Manager. The flyer was updated over time based on questions asked by students. For instance, it is currently being updated to include a step-by-step process for enrolling in the program. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkli](#))

Nashville State Community College

In addition to utilizing the marketing resources on the RMC.com website, NSCC created a brochure, or leave behind marketing piece, to position the RMC program as a retail employer scholarship program. This positioning provided the employer with an education/career development pathway

advantage for attracting and retaining high-potential, entry-level, and incumbent employees. (Contact: [Bill Carter](#))

Wayne County Community College District

To attract and retain industry partners, WCCCD developed strategies to promote the RMC program outside of the traditional retail industry. The college recruited from employers in sectors such as banking, call centers, restaurants, and hotel industries. This strategy yielded diverse industry partners which allowed WCCCD to expand the traditional definition of and approach to retail management. In addition, the college gathered feedback from employers, faculty, and students to ensure that the RMC program continued to improve with each cohort. By maintaining open lines of communication, WCCCD cultivated strong relationships with all engaged employers. (Contact: [Pamela Parks](#))

CEO Engagement

Anne Arundel Community College

Each participating employer identified a champion to work collaboratively with the college and the students to help students to achieve their goals. In addition, modeling exemplary corporate support, one participating employer's CEO sent a personal letter to each student upon course completion, recognizing their hard work and success and extending corporate and departmental resources for their next course. (Contact: [Dawn Carter](#))

Advisory Board

Anne Arundel Community College

AACC created an RMC program advisory board to provide guidance and support for the program. Board membership consisted of the following AACC representatives: Project Director, Program Assistant, Student Transition and Success Coach, Department Chair, Dean, and Budget Director. In addition, each participating employer was required to send at least one leadership representative to at least two meetings per year at AACC. Additionally, WAF's national director of the RMC program was included to provide a regional/national perspective. An agenda was sent in advance for review and additions. The group discussed program details, requirements, successes, and benefits; identified challenges and opportunities; and planned for the program's future. Attendees actively participated in discussions and provided constructive feedback. (Contact: [Dawn Carter](#))

Supporting Student Success and Completion

Dedicated Faculty, Staff, and Retail Management Certificate Advisor

Austin Community College

ACC dedicated faculty, staff, and an RMC advisor to ensure student success by

- Providing guidance and leadership to RMC students throughout their academic studies at the college.
- Getting to know students and providing customized support for scheduling appropriate classes.
- Working toward creating an ongoing partnership focused on students' needs. If a student worked better in the classroom as opposed to remotely (i.e., via distance learning), for instance, he or she was placed in classroom sections only.
- Anticipating barriers that might hinder RMC program success and striving to address those barriers directly with the students.
- Conferring with faculty advisors to ensure accuracy of courses. Course substitutions were entered in a timely manner and the team worked hard to meet students' expectations and reply to all inquiries immediately. (Contact: [Mary F. Rincon](#))

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC dedicated a Program Manager, CBE Coach, and administrative support personnel to its RMC program. The staff helped with student admission, registration, progression through the program, and eventual WAFC application submission and graduation. The college also had a special pool of faculty who taught RMC courses. All faculty received training on program specifics, use of the special RMC LMS, and grading procedures. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Moraine Valley Community College

A part-time staff member was assigned to act as the primary resource for both students and employers in MVCC's RMC program. All inquiries flowed through this dedicated staff member, thus eliminating the need for those with questions having to call the college's general information line for assistance. The practice of assigning a primary contact throughout each student's time in the program provided continuity from one semester to the next. (Contact: [Michael Crehan](#))

Nashville State Community College

NSCC's Business Division hired a business professional from a highly engaged employer as an adjunct instructor. This individual was qualified to teach three of the eight RMC courses. This hiring strategy ensured industry input into the formation and delivery of the curriculum and, through the adjunct faculty member's retail experience, helped employees/students to better understand the course materials and assessment outcomes that improve completion rates. (Contact: [Bill Carter](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC established an RMC Program Coordinator position; this person also served as the RMC Advisor. RMC instructors were purposefully selected by the Business Department Chair. The Chair also provided coaching and feedback regarding class management and program outcome success. RMC

students received college information only from the RMC Program Coordinator/Advisor or their class instructor. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Prior Learning Assessment/Credit

Central New Mexico Community College

Students in the RMC program at CNMCC could earn credit for prior learning through transcript review for courses taken at other institutions, prerequisite overrides for courses not taken in the program, and waivers of two prerequisite classes after completion of the eight-class series. The college also offered credit for some of the courses via challenge exams as well as credit for military training. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirk](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC does not offer credit for prior learning, as the overall concept is still being evaluated by the State of Oregon for transfer credit. However, the RMC Program Coordinator worked with individual retail partners to evaluate the role of the program within their leadership development efforts. It was the position of the college that the program's purpose was to introduce a college education and build confidence for continuation to a bachelor's degree, which is key to the industry. Therefore, the college believes that students taking the program for leadership development should complete all eight of the courses. The college did review transcripts and assess prior credit equivalency. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Transcript Review

Central New Mexico Community College

For the RMC program, CNMCC reviewed transcripts from other institutions through an informal and/or formal process. Students initially exploring the program could send unofficial transcripts to the Program Manager for review by the Associate Dean to determine if any of their prior coursework would transfer. Students interested in enrolling in the program submitted their official transcripts to the records department through an online portal. Students were informed of both options in an email after their first inquiry into the program.

In order to receive the certificate from CNMCC, students were required to take at least four of the eight RMC courses at the college. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirk](#))

Moraine Valley Community College

MVCC hired a Student Success Specialist with experience as an academic advisor to support the RMC program. The specialist reviewed transcripts for incoming students with previous college credit and was able to assess which courses from other institutions had been previously approved for credit and which ones still needed to be evaluated. This allowed MVCC to advise students regarding their best path forward and helped to shorten their time to completion. (Contact: [Michael Crehan](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC supported the transfer of prior college credits to the RMC program. The RMC Program Coordinator/Advisor reviewed unofficial transcripts when requested by prospective students. Under the WAFC

program, credit for any prior RMC classes awarded by another approved, accredited community college was granted. Potential equivalency classes were noted by the RMC Program Coordinator/Advisor and referred to the Registrar. The student term-by-term planner was adjusted based on the unofficial transcript review; however, each student was required to submit official transcripts prior to program completion for Registrar review. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Orientation Session

Central New Mexico Community College

Students in CNMCC's program were required to complete an orientation course before taking RMC program courses. The orientation was managed by the CBE Coach and delivered in the same platform as the other courses to familiarize students with the platform as well as program requirements. The course included the following topics:

- Platform management (e.g., logging in, changing passwords)
- Program requirements and expectations
- Course navigation (e.g., quizzes, discussion boards, final assessments)
- Plagiarism and other school policies (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC developed a dedicated student orientation for the RMC program. Once students were admitted and registered, they were enrolled in the online orientation, which was conducted using the Canvas LMS. The online orientation provided key information regarding the program, student requirements, and steps to complete student account set-up. Once the orientation was completed, the student was ready to begin the program, and their first class appeared in their Canvas dashboard at term start. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Availability of Student Support Outside of Traditional Campus Hours

Central New Mexico Community College

Student support services offered outside of traditional campus hours at CNMCC included the following:

- Online library resources
- Online tutoring and extended tutoring hours during certain times in the semester
- Phone call appointments with a Disability Resource Center representative
- Phone call appointments with academic advisors
- Texts, emails, and calls from the CBE Coach to answer questions and provide time management assistance and motivation
- Virtual meetings with faculty (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC provided RMC student support outside of the traditional campus hours, which is vital for retail workers due to their schedules. Since the program is national in scope, support was required across all time zones. The RMC Office was staffed every week except between Christmas and New Year's Day. The RMC Coordinator/Advisor monitored and responded to emails seven days a week. The college learned

that most RMC student questions come in late on Friday or over the weekend, and that delayed responses could result in students failing to complete the registration process or assignments or to miss deadlines. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Active Advising/Mentoring/Tutoring Throughout Course of Study

Anne Arundel Community College

In addition to the assigned faculty member, a Student Transition and Success Coach (STSC) was assigned to and embedded into each online course. The STSC could then interact with students in the course and monitor student progress. STSC's were viewed as case managers who provided special retention activities for students throughout the course, including, but not limited to

- Regular participant follow-up;
- Provision of additional resources (e.g., fact sheets, study tips, online resources);
- Regularly scheduled check-ins with all participants, at intervals as required;
- Provision of information to participants on next steps;
- Follow-up with participants on registration for the next class, etc.;
- Provision of pathways for program completion; and
- Ensuring that participants navigated college requirements for program completion (i.e., assessment, degree plan, enrollment). (Contact: [Dawn Carter](#))

Central New Mexico Community College

From the beginning of the RMC program, a CBE Coach served as advisor and mentor for RMC program students. The role of the coach was to provide advice and support from the moment the student entered the program to the time he or she graduated. Among other duties, the coach's main functions and responsibilities were to

1. Welcome and introduce students to the program before the first course began;
2. Facilitate the orientation course;
3. Conduct Q&A sessions with new students the first week of classes;
4. Track student progress through competencies/courses;
5. Assist students with registering for classes and tracking important dates and deadlines;
6. Work with instructors to monitor students' academic progress;
7. Check-in and communicate with students on a weekly basis;
8. Intervene as necessary to assist students who were having difficulty;
9. Advise students on goal setting and time management skills to ensure adequate progress; and
10. Provide guidance and direction on learning resources. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkli](#))

College of Lake County

CLC executed a communication plan at the start of each new eight-week term to ensure successful onboarding of new students and guarantee that continuing students were prepared for the start of each new class. The plan included an introductory email that was sent one to two weeks prior to the first day of class. The email welcomed students to the new class, laid out the steps for logging on to MyCLC, and told students to be on the lookout for their first assignment, which was due in week one of the class. Three to five days prior to the class start date, students were called and reminded to log on to MyCLC and to watch

for their first assignment. A few days prior to the first class, the instructor emailed students to introduce him/herself, provide an overview of expectations, and remind students that their first assignment was due in week one of the class. Finally, all students who had not logged on halfway through week one of class were called once again and reminded to log on and complete the first assignment. (Contact: [Eric Kurtz](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC utilized a multi-step communication and support process for new RMC students. The program website provided a single location for information about admissions, registration, and program support utilizing nonacademic language. Once admitted and registered, new students were enrolled in a Canvas new student orientation course specifically designed for the RMC program; the orientation provided program information to help students to become familiar with the LMS. Course instructors were encouraged to open their class shells on the Saturday prior to term start, as many students were looking for their courses in their Canvas dashboards.

The RMC Coordinator/Advisor also worked closely with each class instructor to provide key onboarding information and first-week student communications, and to gather information early and often regarding students who were falling behind. Since these were working adult learners, and life or work events could impact student performance, the RMC Coordinator/Advisor worked with both the students and employers to develop participation options that led to student success. Often, the role of the college was to help students overcome perceived issues that are common to college students, but foreign to first-time, incumbent working students.

Sinclair Community College

The RMC program at SCC utilized academic coaches from the competency-based courses as advisors for all RMC students, regardless of the course format they chose. The coaches worked with students from the first day they contacted SCC until they completed. They assisted with registration, prior learning review, the LMS, and life issues that arose. The academic coaches were "enrolled" in each course so that they could see students' progress as well as the back-end LMS analytics. Because of this access, they often noticed that a student was struggling before the student recognized it and were able to proactively assist the student to ensure that they were successful. (Contact: [Dennis Brode](#))

Wayne County Community College District

To support student success and completion, WCCCD's RMC program team met frequently to discuss the needs of students. The team also developed checklists that assisted in measuring student success. To increase their confidence and comfort level, all students participated in an orientation session on one of WCCCD's campuses. According to student feedback, this experience helped to relieve stress for those who had never taken college-level courses or had not attended college for a long time. In addition, student support was available outside of traditional campus hours and the RMC Program Coordinator made frequent visits to classes as well as phone calls to support and encourage students. Finally, the RMC program team utilized instructors whose teaching styles complemented the adult learners' organizational cultures. (Contact: [Pamela Parks](#))

Multiple Course Formats

Alexandria Technical and Community College

At ATCC, all eight RMC courses were available on campus and online. The ATCC RMC was also offered through Distance Minnesota (distanceminnesota.org). Accredited and award-winning, Distance Minnesota made it possible for students of all ages and backgrounds to achieve their educational and professional goals. In addition, ATCC is a member of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, which allowed retailers to engage employees in states across the U.S. (Contact: [Kristin Daby](#))

Central New Mexico Community College

CNMCC offered the RMC program in two formats: hybrid accelerated courses and competency-based format. When the program was first launched in the summer of 2016, each class was offered in a seven-week hybrid format. This accelerated model allowed students to complete the program in a little over a year. During the WBF 3.0 Project, the competency-based format also allowed students to complete the program in an accelerated manner by using any prior knowledge from their current position or other schooling. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

Nashville State Community College

In addition to in-class and traditional online delivery models, NSCC adopted an open educational resources (OER) course structure for one of the eight RMC courses and aligned competency-based assignments and assessments with existing course learning objectives and current course credit standards. One to two more courses will be added to this structure and model each term. The benefits were that traditional textbook content was integrated into the course, the cost of the course was \$25 per student, and each employee/ student could progress through the course's subject matter at a pace that corresponded with their particular learning mode and mastery timeframe, which improved completion rates. (Contact: [Bill Carter](#))

Sinclair Community College

SCC was the one of only two colleges in the U.S. to offer the RMC in a completely competency-based format. In our grant proposal, the college committed to developing the courses in multiple formats to help ensure access for incumbent workers. Every course in the RMC was available in the following formats:

- Self-paced, accelerated, and 100% online (CBE)
- As 8-week, 12-week, and 16-week face-to-face sessions
- As 8-week, 12-week, and 16-week 100% online sessions
- On employers' sites

Because of the commitment to develop each of the eight courses in these formats, the certificate could not be offered until all course development was completed. As a result, the RMC was first offered at SCC in fall 2017. The variety of course formats ultimately enabled students to find what worked best for them to be successful in achieving the certificate. The primary formats utilized were the competency-based format for employer-based students and online or face-to-face for SCC's Advanced Job Training (prison education) students. (Contact: [Dennis Brode](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC operated the RMC program in a 100% online-only format for closed cohorts of 25 RMC students each. RMC courses were also in the general catalog for traditional students to achieve the RMC while progressing toward other degree options. The college supported sending instructors to company sites for classes, but this option was not requested by any of the local partners. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Free or Low-Cost Textbooks

Central New Mexico Community College

Materials for all eight courses in the CNMCC RMC program were available free to students in the LMS Cognify, thus making the student experience as seamless as possible. (Contact: [Kalynn Pirkl](#))

College of Lake County

CLC offered free textbooks for each class to manage the costs of the program for employers and to make it easy for students to jump right into each class without having to order or rent a book online. Removing the additional step of purchasing books allowed for a quick and successful start to each class for incumbent workers. (Contact: [Eric Kurtz](#))

San Jacinto College

SJC used Lumen Learning for all RMC courses. Lumen Learning is currently only \$25 per student, per course, making it a very affordable option for students. At the time of the grant, another SJC grant covered the cost of the Lumen materials and ensured access to free materials by all RMC students. The college will continue to use free or low-cost materials even though both grants have ended. (Contact: [Sherilyn Reynolds](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC utilized OER texts for seven of the eight RMC courses. A low-cost physical textbook was used for the first course in the series, as student surveys showed that e-text, digital text, or online text was generally not understood by first-time working adult learners; RMC students indicated a desire to hold a physical book for their first class. By the second class, the program design helped move students beyond this need, and they worked exclusively with OER material. Teaching students how to learn, how to interact with a digital platform, and how to use online material was all built into the first class. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Academic and Career Pathway Planning

Alexandria Technical and Community College

At ATCC, the eight RMC courses were incorporated into the following degrees: Business Pathways A.S. (MN State Transfer Degree Curriculum), Marketing and Sales Management A.A.S., Business Management A.A.S., and Fashion Management A.A.S. Integrating RMC courses into established degree programs provided pathways for those who wished to pursue an associate degree. (Contact: [Kristin Daby](#))

Umpqua Community College

The UCC RMC Program Coordinator/Advisor worked with employer partners' talent development teams to envision the high correlation between the retail management education pathway and career paths in the retail sector. UCC's RMC Coordinator/Advisor and Business Department Chair also provided individual academic plans for RMC students who anticipated pursuing an associate degree and/or a bachelor's degree. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

Industry Certificate Application/Paperwork Completed and Provided

Anne Arundel Community College

An AACC representative completed the RMC Application for Industry Certification for each student who successfully completed the program. The representative entered AACC courses, grades received, and dates completed into the chart along with the associated WAFC generic course title. This approach streamlined the process and shortened the wait time for students who were eager to receive their certificates. The AACC representative signed the applications and mailed them to the students for signature. Students then returned their applications to a Human Resources representative, who submitted them to WAFC for processing. (Contact: [Dawn Carter](#))

Umpqua Community College

UCC's RMC Program Coordinator/Advisor prepared the RMC Application for industry certification on behalf of all students. All required college information was provided along with a copy of each student's unofficial transcript. This packet was emailed to students, with instructions for them to complete their portion, sign it, and send it to their employer. UCC also supported the completion process by providing grade reports to each employer for each term. These reports streamlined employer processes. (Contact: [Gary Gray](#))

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Founded in 1968 by B. Lamar Johnson and a dozen U.S. community and technical college presidents, the League for Innovation in the Community College has proudly served community college institutions for five decades. Through these years, the League has sponsored more than 200 conferences, institutes, seminars, and workshops; published over 200 reports, monographs, periodicals, and books; led approximately 140 research and demonstration projects; and provided numerous other resources and services to the community college field.

CEOs from 19 of the most influential, resourceful, and dynamic community colleges and districts in the world comprise the League's board of directors and provide strategic direction for its ongoing activities. These community colleges and their leaders are joined by almost 500 institutions that hold membership in the League Alliance. With this core of powerful and innovative community colleges, the League continues to fulfill its mission through conferences and institutes; online resources; research; and projects and initiatives with member colleges, corporate partners, government agencies, and private foundations in support of student and institutional success.

League activities and initiatives center on essential topics for community colleges, including diversity, equity, and inclusion; information technology; leadership development; learning and student success; research and practice; and workforce development. Learn more at www.league.org.



Established in 1921, the Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC) is a nonprofit organization led by top executives (retailers and wholesalers) in the Western United States representing over 7,500 supermarkets and \$200 billion dollars in annual sales. WAFC's primary mission is to provide educational and leadership opportunities for food industry associates and cultivate career success.

WAFC's most far-reaching education and development tool is the Retail Management Certificate (RMC). The RMC is an industry-driven, competency-based, dual credential program (college certificate and industry certification) that is accessible nationwide through 150+ approved community colleges. This accredited college program puts workers on an education pathway and career pathway simultaneously, providing them with the critical skills and knowledge needed for advancement into management and leadership roles in every facet of the retail industry.

The RMC was initially developed to support the retail/wholesale grocery industry, but two generous grants helped support a revalidation of the competencies, resulting in enhanced curriculum and

expansion of the program nationally to the entire retail sector. WAFB partner employers strongly encourage their associates to earn the RMC and offer pre-paid tuition plus special benefits upon completion. To learn more, visit www.retailmanagementcertificate.com.



By using our strengths to help others, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation create opportunities for people to live better every day. Walmart has stores in 27 countries, employing more than 2.2 million associates and doing business with thousands of suppliers who, in turn, employ millions of people. Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are helping people live better by accelerating upward job mobility for the retail workforce; addressing hunger and making healthier, more sustainably grown food a reality; and building strong communities where Walmart operates. Walmart is not only working to tackle key social issues; it is collaborating with others to inspire solutions for long-lasting systemic change. To learn more about Walmart's giving, visit foundation.walmart.com.

The opinions expressed in this guide are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the League for Innovation in the Community College, Western Association of Food Chains, or Walmart Foundation.

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This guide is available at www.league.org/wbf3 and retailmanagementcertificate.com/for-community-colleges/college-program-resources

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