



Strategies for Transformative Change

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Transformative Change Definition

TCI defines transformative change as follows: Raising the individual, organizational, and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.



TRANSFORMING DELIVERY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACROSS THE STATE

Massachusetts Community College Workforce Development Transformation Agenda (MCCWDTA) Consortium

The Massachusetts Community College Workforce Development Transformation Agenda (MCCWDTA) Consortium has completed over three years of its Transformation Agenda, which was initially funded by a \$20-million Round One TAACCCT grant from the US Department of Labor. The Consortium is led by Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) and includes all 15 community colleges in the state. The consortium brought together the higher education, economic development, adult basic education (ABE) and workforce development systems with industry stakeholders to transform the delivery of education and training programs across the state of Massachusetts.

To achieve their transformation agenda, the consortium worked together to implement the following strategies:

1. Offer programs that meet industry needs. The consortium selected six industry sectors that reflected the strategic economic development plan of the Commonwealth:
 - Advanced Manufacturing • Information Technology
 - Biotechnology & Life Science • Healthcare
 - Clean Energy • Entrepreneurship and Financial Services.
2. Accelerate student access and progress.
3. Improve retention and achievement rates.
4. Leverage Technology.

Major Factors that influenced the state-wide implementation of the strategies include:

<http://mccwdta.org>

• **Shared Commitment to System Change:** From the start, the grant was intended to transform education within the state. Each community college committed to the grant strategies and actively engaged at the state, local and institutional level with adult basic education and workforce development systems, with industry, with the Department of Higher Education, and with three State Secretaries to improve access to and success in the workforce development programs delivered at community colleges. The consortium worked to integrate the community college and workforce development center systems to develop common solutions.

Along with the shared commitment and statewide coordination, there was an understanding that each college would retain local control to adopt and adapt policies and processes to fit its unique needs. Colleges were given permission to experiment, to try new approaches as part of their implementation. Through ongoing professional development opportunities, an online communications forum and in-person team meetings,

partners regularly met to share news and information on scaling practices and delivery models statewide.

• **Committed Leadership:** The leadership of the 15 community college presidents was critical to cultivating an environment of collaboration and cooperation. Within their institutions, Presidents encouraged and supported faculty and staff engagement at all levels.

• **Maximizing Technology:** The consortium members understood the need for a more efficient, technology-enabled approach that would coordinate services and direct support to the community colleges and the American Job Centers. Rather than build a new super system, the colleges worked with Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop a platform to integrate existing data systems. This effort resulted in significant financial and human capital savings, along with buy-in from front-line users, with ramifications for replication by other colleges. Statewide investment in real-time labor market information tool and training greatly improved data-driven decision making.

Strategy Description: Significant Aspects of the Transformation Agenda

Accelerating Student Progress

The consortium was committed to revising the curricula as needed to enable students to develop the industry-relevant competencies, while shortening the time and distance to completion. Each college developed or expanded its policy to offer credit for prior learning and work experience. Across the consortium, over 1/3 of the programs were offered in eight-week terms and completion time for two-year degrees were reduced to 18 months. Some colleges changed course structures to offer degree and certificate programs in condensed formats. Fourteen colleges offered self-paced,

modular and/or flexible scheduling to reduce the time to completion. Stackable credentials were offered by 13 colleges – the most successful model in the consortium was in Advanced Manufacturing programs of study, with sequencing that allowed for stepping in and out.



Consolidating Statewide Access to Technology

The Transformation Agenda was committed to leveraging technology to remove barriers, increase efficiency, scale success, and improve student services. To help achieve this goal, the consortium made joint investments in technology with statewide coordination to allow for the benefits of an economy of scale. For example, the cooperative purchase of an online Real-Time Labor Market Information tool provided college and career center staff with access to data on local employers, available jobs and skill requirements, which informed program planning, employer outreach and job placement strategies. In addition, colleges and career centers across the state implemented the ACT Career Readiness Suite to provide foundational workplace skills assessment, skill development and certification. Another example included collaboratively developed contextualized curriculum modules designed and distributed in digital format and housed online as OER to allow for increased adaptation by colleges. These joint investments provided colleges and career centers partners access to the same resources at the same time, which encouraged better alignment of efforts and resources

Statewide Industry Teams

The Transformation Agenda used a structured team approach to implementing grant strategies. Through regular team meetings, partners shared delivery models, information, and best practices. The teams fostered a shared commitment among all the partners and galvanized the momentum of the collaborative.

The Industry Teams were particularly successful. Created for each of the six targeted industry sectors, these statewide teams included college faculty and staff along with employers and industry representatives. Within the teams, the shared knowledge of the industry trends and related competencies helped inform the development of industry-aligned curriculum. Collaborative work that resulted from these regional and statewide team meetings included real-time labor market information reports, skills gap analysis, reports on industry trends, and sharing of career pathway models. Through participation and engagement on teams, employers could provide feedback and validate program design to help ensure that the students graduated with the skills needed by today’s employers.



Note: Due to the success of the Industry Team model, the state of Massachusetts continues to use it as part of a statewide Round 4 TAACCCT grant initiative.

Evidence

The Transformation Agenda has made tremendous progress toward reaching its goals. As of March 2015, 7,250 students had enrolled in the new or revised certificate or degree programs, and 50% of those students have completed. With 2,455 of the students still enrolled, the colleges report that 84% of participants have completed or are still enrolled.

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