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Career Advancement Academies

Key Lessons from the Evaluation

Quantitative Data – LA Region

Semester	Number of Students Enrolled
Fall Semester 2007	171
Spring Semester 2008	218
Summer Semester 2008	140
Fall Semester 2008	249
Spring Semester 2009	406
Summer Semester 2009	112
Fall Semester 2009	227
Spring Semester 2010	500
Total	**1954**

Quantitative Data – LA Region

Gender	
Female	1258
Male	663
Unknown	33
Age at CAA term	
0-19	688
20 - 24	472
25 - 34	301
35 +	394
Unknown	108
Ethnicity	
African-American	147
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1
Asian	28
Filipino	21
Hispanic	483
Not Yet Available From MIS	1156
Other Non-White	4
Pacific Islander	13
Unknown/Non-Respondent	55
White Non-Hispanic	47
Total	**1954**

Quantitative Data – LA Region

Career Paths of CAA Students	
Health Science and Medical Technology	1034
Education, Child Development and Family Services	188
Information Technology	181
Energy and Utilities	148
Finance and Business	124
Building Trades and Construction	93
Other	55
Transportation	46
Public Services	35
Agriculture and Natural Resources	19
None	18
Arts, Media and Entertainment	10
Engineering	10
Manufacturing and Product Development	7
Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation	2
Fashion and Interior Design	1
Marketing, Sales and Service	1
Total	**1954**

Quantitative Data – LA Region

Support Services Provided	Number of Students
Career Counseling	1086
Academic Counseling	1059
Other	405
Case Management	401
Fees Paid By CAA	399
Personal Counseling	315
Food/meals	312
Transportation voucher	278
Other college programs/services	271
Tutoring	267
Supplemental Instruction	70
Not Applicable	50
Internship/Work Experience	35
Mentoring	33
WIA Enrolled	26
Childcare	3
Job Shadowing	2

Common Elements

1. Building an Intentional Transition Strategy Aligned with a Career

To help disadvantaged students enter college and transition to careers, a critical element of CAA is aligning the CAA program to a career pathway within the college and/or with a specific occupation and ensuring students have the support they need not only to complete the CAA program but also to take the next step along this pathway. This requires that colleges:

❖ Select demand-led occupations or college certificate programs that are well connected to such occupations, and ensure that employers are engaged with CAA to respond to changing industry needs;

❖ Recruit the target population that is interested in that occupation;

❖ Include a set of courses that help students:

❖ Build basic skills (aligned with the occupational content); and

❖ Acquire some entry-level skills development or exposure to the occupation, including internships if possible;

❖ Provide counseling and advising that will help CAA students enroll in CTE courses in the career pathway (or in some cases job search assistance for employment) after they complete CAA; and

❖ Deliver students to a destination that is clearly understood by the students, as well as by faculty and administrators.

Common Elements

2. Targeting a Specific Disadvantaged Population

Across the initiative, CAAs serve a range of disadvantaged low-wage workers, underemployed and unemployed people. Some have low educational achievement (low basic skills, dropped out of high school or haven't passed the CAHSEE); others are moving from welfare to work or were formerly incarcerated; almost all are low-income. While campuses have served a wide range of ages, programs have generally been targeted to 18- to 30-year-olds. Although some campuses are challenged by recruitment and are less judicious about who enrolls in CAA classes, a number of CAAs are recruiting and enrolling from a defined target population and reaching students who would be unlikely to attend college otherwise. Going forward, it is essential for CAA programs to:

❖ Identify the specific disadvantaged population that each CAA program is designed to serve and the criteria that defines that population,

❖ Articulate the individual skills, interests and abilities needed to succeed in the program,

❖ Establish an intake process that screens for appropriate matches,

❖ Develop a targeted outreach plan, including appropriate methods and materials for recruitment, to ensure appropriate matches are recruited and program staff are enrolling a pool of interested applicants, and

❖ Identify appropriate partners in the local community, and communicate the entrance requirements, intake processes and what the program entails to partners to help with the recruitment process.

Common Elements

3. Providing Services to a Cohort of the Population

Using a cohort-based approach is noted as a key design element in many CAA documents describing the initiative. Although many campuses have not implemented a cohort model because it is difficult to administer and structure, where CAAs have implemented a cohort approach successfully, both students and faculty value the peer support, group learning and shared experience. A cohort approach can facilitate the implementation of a transition strategy by making it easier to provide a logical set of next steps for those in the cohort. Cohorts can also make it easier to deliver support services because counselors or case managers (either from within the college or from a partner agency) can visit classes and keep track of students who are having academic or personal issues and provide relevant and timely services. Implementation of this element might look different across campuses, but criteria include:

- ❖ Identifying a set of one-semester courses that include basic skills, career counseling and occupational training in a demand-led career pathway,

- ❖ Hiring faculty who want to develop and teach the courses together, including one instructor or staff member who is assigned to help coordinate the effort,

- ❖ Involving employers in the development of the courses, and include them in appropriate activities to expose students to occupations in the career pathway,

- ❖ Providing institutional support so that instructors can meet routinely (and sometimes with employers) to build and adjust the courses as necessary, and

- ❖ Clarifying the next steps for transition and support into the career pathway or immediate employment.

Common Elements

4. Providing Support Services So That Students Can Succeed

Given that the program is intended to serve a disadvantaged population, CAA students need a wide range of support services. Two models—partnering with outside agencies that bring additional resources to the table and/or employing a counselor (sometimes counseling course faculty) at the college—are viable strategies to effectively provide a higher level of case management services to students. Which works better varies by college, the population that a CAA targets and the local network of community and workforce partners, but either involves several key actions:

❖ Providing support services such as counseling and guidance and assistance with fees, books, supplies, transportation and childcare,

❖ Providing incentives such as lunch, special CAA gifts such as book bags or flash drives, and/or field trips,

❖ Ensuring the support services are provided consistently to all CAA students and administrative procedures for delivering the services are clearly established,

❖ Ensuring that CAA students are supported during their transition to next steps in the career pathway or employment through dedicated counseling, college/career success courses or in some cases, job development,

❖ Leveraging additional resources, when possible, from other internal and external programs (e.g., EOPs, CalWorks, workforce systems, community programs, private foundations) that provide support for the targeted disadvantaged population.

Common Elements

5. Contextualizing Basic Skills Curriculum

Providing effective instruction to students who struggle with math, reading and/or English is central to the purpose of CAA, and contextualizing the curriculum helps students see the relevance and apply basic skills to CTE courses. Contextualization also can help accelerate learning so that students have a greater understanding of CTE content and can move faster through the career pathway. There are a number of methods for contextualizing a curriculum and several appropriate ways to help CAA students build basic skills. Aspects of this element include:

❖ Selecting and hiring teachers—either basic skills, CTE faculty or both, who enjoy working with basic-skills-deficient or ESL students, have a knack for showing the relevance of math, reading or writing skills to a particular subject area and want students to succeed overall,

❖ Linking basic skills classes and CTE content by developing new contextualized courses or having CTE and basic skills teachers work together to align reading, writing and math assignments as CAA courses are offered,

❖ Using computerized basic skills instruction to supplement basic skills classes, but not solely relying on it because most students need instruction by teachers as well.

Key Lessons

❖ Importance of establishing a pathway with clear next steps

  ❖ Staff, administrators, students and partners should all be on the same page about options for education and employment after completing CAA

  ❖ Too general of a pathway can make it hard to identify clear next steps

  ❖ Targeted support through transitions (e.g. assistance registering for courses, financial support for first for-credit course) can help to ensure that students take the next step along the career pathway

  ❖ What's been challenging in identifying/establishing clear nest steps? What strategies have worked well?

Key Lessons

❖ CAAs must think creatively and strategically about engaging with employers

  ❖ Requires dedicated attention and time

  ❖ One semester may not be enough to equip students with all the skills required by employers

  ❖ Even receptive employers may not have job or internship openings; CAAs may need to go the extra step to identify or create opportunities for work experience

  ❖ CAAs may need to change or refine the career pathway based on labor market opportunities; being keyed into current labor market info is crucial

  ❖ What strategies has your CAA used to engage employers? What other strategies might be promising?

Key Lessons

❖ Where the CAA is housed can determine key programmatic strengths and challenges

  ❖ Offering CAA as not-for-credit or noncredit may allow for the flexibility needed to design courses that meet the needs of students and employers, but may make institutionalization and sustainability more challenging

  ❖ Offering CAA as a credit program may allow for greater sustainability, but may be difficult to do in the short-term, and may limit the program's adaptability

  ❖ For students to be likely to progress on to credit programs, it is important for the CAA to maintain connections to credit departments, especially if the CAA is offered for non-credit or not-for-credit.

  ❖ Where has your CAA been housed? What benefits have come with that? Challenges?

  ❖ Are there ways to address some of the challenges by partnering with other departments?