

The Rise of the Platinum Age of Adult Education

In response to the effect of the economic crisis of 2008, on California public K-12 and community college systems, Governor Brown lobbied voters to support Proposition 30, *The Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012*, which was approved on November 6, 2012. This proposition temporarily increased the state's sales tax rate for all taxpayers and the personal income tax rates for upper-income taxpayers. Revenues generated from Proposition 30 are deposited into a newly created state account called the Education Protection Account (EPA). EPA funding has provided significant money to support adult education student success and program expansion initiatives for both K-12 adult education providers and community colleges ("Proposition 30 impact to state aid - principal apportionment (CA Dept of education)," 2015), and has ushered in the "Platinum Age" of adult education for California K-12 and community college providers.

ASCCC continued to advocate for equalization of career development and college preparation (CDCP) funding for select noncredit program categories. At a plenary session in 2014, ASCCC urged support for noncredit programs because they (1) focused on skill attainments and life skills, not grades; (2) are repeatable; (3) did not charge fees (meaning they are free to all residents); (4) are accessible to all; and (5) serve as a bridge to educational and career advancement (Lynch-Thompson, May, & Grimes, 2014). To address decimation of CTE, ESL and ABE/ASE programs during the economic downturn in 2008, the legislature and Governor Brown approved Senate Bill 860, the Education Omnibus Trailer Bill, which included equalization of CDCP noncredit and credit FTES funding in 2014. The new legislation read,

"Beginning in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, career development and college preparation FTES shall be funded at the same level as the credit rate" [(Lynch-Thompson, May, & Grimes, 2014).;

SB 860: Ed Code 84750.5 (d)(4)(A) (ii).] Apportionment dollars are not earmarked for credit or noncredit programming. Instead, local districts determine whether or not they wish to offer noncredit. Community colleges must offer credit course to meet accreditation standards under the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (Lynch-Thompson, May, & Grimes, 2014).

After decades of advocacy, SB 860 finally equalized funding for CDCP noncredit and credit courses. For academic year 2016-17, these two groups of courses are funded at \$5,004 per FTES. Other (non-CDCP) noncredit courses are funded at \$3,009 per FTES. Although SB 860 equalized noncredit and credit funding, this legislation did not establish one set of faculty minimum qualifications or one method of attendance reporting for both noncredit and credit programs. State course approval requirements

remain the same for credit and noncredit courses and certificates, but Title 5 maintained specific minimum qualifications for noncredit and credit faculty, reinforcing a tiered hierarchical system for instructional faculty that required credit faculty to possess more advanced educational credentials.

Similarly, FTES calculation formulas were not aligned. Whereas noncredit FTES reporting requires counting every minute each student attends class, the FTES reporting formula for credit coursed requires tallying total student enrollments on one single day during the semester (Lynch-Thompson, May, & Grimes, 2014). To foster expansion of job and college readiness noncredit programs, the legislature set aside \$25

million to support two years of planning across the state. The five categories championed under Governor Schwarzenegger's 2007 plan were also the focus of Assembly Bill 86 (AB 86), which was signed by Governor Jerry Brown in 2014. AB 86, on July 1, 2013, called for the creation of Adult Education Consortium Programs and the establishment of regional consortia; to-date, 70 have been formed. Each regional consortium must consist of at least one K-12 school district and at least one community college district, with the goal of developing regional plans that serve community needs for adult education. As a result, the CCCCO and CDE, the agencies historically providing adult education services, created an AB 86 Cabinet and Work Group to develop a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) for all adult education providers to respond with the intent to participate in regional consortia.

Consortia may also incorporate other agencies, such as correctional entities or community-based organizations. Adult education program categories included in the AB 86 consortia planning grants were:

- ABE and ASE, including high school diploma or high school equivalency certificates;
- Classes for education of immigrants such as ESL, citizenship, and workforce preparation;
- Educational programs for adults with disabilities;
- Short-term career technical education classes with high employment potential; and
- Programs for apprentices

("Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Adult Education Block Grant," 2016).

The one-time planning funds provided under AB 86 resulted in the Adult Education Block Grant, which currently funds adult and career technical education across the state community college system (Lynch-Thompson, May, & Grimes, 2014).

Consortia are expected to address gaps in services for adult students. Each consortium is also responsible for evaluation of currently offered adult education programs within their geographical boundaries and for planning the integration of existing programs to

create seamless transition paths to credit or workforce. This new legislation emphasized better program integration and improved student outcomes. During the establishment of these consortia, ASCCC advised local academic senates to evaluate the best curricular mechanism to support student success and achievement of basic skills outcomes and ensure clear articulation within the community college district from noncredit to credit instruction and clear articulation from the K-12 adult education system to the community college instructional offering. "Smooth bridging from noncredit to credit and from noncredit to workforce is fundamental for the success of many of the students in the community college system. Developing and implementing a successful bridging plan requires much thought, along with quality input and cooperation among many areas working collaboratively" ("AB 86: A Brief History and Current State of Affairs from the Noncredit Task Force," 2014: 1).

As of November 2014, a second ASCCC plenary on SB 860 and AB 86 presented on the state of noncredit in California. This presentation took place shortly before equalized CDCP funding took effect in July 2015. ASCCC reported that 68 of 72 districts offered some form of noncredit, and that 85 percent of all noncredit courses statewide were in ESL. While most districts greatly reduced (and in some cases eliminated) noncredit offerings during the Great Recession, several districts continued to operate robust noncredit programs despite the lower rate of funding. The bulk of noncredit has historically been offered by five community college districts (listed in order of size): (1) San Diego; (2) San Francisco; (3) North Orange; (4) Rancho Santiago; and (5) Mount San Antonio ("Exploring New Possibilities for Student Success through Noncredit," 014). For the past two years, San Diego has led in the state noncredit FTES with more than 8000 full-time equivalent student enrollments (San Diego Continuing Education, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2016).

In alignment with AB 86, CCCCCO, specifically the programs of the Division of Workforce and Economic Development, aimed to bridge the skills and jobs mismatch and prepare California's workforce for twenty-first century careers. Governor Brown argued that community colleges should become essential catalysts in California's economic recovery and jobs creation at the local, regional, and state level. In support of Governor Brown's agenda for workforce development, CCCCCO launched the "Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy" initiative, which developed a four-pronged framework to respond to the call of our nation, state, and regions to close the skills gap. The four prongs aim to:

- Give priority to jobs and the economy
- Make room for jobs and the economy
- Promote student success
- Innovate for jobs and the economy

The goals of "Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy" are to supply in-demand skills for employers, create relevant career pathways and stackable credentials, promote student success and get Californians into open jobs. This initiative called for a

focus on priority/emergent sectors and industry clusters, recommended the scaling of effective practices; called to integrate and leverage programming between funding streams; promoted common metrics for student success; and removed structural barriers to execution (“Doing what MATTERS,” 2016).

The top 10 California sector priorities include advanced manufacturing; advanced transportations and renewables; agriculture, water and environmental technologies; energy, construction and utilities, global trade and logistics; health; information and communication technologies (ICT)/digital media; life sciences/biotech; retail/hospitality/tourism ‘learn and earn’; and small business. There are fifteen regional consortia and each have identified regional priority sectors in which to focus. (“Doing what MATTERS,” 2016). This has led to the creation of collaborative regional infrastructures to strategically address regional employment gaps while avoiding oversaturating each region with the applicable programming to support narrowing these skills gaps. In addition, funding streams have supported both local and regional approaches.

The Education Protection Account has given rise to the “Platinum Age” of adult education in the California community college system. In addition to equalized funding for CDCP noncredit and AEBG, the Education Protection Account—in lockstep with recommendations of “Doing What Matters for the Jobs and the Economy”—has financed four innovative initiatives to support noncredit student success and program expansion: (1) Student Success and Support Program; (2) Student Equity; (3) CTE Enhancement Funding; and (4) Strong Workforce.

(1) STUDENT SUCCESS AND SUPPORT PROGRAM (SSSP)

SSSP (formerly Matriculation) is a CCCCCO initiative that enhances student access to the community colleges and promotes and sustains the efforts of credit students to be successful in their educational endeavors. The goals of SSSP are to ensure that all students complete their college courses, persist to the next academic term, and achieve their educational objectives through the assistance of the student-direct components of the student success and support program process: admissions, orientation, assessment and testing, counseling, and student follow-up. The Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) unit provides coordination and leadership to the community colleges with respect to credit and noncredit programs and services. SSSP funding was allocated in 2015 to support adult education in the statewide system (“Student Success and Support Program,” 2016). SSSP funds have called for more accountability in the delivery of robust student supports to increase student access and foster greater rates of completion.

(2) STUDENT EQUITY

Student Equity Planning is administered through the SSSP unit at the CCCCCO. SSSP staff is responsible for the implementation of the Board of Governor’s Student Equity Policy and related regulations. College student equity plans focus on

increasing access and course completion. ESL and basic skills completion, degrees, certificates and transfer for all students as measured by success indicators linked to the CCCCO Student Success Scorecard, and other measures developed in consultation with local colleges. “Success indicators” are used to identify and measure areas for which disadvantaged populations may be impacted by issues of equal opportunity based on ethnic/racial identity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or designation as a foster youth, veteran, or student with disabilities. “Each college develops specific goals/outcomes and actions to address disparities that are discovered, disaggregating data for indicators by student demographics, preferably in program review.

College plans must describe the implementation of each indicator, as well as policies, activities and procedures as they relate to improving equity and success at the college” (“Student equity,” 2016: 1). Student equity funding allows colleges to focus on interventions and supports for some of the most disadvantaged credit and noncredit student populations. In 2015, noncredit programs became eligible to receive student equity funding.

(3) CTE ENHANCEMENT FUNDING

In the 2014-15 budget signed by Governor Brown, funding was provided on a one-time basis to create greater incentive for California Community Colleges to develop, enhance, retool, and expand quality career technical education offerings that build upon existing community college regional capacity to respond to regional labor market needs. Noncredit and credit programs received significant funding to modernize career technical education programs.

(4) STRONG WORKFORCE

In June 2016, the California legislature approved a budget that includes an additional \$200 million for a workforce training program that takes aim at the looming skills gap across the state’s regions. Leaders from the California Economic Summit joined the 2015 Strong Workforce Task Force, a statewide effort led by CCCCO to update California’s workforce training programs. This body recommended more than two dozen improvements in the following areas:

- Student Success
- Career Pathways
- Workforce Data and Outcomes
- Curriculum
- Career Technical Education Faculty
- Regional Coordination
- Funding

Governor Brown and the legislature agreed that California’s community colleges are vital to the economy and that they play an important role in boosting our state’s economy by serving more than 2.6 million students each year. In fact, one out of four community college students in the country is presently enrolled in a California community college, making it the nation’s largest system of higher education. The 113 community colleges and three noncredit institutions provide students with the knowledge and background necessary in today’s competitive job market. With a wide range of educational offerings, the colleges provide workforce training, basic skills courses in English and math, certificate and degree programs and preparation for transfer to four-year colleges and universities (“Doing what matters for jobs and the economy—California community colleges,” 2016; “Doing what MATTERS,” 2016).

In addition to these initiatives, the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), formerly a graduation requirement for students in California public schools, was suspended effective January 1, 2016. Senate Bill 172 (Liu) was signed by the Governor to suspend the administration of the CAHSEE and the requirement that students pass the CAHSEE to receive a high school diploma for the 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18 school years. Due to the change in academic standards, this new legislation required that schools grant a diploma to any pupil who completed grade twelve in the 2003–04 school year or a subsequent school year and met all applicable graduation requirements other than the passage of the high school exit examination. The law further required the state superintendent of public instruction to convene an advisory panel to offer suggestions to the superintendent on the continuation of the high school exit examination and on alternative pathways to fulfill the high school graduation requirements pursuant to *Education Code* sections 51224.5 and 51225.3.

In President Obama’s first address to Congress, he challenged America to meet an ambitious goal for education by 2020 to *once again* have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. His administration has valued innovation, science, technology, and workforce development. In response to President Obama’s ambitious educational objectives, the Secretary of Education, Dr. Duncan, and USDOE staff developed an audacious Strategic Plan for 2011–2014 (“U.S. Department of education strategic plan – FY 2011-14: Draft for public comment,” 2012). This Strategic Plan outlined National Outcome Goals for Postsecondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education to increase:

- Number and percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who attain an associate’s degree or higher
- Number and percentage of students who complete a bachelor’s degree within six years
- Number and percentage of students who complete an associate’s degree or certificate within three years
- Number and percentage of adult education students who obtain a high school credential
- College access, quality, and completion by improving higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults.

President Obama's second term has focused on providing adult students and individuals with disabilities who are college- and career-ready with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue successful career pathways. Bills to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act were introduced in 2013. The enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) by bipartisan majorities in Congress revitalized and transformed the public workforce system so that these efforts reflect the realities of the twenty-first century economy. WIOA modernized and streamlined the outdated WIA, which had been pending reauthorization since 2003. This nearly \$3 billion program funds state and local workforce initiatives and provides a comprehensive menu of job training services for adults and youth. This legislation notably encourages greater collaboration among employers, high schools, adult education, and, community colleges and promotes innovative pay-for-performance models to ensure that funds are being spent effectively and efficiently ("The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act," 2014).

As further evidence of the President's commitment to workforce and adult education, the Obama administration's blueprint for a reauthorized Perkins Act would transform CTE and "result in a new era of rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE shaped by four core principles:

1. Industry sectors
2. Collaboration—strong collaborations among secondary and postsecondary institutions, employers, and industry partners to improve the quality of CTE programs
3. Accountability—meaningful accountability for improving academic outcomes and building technical and employability skills in CTE programs for all students, based upon common definitions and clear metrics for performance
4. Innovation—increased emphasis on innovation supported by systematic reform of state policies and practices to support implementation of effective CTE practices at the local level ("An American heritage—Federal adult education: A legislative history 1964-2013," 2013 : 30).

In line with this effort, the administration also proposed a competitive CTE Innovation and Transformation Fund, administered by USDOE, to incentivize innovation at the district level and support system reform at the state level. In January 2015, President Obama announced his campaign for free community college. President Obama proclaimed: "Every American, whether they're young or just young at heart, should be able to earn the skills and education necessary to compete and win in the 21st century economy" ("FACT SHEET: White House Launches New \$100 Million Competition to Expand Tuition-Free Community College Programs that Connect Americans to In-Demand Jobs," 2016: 1). This announcement celebrated the 27 new free community college programs that have launched in states, and the additional investment of \$100 million for America's Promise Job-Driven Training grants (America's Promise Grants) to connect more Americans to education and high demand careers. President Barack Obama's announcement of the America's College Promise initiative began a national

conversation about college affordability (“Beyond Tuition: Reducing Financial Barrier to College,” 2016).

Federal grants will be awarded to pilot and scale innovative tuition-free partnerships between employers, economic development, workforce development boards, community and technical colleges and systems, training programs, K-12 education systems, and community-based organizations to “strengthen the pipeline of Americans ready for in-demand jobs, bridge students’ educational opportunities and employer needs, attract more jobs from overseas, and create more pathways for Americans to reach the middle class,” effectively marrying workforce to adult education and community colleges (“FACT SHEET: White House Launches New \$100 Million Competition to Expand Tuition-Free Community College Programs that Connect Americans to In-Demand Jobs,” 2016: 1).

The California College Promise has charged local community colleges and districts to help fulfill the California College Promise for college completion by partnering with K-12 and university partners, college foundations and the private sector to increase access to underrepresented community members.

Although adult education is already offered at zero fees to state residents, the new Promise programs will offer additional options to individuals who complete noncredit certificates (“Beyond Tuition: Reducing Financial Barrier to College,” 2016).

With renewed attention on the cost of college, one could predict that many districts will soon start to convert credit programs—particularly in ABE/ASE, ESL and CTE—to noncredit.

Recommendations for Future of Noncredit Adult Education Research and Practice

Based on the history of noncredit adult education and the findings of the California Community College Noncredit Offerings survey San Diego Continuing Education (SDCE) administered on the current status of adult education in California, SDCE's Office of Institutional Effectiveness makes the following as recommendations on the future of noncredit adult education in the community college system along with improvements to the research design for SDCE's future research.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Triangulate research methods in future years to further expand the yield and breadth of findings, while validating the data through cross verification of multiple methods of quantitative and qualitative research. Interviews with key CEOs from large noncredit institutions, colleges with large noncredit programs, and colleges or institutions growing their noncredit programs may prove informative, as would focus groups with other stakeholders such as Academic Senate presidents and CTE deans.

Amend the existing annual survey to collect data on the size of programs at each institution offering noncredit to yield a more precise picture of the non-credit offerings across the state.

Amend the existing annual survey to collect more robust data on noncredit pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.

Research why only 70 percent of ABE/ASE programs have K-12 ABE/ASE partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

An Authentic Commitment to Equity and Social Justice Calls for Increased Resources for Adult Education

As colleges rebuild their infrastructure— specifically with respect to facilities, technology, and instructional equipment, ensure that equitable funding is identified for noncredit adult education programs.

Based on the need for on-demand programming, create an attendance infrastructure for online education that allows for open access enrollment and attendance tracking.

To provide noncredit programs with a more reliable funding model, implement a census-based formula for managed enrollment classes to determine non-credit FTES.

Continue to fund CDCP offerings at an equalized rate, and include DSPS and emeritus programs that focus on transition to credit or workforce.

Eliminate the two-tiered adult education system and fund all adult education program categories at the same rate. These programs serve our most needy residents and provide valuable educational opportunities. We should demonstrate our commitment to equity and social justice by taking these programs off the chopping block and ensure their financial sustainability. Non-CDCP program faculty and staff worry that their programs will be eliminated each year as continued funding becomes more difficult for institutions to manage.

Allocate 20 percent of Statewide FTES annually for noncredit adult education to incentivize the expansion of these vital programs.

Modernize Noncredit Curriculum and Instruction

After years of debate, clarify the role of the K-12 and community college systems in the delivery of noncredit adult education to minimize conflict between systems.

As colleges work to develop and expand noncredit, CCCCCO should develop greater infrastructure to support noncredit program development, including the: Localization of the noncredit program approval process to expedite the ability of noncredit program to respond to industry demands; modification of CurricUNET (or other system) to mainstream noncredit course approval process; and identification of greater support for instructional program design.

Shift basic skills instruction to noncredit system-wide to allow students to allocate their financial aid to complete a degree program and transfer-level credit courses.

Locally, expand articulation agreements to support seamless transition from noncredit to credit programs.

Appropriate state funding to support the development and dissemination of Open Educational Resources (OER) to enhance resources for noncredit students and reduce the textbook fees required by some certificate programs to improve curriculum portability across colleges.

Expand noncredit pathways for inmates in jails and prisons to reduce recidivism and foster successful reentry.

Increase noncredit distance education offerings to support the educational needs of adults in the military, in isolated rural communities, and working adults who need alternative delivery models.

Strengthen Noncredit Student Services

Noncredit students typically come from more diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. They therefore require more intensive and extensive student services. An equitable distribution at the state level for SSSP and SEP funding would provide supplemental financial support for noncredit.

Qualify noncredit adult learners for federal Pell Grants as was done recently for high school students enrolled in community college.

Earmark restricted funding to provide dedicated mental health services to noncredit students.

Engage in targeted outreach to veterans, adults with disabilities, ex-offenders, the marginally housed, immigrants, refugees, opportunity youth, foster youth, the unemployed, and single parents to ensure noncredit programs serve our most vulnerable residents.

Reinvent and fund non-credit career counseling and implement workforce services to support students with career exploration, transition, placement, and success.

Marry Noncredit Adult Education to Workforce Development

Increase AEBG and Strong Workforce funding specifically to support noncredit program development and expansion.

Institutionalize bridges between industry and education by creating competence-based certificate programs across the state, aligned with industry side competency-based and employee-recognized certifications.

Strengthen partnerships with regional WIOA-funded workforce development boards to support long-term job placement.

Modify Title 5 to allow for noncredit internship opportunities without instructor presence to augment experiential learning opportunities for job seekers. Ideally, these internships would also provide stipends.

Continue to emphasize CTE program development and expansion in alignment with the Deputy Navigator Sectors (as identified by CCCCCO) the Priority Sectors (as identified by the regional workforce development boards) with a focus on noncredit.

Provide State support to develop a noncredit infrastructure (e.g. Strong Workforce) to track workforce placement.

Champion and Cherish Noncredit Faculty

As noncredit faculty tend to work with the most needy student populations, strengthen the voice and influence of noncredit faculty, equalize the compensation and teaching load of noncredit and credit faculty. There is no distinction in compensation and load for classified employees and administrators. Similarly, there should be no distinction in contracts for noncredit faculty. Maintaining a tiered system places more value on credit faculty and marginalizes the essential work of noncredit faculty.

To strengthen noncredit programming, increase faculty leadership by allocating state funding to hire 500 noncredit contract faculty system-wide.

ASCCC should continue to be a strong advocate for noncredit programs and faculty.

Provide System Support for Institutional Effectiveness

Create a single system for reporting community college, adult education, and workforce outcomes to minimize overhead, maximize efficiency, and marry these three disconnected systems.

Based on the need to comply with accountability measures, identify retention and success rate definitions for non-credit to better align and standardize non-credit across the state.

Improve the quality, accessibility, and utility of student outcome and labor market data to support students, educators, colleges, regions, employers, local workforce development boards, and the state in CTE program development and improvement efforts.

Establish a Concerted Statewide Marketing and Branding Campaign

Based on the challenges of community understanding of non-credit education and funding mechanisms, provide the infrastructure and funding to market provide outreach programs specifically for California non-credit programs. Many, if not most, Californians are unaware of the free educational opportunities community colleges offer that could transform their lives.

Noncredit adult students are not exclusively from lower income communities. A statewide branding and outreach campaign should be developed to de-stigmatize the image of adult education to encourage employed adults to enroll in certificate programs to advance their careers.