



# Student Success: Noncredit to Credit Transitions

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# Agenda

Community College Mission

Purpose of the study

Findings:

- Student Characteristics
- Student Voices

Implications & Recommendations



# Session Outcomes

Participants will:

- Hear the student's perspectives regarding the support they need to successfully transition to credit.
- Gain further insight into the noncredit to credit experience.
- Learn how the research findings can be used to further advance noncredit initiatives.



Overview of the study purpose, design and methodology

# Community College Mission

## *What is the role of noncredit?*



# California Master Plan

The mission of the California Community Colleges, as defined in the California Master Plan of 1960, is to ensure educational excellence and access for **all**. In addition to this primary mission, the Master Plan authorized community colleges to provide adult noncredit instruction.



# California Community College Vision

The California Community Colleges Board of Governors and the chancellor share a vision of a **better future** for Californians by exemplifying exceptional leadership, advocacy and support on behalf of the community colleges. Their guidance provides access to **lifelong learning** for all citizens and creates a skilled, progressive **workforce** to advance the state's interests.



# Topic Background

- The role of noncredit continuing education as a conduit for student success has been minimized, for it remains the neglected sector of the community college mission (Ryder & Hagedorn, 2012).
- “Noncredit programs constitute a precollege or bridging mechanism, helping individuals who might not otherwise gain access to community colleges make the transition into mainstream education” (Grubb, Badway, & Bell, 2003, p. 7).



# Problem Statement

The problem this study examined is that California community colleges are not producing enough graduates to meet the growing workforce demand. Given the focus of community colleges to produce highly skilled workers to compete in the global economy, thus far the role of noncredit instruction as a pathway for student success has not been maximized.





# Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine if California community college students who begin in noncredit and transition to credit reach their academic goals, and thereby contribute to certificate and degree completion rates.

# Research Methods – Setting

- North Orange County Community College District (NOCCCD)
  - Credit: Cypress College & Fullerton College (68%)
  - Noncredit: School of Continuing Education (32%)
  - 61,000 students per semester



# Research Methods – Sample

- Only noncredit students who meet the following criteria were included in the study:
  - Graduated from the School of Continuing Education
  - Enrolled in credit coursework at Cypress or Fullerton Community Colleges in the last 5 years
  - Goal of achieving an associate degree/certificate

# Research Methods – Data Collection

## Quantitative – 3553 students

- Collected educational records
- Identified variables:
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Ethnicity
  - Primary Language
  - Credit Enrollment
  - Degree/Certificate Completion

## Qualitative – 10 students

- Recruited student participants
  - Transitioned to credit
  - Enrolled into credit coursework
- Conducted a 60 minute focus group
  - Audio Recorded
  - Transcribed



## Summary of the quantitative results

**Who are the noncredit students who transition to credit instruction?**

# Quantitative Findings

“What student characteristics and noncredit instructional pathways most often precede transition to credit courses?”

## ***Among the participants...***

- 61.8% Females
- 56.4% Hispanic students
- 39.5% English
- 23.5% Enrolled into credit
- 1.3% Completed a certificate or degree at a district college

# Quantitative Findings

- Relationship between credit enrollment and student characteristics
  - There was a **significant** relationship between credit enrollment and
    - Gender: Females (53.5%) vs. Males (46.5%)
    - Ethnicity: Hispanic (59.8%) & Asian (17.5%)
    - Age: Average age of 21
  - There was **no significance** between primary language and credit enrollment.

# Quantitative Findings

- Relationship between *degree/certificate* and *no degree/no certificate* and student characteristics
  - There was **no significant** difference for *degree/certificate* or *no degree/no certificate* in terms of
    - Gender
    - Ethnicity
    - Primary language
    - Age





## Summary of the qualitative findings

**How do we help noncredit students  
successfully transition to credit  
instruction?**

# Focus Group Participants (N=10)

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Primary Language	College	Year in College	Major
Bryan	27	Male	African American	English	Cypress	2	Physics Math
Damon	39	Male	African American	Non English	Cypress	2	Photography
Deshi	23	Male	Asian	Non English	Cypress	1	Radiology Technology
Jonathan	22	Male	African American	English	Cypress	2	Dance
Josefina	19	Female	Hispanic	Non English	Fullerton	2	Biology
Katia	44	Female	Hispanic	Non English	Cypress	4	Foreign Language
Piao	23	Male	Asian	Non English	Cypress	2	Business Admin.
Tai	44	Female	Asian	Non English	Fullerton	2	Business Admin.
Tom	35	Male	Asian	Non English	Fullerton	1	Health Information Technology
Van	34	Male	Asian	Non English	Fullerton	2	Computer Science

# Qualitative Findings

“What support in noncredit institutions do students report as effective in facilitating the transition from noncredit to credit?”

## STUDENT

- Noncredit Effectiveness
- ## SS

# Noncredit Effectiveness

- Themes:
  - Proximity to credit
  - Pathways to opportunities
  - Builds confidence
  - Academic support
  - Missed opportunity

*“The School of Continuing Education campus is so close to credit, so being on campus...everyone encouraged me.” (Bryan)*

*“At the School of Continuing Education I received basic knowledge. I learned from here to have the basic skill, how to read effectively, how to write a good essay, and learn*

# Noncredit Support Services

- Themes:
  - Active learning community
  - Institutional climate of support
  - Resources
  - Missed opportunity

*“I was going to say it's kind of like how you have a mom and pop corporation compared to a big corporation, you know, because it's a small niche here and we're so close at the School of Continuing Education, and it's such a small population, that it feels more like at home.” (Bryan)*

# Motivated to Attend Credit

- Themes:
  - Extrinsic motivation
  - Intrinsic motivation
  - Missed opportunity

*“Teachers, counselors, staff, and even the students cause you to go to college. Everybody is moving and you have to move.”  
(Van)*

*“You see another student and they are doing well and you say, I can do the same thing. If they did it,*

# Noncredit Preparation

- Themes:
  - Instructional methods
  - Responsive faculty and staff
  - Skill building
  - Missed opportunity

*“A lot of (noncredit) classes are self-paced, so you have more time to obtain knowledge.” (Jonathan)*

*“The wonderful thing about noncredit is they take more time and take more steps...and learn how you can improve. It’s much*

# Persistence to Complete Credit

- Themes:
  - Pathways to success
  - Reinforced confidence
  - Missed opportunity

*“Once I finished my high school diploma, one of the counselors gave me a ‘To Do List,’ and because of that To Do List, I actually follow that plan...I plan to achieve all of those goals.”  
(Jonathan)*

*“My teacher wasn’t an American teacher, she was from Brazil. I’m from Ecuador. I can do the same thing. Why not? This is very good because people from other*





# Missed Opportunity

- The student experiences at either credit or noncredit campuses that appear to **hinder** the academic progress or success of students.
- Where there is a **gap** between the student's experience and the potential for academic success, the participants provided further insight for significant change on their campus.

# Missed Opportunity

- *“The noncredit staff are willing to help you step by step. At college...they don’t train you step by step like the School of Continuing Education will.” (Tom)*
- *“The SCE instructor understands the cultural differences in writing skill. They explain the difference between Vietnamese and American writing styles. Credit teachers don’t give you the*

# Missed Opportunity

- *“There is a divide between noncredit and credit counselors. They only know their school programs. They could benefit from knowing both in order to advise the students of noncredit or credit programs.” (Josefina)*
- *“On the credit side . . . you get lost.” (Tia)*
- *“I feel like professors give you the knowledge and you have to go and learn it.” (Bryan)*

# Key Findings

The analysis yielded the following findings:

- Pre-collegiate basic skills instruction is a gateway to postsecondary education and degree attainment.
- Self-confidence in one's abilities is essential for success in college.
- English language proficiency is perceived as desired and necessary.
- College readiness strategies provide a head start to credit instruction.



# Implications for Policy

- One barrier for Community College students is Basic Skills.
  - 70% to 85% of students are placed in pre-collegiate basic skills courses.
  - 27% actually enroll in the necessary coursework.
  - 52% of students seek noncredit instruction for foundational basic skills.
  - Noncredit receives 60% less funding for its courses than credit.



# Implications for Practice

- Noncredit must use data to provide a deeper understanding of our students.
  - Without adequate data to make informed decisions, noncredit academic outcomes are not a part of the dialogue.
  - Without data-driven practices, legislators will continue to ignore the success rates of noncredit students.
  - It is through data-informed dialogue that policies are transformed.



# Recommendations

- Integrated Planning: BSI, SSSP, SE
- Increased Focus on Data
- Noncredit to Credit Initiatives



# THANK YOU

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