Passing the Torch

Strategies for Innovation in Community College ESL

by Forrest P. Chisman
& JoAnn Crandall

"Bravo for this report – you have done a masterful job of pulling together a tremendous amount of information. The study is a significant contribution to the field. It identifies many of the vital issues for community college adult ESL programs and analyzes how some are solving their problems and challenges. This is essential reading, not only for those of us in the field but for legislators and policymakers who make decisions about adult ESL in community colleges." [Sharon Seymour, City College of San Francisco]

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! What a masterful job! How soon can I start quoting from it? Thank you for saying all the things we have wanted to say." [Suzanne Leibman, College of Lake County]

"I am so proud to have been part of this project. I'm very impressed with the stellar job you have done of integrating the tons of information you received from all of us. There is so little opportunity for exchange in this field, but CAAL's project has made this exchange possible. Thank you!" [Pam Ferguson, Yakima Valley Community College]

"Horray! Well done! We are very impressed with the excellent points and arguments made in this paper." [Sandy Ares, Seminole Community College]

"Thanks to the whole research group for a wonderful experience. It has been a delight to work with a group of professionals who know and experience the delights of working with ESL adult learners in community colleges. I'm grateful and honored to have been a part of this work. I want to thank CAAL for its leadership and vision in bringing this group together." [Toni Borge, Bunker Hill Community College]

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FOREWORD

PASSING THE TORCH: Strategies for Innovation in Community College ESL is the result of two years of intensive, dedicated work by a remarkable team of nearly two dozen researchers (see Appendix II, p. 144). It takes the first steps on a long overdue journey to fully understanding the realities and promise of ESL program service in community colleges across the nation.

The report offers an in-depth look into several community college ESL programs, with a focus on "non-credit ESL." All of the programs offer high quality ESL instruction and are considered exemplary according to a range of criteria presented in the Introduction. The study examines a rich variety of innovative and successful programs and strategies in use in these institutions – and considers them in terms of generating learning gains, retaining students, and bringing about transitions to further education. The paper also examines the ins and outs of all this activity in a way that gives those providing adult ESL service a menu of ideas and concrete suggestions for their own program improvement purposes.

Among the effective strategies examined in this report are high intensity instruction, learning outside the classroom, and the use of "learner-centered thematic" curricula. Special attention is given to curricular integration, co-enrollment, vocational ESL (VESL) programs, and the Spanish GED. Issues of faculty training, development, and quality are examined, and recommendations are given for "engineering innovation" in ESL colleges and programs.

The study finds that, excellent as the programs studied are, their outcomes are not always as great as they could be. It identifies some reasons for that, and looks at some of key barriers to taking the successful programs and practices to scale – such as inadequate ESL funding, administrative and policy issues, limits in available ESL assessment tools, lack of peer learning opportunities for planners and practitioners, and a paucity of fundamentally-needed research, especially longitudinal research. A major section of the report deals with costs and funding issues – calling not only for a substantial increase in funding for adult ESL, but more targeted funding.

PASSING THE TORCH is a highly textured report containing extensive descriptions of programs and practices. CAAL hopes that it will be useful both to designers of community college ESL service and to policymakers and private funders. Readers who are interested primarily in the study's conclusions are referred to the Executive Summary, presented as Appendix I on page 135. This Summary also exists as a standalone document at www.caalusa.org.

CAAL is deeply indebted to the research team for this project. Dr. Forrest Chisman served as the study director. He has been examining both community colleges and ESL service for many years. Dr. JoAnn Crandall of the University of Maryland (Baltimore County) is one of the nation's preeminent ESL experts. She served as the project's research director. Drs. Chisman and Crandall were assisted throughout the study by a team of co-researchers from the five colleges at the heart of this study, who were themselves assisted by research and administrative personnel at each college (see Appendix II, p. 144). This study is just as much theirs as CAAL's. Every member of this team gave enormous amounts of uncompensated time to give the study meaning and usefulness, and to ensure its accuracy. CAAL is deeply grateful to them all.

Finally, it should be noted that a huge amount of information was developed in this project beyond that used in <u>PASSING THE TORCH</u>. In the coming months, CAAL will publish institutional profiles written by each of the five study colleges, as well as more detailed descriptions of some of the program elements discussed in this report.

Gail Spangenberg
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

FORREST P. CHISMAN is Vice President of the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL). He has been an independent consultant in the fields of human resource development, community colleges, health care, and philanthropy. From 1988-1997, he was President of the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. Prior to that he was Director of the Project on the Federal Social Role (a bipartisan group of more than 150 prominent scholars, public officials, and other leaders investigating future directions for federal social policy). From 1977-1981, he was Deputy Administrator for Policy of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Previously he was Deputy Director of the Aspen Institute's Program on Communications and Society, and Senior Program Officer of the John and Mary Markle Foundation. He received his BA from Harvard and his doctorate from Oxford. He is the author of numerous books, articles, and reports on a wide range of public policy issues.

Chisman authored the award-winning Jump-Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy (1989), which proposed extensive changes in federal adult education policy, including specific recommendations for ESL, based on the deliberations of a panel of experts and other research. From 1992-1993 he directed a comprehensive Southport Institute study of adult education ESL in the United States. The results were published as ESL and The American Dream (co-authored with Heide Spruck Wrigley) in 1993. From 2003-2004, he directed CAAL's project on Adult Education and Community Colleges, which included extensive research and writing on ESL. The report of that project, TO ENSURE AMERICA'S FUTURE: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults, was published in February 2005. Dr. Chisman co-authored (with Heide Spruck Wrigley and Danielle Ewen) Leadership for Literacy (Jossey-Bass, 1990) which contains chapters on ESL and related matters. He is a former board member of Literacy Volunteers of America.

JOANN (JODI) CRANDALL is Professor of Education, Co-Director of the M.A. Program in ESOL/Bilingual Education, and Director of the Doctoral Program in Language, Literacy, and Culture at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). She was a member of the blue-ribbon task force that guided CAAL's study of adult education and community colleges. Prior to joining UMBC in 1992, Dr. Crandall was Vice President of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, D.C., where she established and directed the National Clearinghouse on Adult ESL Literacy (NCLE) and several adult refugee and immigrant information dissemination and technical assistance projects.

Dr. Crandall has worked in all areas of adult ESL including teaching, research, curriculum development, program evaluation, standards development, and teacher training. Among her publications are *Approaches to Adult ESL Literacy Instruction* (with Joy Peyton); "Adult Literacy Development" in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*; "Professionalism and Professionalization of Adult ESL Literacy in *TESOL Quarterly*; an adult series, *Life Prints: ESL for Adults, Vols. 1-3*; a series of videotapes and training guides, *Sharing What Works: Promising Practices in Adult Literacy Instruction*; and (with Ken Sheppard) Adult ESL and the Community College (CAAL, 2004). She has served on many advisory boards for adult ESL research and practice, including the NCSALL Adult ESL Lab School at Portland State University, the USDOE-funded "What Works" Study of Adult ESL Literacy, the TESOL/CAL National Task Force for Adult ESL, and the Hispanic Family Literacy Institute. She was ESL consultant to Literacy Volunteers of America and helped develop their teacher training materials. She is past-President of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL).

INTRODUCTION

This report, **PASSING THE TORCH: Strategies for Innovation in Community College ESL,** presents the findings of a two-year study of exemplary adult English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction provided by a select group of community colleges. It focuses primarily on the innovative instructional and professional development practices these colleges use to improve the quality of their ESL/ESOL programs.[1]

1. BACKGROUND

The need for this study was identified during the course of another major study – also conducted by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) – of links between adult education and community colleges. That investigation included extensive research by CAAL staff and independent experts on special aspects of the community college-adult education linkage, and the deliberations of a blue ribbon taskforce of experts on colleges, adult education, and related matters. The study's findings and recommendations were published by CAAL in February 2005 in <u>To Ensure America's Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults</u> and in eight separate reports on the individual research projects.[2]

CAAL's community college project revealed that many colleges provide adult ESL service, as well as other traditional types of adult education instruction – Adult Basic Education (ABE) and preparation for high school equivalency examinations (often referred to generically as Adult Secondary Education "ASE" or "GED" instruction). In fact, ESL is the largest and fastest growing part of adult education (representing more than 40 percent of enrollments), and the fastest growing program of any kind at many community colleges. During the course of the community college study, it became apparent that the project's research program was generating far more information about ABE/ASE than about ESL. And it became apparent that many people who were otherwise extremely well informed about adult education and community colleges had a limited understanding of ESL service.

Undoubtedly, part of the reason for this lack of knowledge about adult ESL is that this aspect of adult education primarily serves immigrants and refugees, and it has expanded rapidly as the rate of immigration and refugee resettlement into the U. S. has grown. As a result, both research and general knowledge about adult ESL have not caught up with research and what is known about ABE or ASE – long the dominant forms of adult education service.

Moreover, most ESL service is concentrated in a limited number of geographic areas that have large immigrant populations. Six states contain 70 percent of the immigrants residing in

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[1] English programs for non-native speakers are variously referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), the latter in recognition of the fact that many students in these programs already speak two, three, or even more languages. For simplicity, the acronym ESL will be used in this report.

[2] See CAAL web site (www.caalusa.org) for copies of the publications.

the United States,[3] although other states have seen a dramatic growth in these newcomers over the last decade.[4] Education experts who do not have a fairly detailed understanding of the states with large or growing immigrant populations often have not focused on adult ESL. Moreover, for most Americans, ESL instruction is intuitively harder to understand than the other components of adult education. ABE/ASE can be understood by analogy to aspects of elementary and secondary education – with which all Americans are familiar. In contrast, ESL consists of learning a new language in a country where that language is dominant— a process that very few Americans have experienced.

However, the major reason for the apparent lack of emphasis on ESL in CAAL's research was its primary focus on public policy issues. As a result, state community colleges and adult education systems were the primary units of analysis for most of the research, along with national patterns and trends. This was because most relevant policy is created at the state and national levels, and states and the federal government are the major repositories of the relevant data. Several dozen individual programs were investigated, but not in depth, because the purpose of understanding them was to illuminate state and national issues.

Most state and national adult education policy, as well as a great deal of the available data, makes little distinction between ESL and ABE/ASE. For policy, funding, and analytical purposes, all three services tend to be treated as a single service – adult education. Moreover, at the policy level, most of the new developments in links between community colleges and adult education, as well as prescriptions for improving those links, apply to ESL as well as to ABE/ASE – in general terms at least.

For these reasons, a national policy study of community colleges and adult education was not likely to reveal very much that was distinctive about ESL. To ensure that findings of the CAAL project were applicable to ESL service, however, one of the specialized research projects commissioned was a survey of ESL in the community college. That research was carried out by JoAnn Crandall of the University of Maryland (Baltimore County) and Ken Sheppard of the National Foreign Language Center of the University of Maryland (College Park). It was published by CAAL as <u>Adult ESL in the Community College</u> in 2004.[5]

Funding did not permit Crandall and Sheppard to conduct a comprehensive study, but they did explain the nature and range of ESL services, contact the faculty/staff at community colleges in 10 states as well as other ESL experts, survey a number of community college ESL programs, and interpret the findings based on their own expert understanding of this field. In addition, their adult ESL report for CAAL (see footnote 5) contains brief profiles of the ESL programs at five community colleges. This study was a substantial contribution to the literature on ESL service, and it received widespread attention. In the context of the

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[3] The six states are California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. Crandall and Sheppard, 2004.

[4] Ten states, most in the Northeast and Southeast, experienced a 30 to 47 percent growth in immigrant populations between 2000 and 2005. Randy Capps, 2006, based on data from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2005 American Community Survey, PUMS.

[5] <u>Adult ESL in the Community College</u> is available in PDF at www.caalusa.org.

larger CAAL community college investigation, it helped fill gaps in understanding about state and national issues. It was and remains a helpful primer on ESL.

2. <u>NEED FOR THE STUDY</u>

As the CAAL community college investigation drew to a close, it became apparent that any study focused primarily on state and national issues left untold an important part of the story of community colleges and adult education. To improve adult education service in the United States, ESL service must be understood in greater depth. <u>ESL programs (whether at colleges or elsewhere) are complex, multi-dimensional instructional systems that differ significantly in their structure, methods, and goals from ABE/ASE programs</u>. In the words of Crandall and Sheppard:

> *ESL belongs to a different continuum than ABE/ASE or developmental education. It has a different research base, different faculty qualifications and training, different curricula, and students with different needs. Adult basic education and developmental education address the educational needs of native English speakers (typically reading, writing and mathematics)....These students have the advantage of knowing English, but need some additional instruction. However, adult ESL students need instruction in English that includes oral as well as written English skills.*

Because of its complexity and unique features, ESL in the community college context (or any other context) is a "story within a story." The story can only be told by investigating ESL at the program level, as Crandall and Sheppard had begun to do.

To fully grasp the linkage between adult education and community colleges, it is essential to develop wider knowledge of ESL service, because ESL students (or English Language Learners, ELLs) comprise such a large percentage of the students enrolled in both adult education programs and colleges.

Almost all adult ESL students are immigrants. Thus, the story of ESL instruction has important implications for how the U. S. responds to the major increase in immigration that has occurred over the last several decades. As the national debate about immigration has gained visibility, an increasing number of Americans have become aware of certain fundamental facts about immigration and immigrants.

Currently more than 35 million residents of the U.S. are foreign-born – about 12 percent of our total population. They have come from all parts of the world, although the fastest growth has come from Latin America in recent years. Contrary to popular belief, most immigrants come to the U. S. legally and they bring a wide range of important skills. Immigrants constituted virtually half of the net increase in the size of the American workforce in the 1990s, for example, and they are expected to constitute most of the net growth in the next few decades.[6]

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[6]Jeffry S. Passel, <u>Background Briefing Prepared for Taskforce on Immigration and America's Future</u> (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Most findings are based on 2004 Census 2004 Current Population Survey data.

Hence, they are a large and essential part of our human capital, and they will continue to be regardless of what federal immigration policies are adopted. In many ways, the future prosperity of the American economy depends on the contributions immigrants make, and it is very much in the interest of all Americans to ensure that they can make the greatest contribution possible. In addition, immigrants are neighbors, consumers, and, increasingly, voters. It is in the national interest to enable them to contribute fully in these roles as well.

The major barrier immigrants face is that a large percentage of them are not proficient in English. Calculations differ on the exact number facing this barrier, depending on the measure of English proficiency used. According to the 2000 Census, of adults 18 years of age and older who report speaking a language other than English at home, 7 million reported that they did not speak English "well" or "at all" and an additional 8 million reported that they did not speak English "very well." The number who have difficulties reading and writing English is probably larger.

Because English is the dominant language of the U. S., virtually all immigrants with limited English proficiency realize that this places them at a severe disadvantage. Most immigrants with limited English ability are employed in low wage jobs, and their opportunities for advancement are severely limited. In large numbers, they enroll in ESL programs wherever they can find them. More than 1.2 million per year turn to the publicly funded adult ESL programs offered by community colleges and other adult education providers.[7] The success of these programs is of great national importance.

In addition, an increasing percentage of immigrants have low educational levels. A large percent of new arrivals have not completed high school in their native countries, and many have only a few years of formal education. According to the 2000 Census, half of the adults who reported that they spoke English less than "very well" have at most a ninth grade education, and of all those who reported speaking a language other than English at home, one third have less than a high school education – half the percentage of those without a high school education in the general population.[8] Limited education together with limited English proficiency reduces the economic prospects of immigrants. ESL and other adult education programs are virtually the only means by which they can address both problems.

It is important to realize, however, that not *all* immigrants are poorly educated. Rather, their educational levels are at the extremes: the non-native born population of the United States contains a far higher percentage of adults with very low educational levels than does the native born population, but it also contains a slightly greater percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher.[9] Large numbers at both ends of this extreme need to improve their English if they are to find economic stability, and at both ends they turn to ESL programs.

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[7] Report to Congress on State Performance, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act FY 2003-2004, U.S. Department of Education (2006).
[8] Ibid. See also Crandall and Sheppard.
[9] Ibid.

The question is, just how successful are adult ESL programs in helping immigrants improve their English? And how successful are the programs in providing pathways to further education for immigrants at low educational levels?

The Crandall/Sheppard research project documented two important facts:

- ESL programs make a major contribution to improving the English abilities of many immigrants, but most people in the field believe these programs are not as successful as they should be.

- A great many programs have developed, and continue to develop, new structures and practices that will improve their effectiveness, and these efforts take many different forms.

Simply put, <u>ESL service should and could be better, and many people are trying to improve it</u>.

3. <u>FOCUS OF THE STUDY</u>

CAAL developed plans for an extensive study of ESL in the community college while its comprehensive investigation of adult education and community colleges was in process. The study was designed to focus at the program level, and had the primary aim of pointing the way toward the future. That is, <u>its goal was to investigate some of the more successful college ESL programs in the country and to document both the overall program structures and the innovative practices that make them succeed</u>.

The study might well have extended beyond community colleges because many other institutions, such as school systems and community-based organizations, provide adult ESL service. CAAL maintained the college focus in part because of resource constraints. But it also wanted to build on the foundation of its previous research on colleges as adult education providers. In addition, and most important, those colleges that provide adult ESL programs also provide opportunities for immigrants to improve their education in other ways, under a single institutional umbrella. Thus, the colleges may offer better opportunities than other ESL provider institutions for investigating how ESL service can serve immigrants as a pathway to educational opportunity and human capital development.

In designing this study, CAAL focused primarily on college ESL instruction that is offered cost free to immigrants with low levels of English language ability – often called "adult ESL/ESOL" or "non-credit ESL." Most colleges also offer other ESL services, but they usually require students to pay tuition. Among the tuition-based services often provided are "credit ESL" for students having greater English proficiency who want to pursue further education, and English for international students who are in the U.S. on student visas.

The focus on "non-credit" ESL was adopted because "non-credit" students constitute the majority of English language learners at most colleges. Furthermore, CAAL's prior study of

adult education and community colleges provided a frame of reference for defining the issues that would be explored by the new investigation.

4. __METHODOLOGY__

This study was designed to examine in depth the non-credit ESL programs of a number of colleges. Because extensive on-site fieldwork and an understanding of the special characteristics of each college was required, CAAL contracted with a team of "co-researchers" from each college to conduct most of the fieldwork under its supervision. These professionals worked closely with the CAAL core staff throughout; they helped define the issues to be investigated, devise the methods of inquiry, and interpret the findings.

As a first step, CAAL's study director and research director defined aspects of college ESL service on which the project would focus. These were derived not only from the prior CAAL and Crandall/Sheppard research cited, but also from the directors' extensive prior involvement in ESL. The aspects of service defined were:

- Instructional practices
- Intensity of instruction
- Retention of students
- Transitions from non-credit ESL to credit ESL and/or academic or vocational studies
- Professional development of ESL faculty
- Use of instructional technology
- Commitment by the college to ESL service

A "reputational sampling" approach was used to identify college ESL programs that might be part of the study. In January 2005, CAAL sent letters requesting nominations to more than 150 leading authorities on ESL, other aspects of adult education, and related fields. The letters explained the nature of the study and asked for nominations of up to five college programs that exemplify "promising/exemplary practices" in one or more of the aspects of ESL service defined. Nominators were asked to explain briefly the nature of those practices.

Several dozen responses were received. Based on information contained in the nominations, follow-up consultations with the people who submitted them, talks with other experts, and information on the colleges studied by Crandall and Sheppard in 2004, CAAL developed a "short list" of 16 colleges that appeared to have program characteristics of particular interest to the study. Representatives of each of these colleges were contacted by e-mail. They were asked whether their college might want to participate in the study, and, if so, to submit further information about their programs. The information requested at that point included the types of ESL service each college offered, the number of students enrolled in their programs, the number of full-time and part-time faculty members, information on student learning gains, and information about any "promising/exemplary practices" in use at the college in one or more aspects of adult ESL service on which the study planned to focus.

Thirteen of the 16 colleges contacted responded that they wanted to participate and submitted detailed supplemental information. All of them (see Appendix II, p. 144) would have been excellent candidates for this study. However, due to resource constraints, CAAL was able to select only some of them. After reviewing further information from the responding institutions, six were selected in March 2005 (one was involved in the early phase of the study but was subsequently unable to continue because of time constraints).

The principal criteria used for selection were: geographical diversity; a mix of urban, suburban, and rural colleges; variation in program size (one large, two medium-sized, and two smaller programs were chosen); student diversity (in terms of ethnicity, native language, and levels of education in their native countries); and diversity of ESL service approach in the areas of defined interest.

Each college selected was asked to submit a letter of commitment from its president, academic vice president, or equivalent officer indicating willingness to participate in and assist with the study. CAAL also asked each college to nominate a co-researcher to conduct local fieldwork and to designate a person to serve as the principal point of contact with CAAL for obtaining required cooperation from faculty and administrators. CAAL then interviewed and approved the nominated co-researchers.

The colleges that participated in this study were:

- **Bunker Hill Community College** – Charlestown, Massachusetts
  Total annual enrollment, 2004-2005 – 15,000
  Total non-credit ESL enrollment, 2004-2005 – 1200
  Elizabeth Zachry, Harvard Graduate School of Education (co-researcher)
  Emily Dibble, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness (point of contact)

- **City College of San Francisco** – San Francisco, California
  Total enrollment 2004-2005 – 93,000
  Total non-credit ESL enrollment Fall 2004 – 27,000
  Sharon Seymour, ESL Department Chair (co-researcher and point of contact)

- **College of Lake County** – Grayslake, Illinois
  Total enrollment Spring 2006 – 15,000
  Total non-credit ESL enrollment Spring, 2006 – 3800
  Suzanne Leibman, ESL Instructor, Division of ABE, GED and ESL (co-researcher)
  Mary Charuhas, Dean of ABE, GED and ESL (point of contact)

- **Seminole Community College** – Sanford, Florida
  Total Enrollment, 2005 – 30,000
  Total non-credit ESL enrollment, 2005 – 2500
  Sandy Ares, English Language Studies Resource Specialist (co-researcher)
  Beth Larson, Director of English Language Studies (point of contact)

- **Yakima Valley Community College** – Yakima, Washington
  Total enrollment, 2005-2006 – 9300
  Total non-credit ESL enrollment, 2005 – 1700
  Pamela Ferguson, ESL Faculty (co-researcher)
  Greg Gillespie, then Kerrie Rodriquez, Director of Basic Skills (point of contact)

In April 2005, the co-researchers were asked to fill out an extensive "college fact sheet" (see Appendix II) providing data about their college and its ESL programs. They were then convened at a two-day meeting at the University of Maryland (Baltimore County). At that meeting, each co-researcher described her college's non-credit ESL program and which aspects of it should be examined in depth. After deliberation among the group, four to six aspects of each program were chosen for further investigation. These "practices" exemplified different approaches in the areas of interest identified at the outset. A total of 24 "practices" were investigated at the five colleges (see Appendix III).

Using a template designed by CAAL for the purpose, and modified at the group meeting, the co-researchers conducted their initial program investigations during the following six months, from June to November 2005. They interacted continually with the CAAL core team via e-mail and phone. Most of the interaction was stimulated by drafts of responses to the research template. CAAL reviewed these drafts, made suggestions, and assisted the co-researchers and others at the colleges in obtaining information.

Based on information submitted by the co-researchers, CAAL selected topics at each college to explore further through site visits. Members of the CAAL research team conducted two-day site visits to each college between December 2005 and February 2006.

Subsequent to those site visits, CAAL identified a number of priority issues at each college that needed further research (most having to do with program outcome data), and the directors worked with the team of co-researchers to design and carry out that research during Spring 2006. In addition, the co-researchers were asked to revise and reformat the college profiles they had submitted in 2005 so that these documents would accurately summarize all of their findings. (CAAL will publish these profiles in 2007.)

CAAL convened the co-researchers in a second meeting at its offices in New York in June 2006. To prepare for that meeting, the project directors culled from the material they had received several major themes about methods for improving non-credit ESL services. The co-researchers discussed how their findings related to those themes, as well as other issues about how their findings should be interpreted. As a final step in the research process, a form of peer review was carried out. A draft of the project's final report was sent to all of the co-researchers in late October 2006 with a request that it be reviewed for accuracy and that the researchers provide CAAL with any comments and suggestions they wanted to make at that stage. Their corrections and suggestions were subsequently incorporated into the report, which then went on to CAAL's president for final editing and publication.

5. <u>NATURE & DESIGN OF THIS REPORT</u>

This report consists of both description and analysis. <u>With data from only five colleges and focus on a limited number of approaches to improving ESL service, the authors decided on a strongly descriptive approach to avoid overstating the strength of their conclusions</u>. In addition, each of the illustrations given consists of ESL program components with quite a number of interdependent elements. To grasp them at all, it is necessary to understand them in detail and to evaluate them within the specific contexts of their individual colleges.

This report is organized into five main parts. Part I (<u>Context</u>, p. 10) describes the context of Community College ESL service within which strategies to improve service has been developed. Part II (<u>Increasing Learning Gains</u>, p. 21) describes the project's research findings on strategies to increase learning gains in non-credit programs. Part III (<u>Transitions</u>, p.49) describes strategies for increasing transitions from non-credit ESL to further education – including credit ESL, ABE/ASE instruction, and academic or vocational programs. Part IV (<u>Faculty Quality</u>, p. 84) explains the importance of attracting and supporting high quality faculty in non-credit ESL programs. Part V (<u>Engineering Innovation</u>, p. 108) explains how colleges and others can develop managerial practices and other systems that will support ongoing program improvement.

A short <u>Executive Summary</u> of the full report is included as Appendix I (p. 135). (This Summary also exists as a standalone document published separately from CAAL in January 2007, and revised on February 20, 2007. It is available in that form from the CAAL website, www.caalusa.org.) Co-researchers and other professionals and institutions that contributed significantly to this study are acknowledged in Appendix II (p. 144). Appendices III-IV (beg. p. 145) contain other background material.

PART I: CONTEXT

PASSING THE TORCH describes innovative practices in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction that a number of community colleges have developed. It also discusses the lessons that other colleges, and other ESL providers, can learn from those practices. As a prerequisite to comprehending those practices, however, the community college ESL service context within which they have been created and operate must be understood.

In general, this context shows that in terms of effectiveness, even the best ESL programs fall short of what they hope to achieve – if effectiveness is gauged by such measures as the percent of students who make substantial learning gains, persist in programs, or make transitions to further education.

However, the innovative practices adopted by the five colleges studied in this project show that, whether gauged by these or other measures, effectiveness can be substantially increased. And they show *how* that can be done.

1. EXTENT OF COLLEGE SERVICE

Community colleges play a large, important role in providing ESL instruction to adults throughout the U.S. About half of American community colleges state that they provide adult education service of some sort, and it is reasonable to surmise that many colleges located in areas with high concentrations of immigrants provide ESL (as well as ABE and GED) service. Certainly this is the case in the 12 states where colleges enroll 50 percent or more of the adult education students, and it is probably true in other areas as well.[10]

For example, although only a small percentage of California's community colleges offer adult education service, colleges are by far the largest ESL providers in San Francisco, San Diego, and Orange County. In fact, colleges in these urban areas operate some of the largest adult ESL programs in the nation. The City College of San Francisco (CCSF) serves more than 27,000 students each year in its non-credit ESL program alone. Likewise, colleges of the City University of New York system operate large ESL programs, as do colleges in most of the major metropolitan areas of Florida.

ESL service by colleges is not limited to urban areas, however, and neither the colleges that offer it nor their programs are all large. This study began with a survey of ESL professionals. That communication revealed numerous highly regarded ESL programs of all sizes in small colleges and large, and in rural and urban areas throughout the land. With the exception of CCSF, the colleges on which this study is focused enroll between 1700 and

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[10] The 12 states (2004) are Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. See: The Role of Community Colleges in State Adult Education Systems: A National Analysis by Vanessa Smith Morest available at www.caalusa.org.

3800 ESL students per year, but, in the process of selecting colleges to study, the project directors also reviewed colleges that serve only a few hundred.[11]

No data exists to indicate what percent of adult ESL service is provided by colleges, but, clearly, they are a pervasive part of the delivery system, and in many communities they are the dominant providers.

Moreover, adult ESL service plays a large role in the many colleges that offer it. For example, in terms of enrollment, ESL is the largest single department at the City College of San Francisco, LaGuardia Community College in New York, and Miami Dade Community College in Florida.

At the colleges examined in this study, ESL is by far the largest non-credit offering and enrolls far more students than do the ABE and GED programs combined.

Adult ESL service also plays an important role in the communities served by the colleges, and those communities differ greatly. This study identified high quality programs in inner city areas (such as San Francisco), working class suburbs (such as Charlestown, Massachusetts), affluent areas (such as Seminole County, Florida), and impoverished rural areas (such as central Washington State).

2. <u>TYPES OF SERVICE</u>

Most of the colleges participating in this study offer more than one type of adult ESL program. (The relationship between these various kinds of offerings will be discussed at length below.) In fact, <u>the ability to offer *various kinds* of English instruction to language minorities is one of the factors that distinguishes colleges from many other providers.</u>

Most of the colleges examined for this study offer both "non-credit" ESL for immigrants with low levels of English proficiency and "credit" ESL to prepare learners for academic programs. Most also offer vocational and other specialized programs specially tailored to the needs of English language learners. And many offer both high-intensity programs for international students and contractual ESL training for businesses.

Although this variety of services is important, it should be kept in mind that the vast majority of students enrolled in college ESL programs are enrolled in non-credit programs. These programs and their links to other kinds of service are the focus of this study.

"Non-credit ESL," as most colleges denote this service, is essentially the same type of ESL service offered by other adult education providers (school systems and CBOs). It is almost always offered free, or at a nominal cost. Although most adult education service in the U. S. is provided without cost to the learners, this is an unusual arrangement for community colleges. Adult education (including ESL) is one of the few programs, either credit or non-credit, for which colleges do not charge tuition or fees.

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[11] These were colleges that expressed an interest in participating in this study and submitted extensive information about their programs, but were not selected for the study.

Free ESL service by colleges and other providers is made possible by federal/state funds for adult education. In some states, these funding streams take the form of earmarked grants for adult education. In others, college ESL service is supported primarily by state FTE (full-time equivalency formulas) or other types of state funding for all non-credit programs, including non-credit ESL. However, even these states sometimes provide additional grant funding for adult education to supplement FTE or similar resources.

College budgeting and accounting systems often obscure the connection to state and federal funding. But most colleges (like other types of providers) could not afford to offer anything close to the amount of free adult education service they presently provide – or to provide free service at all – unless earmarked federal funding was available to support this service, and unless state educational funding systems supported it, either through earmarked grant funding or inclusion in general college funding formulas (in some cases, at preferential rates).[12]

Like the ESL programs offered by other adult education programs, non-credit college programs provide instruction in at least the four core ESL skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English – to learners whose abilities range from "ESL Beginning" through "Advanced" levels, as classified by the U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System for adult education (NRS) and various testing systems. Ultimately, the definitions of this range of abilities are derived from a system for classifying English language ability developed in 1985 by a federally supported study: The Mainstream English Language Teaching (MELT) Project. Until recently, the NRS divided English language ability into six levels:

- ESL Beginning Literacy
- ESL Beginning
- ESL Intermediate Low
- ESL Intermediate High
- ESL Low Advanced
- ESL High Advanced

(Note: Recently, the Department of Education eliminated the "High Advanced" NRS category, creating only one Advanced Level, and divided the "Beginning" category into two

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[12] State funding systems for adult education differ greatly. It is beyond the scope of this report to explain them. In most cases, state funds for community college ESL are either provided by earmarked grants for this purpose (for example, in Massachusetts), by FTE (Full Time Equivalency) reimbursement specifically for adult education, and/or by FTE reimbursements for adult education students that do not distinguish between them and other credit or non-credit students. Some states, such as Washington, support adult education in colleges by all of these means. Washington state officials estimate that this results in total state and federal funding for adult education of approximately $1389 per student. (See CAAL Profile report on Yakima Valley Community College, forthcoming). In Illinois, grant funding is combined with FTE funding specific to adult education, and adult education receives a higher rate of reimbursement than most other college services. In California, state funding for adult education in colleges is supported by the same FTE reimbursement formula that supports other non-credit programs, and the rate of reimbursement is lower than for credit programs – although in dollar terms it is higher than in most other states. Florida supports adult education in the same way that it supports other college services through a complex formula intended to equalize the financial capacity of colleges (see CAAL Profile on Seminole Community College, forthcoming).

different levels, Beginning Low and Beginning High**.** Because this change is recent, all references in this report are to the prior NRS categories listed above.)

Without entering into a disquisition on ESL classifications, two important things should be recognized about this range of English language abilities. First, students at the lowest levels of ability have virtually no proficiency at all in one or more of the core ESL skills (although they may have higher levels in some of those skills than others). Second, even students at the highest levels of non-credit ESL are not fully proficient in English. That is, they are not "fluent" in English as native speakers would be. To the ears of a native speaker, they would speak English with an "accent," make errors in grammar and syntax that most native speakers would not make, and command a limited English vocabulary.

In short, all of the students served by "non-credit" or "adult education" ESL have low levels of ability in English compared to native speakers. The goal of non-credit ESL, and of virtually all adult education ESL programs, is not to help them perfect their English, but to help them improve it.

Another important similarity between non-credit ESL offered by colleges and the service offered by other providers is that <u>the majority of the students served are at the lowest levels of proficiency, as measured by NRS and most other assessment systems</u>. At the colleges examined by this study, half or more of non-credit students were at the two lowest levels of proficiency. NRS reports indicate that this distribution is typical of the population of adult education ESL programs in most states. In contrast, local and state NRS reports indicate that ABE students are clustered toward the middle and higher end of the ability ranges established for these services. In short, <u>non-credit ESL programs disproportionately serve students who might be regarded as "most in need of service" – those whose English language skills are extremely limited</u>.

College non-credit ESL programs are also similar to other adult education programs in the primary goal of their instruction. <u>With a few important exceptions (discussed below), they primarily offer "life skills" instruction</u>. The goal of this type of instruction is to help English learners improve the language skills needed to function more effectively in the common everyday situations of life – e.g., asking directions, shopping, visiting a doctor, using public services, or applying for a job. Many programs also have special classes that give immigrants the English skills they need to pass the American citizenship test, and they provide family literacy programs focused on parents as a way to improve the educational development of children.

This focus on life skills English is a natural choice for both colleges and other providers of free ESL classes. Most of the students who enroll in these classes are immigrants with very low levels of English ability, and what they initially want and need most is to learn enough English to navigate the everyday language challenges of living in the United States. Indeed, at the lowest levels of instruction, this is sometimes called "survival English," although that term is rarely used because many of these adults have survived conditions unknown to most native speakers**.** Most aspects of life skills instruction – the topics, the contexts, and the vocabulary and grammar – are keyed to everyday language use, and the curriculum draws

on "authentic" instructional materials and situations from daily life experience. For example, students may practice dialogues about going to a doctor or fill out a form to apply for a job or get a driver's license.

Improving life skills English is very beneficial for adult ESL students and the communities in which they live. However, there are limits to what it can achieve. From the community college perspective, life skills instruction, by itself, is not sufficient to prepare students for entry into most academic and vocational programs offered for credit. This includes most Associate degree programs as well as a wide range of vocational programs. Students who have received life skills instruction will not have gained many of the English language skills needed to make the transition to these credit programs. For example, they usually will not have the specialized skills required to write college papers or complete other common college assignments, to comprehend college textbooks, to take accurate classroom notes, or to follow oral instruction in English at the conversational speed with which it is usually delivered. They also will often lack the English vocabulary required for many areas of credit study.

The difference between the English language skills taught in life skills programs and those required for academic study is less a matter of how well students master the skills that are taught than what those skills are. Students who have reached highly advanced levels in life skills programs will usually be quite proficient in the reading, writing, speaking, and listening required for everyday social and workforce communication. But academic study requires a different set of language skills than life skills programs ordinarily teach (especially the reading and writing skills required by college level study).

In fact, many native-speakers of English lack these skills. At many colleges, 30-40 percent of *all* students seeking to enter academic programs are referred to developmental education courses because they do not score highly enough on placement tests to directly enroll in academic credit-bearing courses. The challenges that ESL students face are sometimes similar to those of native speakers (e.g., problems with writing the various materials required for academic work), but they are often different (e.g., the rate of comprehension of spoken and written English, the vocabulary, and to an extent, the grammar expected for both oral and written work).

This limitation on life skills English extends to many areas of employment where specialized English language skills are required. A reason that colleges establish English proficiency standards for vocational programs (such as allied health studies) is that these programs aim to prepare students to be fully capable of performing the tasks required by various occupations. Like studies for academic degrees, each area of vocational study has its own specialized requirements for English language skills; students who have only received life skills instruction are unlikely to meet these requirements. To the extent that the requirements mirror the English language needs of the occupations for which colleges prepare students, it is fair to surmise that life skills instruction, by itself, does not prepare students to function effectively in a wide range of occupations.

In many respects, therefore, non-credit ESL at most community colleges is the same life skills ESL instruction offered by other adult education providers, especially at the lower levels of ESL instruction. And it confers the same benefits and the same limitations.

No data reliably indicates whether, on average, colleges are more effective than other providers in offering life skills ESL instruction. Based on NRS data, the five colleges on which this study focused reported rates of ESL student learning gains that are *greater* than the overall rates reported by the states in which they are located. These colleges were, however, selected because their peers believe that their ESL programs are of exceptionally high quality. Other colleges may be less successful by NRS or other measures.

3. DIVERSITY OF PROGRAM STRUCTURES

One of the most striking characteristics of non-credit ESL programs is their diversity. There is no standard model for the management or structure of these programs. They provide a veritable shopping list of different ways that life skills ESL service can be delivered:

- Duration and intensity of instruction. Although instruction is usually provided by classes a semester or quarter in length, the number of weeks varies greatly in each semester or quarter – e.g., from 18 weeks at CCSF to 10 weeks or less at some other colleges. The number of hours of instruction also differs greatly. Bunker Hill Community College offers two non-credit programs (BSL[13] and ESOL) which, respectively, provide three and six hours of instruction in each course per week. Seminole offers between 16 and 20 hours of instruction per week in its non-credit program.

- Hours of instruction. The combination of different semester lengths and different numbers of weekly hours per class results in very different total numbers for instructional hours. CCSF offers up to 180 hours of instruction per semester, and estimates that most students attend about 100 hours per semester. Depending on whether students attend day or evening classes and in what term they are enrolled, Seminole offers between 200 and 300 hours of instruction per semester and requires an 80 percent attendance rate. At the opposite extreme, Bunker Hill's programs offer between 50 and 100 hours of instruction per semester.

- Open entry. All of CCSF's non-credit programs and Bunker Hill's ESOL program are "open-entry/open-exit" courses. They allow students to join the class at any point during the semester. Seminole and Lake County have adopted "managed enrollment" policies that regulate when students can enroll, either limiting enrollment to the first few weeks of the semester or during set times during the semester. Yakima uses both approaches for different elements of its program.

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[13] BSL = Basic ESL

- Levels of instruction. Colleges also divide their programs into a different number of "levels" – each of which is usually offered for a semester. Although all of them use the six NRS levels for reporting outcomes to state and federal funding agencies, their instructional programs are segmented differently. For example, CCSF offers 10 levels of non-credit ESL, Yakima offers five, one of Bunker Hill's two non-credit programs offers three, and the other Bunker Hill program and the Lake County and Seminole programs offer six levels.

- Assessment and placement. One or more of the five colleges studied uses every assessment tool available to the adult ESL field for initial placement, monitoring of student progress, promotion between levels, and reporting to public funders. Most also have developed assessment systems that are unique to the college, and they also rely on teacher recommendations and judgments.

- Use of technology. All of the programs studied make some use of computerized learning systems and other instructional technology. All have learning laboratories where students can use a variety of instructional software systems. Some of these facilities are reserved for ESL students, and others are resources within larger instructional technology centers. Some programs (and individual teachers) include instructional technology use – either within class hours or as "homework"— as part of their curricula, and others leave it to students to use technology as a supplement to classroom instruction.

- Content of instruction. For the skills that should be taught at each level, all of the colleges studied are required to align their instructional content with state standards. Because college instructional levels and state levels are often an imperfect match, these standards usually serve as only rough guidelines. Within them, the content of instruction differs significantly depending on the college and level of instruction.

- Structure of instruction. Most of the colleges studied combine instruction in all of the core ESL skills within the same course – alternating between different skills or combinations of skills on different days or at different times during the same class. However, Bunker Hill's BSL Program offers separate reading/writing and speaking/listening courses.

- Faculty. Like most community college programs, non-credit ESL programs rely heavily on adjunct faculty for instruction. Most of the colleges examined for this study have fewer than ten full-time ESL faculty members, and some employ only two or three. They employ between 50 and 100 adjuncts. CCSF is an exception: it employs 160 full time and approximately 180 adjunct instructors in ESL. Full-time faculty are often the anchors for community college ESL programs – in terms of exercising leadership, defining the nature of instruction, and carrying heavy course loads. Most of them are highly credentialed – having at least a Master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), applied linguistics, or some related field. The credentials that adjuncts must have at most colleges are also quite high – often approaching those of full-time faculty. This fact is important,

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because it is virtually impossible to closely supervise large numbers of adjuncts – just as it is virtually impossible to closely supervise teachers in any educational institution. Despite curricular and other guidelines or requirements, non-credit ESL teachers have substantial discretion in what they choose to teach or emphasize**.**

- Management. Non-credit ESL programs are managed by different divisions at the colleges. ESL is an academic department at both CCSF and Seminole, and non-credit is one of its offerings. At Yakima, a director of basic skills in the workforce education division manages ESL. At Lake County, non-credit ESL is managed by the Adult Education Department of the ABE, GED, and ESL Division, and credit ESL is managed by the Communications, Humanities, and Fine Arts Division. At Bunker Hill, the two non-credit programs are managed by the Division of Academic Support and College Pathways and the Workforce Development Division, respectively.

- Relationship to the community. The adult ESL programs at most of the colleges examined have working relationships with at least some community based organizations (CBOs) that serve immigrants, and (less frequently) with local school systems. Most commonly, CBOs and schools provide the physical premises for off-campus instruction and they aid in recruitment to ESL programs. They also provide social support services to immigrants – which colleges consider important but in which they play very little role. In some cases, the colleges use community volunteers as tutors or classroom aides, though the numbers are small. And, in a few cases, colleges partner with schools or CBOs to offer special purpose employment or citizenship programs. With one exception, none of the colleges examined by this study look to CBOs or schools to directly provide ESL instruction, nor do they seek to articulate their college instructional programs with those of other agencies. The exception is Bunker Hill's ESOL program, which is managed in collaboration with several CBOs. Most ESL students served by the other four college programs receive instruction at college campuses by the college faculty within the guidelines of college ESL policy.

In short, there is a thriving diversity in the organizational and instructional structure of non-credit community college ESL programs. No two are alike, and the differences between them are not minor. There are significant differences of dimension in elements of program design.

Aside from a primary focus on life skills at the non-credit level, the most important *similarities* among college non-credit ESL programs are: (a) scheduling of instruction to approximate standard academic units (semesters or quarters), (b) the prevalence of on-campus instruction with access to the facilities and learning opportunities this provides, (c) high standards set for their faculty, and (d) availability within the college of credit ESL and other types of programs for English language learners.

Where high standards for faculty are in place, more subtle factors are likely to create similarities among ESL programs. The training of ESL teachers, particularly at the graduate level, is both rigorous and fairly standardized nationwide. As a result, highly credentialed ESL faculty, whether at colleges or elsewhere, share a common knowledge base and a

set of core skills that probably determine what is taught and how, as much as program specific factors do.

Although this professional expertise and its classroom applications are beyond the scope of this study, it should be recognized that, whatever differences exist between programs, the service they provide is delivered by faculty with common professional backgrounds and professional understandings, who therefore channel ESL instruction in certain common directions.

4. <u>INNOVATION</u>

These commonalities and differences provide the context within which colleges provide their paramount contribution to adult ESL instruction. That contribution consists of a wide range of innovative approaches to virtually all aspects of non-credit ESL. <u>All five colleges in this study (and many others reviewed) have developed innovative program structures and/or instructional techniques to confront some of the major problems of life skills ESL instruction and to expand the opportunities of non-credit students to pursue further education</u>. Taken as a whole, these colleges can be seen as incubators for innovation within the ESL field.

Ultimately, most of the innovative approaches they have generated arise from the most distinctive feature of ESL instruction at colleges: the fact that it is offered in an academic setting. Community colleges pride themselves on being multi-mission organizations that attempt to fill almost any of the unmet educational needs of adults in their communities. But their overriding mission is to provide opportunities for postsecondary learning. As a result, it is natural for colleges to seek ways to bridge the gap between life skills instruction and their other offerings – to integrate non-credit offerings into the pathways of opportunity that comprise the majority of their programs. They do this by offering credit ESL programs and other links between life skills instruction and academic or vocational programs. And these various attempts to take a step beyond life skills instruction influence the types of solutions they devise for some of the problems confronted by most ESL programs in any setting.

Many of the lessons learned from innovation in college non-credit ESL programs are applicable to programs operated under other auspices. And many of their innovative approaches can be found in non-collegiate programs as well. But few programs outside the college setting can offer instruction that is the functional equivalent of credit ESL, and few have the financial and administrative flexibility or resources to link life skills instruction to other pathways of opportunity. There is no way to prove that colleges are the primary engines of progress in ESL service. It is sufficient to recognize that they provide a promising environment for innovation.

The reasons that specific colleges have adopted particular innovative approaches to non-credit ESL are usually complex narratives of institutional history. The results of these decisions can be categorized in different ways. This report categorizes them as <u>three major goals for improving ESL service to which the innovative approaches contribute</u>. Each of these goals, and the practices that contribute to achieving them, are discussed in the following sections of this report. In brief, the goals are:

- Increasing learning gains and the rate of learning. Based on NRS state reports and college data, only about one third of all adult education ESL students advance even one level of proficiency over the course of a year. Although many experts believe that ESL students persist in attending classes for multiple years, and that many "drop in and drop out" of instruction, longitudinal research prepared for this study by CCSF and Bunker Hill indicates that fewer than half of all students enroll in non-credit ESL programs for more than two or three terms. An even smaller percentage advance more than two levels. Colleges have adopted a number of strategies to increase the students' rate of learning while they are enrolled in programs as well as to increase their persistence.

- Increasing transitions to credit academic and vocational programs. Longitudinal data from a number of colleges indicate that very few non-credit students ever enroll in credit academic or vocational programs, and at many institutions only 10 to 15 percent of students take the first step on this route by enrolling in credit ESL. Colleges believe that a far larger percentage of non-credit students can and should benefit from postsecondary education, and they have instituted a number of initiatives to increase these transition rates.

- Ensuring the quality of faculty. A fundamental prerequisite for engineering and implementing innovation of any kind in ESL programs is a high quality faculty who can devise and deliver an effective instructional curriculum. All of the colleges examined have established high standards for faculty, and they have also taken special measures to support them on an on-going basis.

None of the colleges studied has adopted innovative practices to pursue *all* of these goals, and the practices they have adopted differ in important ways. Moreover, some of the practices address more than one goal.

The effectiveness of these practices is often difficult to gauge. Where it can be gauged, the colleges have often not used them to maximum effect. Nevertheless, the goals pursued by these practices are among the most important aims for program improvement of any ESL program. And the study found enough instances of innovative practices aimed at each goal – and sufficient evidence of their actual or potential benefits – to suggest that other ESL programs should at least consider pursuing all of these goals by some of these means. Because the specific practices are shaped to some extent by the circumstances of individual colleges, this would often entail adapting the core concepts behind them to different local conditions. In this sense, the practices discussed provide an initial agenda for progress in adult education ESL service.

Equally important, the experiences of these colleges in devising and implementing innovative approaches to major issues in ESL highlight some of the barriers to innovation in this field, as well as possible ways to circumvent them. They also indicate some of the policies and managerial structures that colleges, other providers, and government at various levels must

adopt if colleges are to equip themselves for engineering innovation of almost any kind in the ESL field. (Note that Part V of this report covers how college and government policymakers can engineer innovation to overcome these barriers – following the description of specific practices in Parts II to IV.)

PART II: INCREASING LEARNING GAINS

1. <u>THE NEED</u>

This section of the report deals with how colleges have tried to maximize English language learning gains by students enrolled in their non-credit ESL programs. <u>The need to increase learning gains is acute, and acutely *felt* by most ESL professionals</u>, because the learning gains of most students in virtually all ESL programs are not great.

This problem is not restricted to college programs. NRS data indicate that only 36 percent of the 1.17 million ESL students in programs receiving federal funds advanced one or more learning levels in program year 2003-2004 (the most recent year for which data has been published). This percentage differs among states. Some report significantly higher or lower learning gains, but most states that differ significantly from the national percentage have very small ESL programs. All five of the states in which the colleges of this study are located reported gains close to the national percentage in 2003-2004. They ranged between a high of 36 percent for Washington to a low of 31 percent for Illinois.

For a number of reasons, these NRS rates for completion of a level can be considered approximations at best. First, only students whose language proficiency was tested on entry into programs and post-tested at some subsequent point during the year are counted in calculating learning gains. Many programs, or even a majority, do not post-test all of their enrolled students, due to logistical difficulties and the fact that many do not remain enrolled long enough to be post-tested. Close examination of the five study colleges suggests that if all students were post-tested, the percentage the colleges could report as advancing a level in some cases would probably increase, and it would probably decrease in others.

In addition, as explained below, none of the tests used to determine ESL learning gains reported to the NRS measure progress in all of the ESL skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English). Thus, some students may experience significant gains in skills that are not measured, or they may lag behind in those skills. Finally, NRS levels are, to some extent, arbitrary benchmarks. Some students may experience significant learning gains, but fall just short of the benchmark. Thus, programs report that students who enter a level close to the benchmark and complete the level are evaluated as "successful," while those who enter far from the benchmark and make a great deal of progress without meeting the benchmark are evaluated as having not completed the level.

However, NRS reports are the only data available for comparing the learning gains in ESL programs among states and programs. Because states have established different regulations for how often students should be tested and what tests should be used for NRS reporting purposes, comparisons using this data are most meaningful if programs within the same state are compared.

The NRS reports on all but one of the colleges in this study indicate that the learning gains of their ESL students exceed the 36 percent national norm, and the average overall percentages

reported by their respective states. The percent of students at these colleges who advanced at least one level in a year range from 43 to 50 percent, and at some NRS levels they are much higher. The one college that reports learning gains slightly below its state's average, Bunker Hill, falls below only slightly. In addition, Bunker Hill has two non-credit ESL programs. These are a publicly funded program (ESOL) enrolling about 330 students per year, and a larger program that does not receive public funds (Basic English as a Second Language or BSL) which enrolls almost 900 students per year. Only ESOL reports NRS figures. Hence, the College's NRS report does not measure the learning gains of a majority of its non-credit ESL students, and its testing many be more rigorous than that of other programs.

Although the percentage of their students who experience significant learning gains in any given year is higher than their state averages (as measured by NRS standards at least), none of the colleges in this study are satisfied with these rates of learning. A majority of their ESL students experience no measured learning gains in a given year. This might be acceptable if students returned for additional instruction in subsequent years, but NRS data does not indicate how often this happens.

However, a special analysis prepared for this study by CCSF indicates the number of terms (semesters) in which their non-credit students were enrolled over a seven-year period. CCSF's data indicates that, during the seven years, 41 percent of its students were enrolled for only one term; 17 percent for two terms; 12 percent for three terms; and 8 percent for four terms. Only 23 percent of the College's non-credit students were enrolled for more than four terms at any time during this period. Enrollment for more than three terms would be the equivalent of more than one year of instruction (because CCSF offers non-credit ESL for three terms each year). However, many students who enroll for more than one term do not enroll in consecutive instruction – they may, for example, enroll for only one or two terms per year over a period of years.

Bunker Hill also conducted a special analysis for this study. It tracked the number of levels in which its ESL program students enrolled over a seven-year period. Bunker Hill's data indicates that only 33 percent of the College's ESOL students enrolled in more than one level of instruction during the seven-year period and only 8.1 percent enrolled in three levels.

In short, data generated for this study indicates that, whether or not they complete a level of instruction in a particular year, 70 percent of CCSF's students enroll for three or fewer terms. Because, in most cases, each term represents a learning level at CCSF, the maximum learning gain of most of these students would be three levels – if they completed each level in which they enrolled. (Because CCSF offers some multi-level courses, the learning gains of some of these students might be higher.) The fact that only 33 percent of Bunker Hill's ESL students enrolled in more than one level indicates that the maximum learning gain of 67 percent of the students in this program is one level.

These low persistence rates and levels of enrollment in ESL programs are particularly distressing, because NRS reports indicate that more than half the students enrolled in adult ESL are at the two lowest levels of proficiency. This is also the case with the other colleges studied, except Seminole. Low levels of learning gains per year, plus low rates of persistence,

mean that few of these students with very limited English proficiency will attain even the Intermediate level of ability in English. That is, most will not attain the English language abilities that will allow them to overcome many of the language barriers to functioning effectively in everyday life or in the workforce, and very few will attain sufficient proficiency to enroll in further education.

These data on learning gains and persistence obviously present a "glass half empty" perspective on adult ESL programs. This is misleading in some ways, because substantial numbers of students *do* achieve significant learning gains and persist for long periods of time, often with intermissions. Based on NRS reports, 418,000 ESL students nationwide advanced one or more levels per year in 2003-2004. At CCSF 24,737 students have advanced four or more levels over the last seven years.

Moreover, even advancing one or two levels of proficiency may make a significant difference in improving the life skills and opportunities of English language learners. For example, for very low level learners, it may mean the difference between not being able to read English at all, and being able to read simple texts or documents. For higher-level learners, advancing a level may allow them to cross important thresholds, such as gaining the additional proficiency needed to enroll in further education or get a better job. Finally, participation in ESL classes is not the only way immigrants learn English. They also learn by interacting with native English speakers in everyday life, watching television (an "instructional aid" frequently mentioned by learners), and using print materials. For many, ESL classes may be an important first step up in a process of individual lifelong learning.

In short, many students in adult ESL programs benefit in some way from participating. But during the time they are enrolled in these programs, few reach the higher levels of proficiency that would greatly improve their prospects for employment or advancement to further education. Probably the most important challenge that ESL programs face, and that ESL professionals perceive, is devising ways to help more students increase their English proficiency by more levels, and to do so as fast as possible.

2. BARRIERS & STRATEGIES

To appreciate how colleges that participated in this study confront this challenge, it is important to understand at least some of the reasons why learning gains in adult ESL programs are fairly modest. Both researchers and practitioners in ESL have identified far more barriers to improving learning gains than this report can address. As a result, only two barriers of major importance will be discussed here, together with the strategies colleges have adopted to address them.

The major barrier, by far, is time. While there is no direct correlation between time spent learning a language and the degree of proficiency, the Mainstream English Language Training Program (MELT), from which the NRS levels are derived, estimates that it takes about 100 hours of instruction to move from one level to another and between 500 and 1000 hours for an adult with native language literacy but no prior English to satisfy basic needs, function on a job, and interact in English on a daily basis. Even more time is required to

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participate in college academic classes. Most adult education ESL classes, however, meet only 3-6 hours per week.

At that rate of instruction, immigrants with low levels of proficiency would have to attend courses continually for many years to achieve major learning gains. And it is very unlikely they will do so. Why? Because immigrant adults have numerous responsibilities and face many challenges, including childcare, transportation, employment (they often hold more than one job), health problems, and responsibilities to family members both in the U.S. and their native countries. Due to these responsibilities, scheduling time to attend English classes over many years is virtually impossible for most of these adult learners.

Another barrier to learning gains is the level of prior education, and it is a barrier seldom addressed. Both researchers and practitioners have repeatedly found that immigrants with higher levels of education progress more rapidly in learning English than those with low educational levels. For example, students who are not literate in their native language, or who have attended only a few years of school, face the double barrier of attaining literacy skills and attaining them in English. In contrast, highly educated immigrants face only a single barrier: learning how to use their existing literacy skills in a new language. This is one of many reasons why more highly educated immigrants can, and usually do, learn English at a faster rate than those with less education.

As noted above, the educational level of the immigrant population in the United States is bifurcated: most immigrants have either significantly more or significantly less education than the norm for native-born Americans. As a result, strategies to improve learning gains in adult ESL programs may be most effective if they take account of the educational strengths some immigrants bring to the classroom, and the educational barriers others must overcome.

All five of the colleges in this study have developed multiple strategies to increase the learning gains of at least some of their students. These strategies address the problems of time and prior education, although in different ways.

All of these strategies have a solid theoretical grounding. The knowledge base of the ESL field indicates that, in some form, they should be effective in increasing learning gains. Beyond theory, though, the colleges participating in this study believe that they *are* effective, and the evidence they offer in terms of learning gains and learner retention provides support for their claims. However, it is often difficult to determine the relative impact of any of these strategies in isolation, because all of the programs examined combine some mix of several strategies in their attempt to maximize learning gains. Neither this study, nor the colleges examined, nor other researchers have had the resources to conduct extensive quantitative research on the effectiveness of these strategies or their implementation.

As a result, for the most part, this study could establish only "probable cause" of effectiveness – based on a combination of direct and indirect evidence, adult education research and learning theory, and direct observations as well as expert opinions of faculty, program managers, students, and others familiar with the strategies. That evidence

is discussed below, along with quantitative evidence of effectiveness where it could be obtained.

Lack of conclusive evidence should not diminish the importance of either the strategies or the way colleges use them. On the contrary, the only way ESL programs can increase learning gains is to pioneer new approaches to instruction and program design. The colleges participating in this study are among the pioneers. It is, therefore, important that anyone concerned about ESL understand what they have attempted and what is known about the effectiveness of their work.

Documenting efforts of this type is the essential first step in understanding what approaches may increase learning gains. It provides an intellectual framework for discussing and investigating this issue and illustrates how strategies that are theoretically plausible are actually applied in particular instances. And it suggests the agenda for future research and action (discussed in Part V).

Three strategies for increasing learning gains are discussed below. Specific examples are given of how they are applied by the five colleges, along with evidence about their effectiveness. Moreover, lessons are offered on how other colleges may draw from these examples to strengthen their own efforts. The strategies are:

- High intensity instruction with managed enrollment
- Extending learning beyond the classroom by technology and other means
- Adapting curricula to learner needs

In addition, a major issue that makes these and other strategies considerably more difficult to implement is also treated below: the limits of assessment instruments (tests) adequate for determining the English proficiency of ESL students, placing students in appropriate classes, adapting curricula to meet their needs, and gauging their progress.

3. HIGH INTENSITY INSTRUCTION WITH MANAGED ENROLLMENT

Intensity. As already noted, most life skills ESL programs, including many of the programs at the colleges that participated in this study, offer three to six hours of instruction per week. High intensity courses offer significantly more instructional hours – as many as 25 per week. Colleges often provide instruction at this level of intensity to their credit ESL students and to international students enrolled in special programs. But they rarely offer high intensity instruction to non-credit students. In part, for reasons explained above, they believe it likely that the personal responsibilities of these students will prevent them from attending more than a few hours of ESL classes per week.

It is also more expensive to provide additional classroom hours per student. Both students enrolled in credit ESL classes and international students pay tuition, which helps offset the additional cost. But the instructional costs of non-credit students are entirely supported by federal, state, and college funds, and most colleges (as well as other programs) believe they have an obligation to use the funds available to serve as many students as possible. In many

states, the systems for funding adult education create incentives to do so. As a result, colleges that want to serve some or all of their non-credit students with high intensity instruction may feel that they have to choose between serving larger numbers and providing more hours of instruction to the students they serve.

All of the colleges that took part in this study provide high intensity instruction to at least some students, and all of them believe that this increases learning gains – in some cases dramatically. At its most elementary level, the reason for these increased learning gains is a matter of common sense. Colleges believe that the more hours students devote to learning English, the *faster* they will learn and the more learning gains they will achieve while they are enrolled. Also, students may experience learning loss between class sessions if programs meet for only a few hours per week. Although there is probably a limit to the number of hours per week that students can absorb ESL instruction (or any other type of instruction), the experience of colleges with high intensity credit and international student programs encourages them to believe that many of their non-credit students will achieve additional learning gains from programs that provide far more than the three to six hours of instruction commonly available.

The additional hours of instruction in high intensity programs also allow for more instructional options. For example, they provide the time needed to schedule separate classes concentrated on each of the ESL core skills and to introduce other instructional innovations (such as special sections to organize various forms of learning outside the classroom that will be discussed below). Moreover, additional hours of instruction make it possible for more than one teacher to work with each student. For example, students may receive instruction in each of the core ESL skills from a different teacher specializing in that skill. Students in high intensity programs may also gain motivation from experiencing more rapid learning gains. And they may form mutually supportive "cohorts" with their fellow students. Finally, students in high intensity courses may be motivated by the fact that they have made an usually large commitment to learning English – a commitment they feel obliged to honor.

Recent studies of adult education (not just adult ESL) have also found that intensity of instruction correlates with duration: that is, those students who attend more hours per week are also likely to attend more weeks or months or terms.[14] Thus, intensity and duration, two of the most significant factors affecting language learning, may go hand-in-hand for adult education students.

Managed enrollment. None of these benefits of high intensity instruction can be realized unless students do, in fact, honor their commitment to attend all or most of the classes offered. As a result, most high intensity programs have adopted "managed enrollment" policies: they allow students to enroll only in the first few weeks of each term, and they enforce strict attendance and performance policies. In most managed enrollment programs, students who do not attend a certain percentage of class hours (often 80 percent or more) and who do not complete class assignments are either dropped from the program or the

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[14] See, for example: Porter, K. E., Cuban, S., & Comings, J. P., One Day I Will Make It: A Study of Adult Student Persistence in Library Literacy Programs (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corp., 2005).

instructional staff meets with them to help overcome barriers to attendance and completing class work. Moreover, in many managed enrollment programs, students who complete a class are given preference for enrolling in the next semester and/or the next level of classes.

Managed enrollment is not necessarily limited to high intensity classes. At the College of Lake County all non-credit ESL courses use managed enrollment: with rare exceptions, students can enter classes only at the beginning of each 16-week semester or in the 8th week of the semester.

Like high intensity instruction, managed enrollment is a departure from the norm in adult education. Most adult education programs have "open-entry/open-exit" policies: students can enroll in any particular class at any time during the year, attend as many hours as they wish, and drop in and out of classes at will. This practice makes it difficult for teachers and students to maintain learning continuity. Most class sessions must be self-contained learning lessons, because there is no assurance that students who attend on a particular day will have attended the previous sessions. As a result, it is hard for teachers to provide instructional sequences in which each session builds upon what was learned in the prior session. This is particularly problematic for high intensity programs, which usually aim to make the best use of the time they have by building curricular sequences in which each lesson leads to the next, and in which the curricula for classes that focus on one core skill or special activity often assume that students have mastered certain skills in other classes.

Open-entry/open-exit classes in adult education programs are the norm for the same reasons that low intensity classes are. Program managers and teachers generally assume that the complex lives of immigrants make it impossible for them to attend classes on a regular basis. In these circumstances, they believe it is better to provide students with as much instruction as possible whenever they can attend, rather than none at all. Moreover, many teachers in open-entry/open-exit classes have become skilled in rotating lessons, so that students can progress, and in managing the instruction of classes that include both frequent attendees and students who miss sessions.

Most adult education programs also have financial reasons for providing open-entry/open-exit classes. They believe that if students are given the option of attending these classes and attending managed enrollment classes, most will opt for the greater freedom of open-entry/open-exit. Thus, the financial investment required to develop managed enrollment sequences will not be realized. Moreover, many programs managers are concerned that even if students enter managed enrollment classes, many will not be able to live up to the obligation of attending on a regular basis. As a result, participation in managed enrollment classes will become very small – too small to justify the salaries of teachers assigned to teach them.

The colleges studied. The experiences of the five colleges in this study indicate that high intensity courses when combined with managed enrollment can be extremely effective in increasing learning gains. Their experience should allay at least some of the concerns many adult educators have about this type of instruction – in particular that non-credit ESL students simply do not have the time, or are unwilling to make the commitment, to participate in high

intensity/managed enrollment courses. Although this may be the case for many students, the experiences of these colleges indicate that significant numbers will find the time and make the commitment for a year or more, *if* they have the option.

Two of these colleges (Seminole and Yakima) offer high intensity instruction with managed enrollment to all or a large percentage of their students. Two others (Lake County and Bunker Hill) offer this type of instruction only in special courses at particular levels, and the purpose of these courses is to increase transitions to further education.

At three of these colleges, students have the option of selecting free low intensity open-entry/open-exit adult education programs that are at levels equivalent to the high intensity/managed enrollment programs, either at the colleges or elsewhere. In these cases, a high percentage of students who have the option select the high intensity/managed enrollment courses, and a high percentage of those who enroll in them live up to their attendance and class work obligations and complete the courses. Where comparisons of learning gains can be made, these students have significantly larger learning gains per semester or per year than students in the low intensity/open entry alternatives.

An especially dramatic example of increased learning gains is found at CCSF. Most of its students are enrolled in a "semi-high intensity" open-entry/open-exit program that meets, on average, ten hours per week. As noted above, their learning gains exceed the state norm. In addition, CCSF also manages VIP (VESL Immersion Program) – a special high intensity/ managed enrollment program for welfare recipients. VIP meets for 30 hours per week. It combines 10 hours of standard ESL instruction, 10 hours of computer-assisted language learning, and 10 hours of work-related skills instruction. Students are mandated to attend classes on a regular basis, and the College believes that they form a mutually supportive learning community. The percent of VIP students who advance one or more levels per year is more than twice that of students at comparable levels at CCSF. At some levels, it is three times as great. Because this program has such dramatic results, a more detailed description of it is included as Appendix V, p. 148.

In short, the experiences of the colleges participating in this study indicate that significant numbers of students will select high intensity/managed enrollment programs if they have the option. As discussed below, they also indicate that a large percentage of students who select this option persist in these programs, and that their learning gains are significantly higher than those of other students. Based on the experience of colleges that offer these programs, high intensity with managed enrollment is a viable and effective option for improving learning gains in non-credit ESL programs.

Education and motivation. The experience of the five colleges also indicates that <u>high intensity/managed enrollment is not a suitable instructional strategy for all students</u>. Although many students select these programs when they have the option, a majority of them select more traditional ESL classes.

In addition, the experience of these five colleges suggests that high intensity/managed enrollment programs may be most suitable for students with fairly high levels of prior

education and/or levels of English proficiency. Bunker Hill's program is limited to students with a GED. Lake County's program is offered to students at the Intermediate level of English proficiency or above. A majority of Seminole's high intensity students have a high school diploma or higher level of education. They also have quite high levels of English language proficiency.

Seminole is the only college examined in this study where a majority of students are at the higher NRS levels. The high educational and English proficiency levels of its students are not a choice on the part of the College. Rather, they result from the fact that Seminole is located in a fairly affluent suburban area, and many of its ESL students were either professionals or upwardly mobile workers in their home countries. These students wish to continue their careers in the United States. They enroll in the College's ESL program to improve their English as quickly as possible. The Seminole administration believes that having a high intensity program available attracts similar students from nearby areas.

It is not clear from these examples, however, that high intensity/managed enrollment can only succeed with students with high levels of education and/or English proficiency. CCSF's program for welfare recipients is offered to students with very low levels of education and English ability. Virtually all of its students are at levels 1-3 of the College's 10-level ESL program. Likewise, almost all of Yakima's ESL students had only a few years of formal schooling in their native countries prior to entering the program, and its high intensity program is offered to students at all levels of English proficiency – although it is offered for fewer hours to students at the lower levels.

Thus, along with education and English proficiency, *motivation* to learn English as quickly as possible (which, in the case of CCSF's program, is enforced by welfare regulations requiring attendance) may be an important variable in attracting students to high intensity/managed enrollment programs and affecting their ability to benefit from them.

Scale. In assessing high intensity and managed enrollment as strategies for increasing learning gains, it is important to recognize that, except for Seminole's program, most of the high intensity/managed enrollment programs examined by this study are fairly small. Most serve only a few hundred students per year. As a result, it is hard to know if and how much programs of this sort can be expanded to serve larger numbers of students.

However, the experiences of the other four colleges certainly suggest that high intensity/ managed enrollment programs *can* be expanded. In most cases, a major reason that enrollments in these programs are fairly small is that they are not available to a majority of non-credit students. The most salient fact about the potential of the programs to expand is that they enroll a significant percentage of the students to whom they *are* available. In addition, many of the programs studied report that they have waiting lists of students who want to enroll. Both Yakima and Lake County plan to expand the number of high intensity/managed enrollment classes available to students who want to enroll in this type of instruction.

It appears that programs of this kind can serve larger numbers of students in most of the programs examined at the colleges. Nevertheless, while these examples are encouraging, they do not provide a sufficient basis for determining how extensive this type of service can be. To determine that with certainty, these and other colleges will have to "push the envelope" and offer it to more students.

Lessons for Other Colleges

From these examples, it appears that high intensity/managed enrollment programs can significantly increase learning gains. Moreover, these programs may provide a partial answer to the problem of how ESL programs can accommodate the special abilities that more highly educated students bring to ESL instruction. Insofar as these programs primarily serve students with higher levels of education or English skills, they provide a way for them to use those skills by accelerating their learning. Thus, other programs should consider implementing high intensity/managed enrollment programs.

The experience of Yakima and CCSF suggests that high intensity/managed enrollment may be beneficial for at least some students at all levels of education and language ability. But, because the CCSF program, like all ESL programs, has special characteristics, this finding is far from conclusive. And the Yakima program contains other special components aimed at serving low-level learners, as will be discussed below. Nevertheless, these examples at least *suggest* that other colleges should experiment with offering this form of instruction as an option for all of their students.

The theoretical basis for high intensity and managed enrollment appears to be sound, and there is solid evidence that students enrolled in programs with these features experience higher learning gains than comparable ESL students. Moreover, the administration and faculty of the colleges participating in this study are convinced that these higher learning gains are attributable in large part to high intensity/managed enrollment. They believe that the extra hours of instruction and the commitment to learning expected by managed enrollment are valuable in themselves, and that these extra hours offer the opportunity to adopt other program enhancements.

Program examples. To provide a more concrete sense of how high intensity/managed enrollment programs are structured along with evidence about their effectiveness, brief descriptions of three of the programs mentioned above are given below.

> *Seminole.* Seminole is the only college examined by this study where both high intensity and managed enrollment are the norm. Almost 80 percent of the College's non-credit ESL students (2500-3000 students per year), and virtually all of those at

its two largest campuses, are enrolled in a six-level program (Foundation through Advanced). In this program, they attend classes 20 hours a week during the day and 16 hours during the evening in 15-week semesters during the fall and spring terms, and 12 weeks during the summer term. During those 16-20 hours, separate classes focus on writing, reading, grammar, and listening/speaking, and they are taught by four different instructors. Seminole has a rigorous managed enrollment policy. Students may enter the high intensity program only at the beginning of each term, and they must agree to attend 90 percent of the classes. If they meet this commitment, they are automatically first in line for the next set of classes. If they miss more than 10 percent of the classes, they may be withdrawn.

The content of Seminole's high intensity courses is based on Florida's Adult ESOL Goals for each level. But the College has used the time provided by its high intensity program to introduce various curricular innovations. Two of these are TIES (Total Immersion of English Skills) program and "Clearly Said, Clearly Read," a program component to increase "phonemic awareness" (both discussed below).

Despite its rigorous attendance policy, the College reports that two-thirds of its high intensity students persist until the end of each year – a higher percentage than for the state as a whole. Moreover, learning gains far exceed state averages. Students are placed in program levels using the CASAS assessment instrument. They receive number grades for work during the term, and at the end of each term they are assigned a grade in each of their four classes. Only those who have attained a 70 percent grade point average and who score at a sufficiently high level on the CASAS test at the end of the term are promoted to the next level of instruction.

In 2004-2005, 46 percent of students completed a level of instruction using this method of advancement, compared to 28 percent of students who completed a level statewide. CASAS testing for advancement was required by the state in 2002-2003. Prior to that time, the College used grade averages alone for advancement purposes. Using that system, more than 60 percent of students advanced a level each year. The use of CASAS initially reduced the percentage of completers, due to unfamiliarity with the test by both faculty and students, but the percentage has risen each year, and the program manager expects that it will soon approach the 60 percent level again.

Yakima. Yakima offers a five level (ESL Beginning Literacy through Low Advanced) high intensity Transition program. This use of the program to increase transitions will be discussed in Part III. Its effectiveness in increasing learning gains by high intensity instruction is discussed below.

Classes meet 12-25 hours per week in 10-week quarters. They are offered only during the day at the College's two campuses, where approximately half of their ESL students are enrolled. Most of Yakima's noncredit ESL students attend classes off campus at 15 instructional sites (CBOs, churches, and schools) or in the evening. These evening and off-campus classes meet for six to eight hours a week. On-campus

ESL students can attend either the high intensity program or more low intensity ESL instruction in the evenings. In 2005-2006, the intensive program enrolled 22 percent of the College's non-credit ESL students (380 students). This represents 38 percent of the ESL students at Yakima's campuses to whom the program is available.

Yakima increases the intensity of courses in its Transition program as students progress through the ESL levels, beginning with12 hours a week at Levels 1 and 2, and increasing to 16 hours at Level 3, 20 hours at Level 4, and 25 hours at Level 5, the highest level. At the three highest levels, Yakima also enrolls students in ESL math, ABE math, and ABE reading. (This feature of the program is discussed more fully in Part III.)

Students in the high intensity program (like all of Yakima's ESL students) are somewhat more likely to be enrolled in classes at the lower levels of proficiency than in classes at the higher levels. Classes are organized in blocks of time, with each Level attending the same classes. This creates a student learning community that encourages attendance both for academic and social reasons.

Two factors encourage continued enrollment and retention. The high intensity program uses managed enrollment. Students may enroll only during the first few weeks of each term and they are expected to attend at least 80 percent of the classroom hours. In addition, each student has an individualized learning plan. These plans are completed by the instructor and reviewed with the student during a meeting at the end of each quarter. At that time, the student receives feedback about progress toward individual goals and also plans the next quarter and pre-registers for it.

In comparing the success of learners in the daytime high intensity and night (less intensive) classes on its campuses, Yakima has found that students in the high intensity classes are far more likely to remain in classes longer and to make more progress in their English language learning than students at the on-campus evening classes with fewer hours of instruction. In 2004-2005, 38 percent of students in the intensive program completed two or more levels and were retained for two or more quarters during the year, compared to 19 percent of students in the low-intensity evening classes.

A faculty member at Yakima observes that a major benefit of high intensity instruction is that learners can "feel their growth much more quickly. Increased time on task equals increased rate of growth. Students see others moving at a fast rate, and see success all around them. They know it is possible for them, too." This also helps keep them attending classes and persisting in their language learning.

Lake County. The College of Lake County's high intensity program is titled Intensive ESL for Academic Purposes (EAP). As the name suggests, the goal of this program is to help ESL students make transitions to further education (discussed more fully from that perspective in Part III).

EAP is an eight-course, two-level program. Classes meet 12 hours each week in 16-week semesters. The program is offered only to students at the High Intermediate and Low Advanced proficiency levels. In spring of 2006, 120 students were enrolled in the program. Both levels of EAP are a semester in length and contain four four-week courses. The skills taught in each course are more advanced than those taught in the preceding course.

Each course consists of separate classes in ESL core skills: speaking/listening, reading, writing, and grammar, although teachers integrate skills and topics whenever possible. Instruction in the first semester is at the High Intermediate level, and instruction in the second semester is at the Low Advanced level. Course content differs between semesters. For example, in the first semester, the writing courses contain modules on computer literacy, and all of the courses in the second semester have a special focus on academic culture in the United States, and at Lake County in particular. Two full-time faculty members teach all courses, and each concentrates on different skills, although there is some team teaching. Both program placement and promotion from the first to the second semester courses are based on scores on the state-mandated CELSA (Comprehensive English Language Student Assessment) test and teacher recommendations – and in some cases, on writing samples and portfolios of student work as well.

Like Lake County's other non-credit ESL offerings, the program has a managed enrollment policy: students must enroll at the Beginning or in the 8th week of each 16-week semester. Although retention is high, a few students are allowed to enter at other times during the semester if there is room in the class due to dropouts, and if the teacher believes they can keep up with the work. Students cannot pass the courses if they miss more than five days of class a month without permission, and they are dropped from the program if they miss the first three days of class each month.

Curricular enhancements to the program include a special emphasis on group work, formal writing and oral presentations, independent study outside the classroom, guest lectures, and extensive homework.

Effectively, EAP combines four three-hour courses on different skills each week into one sequential course that meets for 12 hours per week. Students can also choose to attend the courses that comprise EAP on a less intensive basis – by enrolling in two of these courses each semester for six hours per week— but only 50 students selected this option in Spring 2006. Students at the High Intermediate and Low Advanced levels can also select low intensity courses at these levels: ESL 50/51 and 52/53. About four times as many students are enrolled in these low intensity courses as in EAP.

The completion rate of EAP is extremely high. More than 80 percent of students who began the sequence completed it in recent years. Learning gains are also high. Approximately 50 percent of the students who enrolled in EAP advanced an NRS

level, compared to 24 percent of all Lake County High Intermediate Students and 18 percent of Low Advanced students in 2003-2004 (the most recent year for which comparable data was available to this study).

Finally, retention rates are also high. A special study of the cohort of students who enrolled in EAP in the fall of 2002 showed that 63 percent were enrolled in some course at the College one year later, compared to 31 percent of other High Intermediate or Low Advanced students, and 27 percent of EAP students (compared to 19 percent of the comparison group) were enrolled three years later.

4. <u>ADAPTING CURRICULA TO STUDENT NEEDS</u>

<u>Curricula and learning gains.</u> In addition to increasing hours of instruction, the colleges participating in this study also attempt to increase learning gains by adapting the content and methods of instruction in non-credit ESL programs to the needs of their students. This is a formidable task, because ESL students differ in their initial level of English proficiency, prior education, native language, motivation, and reasons for wanting to learn English.

<u>One of the major tools these colleges (and most other ESL programs) use to undertake this task is the *development of curricular frameworks* that define what should be taught, and to some extent *how* it should be taught, to students with different needs</u>. For the most part, these frameworks specify what should be taught at different levels of English proficiency. They are created, and periodically revised, by the college faculty. At all of the participating colleges, curricula are linked to "learning goals" or "curriculum guidelines" for ESL students that have been developed by state educational agencies.

In many cases, the college and state curricular frameworks are fairly detailed roadmaps for instruction. For example, Florida's guidelines are described as follows:

> *"Each level has specific expected outcomes under the following standards: obtain employment, maintain employment, career advancement, applied technology, interpersonal communication, telephone communication, health and nutrition, U.S. concepts of time and money, transportation and travel, safety and security issues, consumer education issues, government and community resources, environment and the world, and family and parenting. There are also standards for listening, speaking, reading, and writing effectively as well as applying standard grammatical structures. Competency outcomes under each standard vary from level to level."[15]*

Within the context of state curricular frameworks, colleges adapt their curricula to meet the special needs of their ESL student bodies – not only to differences in English proficiency, but also to differences in education, native language, reasons for wanting to learn English, and other variables. For example, as noted above, most colleges have high intensity curricular tracks for students who want to advance to further education. And many of the methods

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[15] This passage is extracted from the Seminole Community College profile prepared for CAAL by Sandy Ares (the CAAL researcher at Seminole), forthcoming from CAAL.

colleges use to extend learning outside the classroom – such as Seminole's TIES and "Clearly Said, Clearly Read" components – are curricular adaptations to meet special student needs.

Furthermore, individual teachers have a great deal of discretion in creating lesson plans and using teaching methods that adapt instruction to the particular needs of students in their classes. They draw upon a repertoire of instructional methods that have developed in the ESL field over many years. The teacher is, thus, the interpreter of the curriculum, and highly skilled teachers are essential to the success of students in ESL programs. (This aspect of non-credit ESL at the colleges participating in this study is discussed in Part IV.)

It is not within the scope of this study to review all of the ways these colleges adapt their curricula to student needs. However, the value of doing so is vividly demonstrated by the approach to curriculum development adopted by Yakima, which is significantly different from the curricular creation methods used by most other ESL programs, and which appears to be highly effective. Yakima's approach is specifically targeted to serve the special needs of the immigrant population in its service area, predominantly Mexican immigrants working in agricultural and related industries. Most of these immigrants have very low levels of English proficiency and only a few years of formal education.

Most ESL professionals believe that ESL students with these characteristics – low levels of English proficiency and limited prior education – are among the hardest to serve. They are, however, a very large portion of the students enrolled in ESL programs nationwide. A majority of ESL students nationally may be at very low English proficiency levels, and those with low levels of prior education as well are less likely to persist and advance in most programs than other students.

Thus, Yakima's approach not only demonstrates curricular adaptation to student needs, but an innovative way to serve students who are a special challenge for ESL programs. Although some of the program strategies reviewed in this study provide special opportunities for rapid advancement to students with high levels of prior education or English proficiency, Yakima's approach shows how students with very low levels of education and proficiency may be better served.

The Yakima Program. All ESL curricula and classroom instruction involves striking a balance between the interests and skills of students and what ESL professionals believe they should learn. As the Florida competencies characterized above indicate, most programs strike this balance by developing curricular content that anticipates the learning needs of students, and they rely on teachers to adapt that content to individual needs. Yakima's approach is to depend more heavily on the students themselves to generate the curricular content at each level of instruction. All of its classes, regardless of their intensity, level, or location, take an instructional approach that the College calls "student-generated thematic curricula." This approach is drawn from the work of Paulo Freire and his literacy campaigns around the

world (and more recently, from Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein and their work with refugees and immigrants in the United States[16]).

The essence of this approach is concisely summarized by Pamela Ferguson, the CAAL researcher (and a Yakima faculty member) who documented the Yakima program for this study. In her words:

> *"... students in each ESL class select themes or subjects (for example, finding medical care, the U.S. school system, or immigration issues) to study each quarter. (Theme selection is conducted in different ways by instructors, depending on learner proficiency.) Instructors develop curriculum (within the guidelines of the state competencies) that incorporates appropriate level skills practice. Activities for language development within each theme can be vocabulary development, interviews, dialogues, picture prompts, or life experiences for class- and individually-generated writing and reading exercises. A theme may continue for several class sessions, until the class and instructor decide to move on to the next one.*

> "*The concept of 'teachable moments' is the backbone of this approach: first, there is recognition by the instructor of the class need or desire, then the instructor develops curriculum or lesson plans to meet those needs. The instructor also adapts his/her plans to meet the class' evolution or emerging needs. Thus, the program is deliberately flexible, so that student-centered expectations and outcomes are addressed by the curriculum. Promotion through the system depends to some extent on the mastery of the state's competencies as assessed by instructor-developed performance tasks and CASAS scores, and to a considerable degree, on the ad hoc judgment of instructors.*

> *"The use of this instructional approach at Yakima is based on adult learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of goal-oriented, relevant instruction. Instructors...state that the students' enthusiasm when they recognize their own suggestions in use in the classroom is very affirming for both the students and the instructors. Instructors say that students develop responsibility for their own learning and that neither students nor instructors are bored by the material or classroom experience. Additionally, faculty strongly state that the student-generated thematic curriculum is, in their experience, the most effective approach with low-literacy adult students.[17]"*

Freirian approaches to instruction, such as Yakima's, may have a profound effect on learners' lives. But they also require a great deal from the teacher, since each term must begin with some sessions devoted to helping learners articulate their needs, identifying themes, and then developing related curriculum units. Yakima has found that on-going instructor training and peer mentoring are necessary to help instructors, especially part-time instructors, develop skills in using this approach. Nevertheless, Yakima provides this kind of instruction to all of it students, with only a small staff – and the estimated cost of instruction per student is no higher than at the other colleges participating in this study.

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[16] In particular, see: Auerbach, E. *Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL literacy.* McHenry, Illinois: Delta Systems, Inc., 1992. Wallerstein, N. *Language and culture in conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL classroom.* Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1983. Wallerstein, N. and Auerbach, E. *Problem-posing at work: English for action.* Edmonton, Alberta: Grass Roots Press, 2004.

[17] See Yakima Valley Community College Profile, forthcoming from CAAL.

Most importantly, Yakima's approach appears to be effective. As noted above, the College's learning gains and retention rates, as measured by NRS reports, exceed those for the state of Washington as a whole. The College's ESL faculty attributes much of their success to the nature of the curriculum.

Lessons for Other Programs

Other colleges should examine Yakima's student-generated curriculum because it demonstrates the value of adopting special curricular frameworks to meet the needs of different types of students. In addition, the Yakima example demonstrates the value of adopting multiple approaches to increasing learning gains. All of Yakima's students are served by a student-generated thematic curriculum. Not only do these students, taken as a whole, achieve learning gains that exceed those reported for the state of Washington, but also the 20 percent of the College's students enrolled in Yakima's high intensity/managed enrollment program achieve even larger learning gains.

Yakima's approach to instruction should also be of interest to other programs because that approach is not frequently used by professionally-staffed ESL programs in the United States. More importantly, the Yakima approach may offer an answer to questions about how best to provide ESL instruction to a high priority population: students with both low levels of English proficiency and low levels of prior education. By adopting an unconventional approach designed to engage the interest of these students, Yakima is able to help them achieve learning gains that are at least as great or greater than those achieved by students in other programs in the state. Other programs may wish to consider this alternative instructional approach instead of the conventional approach in which the curriculum is strongly defined by the faculty.

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5. EXTENDING LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Nature and extent. Most discussions of improving adult education focus primarily on improving practices in classroom instruction in some way. But there are limits on how much time adult learners with multiple responsibilities can devote to classroom instruction. And there are limits on how much classroom instruction can achieve. At most, *it can create the foundation for students to become independent learners by applying the skills they learn to real life situations*. This is particularly true in ESL instruction. To improve their language skills, students must practice them for more hours and in more situations than even the highest intensity programs allow. For English language learners, this can be difficult. For a significant number of them, English is not the major language spoken at home or in their immediate community or place of employment.

To provide ESL students with more learning time, and help them overcome barriers to applying their English skills in authentic situations, most of the colleges participating in this

study support learning outside the classroom in some way. There is every reason to believe that this practice increases learning gains – particularly for the more highly educated and motivated students who may be more likely to take advantage of the special learning opportunities. Moreover, the ESL professionals at these colleges believe the approaches they use to expand the learning environment are effective – if only because they think their most successful students make the greatest use of them.

Regrettably, this study identified very little data to support this belief. It is inherently difficult to establish the effectiveness of learning outside the classroom because the strategy is almost always combined with other program enhancements. In addition, learning outside the classroom takes many different forms. Due to resource constraints, it was beyond the scope of this study to determine precisely the effectiveness of the different ways of applying the strategies. But it is possible to describe some of the ways colleges support outside learning, as a way to help map this territory for practitioners and researchers.

Approaches. All of the approaches colleges take to extending learning outside the classroom aim to increase learning time, but only some of them aim to create opportunities for practice in authentic situations. Probably the method of increasing learning time that has received the most attention in recent years is use of instructional technology. In most forms, technology applications move learning from the classroom to the computer lab or learning center. This allows students to schedule instruction at times convenient to them, to proceed at their own pace, to study the skills they consider most important, and to select from a variety of instructional approaches. But despite the attention instructional technology has received, there have been few thorough evaluations of its effectiveness in adult education, and this study lacked the resources to evaluate any of the technology applications it examined.

All of the colleges participating in this study make extensive use of instructional technology, but their use in most cases is similar to technology applications elsewhere, in both ESL and other types of programs. These colleges have, however, adopted other approaches to extending learning outside the classroom that rely more on teacher-generated activities. Because many of these teacher-generated activities are more unique to the colleges than their use of technology, several examples are discussed below.

Teacher-generated activities. Two distinctive approaches that extend learning time and increase authentic interactions were reviewed by this study: the TIES project at Seminole, and the Conversation Cafes sponsored by a number of the colleges. In addition, the study identified a number of approaches used to extend learning time: extensive homework assignments and supplemental tutoring.

> **TIES.** Seminole's TIES Program (Total Immersion of English Skills) was created to help learners overcome their fear of speaking English in the community. In Seminole's service area (as well as much of Florida), it is possible for students to speak only their first languages much of the time outside of class. To address this problem, the ESL faculty and staff at Seminole obtained grant funding to develop a

series of lesson plans that incorporate community activities into their high intensity program, and they have made these available to all instructors through the program website and resource center.

The community activities in which TIES students engage include getting a library card and checking out a book, requesting information about volunteering at their children's school, finding and using coupons at a supermarket, talking with Americans about the American Dream, and talking with a college counselor to plan for continuing education. Before students undertake a community activity, they discuss and practice it in class. They receive a document they can show to community members they encounter, explaining that they are involved in a class assignment and encouraging community members to cooperate. Students keep a language log in a small pocket notebook – where they record what has occurred and what they are learning, especially new vocabulary. They also present oral and written reports on their experiences in class.

TIES encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and provides a structure for extending learning outside of class. The majority of TIES activities are targeted to the two lowest levels of Seminole's six-level non-credit program, where students are just beginning to master English for life skills. But Seminole's staff members are so pleased with the results that they are seeking financial support to increase community linkage and service for all students, and to require all teachers to integrate these types of activities into their ESL classes.

Conversation Cafes. Lake County provides supplemental conversation activities for students at Intermediate and Advanced levels through several types of structured after-class discussion groups. These include sessions called "Conversation Cafes" that are led by ESL instructors or other college staff, who meet and talk with ESL students several times a year, and more informal "Conversation Circles," taught by Writing Center tutors, who meet with students on a weekly basis during fall and spring semesters. Leaders are provided with sets of questions to get the conversation going on a number of topics. Students not only choose the topics to discuss, but also whether to participate or pass as their turn comes. After learning about Lake County's program, Seminole has also added an after-class conversation club. Bunker Hill has also instituted a number of conversation groups to increase learning time for students who may attend class for only three to six hours a week. These conversation groups give students, who may return to their homes and communities with little opportunity to use English, a chance to practice their English in social situations. Although only a few hundred students participate in Conversation Cafes or Circles, ESL professionals place a high value on these activities, because they provide a structured, non-threatening way for students to practice their English.

Homework. Extensive homework may not appear to be an educational innovation, but it is quite rare in adult education programs. While many of the programs at the

colleges examined require some homework, the high intensity classes for advanced learners are usually most demanding.

Lake County expects students in the high intensity ESL classes to do two to three hours of homework each day. This is about the same amount of homework time as class time. These requirements are not strictly enforced, however, and faculty are pleased if learners actually do English homework for that many hours per week. Homework assignments include personal journal writing, formal essay and summary writing, and more structured writing assignments focused on grammar points.

Bunker Hill's "Transitions to College Program" consists of three courses, each of which meets three hours per week. Students are required to complete five hours of homework for each class. This means that they are expected to spend more time in structured independent study than in the classroom.

In addition, both Lake County and Bunker Hill students are assigned other activities outside the classroom. Many of these include learning about the college and postsecondary instruction through such means as observing academic classes and visiting the library.

Supplemental tutoring. Individual tutoring is an old tradition in all aspects of adult education. At community colleges, however, virtually all instruction is provided by professional teachers to classes that usually range from 20-35 students. At least some of the colleges participating in this study make use of individual tutoring as a supplement to classroom instruction, and they consider it extremely valuable. For example, Bunker Hill has a college Tutoring Center that supports many of its programs. The College provides tutors to non-credit ESL students, especially for learners who have been in classes at the lowest level for a long time. Most tutors are volunteers from the education programs of local colleges who have been trained by the Tutoring Center to work with ESL learners and faculty.

Seminole has formed partnerships with several CBOs, including Learning Partners, to provide tutors for Beginning level students. Literacy Volunteers of Lake County provides about 150 trained volunteers to serve as classroom tutors, small group tutors, or conversation partners for individual students.

City College of San Francisco participates in a national service-learning program of intergenerational tutoring, Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders). In this program, the tutors are students who were previously ESL students in high school or at CCSF or who are enrolled in TESOL programs at San Francisco State University. They provide one-to-one instruction during general ESL or citizenship classes for immigrant elders. These student tutors receive credit for service learning. The program serves more than 1500 elders a semester and gives the opportunity to tutor to more than 150 CCSF students.

Technology for instruction. <u>All of the colleges participating in this study make extensive use of technology for non-credit ESL instruction</u>. All of them make available a wide range of instructional software in learning labs. In addition, some colleges or courses require students to devote a certain amount of independent study to lab time. In others cases, the use of technology is integrated into class time, or classes meet in a learning lab on a regular basis.

Bunker Hill is a good example of how many of the colleges participating in this study use technology. The College has created a Center for Self Directed Learning (CSDL). This Center can be used for independent study by students in both of its non-credit ESL programs (ESOL and BSL) as well as by credit ESL students. Faculty in the non-credit programs often assign writing to be done in the Center's computer lab or activities in its language lab. Further, students who are on waiting lists to enroll in Bunker Hill's Transitions to College Program are advised to hone their reading, writing, and math skills to the levels required by that program through a special computer program (Passkey) available in the computer lab.

As a variant on this model, Seminole's high intensity program includes modules that meet in the learning lab at least once a week. Students in "smart classrooms" of other study colleges have email accounts in their intranets that they use to practice reading and writing skills by communicating with other students or the teacher and to complete class assignments.

This study observed highly specialized computer learning programs or other specialized technology use in three of the participating colleges. Among these were the following:

> **Bunker Hill's IBM Reading Recognition system**. In recent years, the IBM Foundation has developed a specialized computer software system to assist ESL students. They have made that program available to 100 sites, along with training in its use. One of these sites is the Chelsea campus of Bunker Hill. The Reading Recognition system uses some of IBM's most advanced voice recognition technology. Its two functional components – "Reading Recognition" and "Write Outloud" – support English listening, reading, and speaking skills.
>
> In Reading Recognition, when students pass a mouse over written material they hear it read aloud by a voice synthesizer. This speech recognition software also makes it possible for students to read passages aloud, receive feedback from the computer on pronunciation or grammar, and make repeated attempts to correct their errors. Students using "Write Outloud" type passages into the computer. The voice synthesizer reads what they have typed; tells students if they have made spelling, grammatical, formatting, or other errors; and provides opportunities to correct the errors. After learning how to use these programs, students can work on their own, receiving more individualized attention and feedback from the computer than would be possible in a regular ESL class.
>
> Although Bunker Hill has not formally evaluated the IBM system, faculty members believe it is a valuable instructional supplement because students receive *immediate* feedback about both their problems and improvements in their skills. They also

become more comfortable taking risks. In addition, faculty members believe the programs are improving student attendance and retention.

Seminole. Seminole has developed a computer-based instructional program called "Clearly Said, Clearly Read." It helps students in Beginning classes see the correlations between spelling and pronunciation and to not be confused when these do not match. For example, the program helps students understand different pronunciations of past tense "-ed" which can be pronounced as "t" (in *looked* or *worked*), "d" (in *lived* or *cleaned*), or "id" (in *invited* or *wanted*). Because many languages do not have consonants in a final position in a word, and because final consonants can carry a great deal of grammatical meaning in English, it is important to learn to pronounce these sounds and also to recognize that the spelling does not always match the pronunciation. Teachers report that the students with the greatest opportunity to use Clearly Said, Clearly Read have improved their pronunciation, their phonemic awareness, and their understanding of sound-symbol correspondences. They also say that these students are reading better than those who have had less opportunity to use the program. The program has 25 lesson plans, all designed to be used in the language lab or to be downloaded from a website for use in regular classes.

Lake County. Lake County offers two sections of its High Intermediate program via interactive television during the fall and spring semesters; thus, teachers in different places are able to team-teach the sections. In addition, Lake County emphasizes computer literacy in its intensive ESL for Academic Purposes (EAP) program by including computer application modules in the curriculum and requiring all students to give Power Point presentations – evaluated by their peers – as a final program assignment.

> **Lessons for other Programs**
>
> The colleges participating in this study have created a large menu of options for students to extend their learning outside the classroom. All of these are replicable in almost any adult ESL program. This includes the IBM Reading Recognition System discussed above. This System will soon be available to any interested programs on the Internet. The Seminole system is available from the College.
>
> Although this study could not assess the effectiveness of particular approaches to learning outside the classroom, the colleges that have adopted these approaches believe that all of them increase learning gains. Given the generally positive relationship between increased learning time and increased language learning, this assessment is probably correct. Moreover, virtually all of the approaches described can be adopted at a fairly modest cost.
>
> Of course, some costs will be incurred in the design and implementation of any program improvements, and also in the corresponding staff management time added. But most of the approaches reviewed above can be readily adapted to new settings with minimal development costs. Compared to implementing high intensity programs, for example, these approaches to increasing learning gains are inexpensive.
>
> The most important lesson to draw from these examples is that all of the colleges believe ESL programs should actively support learning outside the classroom by *some* means. There is good reason to believe they are correct. Although the means adopted by the colleges in this study differ, the collective experience should encourage other ESL providers to make such opportunities central elements in their own program designs. At present, the approaches described above are considered to be only instructional supplements or options. If the case for program components of this kind is as sound as it appears to be, colleges and other providers should individually and collectively take steps to move them to the mainstream of ESL instruction.

6. THE LIMITS OF ASSESSMENT

Instruments. A major difficulty with efforts to improve the learning gains of adult ESL students is the lack of adequate assessment instruments (tests) to determine what their levels of English proficiency are and how much they have improved. Representatives of the colleges in this study identified assessment problems as one of the major issues that must be addressed, both in implementing strategies to improve learning gains and in overall program management.

At the heart of this problem is the fact that there are few assessment instruments available that are designed for use with adult ESL students, and none of these instruments meet all the

needs of non-credit programs very well. None provides a comprehensive view of the learning gains for students in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is possible to use a combination of tests, but programs are limited by both time and financial resources. Too often, a program is mandated to use a test of reading or listening, when the focus of the program is on the development of oral skills. At other times, a program is required to use a test before the recommended hours of instruction have been met. With still others, limited test forms are available, resulting in some students receiving the same form of a test more than once.

The most commonly used assessment measures are listed below. They attempt to determine overall levels of English proficiency by measuring only some core ESL skills:

- BEST (Basic English Skills Test) Literacy – developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics – measures reading and writing skills. It is appropriate for use with learners in the Student Performance Levels 1 to 6. It can be administered individually or to groups of students.

- BEST Plus – also developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics – is a face-to-face, individualized oral interview. It must be administered by trained test administrators, who can use either the computer-adaptive or paper version.

- The CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) directly measures only the "receptive" skills of reading or listening comprehension of spoken English.

- The LOEP (Level of English Proficiency) – developed by the Educational Testing Service – is a computer adaptive test that measures reading comprehension, grammar, and sentence meaning using English language texts of various degrees of complexity and multiple choice or "fill in the blanks" questions.

- The CELSA (Combined English Language Skills Assessment) – produced by the Association of Classroom Teacher Testers – is a reading and grammar test that relies on written text. Its producers state that it is not specifically adapted to measuring life skills English, although it is often used for this purpose.

- The REEP[18] writing rubric directly assesses only writing skills. REEP relies on a system of assigning scores to writing samples. Standardizing the scores assigned by different readers requires special training. REEP can be costly to administer because of the staff time required to score writing samples and ensure inter-rater reliability.

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[18] The acronym derives from the name of the test's originator, formerly the Arlington Refugee Education and Employment Program.

Issues. The BEST Plus is the only test that measures oral proficiency, and it requires individual administration by trained test administrators. The expense of training administrators and the time required to give the test have made its use difficult or even prohibitive for some programs. The REEP writing rubric is the only test of the other productive skill, writing, and like BEST Plus, it requires training and time to evaluate the writing samples, both of which can be costly.

The other assessments are relatively inexpensive and easy to administer. The main difficulty they pose is that non-credit ESL programs teach all four of the core ESL skills, and none of these tests directly measures all of them. This is a problem because assessments are used to determine the level of ESL instruction in which students should be placed, how much they have improved their English abilities, and when they should be promoted to higher levels.

Thus, because of the limits in these assessments, students may face difficulties learning because they are placed in levels that are either too high or too low for their abilities, and they may be incorrectly held back or advanced. In addition, scores using these tests are sometimes used for certain "high stakes" purposes – for example, to determine whether or not students can advance from non-credit ESL to credit ESL or enter academic and vocational programs.

These ESL tests are also used for the "high stakes" testing that results in NRS reports on ESL student proficiencies and rates of learning gain. In response to federal Department of Education requirements, most states mandate that programs must use one or more of these tests for reporting the English proficiency and learning gains of their students (for example, in California, only CASAS may be used), and these program reports are aggregated into the state reports of which the NRS is comprised. Based on the test results, states receive additional federal funding if their NRS scores reach certain "targets," and individual programs often receive financial rewards from states if they excel by NRS standards.

Frequency of testing is also an issue when ESL tests are used for high stakes purposes. For example, CASAS recommends that its test should be administered only every 100 hours. Why? Because this is the amount of time generally required to advance a learning level. But 100 hours may be more time than students in many low intensity programs attend each year. Nevertheless, states that rely on CASAS to meet NRS requirements must test students at least every year. In these instances, students are being tested more frequently than they should be considering that they are not likely to demonstrate learning gains in so few hours.

No evidence from the programs examined by this study indicates that ESL professionals respond to these assessment mandates by "teaching to the test." However, some of the programs studied have changed the number of ESL instructional levels they provide, and correspondingly the content of each level, to the six levels defined by NRS reporting. There is no evidence to tell whether this method of structuring instruction is superior or not. It is troubling that these changes have apparently come about to "align" program structures with reporting requirements rather than from considerations of instructional benefit.

Of course, any testing system has limitations. Like most other standardized tests, ESL assessments are used to establish "cut points" between different levels of proficiency and instruction that are to an extent arbitrary – due to the fact that any type of learning occurs along a continuum. But many ESL professionals believe <u>the limits of adult ESL tests are serious enough that they may have a significant adverse effect on program innovation</u>. For example, the rationale of high intensity instruction is that it will accelerate learning gains. But how can programs be assured that their high intensity programs are effective in this way – or how can they be made more effective – if the tests used to assess learning gains do not measure many of the skills they teach?

Moreover, the commonly used ESL tests are often a poor fit with ESL curricula. For example, most ESL programs give primary emphasis to listening and speaking at the lowest levels while at the higher levels they place far more emphasis on reading and writing. Because no commonly available test captures all of these skills, none can adequately assess students in both oral and written skills across the full range of ESL levels. Some programs attempt to meet this challenge by using multiple tests. This is administratively difficult and costly. Further, some states mandate the use of only a few tests for NRS reporting purposes and/or student advancement, so programs cannot use the full complement of tests available for these purposes. To avoid the cost and time involved in "over-testing" through the use of multiple tests, many programs rely on the state mandated test whether or not they believe it is a good measure of the skills their curricula include at various levels.

Strategies. <u>The most common way that programs attempt to compensate for limitations in adult ESL tests is to use other measures to place or advance students</u>. To decide where to place students, when to advance them, and how to evaluate their progress within levels, they rely on teacher recommendations and tests created either by individual teachers or the college to supplement national tests. As noted above, Seminole relies on grades assigned by teachers *and* the state-mandated CASAS test for these purposes, and Yakima relies on performance-based evaluations of student success in completing "thematic" projects.

ESL test limitations do not, therefore, prevent the five colleges studied from making their best effort to accurately assess students. However, these and other adult ESL programs do not receive the support they need from these tests. To an extent, they evaluate, place, and promote students *despite* the tests they are required to use. And the need to improvise adequate assessment systems adds to the already large challenge of having to devise methods to increase learning gains. Moreover, the colleges studied believe that neither they nor their students receive adequate credit for what they achieve. This is particularly true of highly non-traditional programs such as Yakima's.

Investments to develop the needed tests. There is little that individual colleges can do to improve national assessment systems. But they do know the types of tests that would better meet their needs. They need assessment instruments that they can afford to administer, that measure each of the ESL core skills at each level of proficiency, and that can be adapted to differing curricular structures.

Only the federal government, a consortium of states, or large private funders can afford to develop assessment instruments of this kind. <u>An investment in ESL tests that are more accurate and affordable to administer should be a high priority for government and private funders concerned with improving adult ESL service</u>, because, at the operational level, the limits of existing instruments are a barrier to efforts to increase ESL learning gains.

7. <u>CONCLUSION</u>

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<u>Lessons for Programs</u>

The five colleges that participated in this study have developed an impressive array of strategies for increasing the learning gains of non-credit ESL students. There is either evidence or probable cause to believe that, in some form, most of these strategies are effective. Other providers should consider adopting some version of these strategies as core components of their programs. And, to the extent possible, they should consider adopting multiple strategies. The examples cited above show that most of the five colleges adopt all three of the strategies for increasing learning gains discussed in this section of the report, and they adopt other strategies as well. Each strategy appears to provide added value to their programs. All five colleges have high intensity/managed enrollment components. They also provide opportunities for learning outside the classroom. And they offer customized curricula of some kind. These strategies are discussed separately above to maximize understanding of them. But, in practice, they are combined in many different ways by the colleges to create program structures that enhance learning gains.

The major barrier to adopting any or all of these strategies is cost. None of the strategies are "cookie cutter" approaches to increasing learning gains, and all require more staff time than is ordinarily devoted to ESL instruction. This is easiest to see in the case of high intensity instruction: providing twice as many contact hours with each student requires at least twice the amount of staff time. Most of the expense of ESL programs consists of teacher salaries, so program costs escalate accordingly.

Because cost is a major barrier to all forms of improvement in ESL instruction, it will be addressed in detail near the end of Part III (see p. 77), following consideration of the other major form of program enhancement, strategies to increase transitions. It should be noted here, however, that these five programs obviously have found ways to meet the extra costs, at least in the short run, and there is no reason to doubt that other programs can as well. What is required is commitment to increase learning gains on the part of both faculty and administrators.

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Lessons for Policy

The problem of costs also raises issues for policymakers at the state and federal levels. They should recognize that high quality adult ESL instruction is inherently more expensive than other forms of adult education. This is because ESL instruction must address so many different types of learner needs – four core skills that are partly interrelated for instructional purposes and partly separable, as well as differing levels of literacy and other basic skills that immigrants bring to programs from their native countries. To address these multiple needs in more than a cursory fashion may require significantly more staff time than does, for example, ABE instruction where literacy levels are the primary concern. Moreover, effective ESL instruction requires an investment in improved instructional tools for ESL instruction, such as the development of more appropriate assessment instruments.

These issues are rarely addressed in public policy. ESL service is supported financially by appropriations for adult education that make no distinction between the proportion of ESL students in any particular state or program, as contrasted to ABE/ASE students requiring less expensive forms of instruction. And the need to invest in improved instructional tools is rarely recognized or discussed. The sole exception to this is the federal allocation for "English Language Civics" instruction, intended for use in citizenship classes useable for more general ESL instruction. But federal funding for this purpose is small – $70 million per year – and federal funding is a small proportion of total adult education funding in most states that have a large number of immigrants.

Clearly, learning gains among the vast majority of ESL students must be greatly increased – for their own benefit and for the benefit of the U.S. economy. This will require significantly greater per student appropriations for ESL instruction than are presently available, and policymakers must face this fact. They must also recognize that some public policies are counterproductive – such as those that prescribe assessment systems for program management and "high stakes testing" in certain circumstances where those systems may be of limited value. Otherwise, the national problem of a large and growing limited English population will not be solved.

In recent national debates about immigration, policymakers have bewailed the lack of English language skills of many immigrants. Yet evidence from the five programs examined indicates that both ESL professionals and immigrants are willing to do their part by devoting remarkably large amounts of time and ingenuity to increasing learning gains. Policymakers need to support them by providing the resources they need.

This section of the report has shown that there are strategies by which increased dollars will increase learning gains. By itself, this should establish the agenda for policymakers.

PART III: TRANSITIONS

1. POTENTIAL AND NEED

This part of the report discusses how the colleges examined by CAAL facilitate transitions by English language learners into a wide range of other education opportunities.

Colleges are distinctively well suited to facilitate movement of English language learners into further education – because they offer an extensive menu of education services that meet adult needs. All community colleges offer two-year Associate degrees. Credits from these programs can often be transferred to four-year institutions. Most colleges also offer occupational programs, usually focused on local workforce needs. Finally, most colleges that offer non-credit ESL also offer credit ESL, as well as ABE and preparation for the GED or other high school equivalency tests.

Limited English proficiency is often the major barrier that prevents immigrants in the communities served by these colleges from taking advantage of the further educational opportunities available to them. As a result, colleges that offer non-credit ESL combine within a single institution the resources to construct pathways of educational opportunity for English language learners. And through their institutional policies they have the means to make the pathways as seamless as possible. For these institutions, non-credit ESL can be seen as a "first enrollment" or "recruiting ground" for other forms of postsecondary education.

Clearly, a great many non-credit ESL students would benefit from further education. Although few colleges gather data on the prior educational attainments of their ESL students, the data available and faculty observations indicate that a majority of these students have not graduated from high school in their home countries, and many have only a few years of schooling. The economic and social benefits to these students of obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent, and of postsecondary education, are enormous. Most jobs that pay a living wage in the U.S. require at least a high school diploma, and most new jobs being created need at least some postsecondary education.

Of course, it should be recognized that non-credit ESL programs also include a significant number of highly educated immigrants. Their needs and aspirations for further education often differ from those of students who must overcome both language and educational barriers to qualify for high opportunity employment. Some students with advanced degrees, for instance, enroll in non-credit ESL because it is a cost-free way to learn enough English to enter programs that re-certify them in their fields, or to begin studies in allied areas of employment, either at community colleges or elsewhere.

Providing immigrants at all educational levels the opportunity for further education is not only helpful to them, it also benefits the communities in which they live by helping to create a higher skilled workforce to meet local employment needs. Improving their life skills English will help immigrants improve their employment prospects, but enabling them to take

the next step of obtaining further educational credentials is just as important for them as for other adults in today's labor market.

Most colleges that offer non-credit ESL acknowledge the potential of English language learners to make transitions to other educational programs, and they consider it important to help them make these transitions. In published mission statements and informal remarks, they express views such as: "We consider all of our ESL students to be potential college students." And they have devised a remarkably diverse set of innovative strategies to facilitate transitions. To appreciate the nature and significance of these strategies, however, the traditional model most colleges use to facilitate transitions must be understood, as well as the problems this poses.

2. THE TRADITIONAL MODEL

Pathways. As noted in Part I, most colleges believe that instruction in life skills English – the primary focus of non-credit ESL programs – is not by itself sufficient to prepare students with limited English proficiency for success in postsecondary academic or occupational programs. That is, they believe that most students cannot directly make successful transitions from non-credit ESL to these postsecondary programs. This is because most postsecondary programs require a different set of core ESL proficiencies than most life skills programs teach. For example, they require the ability to read and summarize more complex academic texts, to research and write reports at the college level, and to comprehend spoken English at a faster rate. They also require a command of the vocabulary and grammar colleges expect in both oral and written work.

Credit ESL is the primary mechanism by which most colleges help non-credit students make transitions from non-credit ESL to postsecondary academic or occupational studies. Most colleges in areas where there is a significant immigrant population offer credit ESL programs. Unlike non-credit ESL, these programs are not cost-free. Students must pay tuition to enroll in them – usually the same amount they would pay to enroll in any other credit courses at the college. While the primary goal of non-credit ESL is to teach life skills English, the primary goal of credit ESL is to help students with limited English proficiency obtain the English language skills needed for postsecondary study.

At most colleges, credit ESL programs consist of several levels of instruction. They are usually organized into separate courses that teach different skills – often reading, writing, grammar, and speaking/listening skills. Students are placed at different levels in these separate courses depending on their abilities in the particular skills. Once they have reached a high enough level in credit ESL, they have the English language skills required by credit-bearing academic courses, which count toward completion of academic degrees or certificates.

In short, to make transitions to postsecondary academic or occupational programs, most non-credit ESL students must follow a pathway that leads through credit ESL. Students with limited prior education often must pursue a somewhat different path. Sometimes they are advised to enroll in ABE/ASE classes taught in English either prior to or subsequent to their

transfer to credit ESL. In fact, in Florida and some other states students must hold a high school diploma or equivalent to enroll in any credit program, including credit ESL, and academic programs at many institutions have either a high school diploma or at least high school-level academic skills as a prerequisite for admission and/or graduation.

For non-credit students, therefore, most colleges offer two convergent educational pathways to enrollment in postsecondary education. The following figure illustrates how these two tracks are organized at Seminole.

TRANSITION FROM ESOL

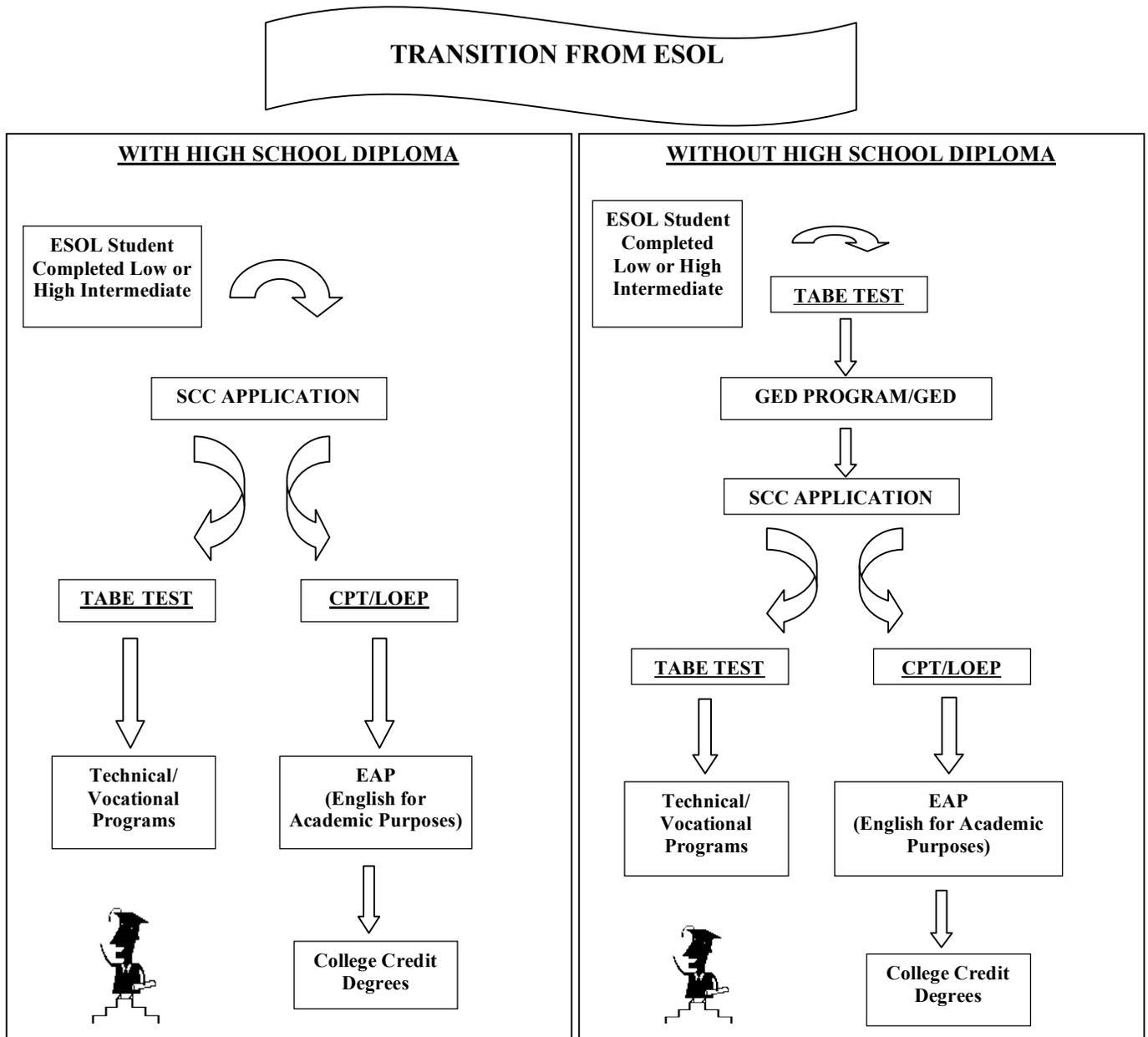| WITH HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	WITHOUT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
ESOL Student Completed Low or High Intermediate	ESOL Student Completed Low or High Intermediate → TABE TEST
SCC APPLICATION	GED PROGRAM/GED
	SCC APPLICATION
TABE TEST · CPT/LOEP	TABE TEST · CPT/LOEP
Technical/Vocational Programs · EAP (English for Academic Purposes)	Technical/Vocational Programs · EAP (English for Academic Purposes)
College Credit Degrees	College Credit Degrees

Figure courtesy of Sandy Ayres, Seminole Community College

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In practice, these pathways are rarely so well defined, and students can and do take many detours. Using the pathways as models, however, it is important to realize that each contains gateways through which students must pass, and the various steps along the pathways do not necessarily prepare them well for the next step.

At most colleges, completion of a certain level of non-credit ESL is not by itself sufficient to make the transition into credit ESL. Students must take various language tests and, in some cases, academic tests to make this transition. Depending on their performance on these tests (and on faculty recommendations), they may or may not enter credit ESL courses, and they may be placed at different levels within the credit sequence. If their scores on gateway tests are not high enough, they must continue to improve their skills by further study in non-credit ESL and/or ABE/ASE.

Likewise, at most colleges, completion of a certain level of credit ESL is not by itself sufficient to enter credit academic or occupational programs. Students must at least pass the standard college placement exam, and they must often pass tests that demonstrate their English proficiency as well. Depending on their performance, they may be placed in developmental education classes or in entry-level academic classes.

CCSF is unusual in that it contains no formal gateways of any kind for transfer to credit studies, and at some other colleges these gateways are not mandatory. However, even where there are no formal gateways, there are usually informal ones. At CCSF, students are generally discouraged from enrolling in credit ESL or other credit courses unless they have reached what the college considers to be a sufficiently high level of English language proficiency, and gateway tests are used to determine the level of credit studies in which they are placed. If students are placed at fairly low levels of credit ESL, it will usually take them longer to complete the program. Similarly, if they score low on gateways tests for academic or vocational studies, they may be advised to enter ABE/ASE or developmental education courses, or to continue in non-credit ESL, until they gain the skills required to increase their test scores.

Limitations. The traditional model for ESL transitions is logical, at least in its general outlines. It is also effective for some students. But it has significant limitations, and, most importantly, it is both time-consuming and expensive.

Most non-credit ESL students begin their English language instruction at the lowest levels of proficiency. Although no single level of non-credit ESL equates with the proficiency required for credit ESL, information from most of the colleges examined in this study indicates that they believe non-credit students must usually complete the Intermediate or Low Advanced levels. CCSF reports that 83 percent of its credit ESL students who were previously enrolled in non-credit ESL had completed these levels, and Bunker Hill has established Intermediate level scores on a gateway test as the requirement for entering credit ESL. For students at the Beginning level or below, it may take many years to reach the Intermediate or Advanced levels, and as Part II indicates, most never do.

The traditional model of transitions makes an already long educational pathway for most non-credit students even longer. Non-credit students, who have often spent years gaining the skills required to transfer to credit ESL, often face several more years of study in that program before they can enter academic or vocational programs. And those who must detour through ABE/ASE must devote even more time to preparation for college study. Adults with many extra-collegiate responsibilities may find these pathways too long to pursue.

The traditional model may also be too expensive for many ESL students. Most non-credit ESL students have very low incomes. The cost of multiple credit ESL courses can be several thousand dollars. Pell Grants and other forms of financial aid may defer the cost for students who take a heavy enough course load, but this is not always possible for adult students. As a result, in the traditional model, cost can be a major barrier to transitions. In addition, students may be uncertain what non-credit classes they must complete to pass through the gateways of the traditional model. This uncertainty in itself may lead many to believe the route to credit studies is too long to pursue.

Because non-credit ESL is not designed to prepare students for transitions, even students who reach the Intermediate level or above may be poorly prepared for credit studies. If they pass formal or informal gateway tests, they may place at the lower levels of credit ESL, thereby prolonging the expensive process of reaching credit academic or vocational programs. Moreover, students with low levels of prior education may be uncertain whether, or when, they should enroll in ABE, high school equivalency, or developmental education classes to increase their ability in skills not usually taught in ESL programs, such as mathematics.

3. <u>THE CHALLENGE TO DO MORE</u>

Despite these difficulties, the traditional model for transitions is effective for some students. At least some students with fairly low levels of English language proficiency persist in non-credit programs long enough to make the transition to credit ESL. In fact, longitudinal research by CCSF indicates that students who complete multiple levels of non-credit ESL are more likely to make transitions than students who enter non-credit programs at a fairly high level of English proficiency. For example, the research found that, of those students who transitioned to credit ESL from the Low Advanced level, 46 percent had completed five levels of the College's ten-level non-credit program, compared to 17 percent who had taken only one level. Although only a few hundred of the students who made transitions from the Low Advanced level had completed five levels, these findings demonstrate that the traditional model for transitions can work for students who have the motivation and time to persist in non-credit ESL.

<u>None of the colleges included in this study believes that the transition mechanisms they have in place are adequate</u>, however. Regrettably, none routinely gather data that tracks the subsequent educational experiences of non-credit ESL students. But the special longitudinal analysis conducted by CCSF for CAAL's study indicates that, of all the students enrolled in non-credit ESL over a seven-year period, 12 percent made a transition to some type of credit enrollment (including credit ESL) and 9 percent made a transition to enrollment in at least

one academic credit course.[19] Longitudinal data from Bunker Hill indicates that, of all students enrolled in its non-credit BSL program over a seven-year period, at most 7 percent made a transition to an academic credit course. Data from these and other colleges indicate that only 10 to 18 percent of non-credit students ever enroll in credit ESL classes.

From the perspective of increasing the educational opportunities of immigrants, these are disappointing statistics. Moreover, they appear to be disappointing from the perspective of the students. College surveys of student goals routinely show that half or more of non-credit ESL students aspire to further education of some kind.

The statistics are particularly disappointing because they reflect a loss of human capital. Longitudinal data from CCSF, and anecdotal information from other colleges, indicate that non-credit ESL students who succeed in making transitions to credit programs do as well or better than native speakers in terms of retention, grade point average, and graduation rates. And data from Yakima indicate that non-credit ESL students who make the transition to ABE/ASE programs outperform their American-born peers in most subjects. In short, based on the data available, there is good reason to believe that non-credit students can both succeed *and* excel in further education if they pursue pathways to transition.

All of the colleges studied believe that transition rates can and must be increased. Yakima has recently launched a Presidential initiative to find better ways to increase transitions, and Lake County has just completed a study of the issue. Many of the transition strategies of Seminole and Bunker Hill are the legacy of past initiatives of this sort, and CCSF has recently launched an effort to increase transition rates.

Most importantly, all of these colleges have developed innovative strategies to increase transitions from non-credit ESL to various forms of further education. Some of these strategies augment the traditional model for transitions, while others open new pathways. Examples of six of these strategies are examined in turn below. They are:

- Increasing learning gains
- Curricular integration with college preparation
- Co-enrollment
- Vocational ESL programs
- The Spanish GED
- Enhanced guidance and counseling

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[19] The CCSF data on transitions to academic credit courses may be deceptively high, because a significant percentage of former non-credit students enroll only in general education classes. A large percentage of *these* enroll in Physical Education (though some do enroll in academic courses in computer and information science, health sciences, biological sciences, or social sciences). This seemingly illogical pattern of enrollment may be due, in part, to the fact that some students at CCSF enroll in academic credit courses while still enrolled in credit ESL. These students may wish to get a head start on their academic careers by fulfilling general education requirements that are not very demanding and that do not require a high level of English proficiency. Also, in some cases, enrollment in credit ESL may not provide them with enough credit hours to qualify for Pell Grants, and taking general education courses, such as Physical Education, may help them to accumulate the credits required for this type of financial aid.

4. INCREASING LEARNING GAINS

Because the time it takes for non-credit ESL students to obtain the English proficiency levels needed to make transitions can be a major barrier for many students, any of the <u>strategies to increase their learning gains and their rates of learning (discussed in Part II) should also help increase transition rates</u>. Insofar as these strategies are successful, they should shorten the pathways to further education by helping students gain the English language skills they need to make transitions in less time. For example, they may help students with very low levels of English language ability more quickly reach the Intermediate level of proficiency. This appears to be a point of departure for enrollment in credit ESL.

In fact, increasing transitions from non-credit ESL to academic and vocational studies is the expressed purpose of some of these strategies. This is especially true of high intensity programs with managed enrollment – such as Lake County's Intensive English for Academic Purposes, Bunker Hill's Transitional Pathways to College program, and Seminole's high-intensity program. In addition, Yakima's high intensity transitions program is designed to create a seamless transition from low levels of English proficiency to ABE/ASE.

<u>All of these programs report high transition rates relative to various benchmarks</u>. The Lake County and Bunker Hill high intensity programs report that 60 percent or more of their students enrolled in credit ESL, ABE/ASE, or academic studies either in the year they took the course or in subsequent years. Depending on the point of comparison, this is two to three times the percent of students from comparable levels who make transitions at these colleges. Likewise, Yakima's intensive program has transition rates to ABE/ASE that are far higher than for comparable students receiving less intensive instruction.

However, the effectiveness of high intensity programs in facilitating transitions is limited. Each year, only a few hundred students enroll in the high intensity programs at Lake County, Bunker Hill, and Yakima. And the students served at Lake County and Bunker Hill are already at fairly high levels of proficiency – at the Intermediate to Low Advanced levels at Lake County, and GED recipients at Bunker Hill.

The effectiveness of Seminole's high intensity program is hard to gauge because the College is located in an area that has several other high quality educational institutions (such as the University of Central Florida) and students may make transitions to them from its non-credit program. Seminole faculty believe that many of their students do move on to these institutions, but data is not available to indicate how many. In an important sense, though, Seminole's intensive program may be preparing students for transitions outside the College.

Strategies to increase the learning gains of non-credit students should be one of the most effective ways to increase transitions – and there is evidence from the colleges examined that high intensity instruction, at least, is very effective. However, due to the nature of the high intensity programs at these colleges, it is hard to determine how effective this strategy can be. This should be a challenge to these and other colleges to build upon the success that strategies to increase learning gains have achieved thus far – both as a way to increase students' life skills English and a way to increase transitions. Specifically, the challenge is

to create high intensity pathways for transition of students at all levels of proficiency, and to monitor the pathways' effectiveness.

5. CURRICULAR INTEGRATION WITH COLLEGE PREPARATION

The goals of integration. Most of the high intensity programs described in Part II include features to increase transitions that go beyond increased hours of instruction and managed enrollment. One feature is curricular integration between non-credit and credit programs, or between ESL and ABE/ASE. Simply stated, the goal of curricular integration is to design both non-credit and credit programs so that life skills students will be better prepared to pass transitional gateways when they reach them. In addition to teaching life skills, programs that integrate curricula try to teach non-credit students the skills they will need for the next step in educational advancement. "Seamless transitions" is the term often used to describe the goals of these programs.

Most programs that emphasize curricular integration also include components intended to prepare students for academic courses – by such means as modeling the type of work students will have to do in those courses, offering college preparation modules, and teaching study skills. For this reason, examples of integrated curricula and efforts to promote college readiness are discussed together.

Three of the five colleges examined – Lake County, Bunker Hill, and Yakima – have developed explicit strategies to integrate their non-credit ESL curricula with their other academic offerings. The examples below are drawn from them:

> **EAP at Lake County.** Lake County's Intensive Intermediate English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – described in Part II in terms of increased learning gains – demonstrates curriculum integration most clearly. This program was originally designed as part of a three-course curricular sequence that would allow ESL students to make a seamless transition to academic study. In the end, the two highest-level courses were assigned to credit ESL; the lowest level course became the two-semester program that is now EAP. Thus, both EAP and credit ESL were designed as a single curricular sequence from the outset, having both learning goals and entry/exit criteria that articulate the non-credit sequence to the credit ESL sequence, and the credit sequence to academic studies.
>
> Because it was designed as the first step on a pathway to academic studies, EAP's curricular content has many elements more typical of credit than of non-credit ESL. For example, among its learning goals are writing formal essays, citing information taken from various sources, proofreading for grammatical errors, scanning unfamiliar text, following and taking notes on a lecture, giving oral presentations, and summarizing newspaper articles. The goals also include learning about academic culture by various means – e.g., using a course catalogue, class schedule, and syllabus, and filling out various academic forms. The program also includes modules in elementary computer literacy.

The course also requires several hours of homework per week, assigns grades for course assignments, and enforces a strict attendance policy. Importantly, too, it emphasizes the language and cultural skills that students with limited education in their first language need for academic work. In addition, EAP contains academic class observation projects and lectures by college administrative staff about career options and about college resources and procedures.

In short, in both form and content, EAP is structured in the same way that a lower level credit ESL course would be, except that it is offered at the non-credit level and students do not have to pay tuition.

Important elements of the "connective tissue" between EAP and credit programs are a common assessment instrument and agreed entry/exit scores. By state mandate, the instrument used for these purposes is the CELSA. To obtain admission to EAP, students must score 30-49 on the CELSA. By agreement with the credit ESL division and the College, students may enroll in the lowest level of credit ESL if they score at least 50, and a score of 70 fulfills the College's language requirement for academic programs. Students take the CELSA twice, once at mid-term and again near the end of the semester. They can also transition to credit ESL if they present a portfolio of work demonstrating that they have achieved EAP's learning goals.

Use of a common assessment measure provides a shared understanding among the faculties of non-credit ESL, credit ESL, and academic courses about the levels of English proficiency students must obtain to pass through the educational gateways to enter each of these programs. And it creates clear expectations among students about what they must achieve to move on to further education.

The combination of high intensity instruction, an integrated curriculum, clear entry/exit criteria, and "pre-collegiate" elements in EAP results in impressive learning and retention gains, as indicated in Part II. It also results in impressive transition rates. An analysis of the cohort of students who entered EAP in the fall of 2002 indicates that by the fall of 2006, 39 percent had enrolled in credit ESL or developmental English courses, or both; 14.6 percent took one or more academic courses; and 20.7 percent enrolled in one or more vocational career courses. These rates of transition are far higher than for those students who enrolled in High Intermediate and Low Advanced courses that did not have the features of EAP in the fall of 2002. Only 11.2 percent of these students made the transition to credit ESL or developmental English, 5.6 percent made the transition to academic courses, and 12.8 percent enrolled in vocational career courses.

As a result, EAP appears to be an effective way for non-credit ESL students having diverse needs and further education goals to prepare for pursuing their goals.

Bunker Hill's BSL. Curricular integration for purposes of enhancing transitions is not limited to high intensity programs. Bunker Hill's Basic English-as-a-Second Language (BSL) program is a three-level non-credit sequence (with an additional course for pre-literate students). It serves about 900 students per year. Each level is divided into separate courses for reading/writing and speaking/listening, and each course at each level meets about 3 hours per week. BSL is, therefore, decidedly a low intensity program compared to the others examined in this study. *This is due, in part, to the fact that it is the only non-credit program examined that is supported primarily by student tuition.* Students pay half the tuition they would for a credit program at Bunker Hill – or approximately $187 per course – for BSL classes. This tuition is not sufficient to support a high intensity program.

Tuition, low intensity, and serving lower level learners are important differences between Bunker Hill's BSL program and Lake County's EAP offering. Moreover, BSL has none of the "pre-collegiate" elements found in EAP. What the two programs *share* is curricular articulation with credit ESL and defined entry/exit points.

Curricular articulation in BSL came about in much the same way as it did in EAP – through planning of a unified non-credit/credit sequence that would serve as a pathway to further education. Bunker Hill has had a strong credit ESL program since 1980. In fact, it is the only college examined in which the number of students enrolled in credit ESL is about the same as the number enrolled in non-credit programs – about 1,200 in credit, 900 in BSL, and 330 in the College's free ESOL program. Prior to 1995, when the ESOL program was introduced, Bunker Hill did not have an ESL program designed to serve low English proficiency students. These students enrolled either in credit ESL or in adult education programs elsewhere.

In 1993, the credit faculty determined that the lowest level of credit ESL was too advanced for many of the students enrolled in it, and that many credit students at that level had non-academic goals. To accommodate these students and improve opportunities for further education, they designed an articulated series of non-credit courses to prepare students with low English proficiency levels for credit ESL, as well as improve their English language abilities for workforce purposes. This sequence was designed "from the top down" as part of a comprehensive revision of the credit ESL program. Detailed learning goals were developed for all ESL programs. The learning goals for the highest level of BSL (BSL 3) were established to meet the goals of what had been the lowest level of credit ESL. In a similar fashion, the learning goals for BSL 2 were designed to prepare students for BSL 3, and those of BSL 1 were designed to prepare students for BSL 2.

Like Lake County, therefore, Bunker Hill has an articulated curricular sequence that links non-credit to credit ESL. Unlike Lake County, this sequence begins at a very low level of English proficiency. BSL 1 students are at the ESL Beginning level and BSL 3 students are at the Low Intermediate level, whereas EAP students are at the High Intermediate to Low Advanced levels. Hence, transitions to credit ESL at

Bunker Hill occur at a lower level of proficiency than at Lake County, and the articulated transition sequence encompasses virtually all levels of ESL.

Like Lake County, Bunker Hill also uses a single assessment measure to facilitate curricular integration. At Bunker Hill, this is the REEP writing rubric – which allows for scoring writing samples by content and vocabulary, organization and development, structure, mechanics, and voice. Because fees support BSL, there is no entry-level requirement for enrollment. However, students are placed in BSL levels depending on their scores on REEP, and on a brief oral interview and writing sample.

Students are placed in BSL 1 if they score less than 2.0 on the REEP. For entry into credit ESL, students must score at least 3 on the REEP. Credit ESL courses also have REEP score equivalents. As at Lake County, this use of a common assessment tool creates a degree of common understanding among faculty, administrators, and students about the levels of proficiency students must achieve at various stages in their transition to credit and beyond.

However, there are limits to the use of REEP for curricular linkage at Bunker Hill. Clearly its use as a placement instrument helps faculty understand the initial proficiency of students. But many faculty believe it is imprecise for these purposes, in part because it measures only writing skills. In addition, neither REEP nor any other standardized assessment is used for promotion between BSL levels. Instead, students are promoted on the basis of grades assigned by faculty. Finally, although a score of 3 on the REEP is required for transition to credit ESL, students must also score at a sufficiently high level on either the College's placement examination (Accuplacer) or the LOEP assessment to pass this gateway.

Because standardized assessments are not used subsequent to entry, it is difficult to assess BSL's success in achieving learning gains. However, more than 60 percent of BSL students receive passing grades in their courses. But, as a mechanism for facilitating transitions, BSL appears to be fairly effective. Longitudinal data indicate that of all BSL students enrolled from Spring 2001 through Fall 2005, 17.9 percent subsequently enrolled in credit ESL, and 7 percent subsequently enrolled in credit academic courses.

Although these percentages are not as high as those for Lake County's EAP program, BSL students are at lower levels of initial English ability than those at Lake County. Because the entry levels of English proficiency for credit ESL also differ between the two colleges (Low Intermediate at Bunker Hill, High Intermediate/Low Advanced at Lake County), it may be more accurate to say that Bunker Hill has created a transition sequence that begins at lower levels, but that it assigns students to credit ESL who would be served by non-credit EAP at Lake County.

Yakima's Transition Program. Yakima's Transition Program is described in Part II as a high intensity program – and, as such, its achievements in increasing learning

gains are substantial, compared to both statewide averages and other ESL programs at the College. But Yakima is also an example of curricular integration.

At most colleges reviewed, the relationships between ESL and ABE/ASE are somewhat distant. ESL students with limited educational backgrounds may, at some point, be referred to ABE/ASE, but otherwise these two aspects of the adult education system operate as separate programs. At Yakima, they are integrated into a single curricular track in the Transition Program, which serves about 300 students per year. The purpose of this program is twofold: to improve core ESL skills and to improve basic education levels in a service area where most ESL students have very few years of formal schooling. Thus, the goal of Transitions is to help very low-level learners improve their English abilities *and* obtain the skill levels of higher-level ABE students (roughly 9th grade equivalency) in reading, writing, and math, as well as to possibly enter GED or developmental education courses.

Yakima achieves this by the deceptively simple method of course sequencing. Beginning at Level 3 of its five-level Transition Program, students take a math course (arithmetic), taught by an ESL instructor, in addition to their ESL language classes. At levels 4 and 5, students take a more advanced math class taught in English by an ABE instructor, and an ABE computer basics course. At level 5, students also take an ABE corrective reading class and an ABE computer basics class taught in English. These are the same ABE classes taken by native speakers of English at roughly the Intermediate levels of ABE. ESL students who complete this transition sequence can then continue their education as ABE/ASE students.

Based on the data available, Yakima's Transition Program appears to be highly successful. Of the 207 students in the high intensity Program in 2004-2005, 38 percent completed two or more levels and were retained two or more semesters during the year (compared to 19 percent of students enrolled in a comparable low intensity program at the same campus), 25 percent of these students were enrolled in Levels 4 and 5 (where they took ABE classes as well as ESL classes), 26 percent made the transition to becoming solely ABE students during that year, and 20 percent enrolled in the College's developmental education classes that year. Thus, 56 percent of the high intensity Transition students moved on to either ABE or developmental education in a single year.

According to a special analysis conducted by the College for this study, during 2001-2006, 73 percent of all students enrolled in Yakima's high intensity Transition Program went on to become solely ABE students. Moreover, in the December 2005 quarter, the completion rates of Transition students enrolled in ABE classes were approximately equal to those of native-born students, and, in reading and writing, their completion rates exceeded those of native-born students.

Unfortunately, there is no data available on how many Transition Program students passed the GED examination. Yakima does not have a separate GED preparation program. The College believes that its upper level ABE classes provide the

instruction required to pass the GED, and that all of the Transition students who become solely ABE students are engaged in GED preparation. Students who make the transition to become solely ABE students enroll in classes that begin at the 9th grade levels of English and math. Most adult education programs consider English and math skills at this level sufficient to begin GED preparation courses.

In short, Yakima's high intensity program appears to be a highly effective way to bring about transitions to ABE and beyond for students with very low levels of English proficiency and prior education.

Bunker Hill's Transitions to College Program. This program exemplifies both curricular integration and the pre-collegiate features found in some other transitions programs. It is managed by Bunker Hill's Adult Basic Education program, which also manages the College's free ESOL program.

Bunker Hill's Transitions to College program is supported by an $85,000 grant from a special transitions initiative developed by the Massachusetts Department of Education (MDOE). Bunker Hill is one of eight colleges supported by this initiative. The aim of MDOE is to address state and national concerns that only a small percentage of people who obtain a GED enroll in postsecondary education, even though a majority say they wish to do so. State regulations require that all projects funded by this initiative must be "bridge" programs designed to increase college transitions by students who obtained a GED, but whose reading, writing, and math skills are not high enough for entry into college credit courses.

At Bunker Hill, skill levels (and hence eligibility) for the Transitions program are determined by scores on the TABE test and the Accuplacer college placement exam.[20] Like the other MDOE transitions programs, Bunker Hill's seeks to increase transitions by a combination of academic instruction and special college readiness preparation. No tuition or fees are charged.

Strictly speaking, the Transitions to College program is not an ESL program, because any former GED students who require transition assistance are eligible for enrollment whatever their native language may be. At Bunker Hill, however, more than 90 percent of the students enrolled in the program are not native speakers of English, and many have been previously enrolled in ESL programs. As a result, the program serves English language learners with fairly high levels of educational attainment and English language skills. In this sense, the students it serves are at the opposite end of the educational spectrum from most of those served by Yakima's Transition program. The skill levels of Transitions to College students in reading, writing, or math may

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[20] The TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education) is a short, inexpensive, multiple-choice reading test produced by The McGraw-Hill Companies. It is probably the most commonly used test in ABE programs. Results are reported in terms of the elementary or secondary grade levels to which the reading skills of adult test takers correspond – e.g., 8th grade, 9th grade. The test is entirely in English and has not been designed for use by ESL students.

differ greatly, however, although for admission they must score a minimum of 6.0 on the TABE.

The Bunker Hill Transitions to College program consists of three courses, each of which meets for three hours once a week for one semester: reading/writing, math, and a Transitions to College Seminar. The reading/writing and math courses provide instruction equivalent to that offered by the lower of two levels of developmental education courses Bunker Hill offers in these subjects. Curricular integration with developmental education is achieved by using the same textbooks assigned by these courses, and curricula resemble those used in developmental education. In effect, the Transitions to College program provides lower level developmental education to the special population of largely non-native speaking GED graduates. The College's developmental education courses charge tuition and fees, however, whereas the Transitions to College courses are cost free.

Both the College and MDOE believe that the population served by the Transitions to College program has special instructional needs within the developmental education curriculum, and that these students are uncertain about their ability to succeed in college. By treating them as a cohort in special developmental courses and eliminating the tuition required for enrollment in developmental education, MDOE and the College hope to overcome these barriers.

In addition, the students receive a great deal of individual coaching from an Academic Advisor as well as their instructors. Bunker Hill, like the other colleges involved in this study, believes that having a "coach" or "advocate" greatly increases the chances that ESL students will advance.

The College and MDOE believe that the Transitions Seminar is also essential to overcoming barriers to transition. This is a required course for all students in the program. It combines general information about the College with instruction in specific skills, such as note-taking, test-taking, and study habits. It also includes presentations on career opportunities and the educational pathways required to pursue them. In addition to the Seminar, the reading/writing and math classes model college attendance by enforcing attendance policies and requiring large amounts of homework (4-6 hours per week). There is no formal exit criterion for the program. Students are re-tested with the TABE and Accuplacer at the end of each semester. Those who score at levels high enough to enter the second level of developmental education or credit courses are considered "completers."

The Transitions Program serves 15 students each semester. Because students often take more than one semester to complete the program, 40-50 students per year are served. Five faculty members and advisors plus support staff are involved in the program. The average annual cost per enrolled student is about $1500 if only the state grant funding for the program is considered. But because the College also provides substantial in-kind support, the full cost is substantially higher. For that matter, even a cost of $1500 per student is high by adult education standards, but the results of this

program are impressive. Of the 236 students served between 2000-2005, an 88 percent attendance average was achieved, 157 students (66 percent) enrolled in some college level class, 25 students (11 percent) received a college program certificate, and 4 students received an Associate Degree.

Keys to success. Based on the evidence of these four programs, <u>curricular integration can be highly successful in increasing the transition rates of English language learners to postsecondary education. The key to their success appears to be a "top down" design process,</u> which begins by clearly defining the requirements of further education, whether it be credit ESL, GED, or academic programs. Once those requirements are defined, non-credit sequences are created to meet them, rather than to meet the goals of improving life skills.

The design and implementation of some of these programs appear to be enhanced by use of common assessment measures to define the skills that must be taught at each level of non-credit ESL – and in at least some of the areas of further education (such as credit ESL) to which students make transitions. The use of common assessment measures helps specify the content of instruction and keep it focused on the goal of transition rather than life skills acquisition. It can also help students more easily pass through transitional gateways. If the assessment measure used as a gateway is the same as the measure used to define curriculum and course completion, students can make a seamless transition to further education by completing the courses.

Most importantly, these transition programs shorten the pathway to further education. By doing so, they save students time and money. In different ways, all of them incorporate the content of the next step in the further education for which they are preparing students (whether it is credit ESL, GED preparation, or developmental education) into a course sequence for non-credit ESL students. All of them, except BSL, also include college preparation components.

As a result of these features, these programs allow non-credit students to skip one or more levels of further education. In the case of EAP and BSL, students in effect skip what would otherwise be the lowest level of credit ESL. In Bunker Hill's College Transitions Program they skip the lowest level of developmental education. And at Yakima they enter the upper levels of ABE upon completion of the high intensity ESL program. <u>By shortening pathways, these programs make it more likely that adult ESL students, who have limited time for education, will arrive at the eventual goal of enrolling in academic or vocational courses.</u> And all of these programs except Yakima's save students the cost of tuition for the credit courses they skip.[21]

6. Co-enrollment

Nature and extent. One way to accelerate the transition of non-credit ESL students is to eliminate gateways to enrollment in further education. The traditional model for transitions assumes that educational progress will be linear: students will obtain a certain level of

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[21] Yakima is the exception because both non-credit ESL and ABE/ASE are offered without cost.

English language proficiency in non-credit courses, move on to some combination of credit ESL and GED instruction, and from there progress to academic or vocational studies. Although this is the dominant model at all of the colleges participating in this study, all of them allow exceptions to it.

At most of these colleges, non-credit ESL students can enroll in almost any non-credit courses if they are able to pay the required tuition or fees, and they can enroll in any credit courses that do not have a language requirement. At both the non-credit and credit levels, this often includes courses for which the major prerequisite is mathematics (such as technical courses in information technology or business), and it includes some courses of special interest to immigrants (such as citizenship courses).

Moreover, at CCSF, students enrolled in credit ESL may enroll in any credit courses the College offers, provided that they meet the course prerequisites (if there are any). Students who complete the highest or next to highest level of credit ESL have satisfied the College's language requirement for graduation from academic programs (though this is likely to change as a result of a new requirement from the State Chancellor's office).

Co-enrolled, nonlinear path. Although most non-credit ESL students are enrolled only in ESL courses, at least some take advantage of the opportunity to depart from the traditional model by enrolling in other non-credit or credit courses. In some cases, they enroll in these courses during the same terms in which they are taking ESL classes; in other cases, they alternate between ESL and other courses. Either way, they are usually referred to as "co-enrolled."

It is hard to know exactly how many ESL students are co-enrolled, because colleges rarely analyze student records to identify them. At some colleges, the numbers may be substantial. For example, Bunker Hill estimates that approximately 25 percent of the students in its non-credit BSL program are co-enrolled in a wide range of credit and non-credit courses. A longitudinal analysis of CCSF enrollment patterns indicates that more than 5000 non-credit ESL students were co-enrolled over the course of seven years. In addition, Lake County indicates that a significant number of students in some of its vocational programs begin in non-credit ESL, complete a vocational course, and then return to non-credit ESL.

This nonlinear path to further education has obvious benefits for the students pursuing it. If they are successful in the vocational or academic courses in which they enroll, they can gain skills, credentials, and possibly college credits that will be valuable to them in the workforce and in other forms of further education *before* they have completed the often lengthy sequence of non-credit and credit ESL. These benefits are valuable in their own right. But co-enrollment also appears to have two other effects: it seems to increase transitions to credit ESL as well as success in credit studies, and it increases the rate of learning gains in non-credit ESL. From the evidence available, it is not clear how these two effects are related. Thus, they will be discussed separately below.

Co-enrollment and transitions. Co-enrollment is, by itself, a form of transition to further education. Co-enrolled students make the transition to vocational or academic

courses whenever they believe they are ready. This suggests that the usual gateways of ESL instruction may not be applicable to all non-credit students: some students have the time, resources, and ability to enroll in further education without passing through these gateways.

By definition, however, co-enrolled students also attend ESL classes. In fact, there is evidence that co-enrollment increases the motivation of non-credit ESL students to persist in ESL programs and to make the kinds of transitions found in the traditional model. This may be because <u>co-enrollment assures students that their many hours of English classes are leading to something other than just learning more English.</u> Co-enrolled students receive near-term benefits from their non-credit ESL classes because those classes allow them to master at least some of the English language skills required to complete courses that improve their prospects for employment or achieve other goals, such as passing the test for American citizenship. <u>Being able to achieve these near-term goals may motivate students to persist in ESL programs</u> so that they can improve their English to levels of proficiency where they are able to achieve more ambitious educational goals.

Alternatively, co-enrollment may *reward* motivation rather than create it. That is, co-enrolled students may be an unusually motivated group. Co-enrollment indicates that they wish to increase as soon as possible their education beyond learning English, and it may suggest that they have high enough levels of prior education to succeed in vocational or academic courses. It is reasonable to expect that students with these characteristics are more likely than other non-credit ESL students to make transitions to credit ESL and other credit programs.

The most direct evidence found by this study about the effects of co-enrollment on more traditional forms of transition came from the special seven-year analysis of ESL students conducted by CCSF. That College, like many others, offers a large number of non-credit programs that have no language prerequisites. Of special interest for these purposes is the fact that CCSF offers several dozen non-credit "business" courses. These are both short courses and longer programs in basic office skills – and they draw a large enrollment of people seeking to enter, or advance in, San Francisco's thriving white-collar economy.

The longitudinal analysis of CCSF's non-credit ESL students found that those who were co-enrolled – and especially those who had at some point enrolled in business courses – were far more likely to succeed in ESL programs than students who only enrolled in ESL. The analysis showed greater success by several measures. <u>Co-enrolled students were more than three times as likely as students enrolled only in ESL to make transitions to credit ESL</u>. They were also far more likely to place at high levels in credit ESL, and to advance to higher levels of education in other credit programs.

None of the other programs examined by this study were able to provide data on the subsequent experiences of co-enrolled students. But faculty at Bunker Hill and Lake County believe that co-enrollment has a similar effect at their colleges.

<u>Learning gains.</u> In addition to increasing motivation, co-enrollment may also facilitate transitions by increasing learning gains. In effect, ESL students enrolled in other courses

receive two types of ESL instruction: core ESL skills from their ESL classes *and* the opportunity to apply that instruction in other courses taught in English. Research on adult education has long indicated that contextualized instruction – the ability to apply basic skills to subject matter of interest to the student – can increase learning gains. Co-enrolled students receive instruction in at least two contexts: life skills instruction in non-credit ESL courses and the opportunity to apply that instruction *through authentic, functional, and cognitively challenging uses of the language in other domains*.

Moreover, students who are enrolled in both traditional ESL courses and other courses at the same time are engaged in learning English (by different means) for more hours during their period of co-enrollment than they would be if they were enrolled in ESL courses alone.

In theory, therefore, co-enrollment should increase and accelerate learning gains by ESL students in both the short term and the long term. This study was unable to obtain data to document the learning gains of co-enrolled students, but many ESL professionals at the participating colleges believe that this is the case. <u>Adult education theory and the observations of ESL professionals carry a great deal of weight. If both are correct about the effects of co-enrollment, this option may be extremely valuable as a means of increasing learning gains, whether or not it increases transitions.</u> And it is reasonable to think that it may increase transitions *because* it increases learning gains: co-enrolled students may be more likely than other non-credit ESL students to move on to further education because they complete non-credit programs more quickly.

Lessons for Other Colleges

It appears that co-enrollment has substantial benefits in increasing both transitions and learning gains. But this proposition deserves a more careful examination than this study allowed. At most colleges, co-enrollment is not seen as a strategy for improving the outcomes of non-credit ESL programs. Rather, it is the inadvertent result of admissions policies developed for other reasons. As a result, colleges rarely take any special measures to encourage co-enrollment. Because of the apparent benefits of this pathway to education, colleges should consider relaxing admissions policies that needlessly restrict co-enrollment, and they may wish to consider advising students who believe they can succeed in courses outside ESL to pursue this option.

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7. **VOCATIONAL ESL**

An alternative pathway. Vocational ESL (VESL) programs combine the ideas of co-enrollment and curricular integration. Their goal is to help students with fairly low English levels make the transition to occupational/vocational programs. They do so by combining vocational programs taught in English with ESL courses that have curricula customized to support those programs. *Thus, VESL programs can be regarded as forms of planned co-enrollment, or supported co-enrollment.*

The options for co-enrollment discussed above allow students to determine whether they have the English language skills required for vocational or academic studies, and they rely on life skills non-credit ESL to provide those skills. In contrast, VESL programs are separate curricular units that include specialized English language instruction designed to ensure that students obtain the English language skills they need to succeed in particular vocational programs. In this sense, they are a major departure from the traditional model of preparing non-credit students for transitions. Their goal is neither to improve life skills nor to prepare students for credit ESL or academic studies. It is to help students make the transition to programs that will improve their occupational skills without having to pass the traditional gateways to credit ESL or academic programs.

VESL programs are of special importance – because the majority of ESL students have low levels of education and/or English language abilities. These students often believe that traditional educational pathways are too long for them to follow, even with the help of special transition programs. Many may believe that even a GED or the upper levels of ABE instruction are beyond their reach.

VESL programs provide an alternative pathway to further education. They are designed to help those with English proficiency and/or prior education below the levels required for credit studies to enter programs that improve their occupational skills and, as a result, their prospects for employment. In addition, many VESL programs are built around non-credit or credit vocational courses that provide students with certifications from the college in a particular occupational specialty, and they often prepare students for state or industrial certifications. As a result, they help students pursue career tracks that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

Growth of VESL. VESL programs have been offered by colleges and other providers of education and training at least since the 1980s, but, at most institutions, they have never been a major focus of further education for immigrants. In recent years, interest in these programs appears to have increased. A growing number of colleges have either instituted VESL programs or expanded their number. For example, CCSF has developed curricula for 32 VESL programs, and it is presently offering 17. Although no data is available to track the growth curve, examination of the study colleges, as well as a review of ESL programs at other community colleges, suggests that transitions provided by VESL programs are probably the fastest growing area of further education for immigrants. Lake County, CCSF, and Bunker Hill have several programs of this sort; VESL programs are under development at Seminole and Yakima.

VESL programs are available in a wide range of fields including healthcare, HVAC, construction, automobile maintenance, information technology, and landscape maintenance. Perhaps the fastest growth has been in programs to prepare limited English proficient students to work as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs).

The growth of CNA VESL programs, like the growth of other VESL programs, appears to be a response to labor market demand. Most of these programs target occupations where there are labor shortages and where the entry-level skill requirements are fairly low. In communities with large immigrant populations, people with limited education and language skills constitute a large portion of the available labor pool for these occupations. Individual colleges, as well as local, state, and federal government, believe that preparing immigrants for these occupations may be a highly efficient way to improve individual opportunities and earnings, as well as to meet local or national workforce needs. For these reasons, colleges have, in some cases, taken the initiative to develop VESL programs. In many other cases, various federal and state grant programs have supported program development. At the federal level, grant support has been available from the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Science Foundation, and other sources (such as Perkins Act funds).

Program design. VESL programs take many different forms. In some cases, the term "VESL" is applied to workforce training courses of only a few hours or days – programs that help people with limited English proficiency learn the vocabulary and/or reading skills required for particular job-related tasks, such as following instructions or filling out forms in English. In other cases, VESL programs may be based on a special task analysis of a particular occupation, or even more narrowly the requirements of a particular type of job at one or more companies. For example, a national retailing firm commissioned a task analyses of the English language skills required to be a checkout "associate" at its stores, and a VESL program was constructed to help prospective employees with limited English proficiency obtain these skills at the same time they were undergoing other job training.

The VESL programs examined by this study are of a particular kind, often described as "supported ESL" programs. Their goal is to help people with limited English proficiency complete the requirements of an established postsecondary certificate program taught in English. Usually these certificate programs are of a semester or more in length, and some of them include more than one course. Usually they are offered to native speakers of English and to students with limited English proficiency. They become VESL courses when colleges (or other education providers) add one or both of these two components to them:

- a preparatory course that improves the English language ability, educational levels, and study skills of students to meet the special needs of a particular occupation, and that often provides them with vocational guidance, and

- a "concurrent" ESL class that students take at the same time they are enrolled in the vocational course, and that provides them with assistance in the reading, writing, speaking, and listening problems they may encounter in class sessions.

There are many variants on what form these ESL support components take and how they are combined. In some cases, only the preparatory course or the concurrent class is offered, and in others both are part of the VESL program design. In addition, some programs include an element of bilingual instruction in the vocational course. Some also include brief "refresher" or "brush up" classes, either prior to the vocational class or before certification exams.

This study did not examine the relative value of these different combinations of instruction. But however they are combined, all programs examined meet with a high degree of success in terms of student retention and vocational course completion. Most are also successful in preparing students for certifications. However, in some multi-course vocational programs, many students enroll primarily to take individual courses they believe will enhance their employment prospects. In addition, students who complete certifications may not pursue the occupations for which they are trained. For example, at least some CNA graduates see their training as the first step on a career ladder to higher paying occupations in the healthcare field.

From a language learning perspective, supported vocational programs have the advantage of *building on* the existing strengths of students in language, general education, and work experience, rather than emphasizing their weaknesses. And they focus on authentic materials (the vocational tasks). Programs with these characteristics are usually considered to be among the most effective means to language instruction. All students have some pre-existing abilities in language, education, and other skills. But these strengths are often uneven. More than most other ESL programs, supported vocational programs attempt to design curricula that are tailored to help students succeed with the strengths they bring with them, while compensating for weaknesses where necessary. Thus, supported vocational programs may be among the most effective ways of improving English language ability (within their scope), as well as obtaining further education.

At the five study colleges, the adult education components of VESL programs (preparatory, concurrent, and brush-up classes) are offered for free, as non-credit courses. The vocational content courses may charge tuition, or they may be offered free due to grant support. Even when vocational courses charge tuition, however, the cost is sometimes borne by employers. For example, Lake County estimates that the tuition of 80 percent of the students in its supported landscape management course is covered by employers who want their landscape workers to gain additional skills or qualify for special licenses (in areas such as pesticide use). Nationwide, an increasing number of hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare institutions are paying the tuition of students in supported healthcare programs, either to generate a larger pool of potential employees, or to upgrade the skills of existing workers.

Costs and benefits. Supported vocational programs can be expensive. This is partly because they are multi-course sequences (the supportive elements plus the vocational courses). It is also because teachers providing the supportive instruction require a great deal of preparatory time. Not only must they understand the vocational subject matter (sometimes by taking the course themselves), but they must also develop customized curricula, trouble-shoot problems as they arise in particular classes (sometimes by attending each class), and develop

collaborative relations with other teachers. As a result, the per student cost of these programs, excluding tuition, may be $2000 to $3000 or more.

However, <u>supported VESL programs that are well designed provide a highly effective "fast track" transitional pathway to further education for students who would not otherwise be able to obtain postsecondary credentials</u>. They have few of the educational or administrative prerequisites of traditional academic programs. Although they do not enroll students at the very lowest levels of English language ability and prior education, many of these programs enable students who are at the Intermediate level of English and who have not completed high school to enter and complete postsecondary certificate programs by a direct route, in a fairly short period of time.

Largely because of their high cost, most supported vocational programs are quite small, serving on the order of 20-30 students per year. Few low-skilled English language learners can afford to pay tuition that would cover the full costs of these programs, and federal/state funding for adult education ESL is not sufficient to pay the cost of the preparatory and concurrent courses.

Supported vocational programs are often initiated by grant funding, but they must usually be sustained by some combination of adult education and Perkins Act funds, college subsidies, scholarships, foundation grants, and other means. This is often a challenge. At least some supported programs that have received large investments of grant funds for program development and operations in their initial years have had to close their doors due to a lack of adequate financial resources after the grant funding has ended. On the whole, <u>because of costs, creating supported vocational programs has proved to be easier than sustaining them</u>.

Lake County's supported CNA program illustrates the components of a supported program in concrete terms:

> **<u>CNA.</u>** The Lake County CNA program contains both a preparatory course for English language learners with low levels of education and a support course offered concurrently with the content CNA instructional course. The preparatory course consists of an intensive one-semester, non-credit adult education ESL class that meets for four hours per day, four times per week, during the spring semester. An important goal of this course is to help students meet the educational entry requirement for the CNA content course – they must have a high school diploma or equivalent or score at the 8th grade level or above on the TABE test. Students who take the preparatory course either score below the 8th grade level or wish to "brush up" on their reading skills. In 2005, 19 of 23 students who entered the ESL supported CNA program took this preparatory course.
>
> Additional goals of the preparation course include vocabulary development for medical and health professions, measurement terminology and conversion formulas, reading authentic non-adapted medical material, communication with patients and

co-workers, study skills, critical thinking skills necessary for objective testing, and preparing a portfolio documenting eligibility for the state CNA registry (which requires health, criminal record, and other checks, as well as a Social Security number). There is also a required oral presentation and written report on a medical topic modeled on a similar task in the CNA course.

In the fall semester, prior to the CNA course, students enroll in a two-week, one-credit-hour medical vocabulary and study skills review course. While the CNA class is in session, and for one week after it concludes, students attend a concurrent ESL class that reinforces vocabulary, study, and test-taking skills, as well as listening and speaking in a health care environment. The emphasis on test taking skills in both the preparatory and support classes is due partly to the fact that CNA students, like students in many other vocational programs, are required to take frequent quizzes and longer tests to document their mastery of a multi-faceted curriculum.

Students who enter Lake County's supported CNA program have a high degree of success. For example, of the 21 students enrolled in the first month of the program in Spring 2005, 13 scored at less than a sixth grade level on the TABE and most scored at the Intermediate level on the CELSA. Nevertheless, all of these students achieved at least the 8th grade reading level required by the CNA content class by the end of the semester, and more than half increased their CELSA scores. All but two of these students subsequently passed the content class and received the College's CNA certification, 20 registered for the state certification exam, and 10 passed on the first sitting.

8. SPANISH GED

The GED Testing Service has offered a Spanish version of the GED test for many years. Recently, the test has been a literal translation of the English GED exam. Three of the colleges examined in this study (Bunker Hill, Lake County, and CCSF) offer courses to prepare students for the Spanish GED through their non-credit ESL programs.

Value of the program. The Spanish GED may not seem to meet the definition of an ESL program, because preparation for it does not directly improve the English language ability of students. It is, however, a means of improving the educational levels of immigrants and of providing them with a high school equivalency credential that may be valuable both in the workplace and in making transitions to further education. Many employers require a high school credential in some language for certain jobs, as do many government or industrial certifications (such as the CNA in most states). In addition, postsecondary programs in some states (e.g., Florida) require high school credentials for admission and/or graduation and will accept those credentials in a language other than English. Due to the low levels of education of most immigrants, providing them the opportunity to improve their abilities to the high school level in their native language is decidedly a benefit to them and to the local economy.

Equally important, proponents of the Spanish GED cite evidence that students with higher levels of education in their native language learn reading and writing (if not speaking and listening) in English more quickly. The common sense explanation for this is that if students already have a high level of literacy in one language, they will at least have mastered the basic skills of decoding and producing written text that are essential to learning any language. As a result, if students who pass the Spanish GED subsequently enroll in ESL courses, they may be able to make more rapid progress than they would otherwise. And if they seek to make the transition to postsecondary education, they will be prepared with the other skills (particularly math) that the GED tests.

The Spanish GED can, therefore, be seen as a credential that is valuable in its own right or as a possible step in transitions to further education in English.

The Bunker Hill program. The Spanish GED program examined in this study is managed by the Adult Education Department at Bunker Hill Community College. It enrolls approximately 100 students each semester. The program is supported by the same federal/state funding system that supports other public non-credit ESL programs, and it operates within curricular guidelines established by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Classes are open-entry/open-exit, and they meet for three hours per session twice a week, both at Bunker Hill's campus in Chelsea and at the facilities of Hispanic-serving CBOs that are partners in the College's ESOL program.

Classes are offered both in the morning and at night. All are free, and they are taught in Spanish. To allow for attrition, 25 students are enrolled in each class, and approximately 20 complete each term. The program is divided into two levels: Level I classes serve students at the 6th through 8th grade levels as tested by the Spanish TABE, and Level II serves students at the 9th grade level and above. Thus, students can be expected to be at least literate and have some background in math prior to entry into the lowest level, and they are in what is usually considered the "pre-GED" range in the upper level.

Demand for the Spanish GED program is high. The College reports that there is a waiting list of about 800 students for the 100 seats available each semester. Enrollment is limited by funding. Based on interviews with program managers and students, it appears that the main reason students enroll in the Spanish GED program, rather than the English GED program, is that they do not believe their English language writing skills are adequate to pass the test in English. These students are fairly proficient in speaking and understanding English. Thus, an alternative pathway for them would be to enroll in the free ESL classes at Bunker Hill or elsewhere to improve their writing skills and then take the English language GED. Students choose the Spanish GED because they believe they can obtain a high school equivalency credential more quickly than if they enrolled in an ESL program.

Based on the data available, Bunker Hill's Spanish GED program appears to be successful in helping a significant number of students advance in their education. For example, of the 50 students enrolled in the upper level classes of the program in 2005, 11 received their Spanish GED, 6 enrolled in the Transitions to College program (which has a total enrollment of 20),

and 3 enrolled in ESOL during that year. Faculty members believe that longitudinal data on these students would probably show that a higher percentage eventually achieved these goals.

9. GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

The need. The pathways that non-credit ESL students must follow if they want to make transitions to further education can be quite complex, even if they follow the traditional model of moving on to credit ESL. Although the special programs aimed at increasing transitions discussed above expand the options available to students, they also make transition pathways even more complex. As a result, most colleges provide guidance and counseling to help non-credit ESL students understand these pathways.

At a minimum, all of the colleges examined in this study have one or more staff members in their student services departments who, upon request, provide counseling to adult education students. Most also have guidance materials available. For example, CCSF's ESL Department has developed for both its non-credit and credit students a CD that describes college opportunities and the means of pursuing them, and it also has extensive information available on its website about career opportunities, courses, requirements, and procedures. In addition, at CCSF, and at most of the other colleges examined, student services personnel visit non-credit ESL classes periodically to discuss further education, answer questions, and help students solve problems as they plan for their next steps.

Most of the colleges examined also have developed relationships with immigrant-serving CBOs in their communities. Bunker Hill's ESOL program is a partnership between the College and a number of CBOs, and CBOs provide both off-campus facilities for instruction and other services to non-credit students at CCSF, Lake County, and Yakima. The role of CBOs in recruiting immigrants for further education and in providing them with guidance and other sources of support was not examined by this study, but that role appears to be substantial and it merits further investigation.

As noted above, some of the articulated transition programs at the colleges examined contain pre-collegiate modules and coaching. And some VESL programs recruit students with advertisements and presentations by program staff. At Lake County, VESL teachers assist students with enrollment and financial aid. Finally, many faculty members and administrators believe that simply by virtue of studying English in a college environment, non-credit students become comfortable with an academic setting and its procedures. As a result, they may be encouraged to consider college a more realistic option. Interviews with students during the course of this study support this notion.

It is difficult to determine the effectiveness of any or all of these recruitment and counseling approaches. Because most students enrolled in non-credit programs have low levels of education and English language skills, they may need a great deal of encouragement to believe that further education is within their reach. This is especially likely when no members of their immediate families or peer groups have attended college, which is usually the case. As a result, recruitment and counseling are obviously a minimal requirement for any college that hopes to increase transitions.

<u>Most faculty and administrators interviewed believe that their efforts in this regard are inadequate</u>, however, because they are unsystematic and under-funded. Students may not receive the information and support they need *when* they need it. Too much is left to student initiative.

<u>Moving On.</u> Seminole's "Moving On!" program has been developed to provide a more systematic approach to recruitment and counseling. Strictly speaking, Moving On is a two-hour seminar offered periodically to Seminole's upper level non-credit students (those at the Intermediate and Low Advanced levels). The seminar is given during class time, and attendance is required. Hence, almost all students approaching readiness for transitions attend. The major purpose of the seminar is to explain in detail the various options for further education available to non-credit students (both at Seminole and elsewhere), the paths they must take, the gateways they must pass, and how to pass through.

Seminole's explanation of gateways is particularly important, because Florida residents must have high school credentials and pass high stakes tests before entering any credit program. It is also important because many of the College's non-credit students have both high school and postsecondary credentials from their native countries but may not know how to use them for transition purposes.

The Moving On seminar contains detailed information and handouts about the American educational system and such matters as how to have diplomas and transcripts validated for acceptance at Florida institutions and how students can fill gaps in their preparation for further education. Students leave the seminar with general knowledge of their options – and with the forms they must submit to make transitions together with instructions about how to complete them.

This seminar is supplemented by bi-monthly follow-up seminars (for which attendance is not required) on many of the topics it covers – such as financial aid, the requirements of particular gateway tests, career exploration, and the College's admission policies. It is also supplemented by individualized support for students from three adult ESL program specialists (discussed in Part IV). In addition, Seminole has a full-time Educational Planner whose job is to help ESL and ABE/ASE students succeed. This means that a student who requests information or guidance will probably receive it from staff members with an in-depth understanding of ESL. Moreover, the program specialists are often proactive in identifying students who have problems with learning or transitions, or who can benefit from learning about opportunities the College offers. They visit classes, discuss individual students with teachers, and offer guidance both during class periods and on an individual basis.

The most significant aspect of Seminole's Moving On program is that the College has dedicated significant staff time to the transitional needs of non-credit ESL students. It has also developed a systematic program of guidance that anticipates those needs before they arise – and it provides customized services and materials to meet them.

Lessons for Other Colleges

Optimizing resources. Two major lessons emerge from this review of transition initiatives: 1) non-trivial numbers of non-credit ESL students enrolled in life skills programs at colleges can make transitions to further education of some kind, and 2) transition rates can be increased by a number of strategies, and colleges should, therefore, examine those strategies for possible adoption at their institutions.

Most of these strategies are common sense. Students who have high rates of learning gain, who are co-enrolled, and/or are enrolled in articulated programs should find it easier to pass through gateways to further education. Students who receive pre-collegiate guidance and experiences should be both more motivated to make transitions and more successful in doing so. Likewise, supported vocational programs should help students with low levels of skills get postsecondary credentials that they could not obtain by following the traditional model for ESL transitions.

Most of the colleges examined by this study employ some of these strategies, but few use them all, or do so on a large scale. The success of the programs and practices examined suggests that all colleges with non-credit ESL programs should consider adopting some version of all the strategies, and those that have adopted them on a small scale should consider expanding their efforts.

In fact, in a sense, colleges that do not adopt these strategies are not optimizing their resources as colleges. Most institutions that offer non-credit ESL also offer credit ESL and ABE/ASE, as well as credit academic and vocational programs. Those programs are developed, staffed, and in place. They are resources to be used. As a result, it seems wasteful not to build stronger bridges between non-credit ESL and these other offerings, so that they can be more fully utilized. Both sides of the transition equation for non-credit ESL students are already present at most colleges. Connecting them more effectively will achieve more for the colleges' investment in non-credit ESL by expanding its reach beyond life skills, and it will achieve more for the colleges' investment in other programs by adding English language learners to their enrollment.

Pathways to college. Specifically, colleges should consider implementing accelerated "pathways to college" programs that combine high intensity instruction with curricular integration and pre-collegiate elements. In each of the programs examined where this combination was implemented, students enrolled in articulated pathways programs are far more likely to make transitions than comparable students enrolled solely in life skills programs. Although all, or even most, non-credit students may not wish to pursue postsecondary education, colleges should at least consider constructing accelerated pathways to college programs for those who do.

This study found integrated pathway programs that increase the transition rates of students from all levels of non-credit ESL. It also found programs that increase the transition rates of students with a fairly wide range of prior education. To optimize opportunities for further education, colleges should consider implementing accelerated pathway programs for all their non-credit ESL students.

Expanding career programs. The case for colleges expanding supported career programs is even more compelling than that for creating pathways to college within the

traditional model of transitions to postsecondary education. For many students, even accelerated programs that lead from non-credit ESL, to credit ESL, to academic studies, or from life skills ESL to a GED, may take more years than they can devote to making transitions. VESL career programs allow students to step outside the traditional model for transitions. Even students with fairly low levels of English proficiency can gain post-secondary credentials and skills far more quickly than they could by following the traditional model. Importantly, they can obtain near-term concrete benefits in employment and earnings. Finally, students can use supported career programs as the first step in academic and employment career ladders that allow them to progress farther.

<u>The demonstrated effectiveness of VESL programs is probably the most compelling reason why colleges should adopt and expand them</u>. Although this study only examined a few such programs in the five colleges studied, many more have been examined elsewhere and they are clearly among the most effective educational programs of any kind in obtaining their goals. The vast majority of students enrolled in well-designed VESL programs complete the programs and obtain college and/or other relevant certifications. *Any college with a significant immigrant population should place a high priority on developing VESL programs in fields where there are workforce shortages that might be filled by immigrants whose English and academic skills are below the threshold for academic programs*.

<u>Opening gateways.</u> It may be that a reason for the high completion rates of VESL programs is that they bypass most of the gateways to progress in further education that may create barriers for some ESL students. Although most VESL programs have entry-level requirements (usually test scores in English ability and sometimes elementary math), the bar they set is fairly low. And there are usually no educational gateways, other than passing the vocational class, that students must surmount in order to complete these programs – no other prerequisites, language requirements, or college placement tests. The success of VESL programs, as well as co-enrollment of other kinds, should lead colleges to examine whether their gateway requirements for transitions from non-credit ESL to credit programs are necessary and appropriate for the purposes they are intended to serve. For example, at most colleges, non-credit students without high school diplomas or advanced degrees must pass testing gateways to move from non-credit to credit ESL and from credit ESL to many fields of academic study. As Part II explained, the language tests often used to establish gateways to further education are imprecise and measure only a portion of English language skills (usually reading and sometimes writing or listening). As a result, gateway requirements based on these tests may not provide a good indication of whether students are prepared to make transitions.

There are many possible approaches to bypassing traditional gateway requirements. One would be to consider a high grade in a non-credit ESL program to be sufficient for transition to credit ESL. In addition, colleges that provide opportunities for co-enrollment of non-credit students in either non-credit or credit vocational or academic courses are eliminating gateways that might prevent students from achieving their vocational or academic goals more quickly. The Spanish GED is yet another approach to bypassing gateways. Because most colleges allow students with a high school equivalency certificate to enroll in credit classes if they can pass a college placement exam, the Spanish GED may provide a more direct route to college for many students with Intermediate levels of English language ability and prior education.

10. THE ISSUE OF COST

Estimating costs. Most of the transition initiatives and designs discussed above serve fairly small numbers of students. Their success suggests that they can and should serve many more. Cost is a major limit on their size, however, and on the willingness of colleges to undertake them at all. Most of these initiatives are embedded in fairly high intensity programs that require far more instructional time – and hence cost much more – than standard life skills instruction. In addition, they cannot be implemented without an investment of staff time to develop special curricula and other aspects of the programs.

It is difficult to determine with much precision the cost of most strategies to increase transitions. In part, this is due to the complexities of college bookkeeping. Although most colleges establish budgets for non-credit ESL programs, these budgets rarely reflect their full expenses. For example, they often do not include the salaries of full time faculty, administrators, or support staff, or the cost of various forms of overhead, such as classroom space and computer facilities. Some or all of these costs often fall into other accounting categories. In addition, college bookkeeping systems rarely distinguish between the costs of different types of non-credit ESL offerings.

A few of the strategies examined by this study, such as the Bunker Hill Transitions to College Program and the portion of Lake County's CNA supported program that is not funded by tuition, are (or have been) entirely supported by earmarked grants. In those cases, the costs appear to be on the order of $1500 - $3000 per student per year. Estimates of the cost of other enriched, high-intensity strategies differ. Based on information gathered by this study, the cost of serving a student enrolled in two or more semesters of these enriched program components in a given year is in the $1500-$3000 range in most cases. One college

that attempted a full accounting of its high intensity managed enrollment program estimates that the cost approaches $5000 for a student enrolled in two semesters per year.

Cost constraints. Most colleges appear to believe that the cost of these strategies for increasing learning gains and transitions limits the number of students they can serve in this way. But it is not clear whether, or why, this is the case.

The primary source of support for non-credit ESL programs consists of allocations from federal/state grant programs earmarked for adult education and/or FTE reimbursements that may or may not be earmarked for this purpose.[22] Whatever the funding system may be in a particular state, the resources that go to colleges (and other providers) are for adult education, taken as a whole. That is, federal and state funding policies rarely mandate that a certain portion of the funding must be used for ABE, GED, or ESL service, and they almost never indicate that it must be used for particular types of programs within these different adult education services. These decisions are left to individual colleges and other service providers.

In short, ESL is not a separately funded adult education service. The amount of support it receives depends on how service providers choose to allocate funding that is either earmarked for adult education or that *may* be used for this purpose. At most colleges, resources that may be used for adult education are deposited in the general fund. ESL program managers must apply for financial support for their overall programs, and often for particular components of them (such as high intensity or VESL programs), through the colleges' regular budgetary process.

As a result, it is not clear how the high cost of transition programs and of the strategies to increase learning gains discussed in Part II limits the number of students colleges can serve in these ways. The limitations, if they exist, may be because the total adult education funding colleges receive from federal/state sources is inadequate to support larger numbers of ESL students with high cost services. Alternatively, the limitations possibly occur because colleges *choose* to allocate less of the funding available for adult education to high cost services, and more to lower cost life skills courses that may meet only a few hours per week.

This issue merits more research. At most of the study colleges, the explanation appears to be a combination of both factors. The colleges have some discretion to initiate or expand transition courses or special strategies to increase learning gains, either by allocating more federal/state adult education funds to them or by supplementing those funds with other college revenues.

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[22] The systems by which states provide support for adult education services at community colleges differ greatly. For a general discussion of this subject see: To Ensure America's Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2005), pp. 69-73. See also, CAAL's reports on the funding systems in four different states. Martin Liebowitz, Adult Education and Literacy in Community Colleges in Massachusetts (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2004). Forrest P. Chisman, Adult Education and Literacy and Community Colleges in Kentucky (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy: 2004). Sharlene Walker and Clare Strawn OREGON SHINES! Adult Education and Literacy in Oregon Community Colleges (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2004). Suzanne Knell and Janet Scogins The Illinois Community College System and Adult Literacy, (New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2004).

One reason colleges choose to limit their investments in comparatively high cost non-credit ESL strategies is that, in most states, both funding formulas and regulations create incentives to maintain or increase the total *number* of adult education students served.

To oversimplify a complex subject[23], in most states, adult education and other college funding formulas are largely based on the number of students served and the number of hours for which they are enrolled, with differing weight placed on these two factors. This practice forces colleges to choose between serving a larger number of students for fewer hours or a smaller number of students for more hours. In addition, federal/state funding formulas rarely reimburse colleges for the program development and other costs entailed in creating and maintaining enriched non-credit ESL programs. Morover, many state adult education programs have the explicit or implicit policy goal of serving as many students as possible.

For financial and policy reasons, most colleges choose to allocate their resources in ways that balance the imperative of serving large numbers of students with the recognition that higher cost strategies for service may be more effective in increasing learning gains and transitions. Most believe, however, that <u>funding formulas and policy prescriptions tip the balance against extensive investments in enriched, high intensity programs.</u>

In effect, most colleges appear to generate the resources for a limited amount of high cost instruction by restricting most of their non-credit ESL offerings to comparatively inexpensive courses that meet only three to six hours per week. These courses may cost less than the per-student reimbursements provided by federal/state funds. The "surplus" of public funds generated in this way is available to support a limited amount of high cost, enriched instruction.[24]

Overcoming cost constraints. As a first step in considering how to overcome cost constraints in creating and expanding innovative non-credit ESL strategies, colleges should look carefully at the extent to which higher cost, in fact, limits their ability to pursue these strategies. And they should <u>examine ways to prioritize innovative strategies within existing funding formulas</u>. Clearly this is possible at some colleges in some states: 80 percent of Seminole's non-credit enrollment consists of students in high intensity classes, but these classes are supported by the same funding formulas and regulations that support low-intensity instruction at other Florida colleges. Likewise, Yakima and Lake County manage to support fairly large high intensity transition programs within the confines of federal/state revenues and regulations, and both colleges are planning to expand those programs.

Whether or not mainstream adult education funding can support more extensive transition programs, many colleges believe (or claim) that they are under cost constraints in this respect. Special grant support is one alternative source of funding they can consider.

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[23] The subject is too complex for a full exposition in this report. See the CAAL state reports, ibid.

[24] This study was not able to examine college finances carefully enough to verify this conclusion. But from the evidence examined, it appears reasonable to surmise that some method of allocating funding in this way has been adopted by most of the colleges that participated in this study, as well as others reviewed in less depth.

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Labor and other federal agencies, as well as their state counterparts, have made grant funds available for the development of supported vocational programs in fields where there are labor shortages. Some private foundations and businesses have also provided grant support. In some states or localities, TANF welfare funding may also be available for these purposes. Grants from the U.S. Department of Education's $70 million English Language Civics Education program have been used by Seminole to help expand its offerings. And in Massachusetts and a few other states, the Department of Education provides grants to support adult education transition programs.[25]

Although colleges should seek grant support to cover the substantial developmental costs of strategies to increase transitions and learning gains, they should keep in mind that the amount of that support is limited. Moreover, many sources of grant support either do not cover on-going operational costs or may shift because state priorities do. For example, Lake County's CNA program was developed with federal grant support, but the program lost its operating funds after the grant ended. The College absorbed some of the operating costs on an interim basis, but the number of students served was reduced. Likewise, state funding for Bunker Hill's Transitions to College program was lowered, thus reducing the numbers of students served.

In addition to exploring the full potential of mainstream adult education funding and grant support, colleges may wish to consider charging tuition and fees for transition programs or other high value program components, or increasing the fees they already charge. Free adult basic skills education, including non-credit ESL, has long been the national norm. However, it is widely accepted that public funding is grossly inadequate to meet both the need and demand for ESL instruction. Bunker Hill's BSL program demonstrates that large numbers of students are willing to pay at least some tuition for an articulated life skills program in a community where public funding does not support enough free service to meet the demand. BSL is entirely financed by tuition of $187 per course per semester – approximately half the tuition of credit programs at the college, and it enrolls 900 students per year – almost three times as many as the College's free ESOL program.

Colleges may not wish to charge tuition for all of their enriched ESL programs, but they may not need to charge the full cost, particularly if funding from other sources is available. Because federal and state regulations restrict the ability of adult education providers to charge tuition for publicly supported programs, colleges may wish to design some transition programs as separate courses offered by their continuing education or other divisions. This is the approach Bunker Hill has taken in offering BSL. Or they may wish to consider classifying transition programs as both credit and non-credit, thereby offering students the option of paying credit tuition if the non-credit versions cannot accept more students.

For VESL programs, colleges might well encourage more employers to pay the tuition of their employees. Alternatively, they may wish to consider configuring all of the components of supported vocational programs as credit programs in such a way that students will be eligible for Pell grants to pay the cost of tuition.

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[25] For an overview of special public and private funding for one model of increasing transitions see: Julia Gittleman, The New England ABE-To-College Transition Project Evaluation Project (Boston: World Education, 2005).

In short, although cost may be a barrier to implementing or expanding strategies to increase transitions and learning gains, there appear to be a number of ways to lower that barrier somewhat. Colleges should place a high enough priority on creating and expanding these programs to fully examine all options open to them.

11. PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR INCREASING TRANSITIONS

The policy vacuum. The public policy implications of these findings about non-credit ESL transitions are very much the same as for transitions from any type of adult education program. These have been thoroughly reviewed and detailed recommendations have been set forth in research published by the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy and others.[26]

In brief, <u>transitions from non-credit ESL (and other adult education programs) to further education fall into a policy vacuum at the federal level and in almost all states.</u> Virtually no provisions exist in federal policy or in the policies of most states to specifically support transitions, although transition to further education is often cited as one of the many goals of adult education policy. Special grant programs at the federal and state level sometimes provide funds to create transition programs (particularly VESL programs in occupations where there are labor shortages), but these grant programs are far too small to reach most colleges, and the funding they provide rarely lasts very long. Massachusetts is one of the few states that has incorporated funding streams for transitions into its adult education policy, but even there those streams are not large enough to meet the need, and they are presently targeted to serve only part of the adult education population, GED graduates.

For the reasons described above, designing and operating transition programs is more expensive that designing and operating most ESL programs. As a result, colleges that want to strengthen transitions must do so by cobbling together federal/state grant funds that are not intended for this purpose with miscellaneous grant funds, general fund resources, and sometimes tuition or fees.

Funding for transitions. The policy prescription for this and other barriers to expanding transition programs is clear. <u>The federal government and the states should define transitions as a special category of service, and should provide substantial earmarked funding to support it.</u> A task force of adult education and college experts convened by the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy proposed this strategy in its 2005 report. The report estimated that as little as $100 million in federal funding per year dedicated to increasing transitions could greatly increase transition rates.

Analysis of policies to increase transitions conducted by CAAL subsequent to its 2005 task force report, suggests that any policies to earmark funding for transition programs will probably be most effective if they are combined with policies that require states and adult education providers to engage in a planning process that determines exactly what form those

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[26] See: <u>To Ensure America's Future</u>, op. cit.

programs should take and what they will cost. Community colleges are uniquely qualified to increase transitions for English language learners and other adult education students, for the reasons mentioned above. But they are not the only adult education providers that can do so.

As a result, <u>federal policy should require states to document the efforts that *all* adult education providers are presently making to increase transitions</u>. Based on this information, colleges and other providers should be required to develop plans for partnerships to expand those efforts. Both colleges and other providers should receive special funding, as well as technical assistance, to develop these plans. Funding levels should be established to meet the cost of the plans that are developed, to the extent that public resources allow.

Other policy tools. Some public funding restrictions presently create barriers to the development of transition programs and other innovative approaches to improving non-credit ESL service. They should be reconsidered. For example, embargos on charging tuition and fees for publicly supported adult education programs might be lifted, provided that the charges are justified to support transitions or other underfunded goals, and provided that there are exemptions of some kind for students who cannot afford these costs.

In addition, <u>both the states and the federal government should reconsider policies that force colleges to choose between serving more students and serving fewer students with higher quality service</u>. Some version of the policy implemented in Massachusetts[27] might be appropriate. In that state, the Department of Education effectively reduced the number of students served by requiring providers to improve the quality (and cost) of serving each student, and it earmarked funds for transitions programs. One result of this policy was that its emphasis on quality together with evidence that the policy clearly improved program outcomes convinced the Massachusetts legislature to vote major increases in funding for adult education. Those increases allowed the Department of Education to increase both the number of students served and the quality of service.

VESL holds special promise. Support for the operational costs of VESL programs clearly requires special attention by policymakers. <u>Well-designed VESL programs are among the most outstanding successes in the adult education field, and they clearly make a contribution to meeting both local and national workforce needs</u>. Federal and state funding has been instrumental in creating a large number of new VESL programs, but neither the federal government nor the states have been willing to provide the resources required to meet their ongoing operational costs. Both groups should give serious attention to providing the long-term funding needed to support successful VESL programs.

At the federal level, this might be achieved through amendments to the Perkins Act program or the job training provisions (Title I) of the Workforce Investment Act. Alternatively, the Pell Grant program might be amended to ensure that students enrolled in high quality VESL programs are eligible for grants to cover the cost of tuition.

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[27] See: Liebowitz, op. cit.

At the state level, policies can be adopted to finance the often substantial costs of developing VESL programs, and to provide scholarships for students who enroll in them. State workforce development or TANF (welfare) funds might be used for these purposes.

Moreover, states can develop models for VESL programs in particular fields (or identify exemplary programs already in existence) and disseminate information about them to ESL providers. At the very least, states should ensure that their systems for reimbursing ESL service do not penalize colleges that implement these or other high intensity programs. This issue will be discussed more fully in Part V. Finally, states can and should monitor the quality of VESL programs to ensure that students achieve greater economic opportunities from specific programs. In particular, they should evaluate "quick fix" job training that may have only marginal or short-term benefits.

PART IV: FACULTY QUALITY

1. THE NEED

The challenge. The preceding sections have focused on innovative approaches to program design, curricula, and instructional practices that increase learning gains and transitions to further education by non-credit ESL students. Important as these innovations are, they are not likely to be very effective unless they are implemented by highly qualified faculty members.

Building and supporting a high quality faculty is probably the single most important step that colleges, or any other adult education providers, can take to achieve any of the goals of ESL programs. This is because ESL teachers, like teachers in any other field, are the immediate point of contact between students and the instructional system. And, like all other teachers, they have an enormous amount of latitude in determining what is taught, how it is taught, and how well students learn. Poor teachers can undermine even the best instructional systems, guidelines, or quality control systems; excellent teachers can help their students succeed despite the worst systems.

The quality of faculty may matter even more in ESL than it does in most fields. That is because so many skills must be taught and because of diversity in students' English proficiency, prior education, and life circumstances. It is a cliché that "one size does not fit all" in most areas of education but this is probably true to a far greater extent in adult ESL than in most other fields. To be effective, adult ESL teachers must customize what and how they teach to meet differing student needs, not only in every course they teach but also in every class session. This requires a unique combination of professional knowledge, teaching skills, experience, and personal qualities, which usually takes many years to acquire. Teachers who may be quite proficient in other instructional settings do not have the qualifications to be effective adult ESL faculty unless they have had the opportunity to obtain the specialized training and experience this field requires.

The key to creating a high quality adult ESL faculty is nothing more or less than treating faculty like the highly skilled professionals they are, the same as their counterparts in other areas: by establishing high standards for employment, conferring appropriate status, providing continuing professional development, and making the necessary support resources available.

Standards and qualifications. State policymakers and a good many ESL provider institutions have been slow to recognize or define the specialized qualifications that ESL faculty should have. Although some states and providers have established professional training criteria that adult education instructors must meet, they are minimal in most cases.

In some states, adult education instructors must be certified to teach elementary and/or secondary education and they must have, or acquire, a special "endorsement" in adult education – usually through short courses or other forms of continuing professional

development. In some states and institutions, ESL instructors must have or acquire a specialized endorsement in ESL by similar means, and/or be certified to teach ESL in public schools. The reason for this emphasis on elementary/secondary credentials is that the overwhelming majority of adult education teachers are employed part time, and the available part-time labor force consists primarily of schoolteachers.

Most adult education professionals readily concede that existing quality standards are inadequate for faculty in this field. They believe that the knowledge and skills required to teach adults are very different from those needed to teach children, and that greater specialized training is necessary for all adult education teachers, including those who teach ESL. The professional ESL association, TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), is in the process of articulating more demanding and detailed standards for adult ESL teachers by identifying the basic competencies they should demonstrate and by setting performance expectations. But these standards are not yet complete, so the impact they may have on overall teacher quality is yet to be determined.

Leaders in the ESL field believe that participation in one of the ESL teacher education programs is the most likely predictor of teacher quality, especially a Master's degree program in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), applied linguistics, or a related field. In particular, they consider a graduate program in TESOL to be the most effective means by which adult (and other) ESL teachers can develop the initial knowledge, skills, and personal dispositions that prepare them for teaching in the range of classrooms and contexts they are likely to face.

While graduate TESOL programs may be housed in departments of Education, Linguistics, or English, they offer a common set of theoretical and practical courses focused on understanding second language acquisition, methodology of teaching and assessing ESL learning, curriculum and materials development, and intercultural communication, as well as courses on English language structure. These programs also provide a range of opportunities for applying what has been learned in the classroom – from individual tutoring, to "micro-teaching" of lesson parts, to full-fledged internships of a semester or more in monitored teaching positions. They also introduce the teacher to relevant research. And in many programs, they help new teachers study their own classes and teaching as a means of continuing personal improvement and professional development.

In short, <u>one of the most important things colleges and other adult ESL providers can do to improve program quality and increase student learning is to hire highly qualified faculty. And the best way to accomplish this is to hire faculty with extensive professional training in teaching ESL – ideally MA degrees in TESOL or related fields</u>.

Status. In addition to recruiting teachers with high professional qualifications, colleges need give them institutional status rewards that correspond to their qualifications. At too many institutions, non-credit faculty are not given parity with credit faculty in terms of salary, benefits, rank, workload, job security, facilities, professional opportunities, participation in institutional governance, and all of the other status indicators of academe. Importantly, only a small percentage of non-credit faculty at most institutions are employed full time. Although

some part-time faculty do not want to teach full time, many must make their living by combining teaching jobs at several institutions. Whatever their personal preferences may be, and whatever other rewards they receive, teachers in a field that rarely offers full-time employment can consider themselves and their field devalued.

These status inequities make it hard to recruit highly qualified teachers for non-credit programs. And they may reduce the incentives of teachers in non-credit divisions – part-time instructors in particular – to remain in the ESL field. To build the high quality faculties that are so essential to success in ESL programs, provider institutions are going to have to reward quality with status.

Professional development. Important as they are, most ESL experts believe that academic training and appropriate status are not enough by themselves to create a high quality teaching faculty for adult ESL. Ongoing professional development is also essential – to keep up with new approaches, new curricula and materials, and new resources. The need for continued faculty learning is most visibly demonstrated by the increasing, and increasingly varied, role of technology in adult ESL teaching – from audio, to video, to Internet, to "smart" boards and blogs. Teachers whose skills were "at the state of the art" even a few years ago have had to master these new tools in a very short period of time.

In addition, virtually any form of program innovation (such as the practices discussed earlier) requires complementary professional development to enable teachers to implement that innovation. Regardless of the quality of their academic preparation and the extent of their experience, when a new program, new curriculum, or new set of learning materials is introduced, all faculty members need new orientation and training. Moreover, while a TESOL program can provide a range of knowledge and skills applicable to any setting, there are also program-specific expectations that can only be learned in a particular program. This is especially true considering the range of ESL program components that an adult ESL faculty member might be called upon to teach (e.g., initial literacy, life skills, academic skills, work-related skills, citizenship, family literacy).

An important form of professional development is the opportunity to benefit from the insights and experiences of other adult ESL teachers and programs, especially through participation in local, state, and national conferences and workshops, such as those provided by TESOL and its state or local affiliates, and those provided by state or regional training centers. Such activities provide a forum in which innovative practices can be disseminated – through informal conversations and formal presentations.

The faculty of adult ESL programs have high degrees of participation in professional conferences. For example, although the number of adult ESL instructors across the country is far smaller than the number of elementary or secondary ESL teachers, their participation in TESOL, through the Adult ESOL Interest Section, is equivalent or greater than the numbers who participate in either the Elementary or Secondary Education Interest Sections.

In sum, the skills required to be an effective ESL teacher are not static. To maintain a high quality faculty, colleges and other providers must give teachers the opportunity to expand

their knowledge and skills as the ESL field continues to expand, and as the demands placed on them do.

Supportive resources. Teacher quality is also enhanced by the availability of both personal and professional support within the program and institution. At the colleges examined by this study, that support includes access to on-site resource centers. It also includes sophisticated websites that provide a range of teaching and assessment materials (including unit and lesson plans), as well as a mechanism for communicating and sharing program information with colleagues. And at many colleges, one supportive resource includes access to specialized personnel who assist with recruitment, orientation, placement, testing, and other administrative functions. These specialized personnel enable teachers to focus more time on teaching and student learning. Support services of this kind are helpful to all teachers, but they are especially important to the majority of instructors who are part-time.

Innovation for quality. The five colleges that participated in this study have undertaken a number of initiatives to make sure they obtain and maintain high quality faculty. In some form, all of them aim to increase the professionalization of their faculty by setting high standards for employment, conferring appropriate status to non-credit teachers, providing opportunities for professional development, and making support resources available. In some cases, their strategies for ensuring faculty quality are unique. In other cases, they exemplify best practices recognized (although not necessarily implemented) in the ESL field. In still other cases, they are struggling to meet the same challenges other programs face. Their approaches to each of the elements entailed in creating high quality faculties are reviewed below.

2. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND STATUS

Qualifications. A major perceived strength of community colleges in delivering adult ESL services is that many set high standards for hiring ESL faculty. At most colleges, a Master's degree is the minimal qualification for full-time faculty who teach credit courses, and an increasing number of community college faculty have doctoral degrees. While faculty who teach non-credit classes, especially on a part-time basis, may not be *required* to have a graduate degree, their presence in an institution where others have that qualification is likely to encourage them to seek advanced education as well. Being part of a community college faculty both directly and indirectly encourages higher professional qualifications.

At all of the five colleges in this study, full-time non-credit ESL instructors are expected to have a Master's degree in TESOL, applied linguistics, English, or rhetoric, or in a related field with a specialization in TESOL. At some of the colleges, such as CCSF, even part-time faculty are required to have a Master's degree, and at other colleges, they are expected to have at least TESOL certification or some graduate preparation in TESOL. Many also have a Master's or even doctoral degree.

In brief, these five colleges have established unusually high standards for the qualifications of their full-time ESL faculty, and many have also set unusually high standards for part-time

teachers. One of the colleges, Lake County, considers specialized TESOL preparation to be so important that it has developed its own TESOL Certificate Program (discussed below).

Status. A college can demonstrate the importance or status of its non-credit ESL faculty in several ways. The first is through the number of full-time faculty it employs. As noted above, an important indicator of whether colleges reward teacher qualifications is the number of full-time positions available. Full-time faculty enhance program quality because they are usually located on campus and have the time, as well as the responsibility, to engage in activities beyond teaching. For example, they are available to meet with students on a regular basis, and to serve on curriculum or other committees. They are also more likely to remain at the college, providing stability to the ESL program. The three full-time instructors at Yakima have been there for 11-26 years.

Full-time faculty. Using the number of full-time faculty teaching non-credit ESL courses as an indicator of status, most of the colleges examined by this study do not rank high, although they probably rank higher than most other community colleges and most adult education programs offered by other providers.

Except for CCSF, the number of full-time non-credit ESL instructors at the five participating colleges is relatively small compared to the number of part-time instructors. For example, Lake County has only three full-time instructors teaching in the non-credit ESL program and about 80 part-time instructors. Yakima has three full-time non-credit ESL instructors and 20-30 part-time instructors. Although Seminole has more full-time faculty in adult education than other community colleges in Florida, the number of full-time non-credit ESL faculty is small in comparison to those teaching part time. A similar situation exists at Bunker Hill.

However, these fairly small numbers of full-time faculty members must be considered in context. One of the major goals of all community colleges is to provide educational opportunities that are far more affordable than those of four-year institutions. One way they achieve *this* is to rely heavily on adjunct faculty for instruction in almost all of their programs. As a result, it should not be surprising that they rely heavily on adjuncts in ESL, and it does not appear that this reliance is any greater than it is in most of their other credit or non-credit offerings.

Likewise, most adult education programs offered by school systems and CBOs simply do not have the resources to employ very many full-time staff members. It is not unusual to find adult education programs in which the only full-time person is the program director. Looked at this way, the fairly small numbers of full-time faculty in the ESL programs examined by this study is regrettable, but it is probably a less meaningful indicator of status than it might appear to be.

Nevertheless, CCSF demonstrates that it is possible for colleges to greatly increase the ratio of full-time to part-time ESL faculty. More than half of the instructors teaching non-credit ESL at CCSF are full time. Historically, the reason for this appears to be a combination of a strong union that has pressed for more full-time faculty over many years together with a succession of college leaders who have championed ESL.

CCSF believes that the benefits of a large full-time ESL faculty have been substantial. Full time instructors increase the stability and effectiveness of its ESL programs because they are able to do much of the ESL Department's administrative and developmental work – such as serving on committees or writing curriculum. In addition, the large number of full-time teachers increases the Department's flexibility in managing faculty resources. CCSF requires both credit and non-credit ESL faculty to have a Master's degree in TESOL or a related field, and it has established parity in wages and benefits between credit and non-credit instructors. As a result, instructors can be assigned to either credit or non-credit courses as required. This flexibility is made possible because all ESL instruction at CCSF is managed by the same academic department.

Part-time instructors. A second status indicator of adult ESL faculty is the reimbursement and opportunities offered to part-time instructors. <u>Most of the colleges examined by this study report that they pay part-time faculty at higher rates than are paid in adult education programs managed by school systems or CBOs in their areas</u>. Nevertheless, at all of these colleges, part-time instructors are paid at a significantly lower rate than full-time faculty. Because the reimbursement formulas for part-time faculty are complex, and because they differ among colleges, it is hard to establish the exact differential. However, it appears that at most of the colleges examined, part-time instructors are paid at half the rate of full- time faculty, or less.

This finding must be taken in context. Virtually all part-time instructors at most community colleges are paid at much lower rates than full-time faculty as a way to keep costs down. There is no indication that colleges discriminate against ESL instructors in this regard. In most cases, lower reimbursement rates for these instructors appear to be an artifact of college wage scales for all adjunct faculty. In addition, part-time instructors are usually compensated only for their classroom time. They are not expected to assume the same variety of additional responsibilities that full-time faculty assume. For example, they are not required to have major responsibilities for program management and curriculum development, or for assisting students outside the classroom.

However, <u>most of the colleges examined have attempted to increase the status of part-time faculty in some way</u>, and they note that many part-time instructors have been teaching at their colleges for many years. For example, at most of the colleges examined, openings for full-time positions are usually filled by part-time instructors who meet the hiring qualifications. Why? Because these instructors have experience with the program and its students. Moreover, many of the colleges examined provide part-time instructors with healthcare and other benefits (which have considerable financial value) as well as professional development opportunities.

At Yakima, part-time instructors who teach enough hours receive full healthcare benefits at the beginning of their second quarter of teaching. At CCSF, part-time faculty gets health benefits and sick leave after three semesters of teaching, and all professional development activities are open to all teachers. At Lake County, part-time instructors are eligible for catastrophic health and life insurance, and they receive one day of sick leave each semester. The professional development opportunities for part-time instructors at Lake County are

almost comparable to those available to full-time faculty, and, for some activities, part-time instructors are eligible for stipends. At Seminole, part-time instructors receive the same professional development benefits as full-time instructors.

Non-credit faculty. A third indicator of the status of adult ESL faculty is the degree to which non-credit and credit ESL instructors are treated comparably. One way the colleges in this study excel in improving faculty status is that they have removed many of the disparities that often exist between faculty teaching credit and non-credit classes. All five colleges have made special efforts to enhance the status of non-credit faculty by providing them with employment conditions that are roughly equivalent to those of credit faculty.

At Lake County, CCSF, and Yakima, all full-time non-credit and credit faculty members are represented by the same union and receive the same salary rates and benefits. At CCSF, the president of the union and of the faculty senate can be, and have been, from both credit and non-credit faculty. At Lake County, both non-credit and credit ESL faculty receive reimbursement for graduate courses and participation in conferences or workshops. They are also both eligible for stipends and released time for curriculum development, sabbaticals, and tenure. A similar situation exists at Seminole and Yakima. At Yakima, this parity has existed only since 1994. Prior to that, non-credit instructors were paid only 60 percent of the salary paid to credit instructors.

At several of the colleges, although salary and benefits for credit and non-credit faculty are comparable, the teaching load differs. At CCSF, non-credit instructors teach 25 hours per week, compared with 15 hours per week for credit faculty. A similar situation exists at Seminole, where non-credit faculty teach 20 hours a week, compared with 15 for credit faculty.

Summary. In general, then, the qualifications and the status of non-credit faculty, both full-time and part-time, in these community colleges are relatively high. All full-time non-credit ESL instructors and many of the part-time instructors have advanced degrees in TESOL or a related field, and those without an advanced degree have graduate coursework, certification, or extensive ESL teaching experience. Non-credit faculty receive a similar salary schedule and benefits – including opportunities for professional development, sabbaticals, or tenure – as those accorded to credit faculty. Although the percentage of part-time instructors far exceeds that of full-time instructors at all of the colleges except CCSF, many of those part-timers have equivalent qualifications and have been teaching at the colleges for many years. Thus, when a full-time opening is available, most of the colleges select one of their experienced part-time instructors.

Still, the prevalence of part-time instructors, as well as the differential between their reimbursement and that of full-time faculty, is a serious concern to the non-credit ESL program directors at all of the colleges. Importantly, all of them have taken some steps to elevate the status of part-time faculty by providing them with at least some benefits and professional development opportunities.

3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FACULTY AND STAFF

Practices. In addition to requiring high initial qualifications when hiring non-credit ESL faculty, the colleges in this study offer an array of professional development opportunities for their faculty and staff – beginning with extensive orientation for new faculty and staff, support for participation in workshops and seminars, reimbursement for graduate courses, opportunities to write and share materials or assessment items, and extensive training where needed. Some of the colleges, notably Seminole and Lake County, have gone beyond supporting or providing professional development for their own faculty to giving them opportunities to make presentations and share their expertise with others, first locally, and then to a wider range of colleagues.

Because the use of technology in language teaching (as with all instruction) is becoming more important, most colleges also provide technology training and support to faculty and staff, online and face-to-face, often through the colleges' technology centers. Most also use the services of professional development offices or programs on their campuses.

Professional development activities of these kinds are essential to maintaining a high quality faculty. Most of them can be found in many community college ESL programs. But, in addition to these activities, the colleges participating in this study have created a number of strategies for professional development that are unique among non-credit ESL programs. These will be discussed in more detail below. They include:

- Peer Mentoring at Yakima
- The TESOL Certificate Program at Lake County
- REEP Rubric Training at Bunker Hill
- The Reflective Teaching Project at CCSF
- Program and Resource Specialists at Seminole
- Other professional development initiatives at the five colleges

Models. These strategies have a value in their own right, but they also demonstrate different approaches to professional development of language teachers. This aspect of creating and maintaining a high quality faculty and programs has been divided into three general models: (1) the craft or mentoring model; (2) the applied science or theory to practice model, and (3) the inquiry or reflective practice model.[28]

An example of the craft or mentoring model is the peer mentoring program at Yakima, where new instructors are paired with more experienced instructors to help orient them to the program's participatory, student-generated thematic curricular approach. The TESOL Certificate Program at Lake County and the numerous workshops, seminars, and extended training programs offered at all of the colleges are examples of the applied science model, in which instructors learn about new theories, new approaches, new textbooks, or new tests, and then have an opportunity to apply these in their instruction. The inquiry or reflective practice approach is central to the Reflective Teaching Project at CCSF, where (typically)

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[28] Crandall, J.A. 1994. *Creating A Professional Workforce in Adult ESL Literacy.* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.

experienced teachers are provided with opportunities to study their own teaching and with the help of their peers, make changes in it.

In practice, most extended professional development activities have features from more than one of these models. Moreover, none of these alone is sufficient for the range of professional development activities desired and needed by instructors with a range of experience and interests. For example, in general, mentoring is most effective for orienting or introducing instructors to a program, and reflective teaching is most effective in helping experienced instructors fine-tune their teaching and possibly to rekindle a waning interest in teaching.

> ***Peer Mentoring at Yakima.*** The instructional approach of a learner-generated thematic curriculum at Yakima requires a great deal of expertise and effort on the part of each instructor. At the beginning of each term, teachers analyze student goals and needs and develop specific curricula to achieve the goals. Although new instructors are likely to bring curriculum development experience from their TESOL graduate programs or their previous teaching assignments, Yakima's approach to instruction poses challenges that few have faced before. Teachers must learn how to help students articulate their needs and how to use that information, in a very short time period, to create appropriate units of instruction. Moreover, they must develop instructional plans and materials that fit within the Core Competencies mandated by the state. In addition, the Yakima program uses no textbooks, and instructors used to relying on texts to structure their teaching may feel that they are "operating without a net if they don't have a textbook to teach from."[29] As one instructor said, "After teaching this way a few times, I'm now comfortable, but this [not knowing exactly what I'll be teaching ahead of time] caused me great anxiety when I first started teaching."
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> To help orient new instructors, Yakima uses the same learner-centered, problem-solving, experiential approach to teacher training that it does in its adult ESL classes. New teachers first meet with administrative staff and receive an orientation CD and an ABE/ESL Departmental Notebook – which explain the instructional philosophy of the program. New teachers at the two main campuses then have the opportunity to learn from peer mentors. Mentoring is provided by the three full-time faculty members and by experienced part-time instructors. Peer mentors meet with new teachers, open their classrooms for observations, and then discuss what they have observed. They also arrange special meeting times when neither the mentor nor the new instructor is teaching (especially afternoons or Fridays) and use e-mail to discuss questions and concerns. Because of the link between ESL and ABE at Yakima, new full-time ABE faculty are given released time to observe ESL classes. This allows them to learn how to monitor their speech patterns, such as their speed and the use of idioms to accommodate ESL learners. It also allows them to observe the variety of strategies ESL instructors use to increase communication and understanding. ABE

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[29] This and the other quotations of teachers in this section are drawn from reports prepared by CAAL's co-researchers at the five community colleges.

instructors report that these experiences help them adjust their own teaching strategies, in classes predominantly comprised of former ESL students.

Through this peer mentoring process, new instructors learn how students articulate their goals and also how that information is translated into teaching activities and lessons. They learn how to facilitate learning, to be "the guide on the side, rather than the sage on the stage." Yakima provides workshops on its student-generated strategy for instruction as well, but these have not been as effective as peer mentoring, which offers the opportunity to see the strategy in action and to talk later with instructors who use it successfully.

Peer mentoring at Yakima developed "organically" in response to a 10-year budget crisis, which drastically reduced funds for more traditional professional development (such as statewide or regional trainings or conference participation). While ESL faculty believe that peer mentoring helps individual instructors become accustomed to the learning and teaching approach at the College, they also believe that a fuller program of professional development should be offered, including opportunities to attend workshops or professional conferences. Moreover, new instructors at off-campus sites have very limited access to experienced instructors from whom they can observe and learn. As a result, it is difficult for these teachers to take part in peer mentoring. A recent small grant now supports instructor-led workshops with follow-up action planning for these off-campus teachers. Those who wish to attend are given released time.

Yakima's peer mentoring approach to professional development requires much time and effort on the part of a few faculty members (whose participation is voluntary and unpaid), especially the three full-time instructors. Ideally, a person would be designated and paid to provide initial orientation for new teachers. Ideally, too, those engaged in mentoring (having their classes observed and meeting with instructors afterwards to discuss the class) would receive additional compensation or released time.

Peer mentoring is both a natural extension of the learning approach used in the Yakima program and an effective (though taxing) orientation to what is likely to be an unfamiliar and anxiety-producing teaching approach for new instructors.

Lake County's TESOL Certificate Program. Although TESOL programs are usually offered by universities, Lake County Community College has developed its own TESOL Certificate Program to provide professional development for its adjunct faculty, most of whom live too far from other TESOL programs to attend them easily. TESOL also serves as a recruitment program for new faculty who otherwise would have to be drawn from the Chicago area, more than an hour's drive away.

The TESOL Certificate Program also provides convenient courses for K-12 teachers seeking certifications to teach ESL, as well as for former ESL students who would

like to become bilingual/bicultural teacher aides. A 2002 survey of the elementary, middle, and high schools in the College's district found that 87 percent needed teachers with ESL or bilingual endorsements and that bilingual aides were also needed. Before Lake County's Certificate program was created, there was no conveniently located program that could provide this training. After receiving many requests from K-12 teachers, Lake County petitioned the state for authority to offer all six of the courses required for the Illinois ESL K-12 endorsement. It is the only community college to which the state has granted this request. The program also meets the state requirements for bilingual/bicultural teacher aides.

The Lake County TESOL Certificate Program consists of ten courses. Although it is technically an undergraduate program, it offers courses that are equivalent to those comprising most Master's TESOL programs.[30] The syllabi and textbooks are also similar to those that would be used in a Master's TESOL preparation program.

The College provides funding for one course per semester for any of its part-time instructors who want to enroll in the program. Instructors pay only for their books and a small fee of $7 per credit hour. Attending one course per semester also meets the College's professional development requirement. Because of how the program is organized, and the possibility of taking some courses online or in a hybrid format, it might be possible to take the six courses (18 credit hours) required for a K-12 ESL certification in one year, or to complete the ten courses (30 credit hours) required for a TESOL certificate in a year, although few students are able to devote the time it takes to accomplish this.

The major responsibility for teaching and managing the program rests on one full-time ESL instructor (with a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Rhetoric and a TESOL specialization) and another full-time ESL instructor (with a Master's in Applied Linguistics/TESOL plus post-Master's graduate coursework). Both have extensive experience providing professional development and both have served as instructors for CELTA (Cambridge English Language Teaching to Adults) programs. They are also experienced teachers who know the strengths and needs of Lake County's ESL programs, teachers, and students. Additional courses are taught by faculty in Communications, Psychology, and Education.

Not only does the Certificate Program provide convenient and easily affordable professional development to a range of ESL teachers (essentially, the only cost is the instructor's salary), but it also has the further benefit of bringing together K-12 and college ESL teachers and creating a learning community among colleagues.

Moreover, many participants in the Certificate Program who are initially interested in obtaining a K-12 certification meet their classroom observation requirements by spending time in the non-credit ESL program. As a result, they may become

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[30] These are: General Linguistics, Intercultural Communication, Theories of Teaching ESL and Bilingual Education, Methods of Teaching ESL, Grammar, Phonetics and Phonology, Assessment, Linguistics and Society, a Practicum, and either Introduction to Teaching or Introduction to Psychology

interested in teaching in that program. It is not uncommon for ESL teachers to teach in both K-12 and adult ESL programs, and the Lake County Certificate Program helps prepare them for both settings.

Currently, the majority of program participants are K-12 teachers. Some of them would like to teach adults. Others are volunteers who tutor ESL students. Still others are current part-time instructors at the College who want to improve their skills and meet the College's certification requirements. The main reason that some ESL faculty do not choose to participate is that they prefer a graduate program, although this requires traveling a considerable distance and is much more expensive.

Because of the TESOL Certificate Program, the College has been able to increase its requirements for new part-time ESL faculty. It now requires a minimum of a TESOL certificate, endorsement, specialization, 12 hours of TESOL-related coursework, or a Master's degree in a related field with bilingual/bicultural experience. Of the College's 106 adjunct Adult Education faculty, 31 have Master's degrees in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, English, or Adult Education with a specialization in TESOL, which leaves 75 who could potentially benefit from the Certificate Program. As of 2006 (three years after the program received Illinois State Board approval), 16 Lake County part-time faculty have taken courses, and four have completed the certificate. However, after a 2005 survey clarified that tuition was waived for teachers at the College, interest has expanded, and more part-time faculty are expected to participate.

Through its TESOL Certificate Program, Lake County has devised an elegant solution to a number of local problems and also provided an on-site professional development program for its current and prospective faculty at minimal cost.

Bunker Hill's REEP Writing Rubric Training. All ESL faculty at Bunker Hill – those teaching in the free, non-credit adult ESOL program; the fee-based non-credit BSL program; and the credit ESL program – participate in training to enable them to administer the REEP writing assessment, which serves as a common assessment tool for the three ESL programs. The REEP writing assessment instrument was selected for the three programs because the College places special importance on writing as a gatekeeper for entry into academic programs. One characteristic of the REEP assessment it that it requires the establishment of inter-rater reliability in scoring writing samples. Special training is needed to establish this reliability.

Adult ESOL instructors receive this training through the statewide System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES), which requires adult ESOL faculty and staff to be certified before administering REEP assessments. The BSL and credit ESL faculty receive their training through the college ESL Department Chair and the Director of Assessment, who have been trained by SABES.

The REEP training provided by Bunker Hill has three components: (1) a workshop to explain the REEP test administration and scoring procedures, (2) testing sessions to establish and maintain inter-rater reliability, and (3) re-certification training. The College believes that training faculty to evaluate writing materials in an equivalent manner helps increase articulation and transition among the various ESL programs, because it ensures that the English proficiency of students in all programs is measured by the same commonly understood standard. In addition, this training provides an opportunity for faculty across the three programs to discuss their particular programs.

CCSF's Reflective Teaching. CCSF faculty have the opportunity of participating without cost (and, until recently, with a stipend) in a Reflective Teaching Project, an excellent example of the third type of professional development: the inquiry or reflective practice model. In this Project, small groups of 6 to 8 teachers meet monthly during the school year at each of the five major campuses. The purpose is to help each other improve their teaching, with a focus on student learning. Teachers commit to meeting once a month for a year, though many continue beyond that time.

The groups follow a "cycle of inquiry" process that consists of the following steps:

- An initial meeting between the "focus teacher" and the group's facilitator to discuss the teaching-related issue or problem that will be presented to the group at the next meeting and also to identify readings for the group;
- Presentation to the group of the issue or problem by the focus teacher;
- A clarification phase during which the other members of the group ask questions to better understand the issue or problem, but without offering advice;
- An interpretation phase which begins with the focus teacher analyzing or theorizing about the situation, followed by other members' interpretation of why the problem or issue arose;
- An experimentation phase in which the group gives suggestions for "intelligent actions" for the teacher to try;
- A feedback phase during which the focus teacher provides oral feedback on the process and/or content, and the other participants provide feedback on the whole session; and
- An opportunity to share any insights or changes that have occurred with the problem discussed at the last session, before a new problem is discussed.

As one participant explained, the "process encourages discussion of the thorniest problem issues in a supportive environment" and "gives teachers time to sort out and understand these issues better."[31] The issues that have been addressed during the Reflective Teaching Project are problems that most experienced teachers of adult ESL would recognize as among the most difficult they confront. Among them are:

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[31] All quotes on Reflective Teaching come from the Profile of this practice prepared by Sharon Seymour of CCSF for CAAL.

- How to address socially and emotionally charged topics in the ESL classroom;
- How to create a classroom community with a small, multi-level group;
- How to deal with the steady stream of new students coming to class throughout the semester (in an open-entry program);
- How to promote or not promote students who attend consistently but are still struggling, compared with those whose attendance is poor but are performing well;
- How to deal with disruptive students who blurt out opinions or "hijack" the class;
- What to do in a multi-level ESL class with Generation 1.5 students (immigrants who have some, usually secondary school, education in the United States and may be quite fluent in English, but are still struggling with some aspects of the language, especially in writing);
- How to deal with students who are reluctant to participate in various activities; and
- How to encourage the use of English when the majority of students share a common language.

The Reflective Teaching Project uses a non-judgmental, collaborative problem-solving approach. It is directly focused on the needs of teachers, the majority of whom are very experienced (more than ten years of teaching at CCSF), and on the problems or issues they encounter in their teaching. Their combined experiences are not only helpful to each other, but also to more novice teachers who may participate in the process. Moreover, the process is teacher-initiated and teacher-controlled, unlike many professional development activities or the formal evaluation process negotiated by the union. It permits teachers to think and plan collaboratively in helping to change their classroom practices and also the ways in which they think of their teaching or their students' learning.

The idea for the Project was drawn from a reflective inquiry program at the San Francisco Unified School District, with which a CCSF instructor was affiliated. At first, the Project was small – only 6 teachers participated. But after several sessions, faculty recommended that it be expanded to include more teachers. The Chair of the ESL Department welcomed this as a way to meet a need for increased professional development activities for faculty – especially activities that would provide time for teachers to talk with others about teaching. Initially, facilitators attended a full-week training offered by the School for International Training in San Francisco, and these facilitators now offer workshops to train others.

When asked how the Project has affected their instructional practices, teachers usually respond in terms of generalities, rather than by citing specific examples of what they do differently in the classroom. For example, teachers report that they are "more aware of the many factors that affect student learning" and "better able to react to student learning while it is happening." They also report that they have become more conscious of student needs, and better able to encourage interaction

and communication. The Project has also helped them become more professionally engaged, "more inspired, and encouraged about teaching." And it has created a greater sense of connectedness with their colleagues.

In one mid-year feedback survey, more than half (54 percent) of the teachers who had participated in the Project strongly agreed that they would like to continue in it, and 60 percent strongly agreed that they would recommend reflective teaching to others. In other surveys, participants recommended that the Project should be structured around groups of faculty teaching the same level/focus class. They also recommended that all new teachers should be required to participate in reflective teaching, because it would help them get to know their colleagues and better understand the non-credit program.

Many participants continue with the project for several semesters. During the first year (2003), 38 ESL teachers participated; in 2004-05, another 35 took part. Each year, about 14 percent of the College's non-credit ESL teachers join. About half of the participants are full-time instructors, and the other half part-timers. By 2005, about 25 percent of all CCSF's non-credit ESL instructors had taken part. The practice has become so highly regarded that the Basic Skills Committee has decided to adopt reflective teaching as a model for staff development of credit instructors teaching in all of the basic skills programs at the College, and the Committee has secured grant funds to support this initiative.

For its first two years, the Reflective Teaching Project was funded by federal WIA program improvement funds. The start-up cost of six reflective teaching groups in 2003-04 was $50,000. These costs consisted of stipends for the coordinator, the facilitators, the participants, and the trainers. Funding was cut to $27,000 in 2005-2006. As a result, participants are no longer paid (although the ESL Department believes in paying stipends to instructors for taking part in professional development activities), and the stipends for the coordinator and facilitators were reduced. However, this reduction in funding did not decrease participation in the Project. In fact, the number of groups increased in 2005-06 to five non-credit ESL and two credit ESL groups.

An emphasis on inquiry and reflection about teaching is becoming central in the training of new teachers and in the continuing professional development of more experienced teachers in many areas of the education field. Many educators believe that helping teachers analyze their own beliefs about teaching and the effects of their classroom practices on student learning can improve instruction better than professional development programs where the topics are selected by others. The reflective teaching approach to professional development is especially important for experienced teachers, who often face burnout. Through the process, they are

encouraged to try new methods and materials, to take risks, and as a result, to become reinvigorated as teachers.[32]

Seminole's Program and Resource Specialists. Like all of the other colleges in this study, Seminole provides a range of professional development opportunities for its ESL faculty. One distinctive strategy it employs is the use of Program Resource Specialists, non-faculty members who perform a wide range of functions to support the teaching staff. Presently, the College employs three Specialists for these purposes, with the titles of ELS (English Language Studies) Program Specialist, ELS Resource Specialist, and ELS Curriculum/Computer Assisted Learning Specialist.

All Specialists provide training and workshops, often focused on curriculum or materials. They help new and experienced teachers understand the Florida ESOL frameworks and they direct the teachers to the curriculum and materials Seminole has developed to meet those frameworks. As a result, they promote standardization of instruction across the program. In addition, they orient faculty to the set of lesson plans developed by Seminole ESL teachers as part of the TIES (Total Immersion of English Speakers) Program. TIES helps students use English in a community activity. Among the other functions performed by the Specialists are:

- Reviewing and recommending appropriate ESL curriculum websites,
- Providing materials to support new or revised curriculum objectives,
- Training instructors in writing lesson plans to achieve curriculum objectives,
- Conducting formal classroom observations of all part-time ESL instructors each year and more informal observations as needed,
- Working closely with the College testing staff to schedule and facilitate placement tests, and
- Meeting with students who are having difficulties with the content or other expectations of courses or communicating those difficulties to the instructor.

In general, the Resource Specialists play a major role in facilitating communication among students, faculty, program administration, and the wider college community. Most importantly, they support the ESL faculty by relieving them of many responsibilities they would otherwise have to undertake. Faculty members can concentrate their attention on teaching to a greater extent than in many ESL programs. In short, Seminole's Resource Specialists are the people to go to when

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[32] There is a substantial literature on the benefits of reflective teaching, drawn from the work of John Dewey. See: 1) Brookfield, S. 1995. *Becoming A Critically Reflective Teacher*. SF: Jossey-Bass. 2) Dewey, J. 1933. *How we think.* Buffalo: Prometheus Books. 3) Richards, J. & Lockhart, C. 1994. *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms.* NY: Cambridge. 4) Rodgers, C. 2002: "Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking", *Teachers College Record 4*(4), pp. 842-866. 5) Wallace, M. J. 1991. *Training Foreign language Teachers: A Reflective Approach*.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 6) Zeichner, K.M. & Liston, D. 1996. *Reflective Teaching: An Introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. See also: The School for International Training's Teacher Knowledge Project. (Contact: Maggie Cassidy at SIT: mcassidy@sover.net; or TKP, SIT, Box 676, Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676.)

someone is having difficulty. As one teacher put it, "They allow us to teach and do our jobs!"[33]

Each Specialist's role has evolved over time. The first Specialist was employed in 2003-04 as a part-time staff member. Since then, the College has created three full-time Specialist positions. All were initially funded by grants, but the salary of one of them is now part of the College's core budget. Qualifications for the Specialists consist of either a Master's degree with specialization in TESOL or a Bachelor's degree in English, Communications, or a related field, with experience in teaching adult ESL. Specialists must also have bilingual English-Spanish skills and/or professional experience working with multicultural groups.

Because of the limited funds allotted to non-credit adult ESL, it can be difficult to choose between supporting other program needs and funding Specialists such as these. CCSF previously had a Resource Instructor funded with WIA program improvement funds, but the College now uses that money to support a webmaster and a staff facilitator who arranges workshops for staff. Even programs smaller than Seminole's may find that it is advantageous to support at least one resource specialist, however. Small programs have fewer instructors and other staff, but they must perform almost as many non-teaching tasks as larger programs. Those tasks can distract faculty from their teaching. Assigning at least some of them to a resource or program specialist can be a cost-effective use of funds.

Other Professional Development Initiatives at the Five Colleges. In addition to the innovative practices discussed above, all five of the colleges participating in this study provide professional development to their faculty in other ways.

All provide special workshops to address teacher-identified needs. For example, at Lake County, recent workshops have focused on learning styles, lesson planning, managing multi-level classes (always a challenge for language teachers), and using Power Point. The Teaching and Learning Center on campus offers classes that teachers are paid to attend. Lake County also hosts a mini-conference that helps new instructors develop abstracts, proposals, and presentations. This activity aims to increase faculty attendance at statewide or national conferences.

CCSF offers three workshops each year in response to teachers' requests. Recent workshops have focused on helping students improve their self-editing and reading skills. Seminole offers a variety of workshops, some of which focus on helping teachers make use of new instructional tools, such as "Cleary Said, Clearly Read" (the College's phonemic awareness initiative discussed in Part II). Bunker Hill hosts meetings with publishers who come to the College to present new materials. In addition, the faculty at Bunker Hill often pilot new textbooks and computer-based materials, such as the IBM Reading Recognition and "Writing Outloud" programs.

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[33] This quotation and information about the Specialists come from the Profile of this practice prepared for CAAL by Sandy Ares of Seminole Community College.

Seminole receives special state funding to provide adult ESL training for its region in Florida. Instructors throughout the area receive stipends from the state to attend these training sessions. Through them, Seminole disseminates its innovative instructional strategies, including "Clearly Said, Clearly Read" and "Total Immersion in English Skills" as well as other practices its faculty have found to be effective. The College's dissemination efforts provide specific lesson plans that others can adapt for use in their classes.

All of the colleges also encourage faculty to develop teaching and learning materials. For example, faculty from all three of the ESL programs at Bunker Hill develop their own assessment tools, which are stored in electronic format and shared with other faculty. Faculty also receive stipends for creating new curricula or courses. In addition, Bunker Hill's BSL program has developed an observation instrument that is used by faculty to learn from the teaching practices of their peers.

Participation in a linked or bridge program, such as the CNA program at Lake County or the ESL/ABE program at Yakima, also provides professional development to the instructors who teach in those programs. These programs offer opportunities for ESL instructors to become better acquainted with the kinds of language requirements their students encounter in academic or employment-related classes. They also provide opportunities for vocational instructors to better understand the needs of English language learners in their classes, as well as ways to better meet those needs. Some of the most effective professional development comes from long-term interaction with instructors from other disciplines who can help provide a fresh perspective on teaching and learning. Lake County offers the possibility of team-teaching a course to its part-time instructors as one way to achieve long-term interaction with a colleague.

4. RESOURCE CENTERS AND WEBSITES

The need. All five of the study colleges have resource centers where curricular materials are housed, including curriculum frameworks, textbooks, teacher-developed lesson plans, assessment instruments, course syllabi, and other teaching and learning materials. These resource centers provide orientation for new instructors or current instructors who are teaching a new course or a new ESL level. They also help maintain the instructional integrity of the program by allowing teachers to build on what others have developed and helping to ensure that the instruction is focused on the needs of learners at different levels of proficiency and with different levels of prior education.

A major challenge in providing instructional resources to faculty is that all of the programs examined by this study have classes at off-campus sites, and some are at a considerable distance from the main campus. Often instructors at off-campus sites are part-time faculty and have less experience than those at the main campus. To make instructional resources available to them, many of the colleges have developed program websites that enable instructors to access those resources electronically. As programs rely more on technology-based instruction and distance education, these websites are becoming increasingly important. Equally important, they help promote communication among faculty and

administrators, who may not otherwise see each other except during meetings at the beginning or end of the term.

CCSF's extensive website is described in detail below, followed by brief discussion of the resource centers and websites at Seminole and Bunker Hill.

CCSF. The ESL Department at City College of San Francisco maintains a resource center at its downtown location (31 Gough Street), but the Center's resources are also available online at the department website (www.ccsf.edu/Departments/ESL). This website was started as a resource for ESL faculty by a full-time faculty member who was granted 20 percent release time in 1999. With a large faculty (350 ESL instructors, 250 of whom teach in the noncredit program) and a large institution of nine campuses and numerous other sites where ESL instruction is provided, the program found it important to find ways to link instructors.

The CCSF website consists of four sections: *About the Department, ESL Course Offerings, Resources for Students, and Resources for Teachers*.

Resources for Teachers is described here. It has three links, two of which are open to the public (the "Teacher Resource Center" or TRC, and the "Teacher Resource Library"). A third link, "Instructors Only," is password-protected and restricted to instructors. Instructors who have not taught a particular course before can use these resources to develop their instructional plans. They can also look at materials from other courses to see what instruction students had in their previous classes. And they can use the contact information given to obtain more information from colleagues.

The TRC link on the College's website offers a wide range of resources, including the following:

1. The TRC VESL Page. This section provides links to VESL courses at the College, as well as VESL resources at CCSF and elsewhere, including occupational interest and career awareness surveys, lesson plans, and links to such state and national resources as the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN), the California Adult Professional Development Project (CALPRO), the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, the (former) ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, and the TESOL English for Specific Purposes Interest Section. This is one of the most heavily used pages at the ESL Department website.

2. The TRC ESL Civic Page. This section supports the College's Citizenship and Civic Preparation programs with links to state-approved objectives,

and materials for citizenship and civic participation developed by CCSF instructors.

3. The TRC Assessment Page. This section provides general information about assessment instruments used by the CCSF ESL program, as well as copies of tests, manuals for administering them, reports of assessment results, and the College Noncredit Curriculum Guide.

4. The TRC Library. This "online library" of curricula, testing information, professional development opportunities, and other resources can be easily accessed by teachers from home or at the college.

The TRC link also provides access to a group of teachers, library experts, and other staff members who assist ESL and ABE instructors, materials developers, and researchers.

Because of the website's size and scope, CCSF uses WIA program improvement funds to pay a webmaster to maintain and update it on a regular basis. For example, recent software acquisitions have made it possible for instructors to create their own homepages.

CCSF also maintains a number of listservs. For example, there are listservs for departmental committees, VESL instructors, and non-credit instructors. Some of the conversations on the non-credit listserv have focused on recruitment, retention, and the role of needs assessments. All website features, including the listservs, play an important role in communication and information transfer in a program as large as CCSF's .

A recent survey of CCSF ESL faculty found that, of those who completed the survey, 68 percent of the full-time and 45 percent of the part-time instructors reported using the ESL website. Newer part-time faculty (less than five years at CCSF) appear to be slightly more likely to use it. Full-time faculty report that the site gives them access to useful curricula and materials, saves them time, and helps them feel linked to the department. Part-time instructors report similar benefits, adding that it has given them access to information they did not otherwise know how to find. Ironically, several faculty were prompted by the survey to investigate what one termed a "fantastic resource" they had not previously used.

Websites at Seminole and Bunker Hill. Seminole maintains Resource Centers at all of its campuses and a Department website which provide information and support to ESL faculty. These are maintained by the ELS Resource Specialists. The website provides a range of curricula and materials which can

be downloaded for use either in the classroom or in a computer lab, and which provide information for instructors. The Resource Centers also provide office space for part-time faculty. Bunker Hill's ESL website was developed with a mini-grant. It offers a central place for faculty to share curricula, assessment items, and program information.

Lake County is in the process of developing an online ESL Resource Center for instructors. The Center will provide access to materials and a way for faculty to post questions and comments. Although Yakima does not have a departmental website, discussion is underway about establishing one where ESL instructors can post instructional questions and comments.

The role of resource centers. These departmental resource centers and websites play an important ongoing role in support for instructors and self-generated professional development. The ability to learn from colleagues and to ask questions of a group of experienced instructors creates an ongoing "just in time" professional development resource. Resource centers and websites are also a means of bringing together faculty with common interests and can serve as vital communication links (both actual and virtual) among instructors and administrators.

However, both the resource centers and the websites require the dedicated time of a center director, a program support specialist, and/or a webmaster. While federal or state funding for professional development can be used for these purposes at some colleges, these funds are limited. Deciding to use them to support resource centers and websites involves a trade-off with competing needs. But, given the efficiency of resource centers and related websites in providing professional development, colleges may find this trade-off worth making.

Lessons for Other Programs

Faculty qualifications. Highly qualified faculty members are essential to the success of ESL programs in terms of learning gains, retention, transitions and many other measures. Building a high quality faculty begins with hiring well prepared and, where possible, experienced adult ESL teachers. In the programs examined by this study, the hiring qualifications for full-time instructors include a Master's degree in TESOL or in applied linguistics, English and rhetoric, or a related field, with a specialization in TESOL. Part-time instructors have at least a Bachelor's degree and coursework and/or substantial experience in teaching adult ESL.

The programs examined report that these faculty qualifications exceed those that are usually required by adult ESL programs of which they are aware. However, these programs have shown that it is possible to establish high standards for hiring faculty and also to find teachers to meet those standards in large and small programs in all parts of the country. Other programs should recognize the importance of recruiting highly qualified faculty and consider setting their hiring standards accordingly.

Full-time faculty. Most of the programs examined, and most other adult education ESL programs, have not retained enough full-time faculty members to anchor their instructional offerings and carry out the numerous functions beyond classroom teaching that are essential to maintaining a high quality instructional system. The major reason for this lack of full-time faculty is that programs feel the need to keep costs down. One way they do this is to limit spending on their largest cost component, faculty salaries.

CCSF has shown that colleges can afford to greatly increase the percentage of full-time faculty members in their ESL programs if they have the will to do so, and if existing faculty demand that they do so (through union representation or other means). CCSF uses its full-time instructors to increase the flexibility of its ESL program in managing staff assignments and to increase the stability and effectiveness of its offerings. Other colleges may wish to consider whether they would benefit in similar ways from increasing the number of full-time faculty. Relying on part-time instructors who may need to teach at several institutions, and who have limited time to devote to any one program, may be a good short-term financial decision, but an inadequate long-term strategy.

Part-time faculty. Programs should examine their policies for reimbursing part-time faculty. Adult education ESL programs could not function without part-time teachers. Although some of these teachers prefer a part-time position, many rely on part-time teaching for their livelihoods. Part-time teachers are often remarkably effective and dedicated professionals, but they simply cannot participate fully in creating or improving curricula, student advising, professional development, or other activities ancillary to classroom instruction without more financial support from the institutions that employ them.

Despite the importance of part-time faculty members, the rate at which colleges and other adult education providers pay these essential staff members is clearly inadequate. Most of the programs examined by this study have found ways to provide part-time faculty with at least some benefits, and some programs have narrowed the differential between their wages and those of full-time faculty. In the interests of fairness, to maintain the stability and quality of their part-time teaching staffs, other programs should do the same.

At a minimum, programs should find ways to reward able and experienced part-time instructors by providing them with stipends for their work in curriculum development and assessment, as well as for their participation in professional development activities. When full-time openings occur, the experience and expertise of the best part-time instructors should be a strong factor in hiring. Financial support and recognition of their contributions in future hiring decisions can be positive factors in gaining the loyalty of part-time faculty and improving both their effectiveness in the classroom and their other contributions to programs.

Professional development. Although a robust professional development program for ESL faculty may entail some expense, it is an essential component of any effective instructional system. The colleges examined by this study provide a rich menu of options for how professional development of college ESL faculty members might be structured and supported. Other programs should carefully examine which of these options best meet their needs. One option they should *not* consider is shortchanging professional

development, because in so doing they will also be shortchanging their programs and students.

Some of the strategies for professional development reviewed above focus on orienting new faculty. Others provide training to help teachers learn how to use new curriculum or materials, or how to develop their own materials following standard curricular frameworks. Still others enable more experienced teachers to study and reflect on their own classes as well as try out new strategies with the support of colleagues in a learning community. The colleges participating in this study also provide resource centers, departmental websites, support personnel, and networks of expert teachers who can answer questions or help faculty with their work.

The five colleges demonstrate that it is possible to provide an extensive range of professional development activities for both novice and experienced faculty, sometimes with creative use of available grants. Seminole has found that its Program and Resource Specialists play such an important role in orienting, training, and supporting faculty that the College has absorbed the cost of one Specialist and continues to use grant funding for the other two. CCSF has invested an enormous amount of time in the development of its departmental website and uses part of its federal program improvement funding to support a webmaster to maintain and update the site.

Not all professional development is costly, at least in financial terms. Bunker Hill has become a testing site for innovative computer-based reading and writing programs and has found that using a common assessment instrument not only provides articulation among its three ESL programs, but also brings faculty together for training and recalibration workshops. Lake County has discovered that it can recruit and train its own faculty by providing a range of courses in a TESOL Certificate Program that is principally funded by tuition from K-12 teachers who seek an ESL endorsement.

However, some seemingly inexpensive professional development *may* have costs. Yakima depends on the expertise of its senior faculty members for peer mentoring. Although this way of orienting new faculty to the College's learner-generated approach to instruction appears to entail little cost, it in fact absorbs a considerable amount of the time from the full-time instructors and experienced part-time instructors who provide the mentoring. Even the seemingly inexpensive Reflective Teaching Project at CCSF has associated costs in program coordination and facilitator training.

Despite cost considerations, all of the colleges examined have demonstrated that they place a high value on professional development and that robust programs to provide this essential program component can be created if there is the will to do so.

Lessons for Policy

Three major lessons for policy emerge from this review of measures to improve teacher quality:

First, because one of the major barriers to improving the quality of non-credit community college ESL programs is that most employ too few full-time teachers, federal and state funds should be made available to expand the number of full time positions. This would require not only increasing total national funding for adult education ESL, but also adoption of state and institutional policies to encourage hiring more full-time staff members. Due to current demographic trends and long waiting lists for many adult ESL programs across the country, more instructors, and in particular more full-time instructors who can anchor programs, will be needed. To maintain and increase the quality of ESL instruction, programs must be provided with the resources to hire more full-time faculty as well as to offer more classes. Alternatively, programs must receive enough funding to retain program resource specialists who can help improve the productivity of existing faculty members.

Second, professional development activities and resource centers must be expanded. Presently, most WIA program improvement funds are allocated by states and programs for teacher training. But these funds are woefully inadequate to support the level of professional development adult education ESL programs need, let alone to support resource centers and websites that create and maintain high quality faculties. WIA funding and investments in professional development by individual states and institutions must be greatly increased to provide the level of professional development that both part-time and full-time teachers need to provide high quality instruction.

Third, there is presently no national source of information about certification, endorsement, or other standards for adult ESL instructors. The national TESOL organization is in the process of finalizing teacher standards for adult ESL. CAAL could find no organization that has systematically documented or analyzed the efforts being undertaken by educational authorities in the various states to create certification criteria or performance standards for teachers in this field.

The U.S. Department of Education should collect information about state requirements and make this information available in a user-friendly way as it did with content standards through the Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse (http://www.adultedcontentstandards.org). State standards should be evaluated to determine how, and how well, they measure the abilities of ESL teachers. For the present, the course requirements of graduate TESOL teacher education programs are still the best measure of the initial quality of adult ESL teachers.

PART V: ENGINEERING INNOVATION

The colleges in this study as well as other community colleges reviewed have done a great deal to improve non-credit ESL service. Collectively, they have developed a large menu of innovative approaches to most of the major issues in this field. But none of them believe they have accomplished enough. The average learning gains, retention, and other measures of success of most of their students generally exceed national or state averages. But they are still far too low, as evidenced by the fact that some of their innovative practices show that these rates can be greatly increased, at least for some students.

In part, this gap between potential and reality in non-credit ESL exists because many of the more successful innovations found at colleges operate on a small scale – they serve very few students. For example, although 80 percent of Seminole's students are served by high intensity programs, this type of instruction is available to only a small percentage of students at the other colleges studied.

Moreover, progress in improving non-credit service has been uneven among colleges. Although all of the colleges reviewed have found new ways to attack at least some of the major problems this field faces, few have attacked all of the problems, or made use of all of the tools this study has shown are available to them. For example, Yakima's well-articulated ESL/ABE program has not yet been paired with supported vocational programs that might be of special value to its students with limited educational backgrounds.

In short, <u>although much has been achieved, much remains to be done in terms of expanding the scope and scale of innovation in non-credit ESL</u>. This conclusion is frustrating, considering that, collectively, colleges have generated so many promising approaches.

<u>A major reason that progress in improving non-credit service has been limited is that colleges have not adopted a systematic approach to engineering and sustaining innovation in this field</u>. Most of the promising practices discussed in prior sections are the legacies of ad hoc initiatives taken by individual faculty members or committees. Others have been developed in response to the availability of grants or contracts. In both cases, these initiatives have addressed specific problems within particular institutional settings. Colleges have rarely taken a holistic approach to upgrading non-credit ESL. That is, they have rarely engaged in strategic planning that would establish priorities and plans for service improvement. In fact, an over-dependence on grant support can lead to a situation where outside agencies determine their priorities. As a result, both at the level of individual colleges, and from a nationwide perspective, progress has been fragmentary – it has been more evolutionary than planned.

In addition, progress in adopting, expanding, and refining innovation has been handicapped by a shortage of essential information. At the institutional level, there is a serious shortage of data and analysis that would allow colleges or others to determine exactly how successful their innovative practices are, what aspects of them are most essential, how to refine them, and whether to expand them.

Moreover, most colleges know very little about innovations adopted elsewhere. There is no effective mechanism for peer learning in non-credit ESL. At best, college faculty and administrators learn what their counterparts are doing to improve service through contacts at professional meetings, articles in professional journals, or occasional reports. Thus, although many colleges are attempting some version of the same approaches to program improvement (such as high intensity or supported vocational instruction), there is no good way for them to learn the features of efforts elsewhere that might help them improve their programs. Nor is there any good way for them to learn about less common approaches, such as Yakima's learner-centered curriculum, in enough detail to understand whether or how those approaches might benefit them. Individually, all of the colleges examined by this study are experimental laboratories for improving non-credit service, but collaborative learning too rarely occurs among them.

This is not an indictment of colleges or their faculty. In fact, it is a tribute to the professional dedication of both to program improvement at their institutions. The progress they have made is all the more impressive because the colleges (and most other educational institutions) have not developed the mechanisms required to support systematic improvement in program design. Although the federal government, the states, and many institutions make available "program improvement" funds, these are usually exhausted quickly by the demands of on-going program management – such as faculty training and reporting requirements. For the most part, the standard academic model relies on the professionalism of faculty and administrators to bring about evolutionary progress. The result is some outstanding initiatives, but fragmentary progress overall.

To consolidate the gains that have been made in non-credit ESL, and to move forward in providing better service to more students, a different approach to program improvement will be required. At the institutional level, colleges will have to adapt their institutions to engineer innovation. In essence, this means that they must adopt systems of continuous program improvement, rather than episodic change. At a minimum, this will require:

- A commitment to strategic planning
- Managerial responsibilities and resources to support that commitment
- Improved evaluation research
- Supportive budgeting systems

At the state and national levels, there must be investment in an information infrastructure that will support program improvement in non-credit ESL. At a minimum, this will require:

- An effective system of peer learning
- Improved reporting requirements
- Research on high priority issues

Finally, at the state and national level, there must be a substantial increase in total funding for adult education ESL and a re-examination of where this service is positioned within state and national policy structures.

Each of these components will be considered separately below.

1. WHAT COLLEGES CAN DO

(a) Strategic Planning

With the exception of CCSF, none of the colleges examined in this study have a systematic strategic planning process for non-credit ESL. That is, they have no process for defining their goals for this service, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, establishing plans and priorities, implementing those priorities, monitoring progress, and revising both goals and plans based on experience. Insofar as they have goals, these tend to be expressed in global terms such as "providing high quality service in response to community needs." Insofar as they have plans, these are usually to expand or adapt particular practices. For example, Lake County plans to add another level to its transition program, and Yakima plans to develop more workforce-oriented programs. These and other future plans are all to the good. But they are usually limited to incremental improvements in existing practices advocated by forward thinking faculty or administrators. That is, there is no way to determine whether they are the highest priority investments required for program improvement, or whether other investments are needed as well.

Comprehensive, continuous strategic planning is not an alien notion in the community college world. Most colleges engage in this type of planning at the institutional level. But it is less common at the program level. Through their budgetary and curricular review and other management systems, colleges respond to proposals generated from their programs, but they rarely invest in generating them. Because ESL students constitute such a large portion of the enrollment at colleges in communities with large immigrant populations, this program has a special claim on investment in generating innovation.

In fact, the experiences of the five colleges studied indicate that strategic planning for ESL can be extremely fruitful. Most of them have at some point engaged in episodic strategic planning exercises. For example, the creation of Bunker Hill's BSL program resulted from a comprehensive review of that College's credit ESL program that led to both a restructuring of the program and development of an articulated non-credit sequence (along with a way to finance it) that had not previously existed.

For the past three years, Lake County has engaged in a series of Academic Quality Improvement Projects (AQIP) to meet its accreditation requirements. One of these was a College-wide planning process to increase the number of English language learners taking credit classes. Among the recommendations relevant to non-credit ESL were: development of stronger marketing and counseling efforts, increasing the number of full-time faculty, stronger curricular alignments, expansion of the non-credit transition program, and better tracking systems. It remains to be seen whether or how these recommendations are implemented, but in general terms at least, they demonstrate the type of comprehensive agenda for improvement that strategic planning can generate.

But these and other strategic planning exercises in the ESL field have been episodic, and of necessity limited in their scope. Importantly, none of them focused initially or primarily on non-credit ESL – the program in which most language minority students are enrolled. Progress will come slowly if it relies on strategic thinking only once or twice each decade. To accelerate progress, strategic planning must become an on-going process that is institutionalized within ESL programs.

CCSF is the only college examined that has implemented a non-episodic strategic planning process for ESL. Every seven years, all CCSF departments (including ESL) must review their programs and assess the achievement of goals and objectives since the last review. Departments must then set goals and objectives for the next seven years. Some of these objectives may be fairly specific (such as creating new listening tests for non-credit promotion). In subsequent years, departments are expected to work toward achieving their goals and objectives, and they cite progress toward these planning outcomes in their annual budget requests. After seven years, departments are evaluated on how well they have met their goals and objectives. However, there are rarely serious consequences if they fail to do so, in part because funds may not be available to help them achieve their planning targets.

The effectiveness of this process depends in large part on the diligence of departmental administrators in managing their plans, and this appears to diminish over time. This may indicate that seven years is too long a period for strategic planning. The College's 2006 accreditation report observes that, "…the process for integrating the strategic planning initiatives into the annual plans and the progress made each year on the annual plans should be more thoroughly integrated into the…planning and budgeting process."[34] Ideally, strategic planning should be an annual, on-going process.

The major issues that strategic planning should address are easy to identify, but it is not clear whether CCSF or any other college address most of them in a systematic way. They are the issues of how to improve learning gains, retention, and transitions, and how to adopt the staffing structures, curricula, professional tools (such as assessment systems and technology support), and administrative procedures that will make this possible.

There is no "one size fits all" answer to these questions. This is especially true because they often involve trade-offs. Should colleges be trying to serve as many students as possible, or should they emphasize quality of service? What should be their relative emphasis on life skills instruction as opposed to transition programs? What resources must be devoted to reducing attrition among low-level learners? How can programs diversify their offerings to recognize differentials in core ESL competencies as well as prior educational levels of students? These are familiar questions to everyone involved in non-credit programs, and reasonable people can differ about their answers. But it is hard to see how better answers can be found unless there is some process for asking and answering them on a continuing basis.

Strategic planning for ESL or any other college service can take many forms. It is beyond the scope of this study to establish what the procedures should be. Nevertheless, a commitment to an on-going strategic planning process of some kind is the first step colleges must take

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[34] Communication to the authors from Sharon Seymour, former Department Chair of ESL at City College of San Francisco.

to engineer innovation. Without that commitment, progress in program improvement will be episodic and uneven, and there will be no system for establishing priorities. Equally important, a strategic planning process can and should provide a focal point for the other measures required to stimulate innovation at the program level, as they do at the institutional level in most colleges.

(b) Managerial Responsibilities & Resources

Point of responsibility. A major reason that few colleges have developed systematic strategic planning systems for non-credit ESL is that no one has the responsibility, authority, or resources to implement them. This responsibility may be implicit in the job descriptions of senior faculty and administrators, but these people have many other commitments. By default, planning is usually carried out by faculty members, administrators, and committees on an ad hoc basis.

One reason colleges have not established clear points of responsibility for planning ESL service could be that they are reluctant to invest in overhead staff. A major goal of community colleges is to expand access to education by keeping their tuition and fees as low as possible, and they accomplish this by keeping their staffing costs down. Compared to four-year institutions, a far higher percentage of their costs are for instructional rather than administrative or managerial staff. This can have adverse consequences on program quality, because it may prevent investment in staff that focus on program improvement. Most colleges are prepared to review their decisions about staffing allocations as required. Because of the large role that ESL plays in the life of many colleges, this is a field in which they should consider additional overhead support.

Fragmented systems. Another reason there is no clear responsibility for ESL program planning is that it is hard to determine where that responsibility should be placed. At the very least, strategic planning for the types of program improvement discussed in this report requires responsibility and authority to consider changes in non-credit and credit ESL services, and in ABE/ASE. This is important, because many ESL students need to improve their educational levels as well as their English language ability, and ABE/ASE programs are the least expensive way for them to do so. (The alternative at most college is developmental education courses, which charge tuition.) However, none of the five colleges examined have placed all three of these services under a single managerial authority.

At Lake County, non-credit ESL and ABE/ASE are managed by the ABE, GED, and ESL Division, but credit ESL is managed by the Department of Languages, Humanities, and Fine Arts. At Seminole, both credit and non-credit ESL are managed by the English Languages Studies Department, but ABE/ASE is a separate program, although both report to the Dean of Adult Education. At CCSF, both credit and non-credit ESL are unified in an academic department, but this department does not have responsibility for ABE/ASE, nor do the two departments report to the same dean (perhaps a function of the size of the ESL program).

At Bunker Hill, credit ESL is a separate department reporting to a dean, but one of the non-credit programs (BSL) is managed by the Office of Community Education, and the other (ESOL) is managed together with ABE/ASE by a program director, who reports to the Dean of Academic Support and College Pathways Programs. Yakima has no credit ESL program, but both its non-credit ESL and ABE/ASE programs are managed by the Director of Basic Skills who reports to the Dean of Workforce Development.

Considering this dispersal of authority, who should be responsible for planning the future of non-credit ESL at any of these colleges? The problem is especially perplexing because even at those colleges where non-credit ESL and ABE/ASE are under the same management, they are usually regarded as separate services. Among other things, this means that even the full-time faculty in each program area appear to have limited interaction and knowledge of each other's programs. This even appears to be the case at Yakima, where the high-intensity transition program is based on articulation between ESL and ABE. In creating this program, it took years of effort to build understanding and trust between the ESL and ABE faculty, and the work proceeded one course at a time. Today, there is a high level of collaboration and cross training within the transition program, but far less understanding by ESL faculty of ABE/ASE services that extend beyond it.

In practice, most innovation in non-credit ESL has originated with the faculty and administrators responsible for it. But the dispersal of authority for relevant services means that they must often go through a lengthy process of enlisting the collaboration and support of other programs that may have other priorities.

Administrative potential. The greatest potential for systematic strategic planning appears to be at colleges where at least credit and non-credit ESL are under the same management, and where they are organized as a department headed by a person with high enough managerial rank to exercise a wide range of authority within the department, and to operate on a peer basis with other senior administrators for planning and budgetary matters outside it. This condition is most fully realized at CCSF where all of ESL is administered by the chairperson of an academic department, and at Seminole where it is exercised by a departmental director reporting a dean.

Lines of managerial authority may complicate the process of ESL planning, but rationalizing those lines is not sufficient to advance the planning process. The tasks of departmental chairs and directors are primarily administrative. These personnel may be able to initiate planning processes but have far too many other responsibilities to perform all, or even most, of the tasks these programs require. Inevitably, this will require the dedicated time of support staff and the active involvement of faculty, both within and outside adult education divisions.

At least two of the colleges examined in this study provide some clues about how systems planning might be structured. At Seminole, the program support staff described in Part IV both enhance the instructional process and help the Director of the English Studies Department plan for innovation. One of these positions in particular, that of EL/CE Support Specialist, was originally developed with grant funding from the federal EL/Civics Program to assist in the development of Seminole's TIES program. The person who fills this position

has continued to play a key role in initiating or facilitating other innovative practices. Over time, the College has recognized the value of this function, and it is increasingly supported by the College's core budget.

Bunker Hill's ESOL program has evolved similar positions starting from the opposite direction. Most of its full-time staff consists of Program Specialists supported by its core budget. These Specialists combine the functions of teaching, advising, and technical/administrative support in different ways. But the responsibilities and expertise of many of them bridge the ESL/ABE divide. And they both generate and facilitate program improvement initiatives.

Both of these colleges have found some way to support the staff at some level to enable them to focus on program planning for non-credit ESL and related services. Although these staff lack fully developed strategic planning capabilities, this is at least a start. All colleges should recognize that systematic planning in this field is important enough to hire the necessary staff for this function rather than adding the responsibility to already-overburdened staff. As part of their management plans, they should make a formal commitment to support this function with core budget resources.

Faculty resources. Effective strategic planning for non-credit ESL cannot be carried out by specialists and administrators alone, nor should it be. At virtually all of the colleges examined in this study, faculty members have taken the lead in identifying issues and developing innovative programs to address them. Many full-time, tenured faculty members have the motivation, insight, and ability to perform this function. They are a valuable resource that should be fully utilized. To perform planning and development functions, however, they need released time from their teaching loads, and sometimes research grants.

As Part IV indicates, virtually all colleges provide full-time faculty with professional development resources, such as funds to attend meetings and special conferences. This is valuable, but it will take a larger commitment to fully involve faculty in the developmental process. Colleges and departments differ in their generosity toward faculty members in this regard, and their ability to be generous depends on their finances and the teaching loads faculty members must carry. Because the possibilities differ among colleges, it is difficult to establish a general rule for how generous colleges should be. However, they will be short-sighted if they do not build into their staffing budgets both regular sabbaticals for credit faculty and ample opportunities for them to bid for release time and research stipends. That is, wherever possible, full-time faculty should not be scheduled to teach full time, all year, every year.

Moreover, it is important to involve part-time faculty in planning processes as fully as possible. Many part-time faculty members are highly motivated professionals, and some have expertise within and outside the ESL field that full-time faculty members lack. As indicated, there are too few opportunities at most colleges for part-time faculty to receive release time or other forms of compensation that would allow them to apply their skills to planning for program improvement.

In sum, <u>just as engineering for innovation requires strategic planning as a focal point in terms of process, it requires a focal point in terms of personnel</u>. Someone must have the responsibility and authority to make program improvement systems work. The fact that ESL and related services are not under the authority of a single program or manager at most of the colleges studied underscores the importance of establishing a point person who can draw administrators and faculty together in a holistic planning process. At the very least, engineering for innovation requires a commitment by colleges to establish a position from which someone can perform this function.

(c) <u>Outcomes Research</u>

It is hard to see how colleges can provide high quality ESL service unless they know how effective their programs and new initiatives are. <u>Probably the largest single barrier to innovation and planning discovered by this study is how little the five colleges (and other colleges as well) know about program performance, how little use they make of the information they have, and how easy it would be to improve this situation.</u>

Most ESL managers and teachers have a general *impression* about the effectiveness of their programs, and this impression is usually favorable. But they have very little data to support that impression. For the most part, the only data to which they have access is generated for routine administrative purposes. As a result, they know how many students are enrolled in their non-credit and credit ESL programs – as well as in other special programs – on a semester and annual basis, although sometimes the annual headcounts they receive are duplicated, sometimes unduplicated. They usually know the numbers of students enrolled in each level of credit and non-credit ESL. They know the number of faculty and classes, and the approximate size of classes. They have some idea of attendance and retention rates, based largely on attendance data gathered to calculate teaching loads, plan class sizes, and estimate enrollment for budgetary purposes. Where assessment is required – for placement, reporting, or passing various gateways to advancement – they know the numbers of students assessed and their scores, although this data is usually not aggregated in reports that would indicate rates or trends in enrollment, promotion, or transitions.

<u>Administrators, at least, have access to their colleges' NRS reports on learning gains and retention, but they usually do not find these very valuable, for a number of reasons</u>. Among them:

- The NRS levels often do not correspond to the instructional levels of their programs;

- NRS data on retention and the number of levels completed are based on tests – often mandated by state authorities – that they do not believe adequately capture learning gains;

- For logistical reasons, a percentage of students at many colleges are not retested, and hence not included in the reports;

- NRS reports do not distinguish different program components and may not contain data about students in classes not directly funded by federal grants. For example, students in special programs (such as the smaller transition and/or high intensity programs as well as in supported vocational programs) may be unreported or mixed with other students in these reports.

Neither administrative nor NRS data contribute very much to program evaluation and improvement for several reasons: (1) the data is short-term rather than longitudinal, (2) important types of information are not collected, and (3) the data available is not used for planning purposes.

Longitudinal data. Almost all of the information most college ESL programs receive about the characteristics and performance of their students (including NRS data) consists of reports that track students one semester, or one year at most. This is because these are the relevant periods of time for administrative purposes (such as budgeting and scheduling) and for most grant reporting.

Data of such short duration is of limited use in assessing non-credit ESL programs. Three of the major goals of these programs are to increase learning gains, retention, and transitions. But it almost always takes ESL students many years to achieve significant learning gains, and it certainly takes most of them many years to make transitions to further education (the majority having both low educational levels and limited English proficiency). Moreover, because they are working adults, ESL students can rarely continue their education for very long without taking a break. They "stop out" and return to programs over multiple years. During their absence some may improve their English by experience in a country where English is the dominant language – whereas those who live in linguistically isolated communities may experience learning loss in their English abilities.

As a result, semester-length or annual data reveals little about how fully programs attain their goals. It is undoubtedly important to know what the measured learning gains of students at various levels are for a particular year. But, by itself, this information only hints – which may be misleading – at what they gain from a particular program. Some students may progress quickly during the course of a year but never return to continue their progress. (As mentioned in Part II, CCSF has found that 41 percent of its students enroll for only one term.) Others may make slower progress but return in subsequent years to make gradual and substantial gains in learning. Likewise, some students may make progress in life skills programs, but never pass through the gateways to further education.

To understand how effectively a program is achieving the goals of learning gains, retention, and transitions, it is necessary to know how individual students progress over multiple years. Not only is this essential as a general evaluation of non-credit programs, but also as an assessment of most innovative practices. For example, there is no way to know how effective multi-year high intensity programs are – such as the program at Seminole— unless the number of years students remain enrolled in them is known and what their net learning gains have been during that time. And there is no way to know how effective short-term high

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intensity programs have been – such as Lake County's – without knowing the subsequent educational performance of students after they leave these programs.

Non-credit ESL programs rarely receive longitudinal data on the performance of their students. In that respect, the previous sections of this report may seem misleading, because some of them cite longitudinal information. But it should be noted that the five study colleges conducted special analyses to generate longitudinal data for CAAL as part of their contribution to the project. Data of this sort is not reported on a regular basis – and the absence of such data makes it virtually impossible to identify the strengths and weaknesses that should be addressed.

For example, from the longitudinal data obtained, it appears that students with very low levels of English proficiency make quite rapid short term gains, but only a small percentage enroll for many terms or in more than one level. This suggests that, for these students, most programs do a good job of teaching elementary life skills English. But they appear to be less successful in helping students acquire the higher levels of language proficiency and education they need to take advantage of the opportunities of American life. Where this is this case, it suggests that while programs are effective for these students in some respects, they should be focusing on the issue of retention. And in doing so, they may wish to search for models (such as Yakima's high intensity program) that have generated both learning gains for students with very low skills and high rates of long-term persistence.

Analysis of the problems of low-level learners in this example is impossible without longitudinal data. And without such data, it is impossible to determine that Yakima (or any other college) appears to have greater success in helping these students. Longitudinal data is particularly important for assessing any aspects of Yakima's program, because many of that College's ESL students can only attend classes seasonally. Hence, their net progress is under-represented in semester or annual data.

To give another example, it takes virtually all students many years to make transitions from life skills programs to credit ESL, academic programs, or other areas of further education. It is impossible to know even how many students make transitions of various sorts, let alone to assess the various programs discussed to increase their numbers. Only longitudinal data can reveal which students on the other side of gateways were originally non-credit students, and what educational experiences preceded their transitions.

In short, there are very few important questions about the effectiveness of non-credit ESL programs that can be answered very well without longitudinal data. Yet this type of data is rarely available to administrators or teachers – even though it would not be difficult to obtain. Most colleges collect and archive data on their non-credit students over multiple years. And if they do not archive the data, they can readily do so. Most also have institutional research (IR) offices that can create longitudinal reports on a significant number of student variables. Working with several of these departments, this study discovered that they did not find it a major challenge to generate longitudinal reports upon request. Unfortunately, they are rarely asked to do so.

ESL programs and colleges committed to improving non-credit ESL service must broaden their commitment by tasking IR offices with the responsibility of routinely generating longitudinal reports on learning gains, retention, and transitions, just as they routinely generate semester or annual reports. It is beyond the scope of this study to prescribe a template for reports of this type, but the task would be a worthy collaborative effort among colleges that wish to improve their planning processes.

At the very least, reports should show on a multi-year basis how many terms students entering at various levels of non-credit ESL studied at the colleges and what their learning gains were over a period of years. And it should show which students made transitions, and reflect as well their prior and subsequent educational experiences and attainments. Moreover, reports should compare the performance of students enrolled in special programs (such as transition initiatives) with the goals of those initiatives *and* with the performance of students not enrolled in such programs.

There has not been enough experience with this type of work to determine what the relevant period for longitudinal research should be. Among the analyses conducted for this study were reports from CCSF and Bunker Hill that tracked students for seven years. Although it appears that few non-credit students retained an attachment to the colleges for seven years, there is no way to be certain about this without also examining a longer time period. In addition, data covering more years may be desirable because many long-term variables (such as subsequent educational experience) could not be fully explored by the longitudinal data generated for the CAAL study.

Data collection. It would be a substantial step forward if colleges were to use existing student records data to conduct longitudinal analyses on the effectiveness of non-credit programs. However, to gain the level of understanding required for many types of program improvement, data routinely gathered for administrative purposes is often not sufficient. Remarkably, age, country of origin, and native language are not necessarily recorded for non-credit students, although all of these variables have an effect on learning gains.

Another common data collection problem is that prior educational levels of non-credit ESL students are often not recorded in college data systems. This variable appears to have a significant impact on the learning gains of non-credit students, and should affect both the curricula and classroom practices used to serve them. It also has a significant impact on their ability to make transitions where certain levels of academic skills and credentials are required for the next step. Few colleges record this data on a regular basis. Hence, few have the information needed to design efficiently the special pathways or sections suited to highly educated students, or to easily plan pathways for those with limited education. Both credit and non-credit ESL students must fill out admissions forms. At the very least, prior education should be a category on those forms, and this information should be archived in student record databases.

An even more serious data collection problem is that non-credit ESL programs rarely have a reliable record of their students' ability in all four of the core ESL skills. This is largely due to limitations in the assessment measures colleges must use (as discussed in Part III).

Until standardized testing systems are developed that can provide colleges more of the information they need for program evaluation and strategic planning, colleges should at least make the best use of information they have. This consists primarily of non-standardized faculty evaluations of student ability. The validity of these assessments should not be trivialized, particularly in programs with highly trained staff. At the colleges studied, assessments of the students' ability in different core skills may be recorded on individual student records or learning plans, but this information does not appear to be recorded in central data systems where it can be used to evaluate problems and opportunities to improve learning gains. This should not be hard to do.

Still another category of data seldom gathered at the colleges studied is student success outside of ESL programs. In some cases, this is an elementary matter of data matching. For example, few of the programs examined could readily generate data on how many of their less educated students enrolled in ABE/ASE programs, and how many actually received high school equivalency certificates. This data should be gathered and merged with other student records. Likewise, most programs found it difficult to track the success of former non-credit students in academic or vocational programs (although CCSF was remarkably successful in doing so), because credit program records can be difficult to merge with non-credit records in college data systems. Colleges should ask their IR departments to seek analytical shortcuts to this problem. Failing that, a simple expedient is to include a category asking students whether they were enrolled in adult education programs and what those enrollments were on credit program application forms.

College record systems also rarely include data about the life circumstances of their ESL students – e.g., marital status, children, income level, and occupation. Such data is *sometimes* gathered, and has high relevance for special programs, such as those serving welfare recipients. But life circumstances may have a significant impact on learning gains in all aspects of ESL instruction. And, in some cases, information about the problems posed by life circumstances may suggest the need for special initiatives – such as stronger partnerships with organizations that serve immigrants and public welfare or job training programs.

In some states (including Florida), statewide systems have been established that can determine the increase in income of students who complete various programs, through use of Unemployment Insurance data. Although the link between cause and effect may be uncertain when using this data to assess educational programs, colleges should consider whether it can be helpful for strategic planning purposes.

Of course, no college can know as much as it should about all of its students, let alone make use of all the data that might be available. However, colleges with a commitment to improving their non-credit ESL programs should make use of longitudinal reports using existing administrative data, and they should also consider what additional data is most needed to evaluate their work.

Data for planning. The simple availability of more robust data is not by itself sufficient. That data must be used in the context of on-going program evaluation and strategic planning. Conversely, a commitment to strategic planning and on-going program improvement requires

a commitment to using program effectiveness data to assess problems, opportunities, and solutions. Unless faculty and administrators ask and answer the question, "What difference does it make?" about both their mainstream non-credit programs and innovative practices, they are at best making educated guesses about the directions their work should take.

Making greater use of outcomes research may require a change in thinking by some programs. This study observed that many ESL administrators and faculty members are more comfortable developing concepts and content for new initiatives than in assessing outcomes or using program data in other ways. One of the tasks for anyone leading a planning system, therefore, is to establish the importance of all aspects of the planning process and to coordinate the strengths of faculty with those of other staff members who can support them, such as IR offices.

The state of Oregon has concluded that adult education programs need encouragement and support in adopting data-driven planning processes. Oregon adult education authorities conduct regular college-wide program reviews that require application of outcomes data. They also work with program directors to identify topics of statewide significance that require evaluation research and they coordinate the efforts of individual colleges to conduct this research and act on the findings.[35] Other states and senior college personnel may find this type of leadership helpful in bringing outcomes research into the mainstream of their adult education systems.

(d) Budgeting Systems

This study did not examine college budgeting systems in detail. But it revealed enough about them to suggest that they can be barriers to both strategic planning and innovation in non-credit ESL. Because these systems differ somewhat among colleges, the following is a somewhat generalized explanation of how this can occur.

Non-credit ESL is considered a "core" program at all five of the colleges examined in this study. This means that the colleges have a continuing commitment to provide it, and to at least provide the salaries of full-time faculty each year.

But most college budgeting systems have several features that make it hard to fulfill this commitment by engineering for innovation. First, funding levels for programs depend primarily on the number of students they serve and/or the number of instructional hours they provide. Thus, there is a strong incentive for programs to maintain prior year enrollments and instructional time. The level of funding for instruction created in this way in effect establishes a baseline for each program. Beyond this baseline, programs can request incremental funding from discretionary college resources.

This system of budgeting is not very conducive to strategic planning and innovation in non-credit ESL, both of which need additional funds on a continuing basis. To the extent that college budgeting systems annually evaluate requests for support beyond core instructional costs, support for planning and new initiatives is likely to be episodic. In the words of one

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[35] For a description of the Oregon planning process, see Walker and Strawn, op. cit.

program manager, "In reality, 92 percent of the College's income goes to pay personnel costs. The ESL department has generally been able to replace retired full-time teachers, and it has occasionally gotten approval to create new full-time positions, but there have been few opportunities to adjust budgets or explore innovation in recent years."[36]

Programs can to some extent find ways to work around these budgetary restrictions. In some cases, such as Bunker Hill's transitions program or CCSF's VIP program, they obtain special grant or contract funding. In others, such as Lake County's transitions program, they classify what is essentially a single course as several combined courses. These and other strategies can work, but they inevitably entail a patchwork pattern of change. Importantly, they do not support strategic planning or the research needed to carry it out on a continuing basis.

To engineer for innovation, colleges must reach beyond their standard budgeting systems to provide more funding for the functions needed to create program improvement every year. At the very least, funding for ESL program improvement staff and for longitudinal research should be built into the core program costs colleges are committed to supporting. In addition, colleges should develop criteria other than enrollment levels to reward improved program performance. They should reward improvements in learning gains, retention, transitions, and strategic planning benchmarks achieved. Ideally, they should require annual strategic plans with measurable goals for program improvements and cost estimates for the measures required. These plans, rather than episodic requests for improvement projects or enrollment figures, could serve as the primary basis for budget negotiations, and programs should be rewarded for achieving strategic planning benchmarks.

In fact, some version of this type of budgeting has occurred at most of these colleges, but it has not occurred in a very systematic way. CCSF's seven-year strategic planning system, described above, contains many elements of this model. In addition, both Seminole and Yakima's ESL administrators have convinced college authorities to incorporate funds for high intensity programs into their core budgets. To engineer innovation more effectively, the evolutionary process of budgeting for innovation should become systematic at these and other colleges.

2. **WHAT OTHERS CAN DO**

Individual colleges can do a great deal to accelerate the pace of program improvement in non-credit ESL, but there are also important components of engineering for innovation that no single college can undertake. Colleges require various kinds of support that only government or other funders can provide. Most importantly, they need help in looking beyond their institutions to gain a better understanding of what initiatives they should undertake and to gauge their progress. Among the support systems they need are improved peer learning systems, improved reporting requirements, and systematic national research on approaches to better service, each of which is considered in turn below.

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[36] See CCSF college profile, forthcoming.

(a) Peer Learning

One of the easiest and most direct means of engineering innovation in non-credit ESL (or any other endeavor) is to provide information to people working in the field about new problem solving approaches they might try. As the previous sections of this report show, there is a great deal of innovation in providing ESL service at the colleges at the heart of this study, and a cursory examination of other colleges indicates that this is the case elsewhere. Yet there is virtually no way for ESL faculty and administrators to learn how their peers are attempting to address the problems of providing non-credit service, or whether the experiences of others can benefit them. To a remarkable extent, each college program works in isolation. Given the abundance of ideas and new approaches available, this should not be the case.

The lack of a peer learning system was one of this study's first findings; it emerged even before the research phase began. More than 150 leading experts in ESL, community colleges, adult education, and related fields were asked to nominate colleges to participate in the study. They were invited to suggest as many as five colleges with outstanding non-credit ESL programs. A large number of experts responded. But few of them identified more than one college. Moreover, when asked to describe characteristics of the programs they had suggested, few of them could provide much information about colleges other than those with which they were presently affiliated, or had been affiliated in the recent past.

Furthermore, once the colleges in this study had been selected, it became apparent that few ESL faculty or administrators in these colleges knew very much about the programs and practices of the other colleges, or of any other college very far from their service areas. Often they have little knowledge of other ESL programs in their state, or even their city. This is true despite the fact that ESL managers and senior staff regularly attend state and national professional meetings, such as the annual TESOL Conference.

The five colleges that took part in this study incurred substantial costs and experienced substantial inconvenience to make their contributions, and they were aware that this would be the case from the outset. The only reimbursement they received was payment of a nominal amount to an on-site researcher (a faculty member or administrator at four of the five colleges) to gather and report information and attend two group meetings. The costs incurred by the colleges in assisting these researchers and the national research team, and the value of the researchers' time, far exceeded any compensation CAAL could pay.

So, why did they want to participate? All of them said that a major reason was to learn more about what other colleges are doing to improve their non-credit ESL programs.

These experiences illustrate that there is virtually no effective way for non-credit ESL faculty or managers to learn about innovative strategies for program improvement from their peers in other programs. They recognize this -- and the willingness of the five colleges examined (as well as others) to participate in this study shows that they will go to great lengths to share their experiences, and to learn. In an off-handed way, one of the CAAL college-based researchers said, "The major reason I wanted to participate was so that I could steal other

people's ideas." As this report indicates, there is a great deal that colleges might learn from each other. Many of them are trying to solve essentially the same problems by similar means, and many have also adopted approaches that are rarely employed.

This report is a first step toward assisting them with peer learning. But no single document or project can be adequate for that purpose. Because of resource limitations, the CAAL study could examine only five colleges in depth. Yet many more colleges, including several with national reputations for excellence, expressed an interest in participating in the study. There is no reason to doubt that far more colleges are willing and able to participate in a peer learning system, and that virtually all colleges that provide ESL service would benefit from doing so. There is also no reason to doubt that adult education ESL programs managed by school systems, CBOs, and other providers face problems similar to those of colleges and have new ideas of their own to contribute – although this study did not examine non-collegiate providers.

The point is that there needs to be a national system for peer learning about innovative practices in program design among non-credit ESL programs. Creating such a system is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to improve service. The system might be as simple as a clearinghouse of innovative practices, or it might extend to national, regional, or state workshops and collaborative research projects on better approaches to improving service.

Whatever form it takes, a peer learning system should focus on program design, not pedagogy. The professional organizations of the ESL field already devote a great deal of attention to disseminating information about the practice of teaching, and this is of great value. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education provides funding for the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). Although CAELA has a broad mandate, in practice its primary function is to provide and support professional development for adult ESL teachers. Among the means it uses to accomplish this, according to CAELA's website, are:

- Working with states to build capacity to improve the skills of teachers and administrators in adult ESL programs,
- Producing easily accessible materials that synthesize research and apply it to practice,
- Developing a *Guide for Adult ESL Trainers* for use in conducting professional development,
- Providing technical assistance to adult ESL teachers, programs, and states, and
- Developing an easy-to-use repository of resources (e.g., research studies, instructional curricula, information on language acquisition), accessible through the CAELA Web site.

Important as the efforts of CAELA and other organizations may be, they do not meet the need for peer learning about how to structure and support programs so that teachers have the best possible opportunity to do their jobs. To accomplish this, a new peer learning system will have to be created. And, for that system to be effective, it should be more selective in the

information it provides than most education clearinghouses or databases have been. In particular, it should ensure that its information is thorough, pertinent, supported by data about its effectiveness, and focused on approaches that have the greatest likelihood of benefiting many programs. Moreover, an effective peer learning system should be more than a repository of information. It should create opportunities for program managers and other ESL leaders to exchange in-depth information on innovative practices on a face-to-face basis and by the use of information technology, such as listservs, websites, and e-mail.

Creating a system of peer learning would require a modest, multi-year investment from some national funding source. The source might be a government agency, such as the Office of Vocational and Adult Education or the National Institute for Literacy, or it might be one or more private funders. The system might be designed and managed by one of the existing leadership organizations in the ESL field, such as the Center for Applied Linguistics or TESOL. At the national level, creating a peer learning system for innovative practices is clearly one of the highest priority, most cost-effective ways to engineer innovation in the ESL field.

(b) Reporting Requirements

The federal government and the states require programs to report annually on some of the characteristics and outcomes of their adult education programs. The National Reporting System (NRS) is the main federal system for this. It requires states to collect and aggregate certain types of program data. States have implemented reporting systems to do this, along with systems of their own to collect additional program data. The major purposes of the NRS are to compare the overall performance of state adult education systems and reward states that improve their performance by various measures (such as numbers of students served and learning gains). For states, therefore, the NRS should serve the function of benchmarking their performance compared to other states and provide an incentive to improve service.

Regrettably, the colleges examined do not find NRS reports of much value in assessing their programs, for the reasons noted above: the NRS categories do not correspond to their program categories, the assessment measures are limited, the data generated is not longitudinal, and the variables examined are too few. They appear to believe that too much staff and student time is devoted to testing and retesting students with federally or state-prescribed assessment instruments. The same resources might be better used to improve program-specific planning and evaluation.

Viewed at the program level, the NRS does not appear to be a very effective method of either benchmarking or stimulating ESL program improvement. If the primary goal of NRS reporting is to compare the performance of different states, a sampling methodology (testing a representative sample of students in each state) might be equally effective and less burdensome on programs. In addition, a sampling methodology could allow the collection of more in-depth information (including longitudinal data) on student performance than the present system allows.

However, the basic goals of the NRS – benchmarking and rewarding better performance – are important. If programs are to improve their performance, they need to have some reasonable estimate of how good that performance is. They can measure performance in various ways. But even the best measures tell very little about program quality unless their findings are compared to some benchmarks. That is, to determine how well they are doing in improving learning gains, retention, transitions, or any other aspect of their performance, programs must not only gather performance data, but also assess it in relation to this question: compared to what?

Comparisons can be drawn from within programs. For example, increases in learning gains can be tracked over time, or the performance of students who receive specialized services can be compared with that of other students. Programs should certainly make these comparisons. But even if they do, they will still be left with the question of how good the end results of their efforts are. To answer that question, they need some external sources of comparison. The most likely sources are other programs with similar characteristics.

How effective is any one of the five study colleges in increasing the English language abilities and further education of its students, compared to the other colleges reviewed? This study discovered no good way to make this comparison. By default, it used NRS reports as well as the judgments of leaders in ESL and related fields to make comparisons among colleges, recognizing the limitations of both sources of information.

The lack of adequate benchmarking systems limits the ability of programs to conduct internal strategic planning, because it limits their ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses. It also limits their ability to learn from each other. For example, colleges may be interested in the experiences of peer institutions that have implemented managed enrollment systems. But to understand the value of these systems, they should also know how effective those colleges' programs are compared to their own. There is no good way to determine this, except to explain the difference that, for example, managed enrollment has made within the colleges that have adopted it. This is important evidence, but it falls short of what colleges may reasonably wish to know about the innovative practices or overall programs of their peers.

Solving the benchmarking problem is beyond the scope of this study. But recognizing it is not. Individual colleges cannot solve this problem. Part of the solution is to develop assessment measures that are more comprehensive and less expensive for programs to use, along with methods to compare programs using systems of this kind. In addition, either the NRS should be configured to provide information more useful for planning at the program level, or some other reporting system should be devised. Whatever the solution, finding and implementing it will require leadership and a significant investment of resources by government education agencies.

(c) <u>Research on Priority Issues</u>

To develop effective plans for program improvement in non-credit ESL, colleges need a much stronger body of research on the dimensions, problems, and possibilities of this field

than is presently available. Although they can, and must, learn a great deal from their peers and from their own institutional research, they also need a foundation of more extensive and systematic research on major dimensions of non-credit service than individual colleges can create. This study is an initial effort to meet that need. But, due to resource constraints, it has examined only five colleges and a limited number of variables that affect the performance of each. Moreover, it has not examined many of those variables in the depth required to form a thorough understanding of problems and possibilities in this field.

Regrettably, there has been very little descriptive or analytical research on non-credit ESL – or on adult education ESL generally – that asks or answers the questions colleges must address in order to assess or improve their programs. Most ESL research has focused on understanding the language learning process and on improved teaching techniques. While this is immensely valuable, it is not enough to help colleges understand how to better organize their programs to make the best use of professional expertise. Although there have been a few "best practices" studies, these have focused on a limited number of variables. Moreover, both in ESL and in other aspects of adult education, there has been little research on the distinctive characteristics of community colleges as service providers, and how these institutions can most effectively be put to use in addressing the needs of adult learners with limited basic skills.

Research on ESL service delivery, whether in community colleges or elsewhere, has not been a priority of any funding source. It should be. To support the efforts of colleges seeking new ways to provide ESL service, at least five areas of national research merit substantial funding.

Baseline longitudinal research. The first step in any efforts to improve non-credit service is to understand in greater depth than has been possible in this study just how effective existing efforts are. As discussed above, to do this requires longitudinal research on how students flow through the various components of the ESL service system, where they meet barriers, and how those barriers are (or are not) overcome. Due to the generosity of the IR departments at CCSF and Bunker Hill, this study was able to make a start at this type of research. *These initial efforts generated information that was previously unavailable from any source*. And they provided virtually the only quantitative information about learning gains, retention, and transition rates in the programs examined by this study. These are the dimensions of program effectiveness that are of greatest importance for any examination of non-credit ESL. Without baseline longitudinal research, it would have been impossible to obtain more than a rough estimate of them, and it would have been impossible to document the effectiveness of many innovative practices.

Nevertheless, due to resource constraints, the baseline research for this study was incomplete in a number of important ways. First, most of it was limited to two colleges, although the other colleges involved in the study provided some longitudinal data. Second, it was not possible to include a number of variables that should be of high interest to anyone wanting to improve non-credit ESL service. Among these is the extent to which ESL students assigned to the same instructional levels differ in their levels of prior education and their reading, writing, speaking, and listening proficiency (the core ESL skills).

In addition, it was not possible to examine students' socio-economic characteristics that might affect their educational progress. And it was not possible to estimate the effects of different methods of classroom instruction or faculty qualifications by longitudinal analysis. Moreover, the funding resources available for this study did not allow a full analysis of the longitudinal data it generated. For example, extensive data on transitions could not be fully analyzed.

It would be of great value to conduct baseline longitudinal analyses of more colleges and to include in that analysis variables that could not be examined in this study. Longitudinal research would provide a far stronger basis for making comparisons among college ESL programs than NRS data or any other information presently available. Thorough longitudinal analyses of multiple colleges would also help those colleges establish benchmarks for planning, and it would undoubtedly reveal opportunities and issues that this study did not analyze. In addition, it would provide public and private sources that support non-credit ESL with a more thorough understanding of this service, which should help to inform *their* decisions about where they can best invest their resources.

Practice research. This study identified a large number of innovative practices and some information about their effectiveness. A number of these practices are being adopted in some form by most of the colleges studied. Among these are high intensity/managed enrollment classes, co-enrollment, expedited transition pathways, and VESL programs. Because these and other approaches to program improvement appear to have generated national interest, they deserve much more detailed research than this study was able to conduct. In particular, further research should be conducted on the types of students for whom each of these practices are most beneficial, and on how beneficial they are in terms of increasing learning gains, retention, transitions, income, and other outcomes.

Further research should also investigate in greater depth the financial, administrative, and policy barriers to adopting these practices. This study has made a first attempt at investigating these issues. But substantially more resources would be required for a thorough investigation of them. Because these practices have the potential to greatly improve ESL service, each of them merits further research that can provide colleges and others with a more accurate assessment of when and how they are beneficial, and a better analysis of the cost/benefit calculus of adopting them.

Linkages outside the college. Most of the colleges on which this study focused believe that organizations outside the college can, and often do, make a significant contribution to improving the learning gains of their students, and most have formal or informal relationships with those organizations. Community based organizations (CBOs), local welfare agencies, job training and placement agencies, and schools are the types of organizations most often mentioned.

This study did not have the resources to explore these linkages in very much detail. Based on what it did discover, however, they merit serious investigation.

<u>There is a need for more in-depth research on the multiple roles CBOs play in the nation's ESL service system, including their links to community colleges</u>. Based on the findings of this and other studies, it appears that their role may be considerable. Some CBOs provide adult education ESL instruction, and, in fact, they may be the only providers in some areas. In other areas, their instructional service may be parallel to that of colleges and other providers, or there may be a division of labor, with CBOs serving very low-level learners or offering supplementary tutoring service to students at other institutions.

In this regard, Bunker Hill's ESOL program is a hybrid model. The program is jointly managed by the College and a number of CBOs. The College serves as the fiscal agent and overall coordinator, but the individual organizations hire staff, recruit students, and provide facilities. Of course, from this example and the limited other evidence available, it is difficult to assess the contribution of CBOs as providers of instruction. By most estimates, the total number of adult education students of any kind that receive direct instruction from CBOs is a fairly small percentage of the total served nationwide.

However, it appears that in many areas CBOs play an important role in adult education in ways other than offering instruction. For example, they often provide locations for off-campus college classes. All five of the colleges studied provide some off-site instruction at CBOs, and they appear to believe these arrangements help students overcome the logistical difficulties of coming to main campus sites. If so, the extent and nature of these relationships, and whether they should be expanded, merits further investigation.

The contribution of CBOs that is probably least well understood is how their various personal support services help immigrants participate in English classes. Some colleges report that immigrant-serving CBOs may be a major source of recruitment for ESL programs. They may make immigrants aware of the possibility of free ESL service, encourage them to register for classes, and help them do so. Equally important, they may provide coaching and mentoring for students, encouragement to believe that they should persist in their studies and that they can succeed not only in learning English but also in obtaining further education. In addition, the social services – e.g., childcare, transportation, healthcare, and job placement – provided by many CBOs may remove barriers to attending classes that many immigrants face.

In some cases, CBOs also serve as job training agencies that collaborate with colleges in a variety of ways. For example, they may sub-contract with colleges to provide certain courses, or colleges may sub-contract with them. And they may share staff, curricula, and instructional resources (such as learning labs) with colleges or other educational providers.

From the perspective of colleges and other large ESL providers these social and educational services are often regarded as "wrap around" supports that facilitate ESL instruction. From the perspective of the CBOs, however, they are mainstream services with multiple goals. <u>There is a need for more research on how CBOS support the education of language minorities by means other than providing instruction. And there is a need for more research on how colleges and other providers collaborate with CBOs as well as how that collaboration can be enhanced</u>.

Many immigrants face multiple barriers to education that most colleges do not address. CBOs may be able to address at least some of these barriers. As a result, research to understand their multiple roles in the ESL service system should be a priority.

The relationship between ESL service providers and local welfare or job training agencies is somewhat better understood. In some areas, these agencies contract with colleges or other providers to offer ESL instruction to their clients. This may consist of short-term "survival English" instruction, longer-term instruction similar to non-credit classes, or vocationally linked instruction.

The extent of these relationships is increasingly limited by federal welfare policy, which has gradually diminished the amount of time welfare recipients can devote to education, as well as by federal job training policy, which has increasingly focused educational funds on a few priority areas. The effectiveness of educational programs supported by either source has been a matter of debate. And that debate has too often tried to answer the over-simplified question of whether educational programs for welfare recipients, taken as a whole, have value, rather than trying to find what types of programs are effective in improving the lives of low income people under what circumstances. Moreover, ESL programs have not been the focus of most of the research.

To inform policy and direct available resources in the most effective way, there is a need for more focused research on the contributions that ESL instruction can make to help welfare recipients become self-sufficient. For example, this study was able to gain some information about the educational effectiveness of CCSF's VIP Program for welfare recipients as well as the effectiveness of various supported vocational programs, even though it was not able to gather information about the long-term economic benefits of these programs.

The use of targeted adult education programs to combat poverty was once a front-burner issue. It has been sidelined in recent years. More thoughtful research would accurately assess these types of programs, and possibly generate more resources for them.

Citizenship programs. All of the colleges that took part in this study offer programs specifically designed to help immigrants pass the American citizenship test. This study did not examine these programs, although it appears that the resources devoted to them are not large. On the whole, the major contribution to citizenship education made by colleges seems to be increasing language ability and further education through non-credit programs, although some have targeted citizenship courses.

In the 2006 Congressional debates about immigration policy, there was considerable discussion about the importance of English language ability to promote assimilation and help immigrants obtain citizenship or other forms of legal residency status. Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee introduced an amendment that would establish a program of grants to CBOs that would award $500 per student for language education. From what this study has learned about the costs of high quality ESL programs, this amount of funding would not support ESL service of very high intensity or duration. However, it might help CBOs provide important supportive services if the funds were directed that way.

Like this proposal, the 2006 debate lacked a clear focus on exactly what the goals of language education should be in the context of immigration policy, and how best to achieve them. At the same time, the federal government has been revising the citizenship test for the first time in many years. This increased salience of ESL as a component of immigration policy suggests that it would be highly beneficial to understand the form that existing citizenship programs take and how effective they are, as well as to clarify the goals of both educators and policymakers about what those programs should achieve. One or more efforts along these lines merit support, either from federal or private funding sources.

Classroom instruction and language learning. Finally, research is needed on a question of fundamental importance to all types of adult ESL instruction: how does attending ESL classes help immigrants continue to improve their English after they have severed left adult education programs? This is an important question because most students attend classes for only a few terms, and because it is generally assumed that much of their English language learning occurs through everyday interactions with native speakers, exposure to the media, and performing a variety of tasks that require core ESL skills in a country where English is the dominant language.

ESL classes can at best provide a foundation to accelerate learning by these informal means. And in the case of students with low proficiency levels who do not attend classes very long, formal instruction can provide an introduction to English. Put another way, ESL classes can at best facilitate lifelong learning of English outside the classroom. If programs and faculty are to perform this function well, it is essential to understand as much as possible about whether and how classroom instruction helps students improve informal learning of English, and what program designs or classroom techniques are most effective in doing so.

Part III examined a number of innovative practices intended to help ESL students become independent learners. A thorough assessment of these and other ways that ESL classes can enhance lifelong independent learning should be a high priority. ESL students do not remain ESL students forever, and most of them do not remain ESL students for very long. Finding better ways to help them continue improving their English after they have stopped attending classes should be one of the most important goals of colleges and other providers. Establishing a better foundation of knowledge about how classroom instruction facilitates informal learning is an essential first step in achieving that goal.

(d) Funding and Policy Structure

It is widely accepted that total national funding for adult education ESL is inadequate. This conclusion is usually based on the fact that a large number of ESL programs have long waiting lists. They do not have sufficient resources to meet the demand of immigrants for English language instruction. But this report has emphasized another aspect of inadequate funding. Because of limited financial resources, colleges and other ESL providers are unable to give English language instruction of high enough quality. The learning gains, retention, and transitions to further education are not as great as they should and can be.

This report has shown innovative strategies for ESL instruction that can greatly increase program outcomes in all of these respects. But, with rare exceptions, colleges and other providers lack the resources to implement these strategies on a large scale – and they lack the resources to generate even better strategies in a systematic way.

This report has also proposed additional special purpose funding to increase transitions, support the continuing operations of VESL programs, increase the number of full-time ESL faculty, improve professional development in this field, improve management systems, develop better assessment measures, create a peer learning system, and expand research on essential issues. If adopted, these funding proposals would make a major contribution toward improving the quality of adult ESL instruction nationwide.

But by themselves, these measures would not be not fully meet the financial needs of adult education ESL. They will not reduce the waiting lists for service, and they will not allow providers to implement innovative approaches that can improve learning gains and retention on a large scale. To accomplish *this*, total ESL funding from federal and state sources must be greatly increased.

By best estimates, total federal/state funding for adult education is on the order of $1.8 billion per year. Assuming that this funding for the different adult education services (ABE, ASE, and ESL) is proportionate to the numbers of students enrolled, and assuming that approximately 40 percent of students are enrolled in ESL, this means that total funding for ESL service is on the order of $720 million per year. This equates to an average of $600 per year to serve each of the estimated 1.2 million students enrolled in public ESL programs.[37] Considering the need to expand services to those on waiting lists and the greater cost of high quality instruction, doubling the total amount of federal funding would seem to be an appropriate initial goal.

As noted, most of the enriched, innovative strategies (such as high intensity instruction with managed enrollment or supported VESL programs) examined by this study cost on the order of $1500-$3000 per year or more for a student who attends two or more semesters, although all students cannot be expected to benefit from these strategies. Present funding levels do not allow colleges to implement and sustain the full range of innovative strategies or to take them to scale. Also, as noted above, at current levels, colleges or other ESL providers cannot establish enough full-time teaching positions, adequately compensate part-time teachers, or implement needed strategic planning systems.

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[37] This average is useful for illustrative purposes only. States provide 70 percent of the estimated $1.8 billion in public funds devoted to adult education each year, and the amounts that states provide – both in total and on a per student basis – differ greatly. Some states provide little more than $100 per student; others provide more than $1000 per student. However, the authors are not aware of any state in which federal/sate funding is sufficient to eliminate waiting lists for ESL programs and/or to implement the types of strategies for providing high quality instruction discussed in this report to all, or even most, of the students who might benefit from them.

Remarkably, despite widespread agreement that adult ESL is underfunded, there have been few proposals to provide additional resources and few advocates actively demanding them.[38] This may be due in part to the fact that there is no leadership organization that focuses specifically on the adult ESL field. The major professional association, TESOL, and its regional, state, and local affiliates, are concerned about all aspects of ESL instruction (K-12, university, and professional), but they lack the personnel and resources to advocate sufficiently for adult ESL funding. Most immigrant advocacy groups have other priorities, such as the pending comprehensive reform of immigration laws, to which they must give higher priority than funding for English language instruction.

However, another reason for the lack of proposals and activism to increase adult ESL funding may be that this service is joined with ABE and ASE in federal/state adult education policies and funding streams. There is no separate funding stream for ESL. As a result, neither the total amount of funding nor the extent to which it is adequate is readily apparent. Moreover, advocates for increased adult education funding are placed in an awkward position. There no way they can propose additional funds for ESL by itself, and they are not inclined to do so because it might imply a reduced commitment to ABE and ASE.

This dilemma should lead both adult education leaders and policy makers to reconsider whether ESL should be joined with ABE and ASE in policy and funding streams. In most respects, ESL is a wholly different service system than the adult education programs designed to serve native speakers of English. It provides a very different type of instruction to a very different population. Its goals (and those of ESL learners) are radically different from those of ABE and ASE programs, and so are its instructional methods, faculty, program designs, curricula, research base, assessment measures, and virtually every other aspect of the service.

Practically the only important things ESL has in common with ABE/ASE are that all three services are connected by the same policy framework and funding stream, and they are usually administered by the same institutions. Policymakers and leaders of all aspects of the adult education field should carefully consider whether these connections are artificial and counterproductive. At the very least, they stand in the way of advocacy for adequate funding for ESL, for the reasons mentioned above. Moreover, they may well prevent ESL service from receiving the specialized policy support and oversight it requires. For example, they may make it far more difficult to develop appropriate policies, assessment tools, staff development, and many kinds of program improvement.

In sum, policymakers and adult education leaders should carefully examine whether there should be separate authorizations, appropriations, and administrative policies for ESL at the federal and state levels.

Whenever this idea has been posed in the past, concerns have been raised that anti-immigrant sentiments would undermine support for ESL, or that ESL would absorb too large a share of

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[38] One of the few comprehensive proposals that can be found is: Forrest P. Chisman, Heide Spruck Wrigley, and Danielle T. Ewin, ESL and the American Dream (Washington: the Southport Institute, 1993). The argument in this section largely follows the lines of that proposal.

total adult education funding. These are legitimate concerns, but they should be weighed against the possible benefits to all areas of adult education of separating ESL and ABE/ASE in terms of policy and funding streams. Although anti-immigrant sentiments are undoubtedly real, they appear to be balanced at present by a public desire for immigrants to learn English, and a lack of public understanding about the system by which so many seek to do so. At the same time, support for programs that will improve high school completion rates is on the rise. This should provide advocates for ABE/ASE with a strong constituency to argue for greater resources. In short, this may be an opportune time for all components of adult education to place their separate claims for additional funding and improved policy before the public.

From the perspective of ESL as well as ABE and ASE, separate authorizations and appropriations could well serve as the rallying points for the supporters of each service. It is difficult to build support for greater funding for any aspect of adult education when the nature and dimensions of its various services are obscured by policy and when there is no mechanism by which greater funding might be directed to any of them individually.

3. **CONCLUSION**

The experiences of the five colleges on which this study focused indicate that creative faculty and administrators can devise effective ways to substantially improve non-credit ESL service. But progress has been uneven, and no one in this field believes that programs are nearly as effective as they can or should be. To accelerate the process of program improvement, colleges, government agencies, and other organizations concerned with the education of language minorities need to adopt a more systematic approach to harnessing the creative energies of the ESL field.

The essential elements of this new approach are not difficult to understand or implement. Colleges must make a commitment to strategic planning in this field, assign responsibility for carrying out that planning, provide the types of data necessary to identify problems and solutions, and create budgetary processes that will support innovation. Government and other funders should help colleges move more rapidly along the learning curve in terms of understanding the possibilities available to them, by supporting peer learning systems, reporting requirements that produce useful information at the program level, and systematic research on priority issues. They should also provide funding at a level adequate to support high quality instruction and innovation.

From the perspective of how college non-credit programs now operate, these measures may seem to be a prescription for radical change. But they are feasible and relatively inexpensive. Most importantly, they are essential to engineer the scope and pace of innovation required to provide language minorities with the educational services they need and deserve.

The measures proposed in this report would require many colleges to adopt a different view of the role adult education ESL plays in their institutions. At most colleges, non-credit ESL was once viewed as a small community service program. Over the years, in terms of sheer

numbers, it has become a large and essential component of college life. This change has come about gradually with the increase in immigration and immigrants' increasing choice of community colleges to meet their educational needs.

Colleges need new and better organized systems for managing what has become a very different component of their work. And they need stronger support from government and the private sector to provide ESL service of the highest quality. Their students and the nation's economy require nothing less.

APPENDIX I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. SYNOPSIS

Adult education English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction is an essential national education service,[*] but the outcomes of most ESL programs are by no means as great as they should and can be – in terms of learning gains, retention, and transitions to further education. Fortunately, at least some programs have developed a wide range of innovative strategies that meet with considerable success in addressing these problems. Regrettably, inadequate funding for ESL – as well as administrative and other policy issues – has prevented programs from taking most successful strategies to scale, and other programs have no way to learn about them in depth. Funding for ESL should be greatly increased to permit the dissemination of these strategies and to allow more students to benefit from them, as well as to advance research and development of new strategies to improve program outcomes.

2. THE SERVICE

ESL instruction for adults is the largest component of America's adult education system. More than 40 percent of all adult students in publicly funded programs are enrolled in ESL classes – more than 1.2 million students per year – and most ESL programs have waiting lists for admission that sometimes exceed the numbers enrolled.

Virtually all ESL students are immigrants. Census data and projections indicate that half the growth of the American workforce in the 1990s was due to immigration – and most of our future workforce growth will come from this source, primarily from legal immigration. A large percent of adult immigrants (estimated at 15 million or more) have very limited English proficiency, and many also have low levels of prior education in their native countries. Most ESL students at the lower levels of English proficiency have less than a high school diploma. This combination of limited ability in English and limited education severely limits the contributions they can make to the American economy, as well as their prospects for personal well-being and assimilation. In large numbers, they seek out adult ESL programs and related adult basic education (ABE) and adult secondary (ASE) programs to address these problems. As a result, ESL service plays a critically important role in improving the quality of our workforce and in addressing a wide range of social and economic problems.

3. THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ROLE

Community colleges are among the largest providers of adult education ESL service in many states and communities. At community colleges in New York City, San Francisco, and Miami, ESL is both the single largest program offered and the fastest growing program. At most colleges, adult education ESL service is called "non-credit ESL" to distinguish it from the credit ESL programs colleges offer to prepare people with limited English proficiency for academic and vocational programs. In many respects, community colleges are ideal providers of adult ESL service, because they are adult-focused institutions that offer both non-credit and credit ESL as well as opportunities for immigrants to pursue further education – all under a single educational umbrella.

Non-credit ESL service at colleges resembles adult education ESL service offered by other providers (school systems and community-based organizations) in many ways. It is offered at no charge, and teaches the same range of core English skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening/comprehension in English) to learners who range from immigrants with virtually no English language ability at all to those prepared to undertake

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[*] Notes: (a) The term "*adult education* English as a second language" is used in this report to distinguish it from other adult ESL service, such as programs for foreign students or services of private language schools. (b) This report uses ESL (English as a Second Language) rather than ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) because it flows better and is a convenience.

credit ESL programs or other forms of further education. Finally, the focus of most non-credit ESL is on "life skills English" – the language skills that will help immigrants function better in everyday life and on the job.

4. THE CHALLENGE

Like ESL service offered by other providers, however, non-credit ESL instruction at colleges has disappointing results. The federal government's National Reporting System for adult education (NRS) classifies language proficiency by six levels. According to the NRS, the overwhelming majority of ESL students enter programs at the two lowest levels, and NRS reports that only about 36 percent of ESL students advance one level per year. Longitudinal research prepared for CAAL by two community colleges indicates that only a small percentage of ESL students are enrolled in programs for as long as four semesters (the equivalent of two years or less) – either consecutively or at any time. As a result, few ESL students experience significant learning gains from adult education ESL programs. Moreover, only about 10 percent of non-credit ESL students make transitions to credit ESL, and an even smaller percentage make transitions to college academic or vocational programs.

5. THIS STUDY

The problems of learning gains, persistence, and transitions clearly call for serious attention. Fortunately, at least some community colleges and other ESL providers have devised innovative and effective strategies to address them.

This report is based on a two-year study of ESL service at community colleges by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL). The study draws on the authors' extensive knowledge of and exposure to dozens of community colleges and ESL programs through other studies, but it is based primarily on an in-depth examination of the innovative strategies adopted by five community colleges identified by ESL experts and their peers as exemplary in their provision of adult ESL service. The five colleges are:

- Bunker Hill Community College – Charlestown, Massachusetts
- The City College of San Francisco (CCSF) – San Francisco, California
- The College of Lake County – Grayslake, Illinois
- Seminole Community College – Sanford, Florida
- Yakima Valley Community College – Yakima, Washington

The learning gains and transition rates of adult education ESL students at all of these colleges significantly exceed national norms and the norms for their states. More importantly, these colleges have developed a rich menu of innovative strategies for improving ESL service that can and should point the way toward progress for both other colleges and policymakers. This report describes those strategies in considerable detail and draws conclusions for practice and policy.

6. IMPROVING LEARNING GAINS

The colleges examined in this study have adopted at least three highly effective strategies for increasing learning gains of adult education ESL students. They are:

- High intensity programs with managed enrollment
- Extending learning outside the classroom
- Adapting curricula to learner needs.

High intensity instruction. Most adult education ESL programs meet at most three to six hours per week and are "open entry/open exit." All the colleges examined in this study have implemented at least some programs that meet 12-24 hours per week (high intensity). In most of these programs, students may only enter at the beginning of each semester, and they are dropped from the program unless they attend on a regular basis. Many adult educators are concerned that ESL students cannot make such a large commitment to learning English, but all of these programs are filled, many have waiting lists, and most of the colleges are extending them. At Seminole, 80 percent of all non-credit ESL students are served by high intensity/managed enrollment programs. Programs of this sort invariably show greatly increased learning gains, compared both to national norms and to

comparable low intensity programs at the colleges where they are offered. Students in the high intensity program offered by City College of San Francisco achieve learning gains per year that are twice to three times as great as students at comparable levels enrolled in the college's lower intensity program.

Learning outside the classroom. All of the colleges examined have devised strategies to increase learning time and encourage students to practice their English with native speakers outside the classroom. All of them make extensive use of instructional technology for these purposes. Lake County, Seminole, and Yakima have devised instructional modules that require students to interact with native speakers in conjunction with class projects. Many of the colleges also make extensive use of informal conversation groups, homework, and individual tutoring. All of these colleges believe these strategies are integral to the success of their non-credit ESL programs.

Adapting curricula for learner needs. All of the colleges examined have taken special measures to accommodate the major differences in English proficiency and prior education levels of ESL students. Perhaps the most striking strategy is Yakima's "learner-centered thematic" curriculum. Because virtually all of Yakima's students have very low levels of English proficiency and prior education when they enter the program, the College has adopted an instructional approach often used in third world countries. Rather than establishing a set curriculum, classes are structured at each level around study projects selected by students. This appears to engage the interest of students and make them "active learners," both in the classroom and outside. Yakima's approach to low-level learners has been highly successful: the learning gains and transition rates of its ESL students significantly exceed those of comparable students in the state.

The issue of assessment. Both the design and the implementation of these and other innovative practices for increasing learning gains are handicapped because there are no assessment measures (tests) that indicate the full range of English language ability of adults and some of the tests available are expensive to administer. As a result, college and other ESL providers are to some extent "flying blind" when they must make decisions about how individual students can best be served, what progress and problems they are encountering, what types of innovative strategies will serve them best, and how effective those strategies are. This is a major structural problem in the adult ESL field and should be addressed by public investment or private initiatives to develop adequate assessment measures. It may be that combining existing computer-adaptive tests with advanced voice recognition software can address the problem.

7. INCREASING TRANSITIONS

Because most adult ESL students have very limited prior education in their native countries, improving their English language abilities will not by itself give them the opportunity to contribute all that they are capable of to our nation's workforce and society. It is discouraging that only about 10 percent make the transition to further education of any kind.

Transition rates are so low primarily because educational pathways from the lowest levels of English proficiency to enrollment in academic or vocational programs are so long. Usually, ESL students must devote years to improving their English by ESL programs and to improving their educational levels by ABE/ASE programs. Even then they must enroll in credit ESL programs, because the "life skills" curricula of most adult education ESL programs do not provide them with the specialized English language skills required for academic studies. These pathways to further education require a longer commitment of time, and a larger commitment of money, than most working adults with other responsibilities can make.

To address this issue, the colleges examined by the CAAL study have adopted a number of innovative approaches that significantly increase transition rates. Among these are the strategies to increase learning gains just discussed. The faster ESL students can master life skills ESL, the faster they can move on to further education. In addition, the five colleges studied have adopted several other strategies. Among them are:

- Curricular integration with college preparation
- Co-enrollment
- Vocational ESL (VESL) programs

- The Spanish GED
- Enhanced guidance and counseling systems

Curricular integration. Most of the colleges examined have developed "pre-collegiate" programs. Instead of teaching students life skills English throughout the course of non-credit studies, these special programs teach many of the skills that would be taught in credit ESL. Programs of this sort usually provide high intensity instruction for these purposes to students beginning at the Intermediate level of English language proficiency or above. And they are usually designed to help students understand and meet the expectations of academic programs by special college preparation modules and by establishing expectations that are similar to those of academic courses. Most programs of this sort have transition rates that greatly exceed those of other programs for students at comparable levels at the same colleges.

An important variant of these strategies is Yakima's transition program. Its goal is to help students make seamless transitions to ABE/ASE. It accomplishes this by enrolling ESL students in an increasing number of ABE courses taught in English beginning at the Low Intermediate level of English proficiency. This is a high intensity program, and a large percentage of the students who enroll in it not only complete the program but also become full-time ABE students at about the 9th grade ability level – the level at which ASE instruction usually begins. One key to success in this kind of transition program is that the curricula are usually designed "from the top down" to anticipate the requirements of credit ESL and academic studies. Another is that the programs use the same assessment measures employed by credit programs.

Co-enrollment. Even those non-credit ESL students placed in the same instructional levels differ in their English language abilities and their prior education, so at least some of them can succeed in certain non-credit or credit vocational or academic courses before they have reached the upper levels of non-credit ESL. Many colleges allow non-credit ESL students to "co-enroll" in certain courses taught in English. This practice not only allows students to gain valuable skills taught by those courses, but it also allows them to practice their English in authentic situations. It may also increase their motivation to persist in ESL, because it reinforces the idea that the purpose of ESL is not simply to learn more English. Longitudinal research prepared for this CAAL study indicates that co-enrolled students are more likely than other non-credit students to make the transition to credit ESL and other types of further education.

Vocational ESL (VESL). VESL programs are among the most effective and fastest growing forms of non-credit ESL instruction. That is because they provide a "shortcut" to vocational certification in areas of employment for which there is a significant workforce demand – such as aspects of the allied health field, and various areas of construction, maintenance, and hospitality. They offer a shortcut in that they enroll students who are at the Intermediate levels of ESL and often have no more than a sixth grade education. Effective VESL programs allow these students to obtain postsecondary vocational certifications without having to pursue the time-consuming pathway of improving their skills through a sequence of non-credit and credit ESL programs and/or ABE/ASE instruction.

VESL programs take many forms. Those examined in this study have three elements: (1) a high intensity course that teaches students English language skills (such as vocabulary and particular types of writing) that are specially required by a particular vocation and that increase their general educational levels in math and other subjects the vocation requires, (2) enrollment in a pre-existing vocational program taught in English, and (3) an ESL support course that meets concurrently with the vocational course to help students with language or basic skills problems encountered in that course. The success rate of well-designed VESL programs, in terms of course completion and obtaining vocational certifications, is very high. In addition, a significant percentage of VESL students return to complete traditional non-credit and credit ESL programs -- and to make transitions to higher levels of education. A major problem with VESL programs is that their development is often grant-funded, and it is difficult to sustain them after this funding ends.

The Spanish GED. The Spanish GED examination is a literal translation of the GED examination in English offered by the GED Testing Service. Most of the colleges examined offer courses to prepare for this test, and there are often waiting lists for these courses. Many immigrants prefer to take the GED examination in Spanish because they believe their writing skills in English are not strong enough. The Spanish GED not only provides

these students with a valuable credential, but it also enhances their ability to make transitions to academic or vocational programs that require a high school diploma or equivalent.

Enhanced guidance and counseling. Because the pathways from non-credit ESL to academic and vocational studies can be long and complex, a strong program of guidance and counseling is required to help students make transitions. Most colleges make some efforts along these lines, but they are often unsystematic. A few colleges have developed systematic programs that include mandatory workshops and seminars, with special focus groups and individualized support by program specialists and faculty who are devoted entirely to assisting non-credit ESL students.

8. FACULTY QUALITY

Even the best designed programs to increase learning gains and transitions will not succeed without highly trained teachers to implement them. Effective ESL instruction requires specialized professional knowledge, teaching skills, experience, and personal qualities that teachers who have not been trained for this field do not have. To develop and sustain a high quality faculty, programs must adopt four major strategies:

- Establish high standards for the hiring of faculty;

- Treat all faculty members like highly qualified professionals by providing them with appropriate status within the college through full-time employment opportunities, adequate reimbursement, benefits, and professional opportunities;

- Provide robust programs of continuing professional development; and

- Establish faculty resource centers and websites.

Standards for employment. Regrettably, most states have not established very high standards for adult education ESL teachers. In the ESL field, the "gold standard" for qualifications is a Masters degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or a special certification in TESOL or a related field. This is a high bar to cross, but most of the programs examined by this study require qualifications at this level for their full-time faculty members, and an increasing number require equivalent standards for their new part-time instructors. These programs demonstrate that high professional standards can be both required and met.

Status. Regrettably, cost constraints prevent most colleges and other adult ESL programs from employing a very large number of full-time ESL instructors. The vast majority of instruction is provided by part-time teachers. Full-time faculty provide an anchor of professional expertise to programs, and they can undertake a variety of essential tasks such as program administration, curriculum development, training, testing, advising students, evaluating program performance, and developing improved strategies for instruction that part-time faculty cannot undertake. The City College of San Francisco (CCSF) has shown that colleges can increase the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty if they have the will to do so and that they accrue many benefits from this policy. Roughly half of the CCSF's ESL faculty are employed full time.

Regrettably, too, part-time instructors at most of the colleges examined by the CAAL study (except CCSF) are paid at half the rate or less of full-time faculty, although many of the colleges provide them with healthcare and other benefits (which have substantial financial value), as well as opportunities for professional development and preference in hiring for full-time positions when openings arise. Also, all of the colleges examined have largely eliminated differentials in salary, benefits, and professional opportunities between faculty that teach in credit and non-credit programs that are common in many community colleges.

Professional development. All of the colleges examined provide faculty members with opportunities for continuing professional development through stipends and/or released time to attend professional conferences, workshops, special training sessions, and courses toward advanced degrees. They also provide reimbursement for work on curriculum development and other program improvement activities. Moreover, individual colleges have developed distinctive strategies for professional development. Among these are:

- Peer mentoring at Yakima. Experienced faculty members are paired with new teachers in a structured program to help the new teachers master the College's distinctive approach to instruction.

- TESOL Certification Program at Lake County. The College has developed its own TESOL certification program that provides 30 credit hours of courses that are in many ways equivalent to the instruction provided by Masters degree programs in TESOL. The purpose of the program is to provide qualified ESL staff for the College, and Lake County has raised the hiring requirements for its ESL faculty as a result. The program is offered at a nominal cost to Lake County faculty and largely supported by tuition from K-12 teachers who can gain ESL teaching endorsements by taking some of the courses.

- Training for the REEP** Writing Rubric at Bunker Hill. The REEP rubric is the primary ESL assessment measure used at Bunker Hill. It requires on-going faculty training to assure consistency in scoring. This training builds mutual faculty understanding about the expectations of non-credit and credit programs, as well as the opportunity for collective learning that extends beyond assessment.

- Reflective teaching at CCSF. This strategy consists of highly structured faculty discussion groups that address major problems that arise in the classroom and then explore possible solutions. Faculty members believe this form of professional development greatly increases their teaching skills.

- Program Specialists at Seminole. Seminole employs three staff members whose sole duty is to support faculty in performing their duties. This support includes counseling and trouble-shooting with students, assessment, curriculum development, managing instructional technology, and a wide range of administrative functions that relieve faculty of non-instructional duties and allow them to concentrate more fully on teaching.

Resource centers and websites. All of the colleges examined maintain extensive resource centers that include information about curricular frameworks, assessment, lesson plans, course syllabi, and other tools of instruction. Most of the colleges also have extensive faculty websites that provide this information online and serve as a means of communication among faculty members about issues of general and specialized interest.

9. ENGINEERING INNOVATION

The limits of innovation. The instructional and staff development strategies adopted by the colleges examined in the CAAL study provide a rich menu from which other colleges can select innovative strategies to improve the performance of their programs. However, only a fairly small number of students and faculty are served by these strategies, even at most of the colleges that have developed them. Progress toward adopting, expanding, refining, and disseminating innovative strategies to other programs has been episodic and slow. In part, this has been due to inadequate funding for adult ESL service, which is treated below. In part, however, these problems arise from the fact that most colleges have not adopted the managerial strategies required to optimize the resources they have.

To consolidate the gains colleges have made in improving non-credit ESL, and to move forward in providing better service to more students, individual colleges and other providers must adopt more systematic approaches to program improvement. In addition, federal and state authorities must provide certain kinds of support for innovation that are beyond the scope of what colleges and other providers, acting individually, can generate.

What colleges must do. Colleges must adapt their managerial and organizational systems to engineer innovation. At a minimum this will require:

** An online adult ESL assessment and instructional system developed by the Arlington (Virginia) Education and Employment Program (REEP).

- A commitment to strategic planning for non-credit ESL. Colleges must establish processes to comprehensively examine the design and effectiveness of their non-credit programs on a regular basis (ideally each year), establish specific goals and objectives for program improvement, and support the implementation of these measures. With the exception of CCSF, none of the colleges examined has implemented comprehensive strategic planning processes at the program level, and CCSF's plans are developed only once every seven years.

- Establish managerial responsibilities to support strategic planning. At most colleges, responsibility for non-credit ESL, credit ESL, and ABE/ASE is fragmented among different departments or divisions. Nobody is responsible for identifying and developing the improvements in service required to meet the needs of ESL students, and nobody has the authority to implement those improvements. Although program directors and department chairpersons nominally have this responsibility, they are overwhelmed by routine administrative duties. Colleges must establish points of responsibility for program improvement and provide supplemental staff support.

- Expand research on program outcomes and integrate it into the program development process. The information most colleges and program managers have about the effectiveness of their programs is remarkably limited, and it is seldom used for program planning. NRS reports are rarely used for these purposes at the colleges examined for three reasons: the colleges do not believe they accurately reflect what their programs teach, they are based on limited assessment measures, and they do not distinguish among different program components. Most importantly, neither NRS data nor most of the other data available to ESL programs provide longitudinal (multi-year) information of student progress, and this is essential to assessing programs in which students often take many years to achieve their goals. Colleges must forge closer relationships between their ESL programs and their institutional research offices to generate the longitudinal data they need, gather data on key variables not now recorded, and apply that data to planning processes. This CAAL study found that such relationships are both possible and fruitful.

- Provide supportive budgeting systems. Most colleges employ some version of baseline budgeting systems that primarily reward programs for increasing or maintaining the numbers of students served, and they are reluctant to incorporate innovative strategies into their core budgets. Colleges should adopt budgeting systems that place greater emphasis on learning gains, transitions, and other outcomes, and they should at least incorporate the resources required to develop innovative strategies into their core budgets.

What others must do. To substantially improve non-credit ESL service, certain measures should be taken by federal, state, or private funding sources. Among them are:

- Establish a system of peer learning in adult education ESL. This CAAL study discovered that colleges are rarely aware of the innovative strategies adopted by their peers, and there is no effective mechanism by which they can get this information. This failure of information dissemination greatly reduces the rate of program improvement in non-credit ESL. One of the most important steps that can be taken to improve program quality is to establish a system of peer learning that will result in the dissemination of in-depth information about innovative practices (through both face-to-face contacts and the use of technology) and foster collaborative efforts in research and development.

- Improve reporting requirements. The NRS places requirements on programs that the colleges examined have found to be of little value in assessing their programs and developing strategies for better service. Because the primary goal of the NRS is to compare the performance of states, a sampling methodology, rather than a system that requires assessing every student with prescribed tests, might be considered. Programs would benefit from a system that allows them to benchmark their performance relative to their peers. A collaborative effort of ESL programs and states would be required to design an effective benchmarking system.

- Support research on priority issues. There has been very little high quality research that would inform program improvement in adult education ESL, outside the areas of pedagogy and teacher training. Among the types of programs needed are:

  - Baseline longitudinal research on the effectiveness of adult education ESL service;

  - In-depth research on the effectiveness of innovative strategies and why they are successful;

  - Research on the contributions that CBOs make to ESL service, by providing both instruction and supportive services to learners;

  - Research on strengthening the linkages between ESL programs and welfare or other job training agencies;

  - Research on improving the cost effectiveness of programs that provide immigrants with the English language skills required to pass the test for American citizenship; and

  - Research on how ESL programs can be structured to improve students' lifelong learning of English after they have separated from formal instructional systems.

10. COSTS AND FUNDING

The need. It is widely acknowledged that total national funding for adult education ESL service is grossly inadequate to meet either the need or the demand for this service. The long waiting lists at many ESL programs are often cited to support this point. This study has demonstrated the effects of inadequate funding on the quality, rather than the quantity, of instruction.

Relatively few students are served by innovative strategies to increase learning gains and transitions. The main reason is that these strategies are considerably more expensive than standard ESL service. On average, the national expenditure for adult ESL is on the order of $600 per enrolled student per year, but the innovative strategies examined by this report cost on the order of $1500-$3000 or more for a student who would be enrolled for two semesters each year. This forces colleges and other providers to choose between serving a large number of students with standard ESL instruction, and serving a smaller number with enriched service that improves their learning gains and transition rates. Because of federal, state, and institutional pressures to serve as many students as possible, most providers tilt toward limiting their investments in enriched strategies. Inadequate funding also limits the ability of colleges and other providers to retain more full-time faculty, provide equitable reimbursement for part-time teachers, develop robust professional development systems, and adopt the measures required to engineer for innovation.

Although most colleges could be more creative in finding additional resources to support innovative strategies in ESL, there are limits to their ability to do so. A major increase in total national funding for adult education ESL is urgently required. Without it, there is little chance that either the quantity or quality of this essential service will be improved greatly. Additional funding can be provided on a targeted basis or more comprehensively. A combination of both approaches is desirable.

Targeted approaches. Some specific areas where additional funding should be targeted are:

- Transitions programs. At present there is a policy vacuum with regard to increasing transitions by ESL students to further education, and no funds are earmarked for this purpose. States and programs should be mandated to develop policies and plans to greatly increase transition rates, and at least $100 million in federal funding should be earmarked to support these efforts, including the expansion of VESL programs.

- Program improvement funds. At present, 12.5 percent of federal funding for adult education is earmarked for program improvement. This amount is manifestly inadequate to support the professional development, systematic planning, and creation of innovative strategies required,

let alone to meet the cost of assessment and reporting mandated by the NRS. A major increase in funding for these purposes from federal and state sources is essential.

- Peer learning. As noted above, the adult ESL field urgently needs a system of peer learning to disseminate the lessons learned from innovative strategies developed by some programs to others. This is a highly cost-effective means of program improvement.

- Development of adequate ESL assessment measures . The lack of assessment measures that are affordable to administer and measure the full range of ESL skills is a major structural problem in the ESL field. A significant investment is required by government or the private sector to overcome this problem.

- A more robust research agenda. There has been very little investment in most aspects of research on adult education ESL. As noted above, the list of essential topics that require high quality research is long. A major investment in any or all of these is required.

- Adopting supportive policies. A number of federal and/or state policies create barriers to the most effective use of resources now available. In particular, policies that create incentives to increase the quantity of students served, rather than the quality of service, should be modified. Also, programs should be permitted to charge tuition and fees for adult education ESL programs when public funds are inadequate to support the quantity or quality of service required. The CAAL study found evidence that a substantial number of non-credit students are willing and able to pay for this service if they must.

Comprehensive reform. Targeted funding increases would make a major contribution to improving the quality of adult ESL service. By themselves, however, these increases would not be sufficient to reduce waiting lists or to take many innovative strategies to scale. To accomplish these goals, a major increase in total federal/state funding specifically for ESL is required. At present, total national funding is on the order of $700 million per year. Doubling that amount would be a reasonable initial goal.

Accomplishing this may well require a reconsideration of how adult education ESL is positioned in the overall adult education system. At present, there is no separate authorization or line item appropriation for ESL. Policy and funding for this service are combined with policy and funding for ABE/ASE. Yet, in most respects, ESL is a wholly different service from adult education for native speakers of English. It serves a very different population with very different needs and goals, and it employs almost completely different instructional methods and tools. This study recommends that policymakers and adult education leaders consider carefully whether it is in the best interests of all aspects of adult education, including its adult ESL strand, to separate the present policy and funding links. In many respects, these links are artificial and may be counter-productive to improving both ESL and ABE/ASE service.

APPENDIX II

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX III

COLLEGE FACT SHEET
COLLEGES PARTICIPATING IN CAAL MEETING
June 9-10, 2005

Please fill in the blanks as best you can. Don't worry if you cannot find all of this information. Provide the information most readily available to you. Be as brief as you can. Please attach any additional information about your college you believe is important.

1. Name and address of college:

2. Name, address, email and phone of co-researcher:

3. Approximate total enrollment of college – credit and non-credit:

4. Students:

   • Approximate total number of non-credit ESL students served in last program year for which information is readily available (specify):

   • Approximate total number on credit ESL students served in last program year in which information is readily available (specify):

   • Major native language and ethnic groups served by credit and non-credit programs, respectively. If you can, give an estimate of the percentage of students in each group served, please do (even if it is only "most" or "a few"):

   • If you have an estimate of the percentage of students who are "Generation 1.5," please provide it:

5. Number of sites at which ESL is delivered (Please list names of sites) and the types of ESL offered at each (credit, non-credit, workforce, VESL, citizenship, family literacy, etc.) If easily available, the number of students in each program at   each site.

6. Does the program have waiting lists for any of these services, and if so for which ones and about how large?

7. Levels of non-credit and credit ESL courses (list):

8. Please list any special features of any of the non-credit ESL courses listed above (e.g., high intensity, technology based, "immersion" Spanish Language instruction, etc.). Provide 1-2 sentences about each:

9. Any special features of credit ESL courses offered. (Same specifications as above):

10. Number of ESL faculty – full time and part time – for-credit and non-credit – if available. Highest degree of each full-time (and if possible, part-time) faculty member and/or hiring criteria:

11. Assessment instruments used for placing students into each ESL program:

12. Assessment instruments used for monitoring student progress in each program:

FROM THIS POINT ON, PROVIDE INFORMATION ONLY ON THE NON-CREDIT PROGRAM, UNLESS OTHER INFORMATION IS EASILY AVAILABLE.

13. Non-credit student attainment in any recent year (from NRS data or other sources readily available – if known). If this is in the form of a large chart (which it probably is), attach it:

14. Non-credit student retention and progress from level to level – over any time period by any measure:

15. Any information (or estimates) on the number of non-credit students who make transitions to credit enrollment – either in credit ESL or credit academic programs – over any time frame:

16. Staff development programs or activities offered by the college, or to which the college helps ESL faculty gain access. (Simply list them. You can be a bit cryptic.)

17. Support received from the college for non-credit ESL, if known (in most cases, "yes" or "no" will suffice):

- Financial subsidies (what):

- Un-reimbursed overhead support:

- Faculty status (benefits, etc.) is the same as that of other non-credit faculty:

- Students have access to same services and facilities as credit students (e.g. college library, student ID card, guidance and counseling, etc.):

- Non-credit ESL program is part of core college budget (rather than treated as a grant program):

18. Does the college contract with or collaborate with non-profit CBOs (and/or independent tutors) to supplement its non-credit ESL program? If so, briefly characterize the relationship(s) and indicate about how many students are served by CBOs/tutors (if information is readily available):

19. List up to 5 major ways in which the college makes use of computer instructional technology for non-credit students (a few words will do):

20. At present, what aspects of the college's non-credit ESL program do YOU consider "exemplary"? That is, what do you think the college does exceptionally well, and/or that other colleges should know about? (E.g., high intensity programs, transitions to credit, counseling, retention, student-centered learning, use of technology, Spanish language instruction, emphasis on transitions to credit, etc.). Simply list them. You can add any additional information you want.

21. Given the goals of the Project and your interests, what topics would you especially like to discuss at the June meeting?

APPENDIX IV

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES DOCUMENTED BY COLLEGES IN CAAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL PROJECT

Bunker Hill Community College

Basic English as a Second Language (BSL) Program
IBM Reading Recognition Software
REEP Training
Spanish GED and Spanish Literacy
Transitional Pathways to College

City College of San Francisco

Bridges to Biotech
Project SHINE
Reflective Teaching
VESL Immersion Program (VIP)

College of Lake County

ESL Supported Landscape Management Certificate
Healthcare Bridge Program
Intensive Intermediate English for Academic Purposes
TESOL Certificate Program

Seminole Community College

Clearly Said, Clearly Read
Intensive ESOL With Managed Enrollment
Moving On!
Regional Training Sessions
Resource and Program Specialists
Total Immersion in English Strategies (TIES)

Yakima Valley Community College

Articulation Between ESL and ABE
On-Campus (Day) High Intensity Transition Classes
Faculty Peer Mentoring
Student Generated Thematic Curriculum
High Intensity Classes

APPENDIX V

VESL IMMERSION PROGRAM (VIP)
CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO

By Sharon Seymour
Professor of ESL and Former Program Chair, CCSF

1. Synopsis

The VESL Immersion Program, (VIP) at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) is an intensive VESL program offered in collaboration with the San Francisco Department of Human Services (DHS). It was developed to provide vocational language skills to CALWORKS (California Work Opportunity and responsibility to Children) and PAES (Personal Assisted Employment Services) clients in San Francisco who have not yet achieved sufficient ability to speak English in the workplace through customary ESL classes. The DHS CALWORKS program serves low-income adults with dependent children. The DHS PAES program provides services to indigent single adults. Students can participate in the VIP program for as long as they are receiving government assistance. The goal of the program is to provide students with language and job preparation skills that will enable them to find employment before the financial and other support services they receive from DHS terminates. In addition, the program aims to help students achieve self-sufficiency, not just a low-paying job with no opportunity for advancement.

This practice is significant because:
- The intensity of instruction and the learning community that VIP provides increases student retention.
- The intensity of instruction and learning community that VIP provides increases the percentage of students moving up one or more levels in ESL
- The collaboration with DHS allows for students to receive additional important support services from DHS above and beyond what the college can provide.

2. History and college context

City College of San Francisco serves approximately 45,500 students in non-credit and 47,250 in credit each year at programs in numerous locations in San Francisco. The noncredit ESL program serves approximately 26,800 students in non-credit and 4,640 students in credit each year.

DHS contracts with CCSF to offer the VIP program. VIP serves approximately 75-85 students a semester, less than 1% of the total noncredit ESL students at CCSF. In fall 05, VIP served 83 students: 55 in Levels 1-3, 14 in Level 4 and 11 in Level 5/6. An ESL instructor, who reports to ESL Department Chair and/or designee, coordinates The VIP instructional program. The ESL Department Chair, who reports to the ESL Department Dean, is the program administrator and is responsible for daily operations and overall performance of the contract. The DHS Director of Client Special Needs or designee is responsible for overseeing the program and evaluating contract design and performance. A DHS VIP coordinator is the liaison between the VIP instructors and DHS staff.

The CALWORKS and PAES programs were created in 1998 as part of the programs developed to serve the former General Assistance population following welfare reforms in California. DHS recognized that clients with low levels of English needed intensive VESL instruction in order to be ready for employment when their DHS benefits terminated. They also were convinced that their clients would benefit from receiving the extra attention they would get in ESL classes that were smaller than the large noncredit ESL classes that CCSF provides (average of 28 students/class.) In Spring 2000 DHS came to CCSF to ask if the ESL Department was interested in developing a program for their non-native clients, modeled after a program they'd discovered in Southern California. The Southern California program targeted three specific vocational areas for their training. In contrast, CCSF and DHS decided to provide general VESL instruction in the VIP program rather than focus on specific vocational areas. The program began in spring 00 with 13 students and now and offers instruction year round to approximately 75-85 students each term.

3. Program Description

Goals. The goal of VIP is to increase the rate and quality of learning by high intensity instruction offered in a learning community so that students will be prepared to find employment before the financial and other support services they receive from DHS are terminated.

Students. VIP serves between 70-85 students each semester on average, less than 1% of the total number of noncredit ESL students served at CCSF. Students are welfare recipients, and are typically Asian, Hispanic or Russian. Many have limited education in their native language and limited employment skills. Students are at the beginning level of ESL. Four levels of instruction are offered from Low Beginning (CCSF Level 1) to High Beginning (CCSF Level 4) with approximately 15-20 students/class. Occasionally DHS requests that CCSF also offer Literacy classes and/or Low Intermediate classes, (CCSF Level 5 and 6.) to serve students at those levels.

4. Design

Structure. The program offers 20-30 hours a week of instruction for 18 weeks a semester (8 weeks in the summer session). All students take a general ESL course for 10 hours a week and a general VESL class 10 hours a week. The majority of students also take a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) class for an additional 10 hours a week. When offered, Level 5/6 students take 10 hours a week of VESL and have 25 hours a week of subsidized employment. Enrollment is managed in that students are required to attend classes to meet their CALWORKS and PAES Employment Plan obligations and receive continued financial support. Attendance is carefully monitored and DHS staff follow-up with students who are absent. Students with excessive absences are dropped from the program.

VIP is in part based on the concept that learning communities promote student success. Students are together for the 20-30 hours a week of instruction. A number of studies report on the implementation of learning communities and describe experiences of the students and instructors in these programs. See the National Learning Communities Project Website: http://learningcommons.evergreen.edu for examples of studies of learning communities. CCSF research has shown that VIP retention rates and learning gains are higher for VIP students than for students in its general noncredit ESL program. A few other studies that have measured program outcomes have found similar promising results. Studies of credit programs at LaGuardia Community College in New York and Seattle Central Community College found that students in a learning community were more likely to pass their courses, and student persistence to the next year was higher.[39] A study of Kingsborough's Opening Doors Learning Communities program that compared students in a learning community to a control group found that student performance can substantially improve during the period the student is involved in the program, and students are more likely to take key developmental courses and more likely to pass these courses.[40]

Content. The Monday-Friday 9-11 ESL class focuses on general language acquisition; the Monday-Friday11-1 class is VESL and the M-F 10-hour CALL class from 1-2 focuses on both, more general language acquisition in the lower levels and more job related skills in the higher levels. Job search skills, cultural understanding of the workplace, general customer service skills and SCANS skills are taught in the VESL classes. Vocational "hard skills" training is not a part of the curriculum. Listening and speaking skills are emphasized because they are more critical for most jobs, but reading and writing skills are also taught as deemed important. Project based learning activities are an integral component of the program and include: informational interview projects to help students gain knowledge about their intended career paths, business simulations at a Job Fair, intensive job interview practice with native speakers, bake sales, creation of a word-processed book of interviews with employers at local business as well as a book of personal narratives, and opportunity for students to prepare for and conduct the graduation ceremony held each semester. The DHS coordinator and teachers have recruited volunteers to help facilitate conversation groups for the higher-level students and assist students in the

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[39] Tinto, Vicent. 1997. "Classrooms as Communities: Exploring the Educational Character of Student Persistence." *Journal of Higher Education* 68(6). And Tinto, Vincent, 1998. *Learning Communities and the reconstruction of Remedial Education in Higher Learning*, paper presented at the Conference on Replacing Remediation in Higher Education, January 26-27, at Stanford University, Stanford, CA.
[40] Bloom, D. and Sommo, Colleen. 2005. *Opening Doors: Building Learning Communities* New York: MDRC.

CALL classes. The program also includes visits to markets, job sites, city centers, museum, and libraries. Many students are matched with volunteer tutors who go to the students' homes to help them with their English.

Role of Assessment. Assessment of students' ESL level, using a locally developed ESL placement test and an oral interview, determines what classes they place into. Curriculum is driven by CCSF course outlines and instructors' evaluation of student needs, not by any external assessment instruments.

Articulation. The contract that CCSF has with DHS spells out the services to be provided by CCSF and by DHS. CCSF provides assessment of the students, develops and implements the curriculum, provides instruction, submits evaluations and feedback to DHS and maintains a student database. DHS conducts outreach and refers students to the program, limits enrollment in the classes, contracts with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide training facilities and case management, conducts group orientations, ensures availability of backup childcare, develops compliance plans, as necessary for the students, and collaborates with CCSF to organize field trips, projects, and the graduation ceremony. The VIP classes are advertised in the CCSF schedule of classes and are open to the public. However in reality, mostly DHS referred clients enroll in the program. Any prospective CCSF students who are not DHS clients but express interest in VIP are referred to the ESL coordinator at one of the CCSF campuses to get more information about the program.

VIP students are registered as CCSF students and complete the CCSF noncredit application form. They are welcome to enroll in other CCSF noncredit ESL classes at their level either after or during the time they are enrolled in VIP. But according to CalWORKS regulations, training programs, such as VIP, are accepted as a "core activity" and qualify the client for welfare whereas City College ESL classes are not generally considered a "core activity." Instructors inform students about the opportunities available at CCSF and students go to the Admissions and Enrollment Office at the campus of their choice to register for a noncredit ESL class. A few VIP students have taken CCSF non-credit ESL classes at night in addition to VIP during the day. Some students who have completed VIP have continued their studies in noncredit ESL at CCSF or taken City College credit classes. Any student wishing to take credit classes at CCSF must complete a CCSF credit application and take an ESL and a math placement test to determine what level of ESL and math they need to take.

Entry and exit procedures. Students new to VIP take the CCSF ESL placement test, have a follow-up oral interview with a VIP instructor and are placed into classes based on the results of this assessment. Pre and post CASAS Job Skills, and CASAS Reading and Listening tests are administered each semester. At the end of the semester, all students are given an oral interview to assess their aural comprehension and oral competency. Promotion decisions are based on the results of the CASAS post-tests, the final oral interview and evaluations of daily coursework and attendance. A screening checklist is also used to identify possible learning disabilities (LD's.) VIP instructors use the screening checklist at the beginning of the semester and continue to screen for learning disabilities throughout the semester. Students who are identified with possible learning disabilities are referred to their DHS Employment Specialists for further learning disability diagnosis at the Department of Rehabilitation (DR). Depending on the results of this screening, the student might receive special services through DR. Diagnosing learning disabilities is a difficult process due to lack of appropriate tests for non-native English speakers, but some of the ESL instructors have attended workshops about what behaviors are a possible sign of LD's. Usually there are only two or three students identified with LD's each semester**.**

Support Services. CALWORKS participants receive financial support and a full array of services for 18-24 months as they work with an Employment Specialist to follow an individualized Employment Plan (EP). This Plan may include job preparation, assessment, training, counseling and treatment, education and job search activities that lead to a job and self-sufficiency. Participants also receive childcare, food stamps, Medi-Cal, Fast Passes for public transportation and may qualify for a housing subsidy. If a CALWORKS or PAES client's level ESL level is four or below, they are referred to VIP as the first step in their EP. The DHS program coordinator for VIP works with case managers and community-based organizations (CBOs) to identify students for the VIP program, and coordinate support services for the students while they are with VIP.

When VIP students are in the middle of their final semester with VIP, they do a targeted vocational assessment (TVA), and have a career-counseling meeting with a vocational advisor or counselor (VA). They meet with their welfare workers and, with the assistance of a VA, create a mutually agreed upon new EP which may include job training (such as office skills training at CCSF or certified nursing assistant (CNA) training at a community based organization), a job readiness

workshop (Gateway), job search, Community Job Placement (CJP), or more ESL. The Gateway program, which is a Job Readiness Workshop for limited English speakers, includes training on how to write an application, resume and cover letter, interviewing, and how to access the hidden job market.

Technology. Many of the VIP students take the 10-hour a week CALL classes offered in the afternoon. Students in the CALL classes work at a computer each day. At the low beginning levels they learn how to operate a computer and use the mouse, and complete basic reading and writing tasks such as reading questions on screen or copying materials into a Word document. At the high beginning levels they complete more vocationally oriented tasks such as typing a resume or an application letter.

5. Faculty

Seven or eight instructors teach in the VIP program each semester. Instructors are members of the CCSF ESL Department and have an MA in TESOL or a related field with a TESOL emphasis, which is the minimum qualification requirement for all ESL instructors at CCSF. One of the VIP instructors is assigned 5 hours a week (20% release from teaching) to coordinate the program. The ESL Department Coordinator who oversees VIP makes the instructional assignments and looks for teachers who are good at working closely with other instructors in a team and who have some experience teaching VESL and/or CALL if possible. It is desirable, but not required, that instructors have some curriculum development skills since they write a lot of their own materials. It's also preferable to maintain a continuity of instructors and fortunately most instructors like the program and stay with it for several years.

6. Financing

VIP is supported by a grant from DHS. The 2005-2007 contract between CCSF and DHS provides a budget summary:

$ 355,601 includes instructional costs and non-instructional
       costs for instructor/coordinator meetings
$ 8,001 for database system maintenance
$ 3,500 supplies/equipment
$ 11,500 textbooks, software
$ <u>2,000 miscellaneous</u>
$ 388,214

CCSF bills DHS for expenditures at the end of each semester. Figures are not currently available for the CCSF approximate cost per noncredit student but it is estimated that the cost is higher than the DHS grant pays.

7. Outcomes

Learning Gains. VIP students are more likely to move up one or more levels of ESL than students in the general noncredit ESL program at CCSF.   See the chart below**.**

First NC ESL Level	Percent of VIP Moving Up one or more Levels	Percent of CCSF NC ESL Moving Up one or more Levels
Literacy	100%	35%
Level 1 (Beginning Low)	86%	46%
Level 2 (Beginning Low)	71%	40%
Level 3 (Beginning High)	100%	43%
Level 4 (Beginning High)	13%	55%

VIP students at Level 4 are less likely to move up one or more levels because the VIP program normally stops at Level 4 and the goal of the program is to provide students with sufficient English to find employment after they complete the VIP program rather than to transition them on to further studies.

Retention. VIP students are more likely to persist for one or two terms than students in the general noncredit ESL program at CCSF. 80% of VIP students persist for more than one term compared to 38% of non-VIP CCSF NC ESL students. See the chart below.

Number of NC ESL Terms	Percent of Students Persisting in VIP	Percent of Students Persisting in CCSF NC ESL
Persist for 1 term	20%	42%
Persist for 2 terms	14%	17%
Persist for 3 terms	12%	12%
Persist for 4 terms	12%	8%
Persist for 5 terms	13%	6%

VIP students are less likely to persist for four or more terms because the program is normally only four or five semesters long (from Literacy or Beginning Low Level 1 to Beginning High Level 4.) The goal is to provide students with sufficient English to find employment after they complete the VIP program rather than to transition them to further studies.

However, the VIP program may achieve more. The percentage of VIP students persisting for up to five semesters in the table above sums to 71% rather than 100%. Likewise, the percentage of all CCSF students persisting for up to five semesters sums to 85% rather than 100%. This indicates that 29% of VIP students and 15% of all ESL students were enrolled in the ESL program for more than five semesters. Because the VIP program rarely alalows students to continue for more than five semesters, this means than 29% pf VIP students were enrolled in the mainstream ESL program either prior or subsequent to their participation in VIP. (The college does not know what percentage of these enrollments occurred before or subsequent to participation in VIP.)

At the very least, these data indicate that VIP students had a higher rate of persistence than CCSF's other ESL students. And the data may also indicate that VIP encouraged students to persist in ESL studies after they had completed the program, although the college has not determined the extent to which this is the case. Depending on when the additional persistence occurred, enrollment in VIP may possibly have been the reason that VIP students persist in ESL studies at a higher rate than the college's other ESL students. If so, this would mean that high intensity programs like VIP can be a "launching pad" for welfare recipients and other ESL students to continue their study of English.

Transitions and Attainment of Employment. Please note that the figures cited below are duplicated numbers. For example, some students had attained jobs and were also going to school.

As stated above, the goal of the program is to provide students with sufficient English to find employment, not to transition them into further studies in academic or vocational programs. Nevertheless, records kept during the first two years of the program indicate that of the 64 students who completed VIP Level 4, 39%, or 25 students, continued their studies in ESL or in another noncredit vocational or training program - most at CCSF but some at other programs. 18.5%, or 12 students, had entered DHS's Job Readiness Program. Nine percent, or six students, were repeating VIP. DHS had lost contact with 15 students, over 23%.

Records indicate that 64% or 41 of the 64 students who completed Level 4 during the first two years had found a part time or full time job. For the first two years of the VIP program, DHS was required to keep close track of job placements, but in more recent years such information has not been kept.

9. **Special Features**

Job site visits and community field trips are incorporated into the program. For example, in spring 05 VIP students journeyed outside their classrooms to visit markets, museums and libraries. To learn about career paths and opportunities they visited a hotel, the MUNI headquarters (the public transportation system), a daycare center, and a grocery store and had informational interviews at different worksites. These experiences motivate and stimulate VIP students to be active learners and job seekers. Also, instructors or aides volunteer to provide small group conversation practice and individual attention to VIP students on a weekly basis. VIP VESL and CALL curriculum binders that include materials developed by VIP instructors are kept and updated regularly.

10. **Significance**

Among the reasons other colleges may wish to consider implementing a program similar to VIP are these:

- The collaboration with an agency, such as Department of Human Services, enables students to receive additional support services they need that a college can not normally provide to the extent that the outside agency can, such as financial support, counseling, job readiness training, childcare, bus passes, etc. Receiving these kinds of support services may make it possible for many students to attend ESL classes who otherwise would not be able to.

- The intensity and learning community that VIP provides increase student retention and success, enabling them to reach their goal of gaining sufficient English to get a job in a quicker time then they may be able to by taking customary noncredit ESL classes.