

**POLICIES TO PROMOTE ADULT EDUCATION  
AND POSTSECONDARY ALIGNMENT**

**Prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy**

**by  
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## FOREWORD

This Policy Brief is by Julie Strawn, Senior Policy Analyst with the Center for Law and Social Policy. It was prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy and presented by Ms. Strawn at the Commission's August 20, 2007 meeting.

The Commission wishes to thank Ms. Strawn and the Center for this important contribution to its work. While its publication does not necessarily reflect conclusions of the Commission, we are pleased to make it available as a public service.

*Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Education* is focused on “helping adults with lower skills and/or limited English proficiency earn postsecondary credentials that open doors to family-supporting jobs.” The Policy Brief examines obstacles to moving toward this goal – with major attention to lack of alignment between federal and state adult education efforts, job training services, and postsecondary education policies. It also draws attention to the financial, personal, and family challenges that prevent adults from seeking and completing programs. Numerous policy and action recommendations are given.

Other materials developed for the August 20 meeting of the Commission are also available, at [www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org/pandp.html](http://www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org/pandp.html). A listing of commissioners and honorary commissioners is given below.

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**Sherrie Claiborne** – Chair, Public Policy, Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE), and past president; COABE representative to and president of National Coalition for Literacy.

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**Samuel Halperin** – Senior Fellow & Founder, American Youth Policy Forum and Institute for Educational Leadership; Director of William T. Grant Foundation studies of non-college-bound youth, “The Forgotten Half.”

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**Owen Modeland** - President, Correctional Education Association (incoming); Superintendent of Schools, Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

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**Hon. Tom Sawyer** - Former member, U.S. House of Representatives (OH); Author, National Literacy Act of 1991; Former Mayor, Akron, OH; Extensive Congressional role in tracking U.S. and world demographic trends and applying them to policy and program purposes.

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**Andrew Sum** - Professor of Labor Economics, Director of Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University; National leader in labor market research related to adult literacy.

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## **HONORARY COMMISSIONERS**

**David Baldacci** – Author of 13 best-selling novels, translated into 38 languages and sold in more than 80 countries; Playwright; National ambassador for various charities, including the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy; Lawyer, trial and corporate law.

**Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr.** – Distinguished Professor, Hispanic Research Center, Arizona State University; Recipient, Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education; Board Member, Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching.

**Hon. Ruth Ann Minner** – Governor, State of Delaware.

**David A. Perdue** – former Chairman & CEO, Dollar General Corporation; Chairman of National Commission on Adult Literacy, July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007.

**Hon. Richard Riley** – Partner, Nelson, Mullins, Riley, and Scarborough; former Secretary of Education (Clinton Administration); Former Governor, South Carolina; Recipient Harold W. McGraw Jr. Education Prize for national leadership.

## AUTHOR'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Brief focuses on how to help more adults with lower skills and/or limited English proficiency earn postsecondary credentials that open doors to family-supporting jobs. This is not the task of adult education alone but must also be the work of postsecondary education and workforce development institutions. This should be a national priority, for two reasons:

- **Many workers are stuck in low-wage jobs, and postsecondary credentials can help them qualify for jobs that pay enough to support a family.** One in four working families in our country is low income.<sup>1</sup> While there are a number of factors contributing to this, postsecondary education or training can be a ticket out for low-wage workers seeking better jobs. Employers now pay college-educated workers 75 percent more than those with only a high school diploma, compared to just 40 percent more back in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>
- **Employers in many sectors and regions of the country either face skill shortages currently or will in the near future.** Between 2004 and 2014, 24 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations are expected to be filled by people with postsecondary education or training (either an occupational certificate or degree). Yet nearly half of the U.S. workforce has only a high school education or less.<sup>3</sup>

While the business community and legislators often point to K-12 school reform as the solution, school reform alone cannot fix these problems. About two-thirds of our 2020 workforce is already beyond the reach of our elementary and secondary schools,<sup>4</sup> and education trends for youth entering the workforce are going in the wrong direction.<sup>5</sup> If we are to avoid ever-worsening inequality in skills and income and to meet the employer demand for skilled workers, then we must enable more adults to gain marketable postsecondary credentials.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the current potential pool of skilled workers among prime-age adults is equal to the next 17 years of high school classes.<sup>7</sup> *The bottom line is that we need to “grow our own” skilled workforce for the future from within the workforce we already have.*

So what stands in the way of us getting there? First, only about one in four adults with less than a high school education participate in any kind of education or training.<sup>8</sup> Second, we are not successful enough with those who do participate—*most do not persist long enough to earn any credential.*<sup>9</sup>

**One major factor behind these discouraging outcomes is the lack of alignment between federal and state adult education, job training, and postsecondary education policies.**

- Lower-skilled adults typically need help from multiple agencies, but few states track their education and economic outcomes over time, across services, and into the labor market.
- Adult education services typically are not aimed at preparing students either for careers or for postsecondary education or training,<sup>10</sup> although a clear majority of students have these goals.<sup>11</sup>
- Federal job training to lower-skilled individuals has declined over the last decade under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and there is very little collaboration with adult education.<sup>12</sup>
- Postsecondary education and training typically does not coordinate, dual enroll, or align services with adult education in the way that it increasingly does with high schools. As a result, even adult

education students who earn their GEDs generally must enroll in remediation again at the college level, at which their chances of earning a degree are slim.

**There are two additional major obstacles: adult students face financial, personal, and family challenges; and adult and postsecondary education and training institutions lack the capacity to respond effectively to these challenges.** Students often must work full-time while attending school (and, often, taking care of children)—making it unlikely they will complete their programs. Yet federal and state financial aid leaves a large gap between costs and the resources of lower-skilled adults.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to financial help, lower-skilled adults often need help navigating education and training services, setting career goals, gaining college success skills, and obtaining personal support from staff and other students. These students are unlikely, however, to get these supports from adult education or postsecondary education and training institutions. Adult education programs especially are hampered by severe under-funding—an annual total of just \$645 government funding per student.<sup>14</sup>

Community colleges—the postsecondary institutions in which lower-skilled adults are most likely to enroll—also typically have few resources for supporting student success or for investing in program innovation and replication. The federal government spends about 55 times as much on grant aid as on student success services.<sup>15</sup> Most states neither dedicate funding to success services nor hold colleges accountable for completions rather than enrollments—giving them little incentive to devote scarce funding to supporting success.

If our country’s mediocre and worsening workforce skills pose a real and urgent threat to economic growth and individual opportunity, and our current set of public policies is inadequate to address this, what can we do to change this? Because this task is too large for adult education to take on alone, our recommendations go beyond the adult education system to an array of federal and state funding streams and agencies that have a part to play in helping lower-skilled adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials. These recommendations fall into three areas critical to progress:

**1. Increase state capacity to track individual outcomes across adult and postsecondary education and training services, over time, and into the labor market; and use this data to set goals for improvement.** This depends on each state designating an entity to lead this work at the state level, one that has the authority to set goals and create accountability mechanisms that cut across agencies and services. It also depends on the state having a clear bottom line for these cross-agency accountability efforts, one that is meaningful in the labor market—such as helping lower-skilled adults earn credentials that lead to family-supporting jobs. Interim steps, such as increasing transitions from adult education to postsecondary, can be a valuable part of this work—but only so long as the combined efforts of the different systems are moving the needle on the overall bottom-line goal.<sup>16</sup>

**2. Integrate adult education and English language services with postsecondary education and training to increase attainment of credentials leading to family-supporting jobs.** We should build on exciting state innovations currently underway that teach basic skills and the English language in the context of particular occupations with the goal of helping students increase skills to the level needed for the next education step on a career pathway—while allowing them to simultaneously complete an initial occupational credential. This integrated basic education and skills training approach, such as Washington’s I-BEST program, shortens the timeline for helping adults earn marketable credentials, so that more students can finish their programs.

To support such state efforts, we should revise federal adult education and workforce development policy to clarify that these federal funds can be used for integrated adult education and postsecondary occupational programs. We should also make helping lower-skilled adults reach their career and postsecondary education goals an explicit and central part of the mission of the federal adult education program—and revise program definitions, performance measures, and reporting requirements accordingly. Changes are also needed in WIA’s adult training program, to ensure that lower-skilled adults can access needed adult education and postsecondary education and training services.

**3. Adapt financial aid policies to the needs of lower-skilled adults, and support their success in adult and postsecondary education and training.** If we really want to substantially increase the number of adults with marketable postsecondary credentials, we have to figure out how to allow them to reduce work hours to a level at which educational success is possible. We can do this by increasing federal and state grant aid to low-income working adults. We should also think about ways to encourage more employer support for skill upgrading of lower-skilled workers, so that greater use can be made of tuition reimbursement, paid release time, workplace-based services, pay raises or promotions linked to completion of training, and other strategies. Greater use of distance and online education in combination with face-to-face instruction would also help. We also need to do much more to support success in adult and postsecondary education and training, in particular through greater career and academic counseling, especially proactive advising; courses on skills for college success; and cohorts or “learning communities” for peer support. One important step in federal policy would be to attach to every Pell Grant a Student Success Grant, to be used by the college the Pell recipient attends for intensive student success services. Federal funding for access and success would be coupled to ensure the investment results in more credentials completed, not just more students enrolled.

### **Conclusion**

Helping more adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials is critical to the twin national goals of increasing economic competitiveness and sharing the benefits of prosperity more widely. Because many adults have low literacy and numeracy skills, limited English proficiency, or both, remediation and English language instruction linked to postsecondary education and training in demand occupations and industries has to be part of the solution. The recommendations in this Brief would go a long toward making such services more available, accessible, and effective for lower-skilled adults.

## Endnotes to Executive Summary

<sup>1</sup> *Working Hard, Falling Short America's Working Families and the Pursuit of Economic Security*, Tom Waldron, Brandon Roberts, and Andrew Reamer with assistance from Sara Rab and Steve Ressler. October 2004, Working Poor Families Project, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.

<sup>2</sup> "Capitol Column," *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *Strengthening State Policies To Increase The Education And Skills Of Low-Wage Workers*, Adair Crosley and Brandon Roberts, Spring 2007, Working Poor Families Project, Chevy Chase, MD.

<sup>4</sup> *Sector Initiatives and Community Colleges: Working Together to Provide Education for Low-Wage Working Adults*, Workforce Strategies Initiative Update, Issue 4, April 2007, Aspen Institute, Washington, DC.

<sup>5</sup> *Forces Changing Our Nation's Future: The Comparative Performance of U.S. Adults and Youth on International Literacy Assessments, the Importance of Literacy/Numeracy Proficiencies for Labor Market Success, and the Projected Outlook for Literacy Proficiencies of U.S. Adults*, Andrew Sum (Northeastern University) June 2007, for the National Commission on Adult Literacy, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, New York, NY; *Mounting Pressures Facing the U.S. Workforce And The Increasing Need For Adult Education And Literacy*, Dennis Jones and Patrick Kelly (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems), May 21, 2007, for the National Commission on Adult Literacy, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, New York, NY.

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive look at the evidence of growing inequality, see *Forces Changing Our Nation's Future*, op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> Numbers refer to adults aged 18 to 44 with a high school diploma or less. Author calculations from Census Bureau data from the March 2006 Current Population survey and from *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates 1998 to 2018*, December 2003, Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, Boulder, CO.

<sup>8</sup> As compared to one-third of high school graduates and more than half of adults with some college experience. *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, Table 354, [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d05/tables/dt05\\_354.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d05/tables/dt05_354.asp).

<sup>9</sup> This is true regardless of which door they enter (adult education or postsecondary education or training).

<sup>10</sup> In program year 2003-2004, states reported that just 1.7 percent of all federally-supported adult education students entered postsecondary education or training. See *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Year 2003-2004 Report to Congress on State Performance*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Three-fourths of GED test takers report having college or career goals. "The General Educational Development (GED) Credential: History, Current Research, and Directions for Policy and Practice," John H. Tyler, Chapter 3 in *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy 2005*, National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>12</sup> In 2005, only 2.1 percent of WIA Title I adult program exiters who received training had completed the eighth grade or less, and just 3.7 percent were limited English proficient. Less than 1 percent of those who received intensive or training services were co-enrolled with adult education. See U.S. Department of Labor, PY 2005 WIA Summary Report – Adults (Derived from PY 2005 WIASRD) March 2007. Available at: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/WIASRD/PY2005/Adult05-Summary-Rpt.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> A recent study (2003-2004 school year) found that after all aid was awarded, working poor students were still left with nearly \$4,000 in unmet need. See *College Access for the Working Poor: Overcoming Burdens to Succeed in Higher Education*, Courtney McSwain and Ryan Davis, July 2007, Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, DC.

<sup>14</sup> Includes funding from federal, state, and local governments. Author's calculation of median federal and state combined expenditure per student in Fiscal 2003, data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational

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and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. The ETS Adult Education Program survey found a similar average spending level, \$626 per student.

<sup>15</sup> If one includes in access spending only Pell Grants, campus-based programs, LEAP, and Academic Competitiveness Grants, the total is about \$15 billion for FY 2006, compared with \$273 million in the TRIO Student Support Services program.

<sup>16</sup> Federal goals and performance measures in adult education, job training, and postsecondary education should also reflect this crosscutting goal of low-skilled adult career and education advancement.

# POLICIES TO PROMOTE ADULT EDUCATION AND POSTSECONDARY ALIGNMENT

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This Policy Brief is intended to help the National Commission on Adult Literacy consider state and federal policy strategies that hold promise for increasing the number of lower-skilled adults\*, including those with limited English skills, who earn postsecondary credentials that can open the door to family-supporting jobs and careers. Section 1 summarizes the research on why adult and postsecondary education should focus more on helping lower-skilled adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials. Section 2 describes some of the key policy challenges to achieving this goal. Section 3 discusses some current state policy innovations related to these challenges and makes recommendations for state and federal policy changes that could help more lower-skilled adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials.

## **Section 1. Why should adult education focus more on helping lower-skilled adults earn postsecondary credentials?**

Adult education currently focuses primarily on helping adults increase their literacy skills, improve their English proficiency, and earn GEDs. To the extent that adult education succeeds in accomplishing these aims, it contributes positively to students' lives and to our society more broadly. Research suggests that when lower-skilled adults increase their skills, they work more and earn more, their children do better in school, and those formerly incarcerated are less likely to return to prison.<sup>1</sup>

But as positive as these accomplishments are, they are not enough – individuals, employers and our economy as a whole need more. Why?

- **The widespread problem of low wage work.** One in four working families in our country is low income.<sup>2</sup> While a number of factors contribute to this, postsecondary education or training can be a ticket out for low wage workers seeking better jobs. As the Wall Street Journal recently noted, employers are now paying college-educated workers 75 percent more than those with only a high school diploma, compared to just 40 percent more back in the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>
- **The looming skills shortage in many sectors and regions.** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2004 and 2014, 24 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations are predicted to be filled by people with postsecondary education or training (either an occupational certificate or degree). Yet a recent analysis of American Community Survey data found that nearly half the U.S. workforce has only a high school education or less. Some 25 million workers aged 18 to 64 lack a high school diploma or GED while another 52 million adults have no postsecondary education.<sup>4</sup>

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\* The term “lower-skilled adults” is used to refer to essentially the same population as that eligible for public adult education services: adults and older youth not in school who either lack a high school diploma, or have limited English proficiency, or even with a high school credential lack the literacy and numeracy skills to function effectively in work and society.

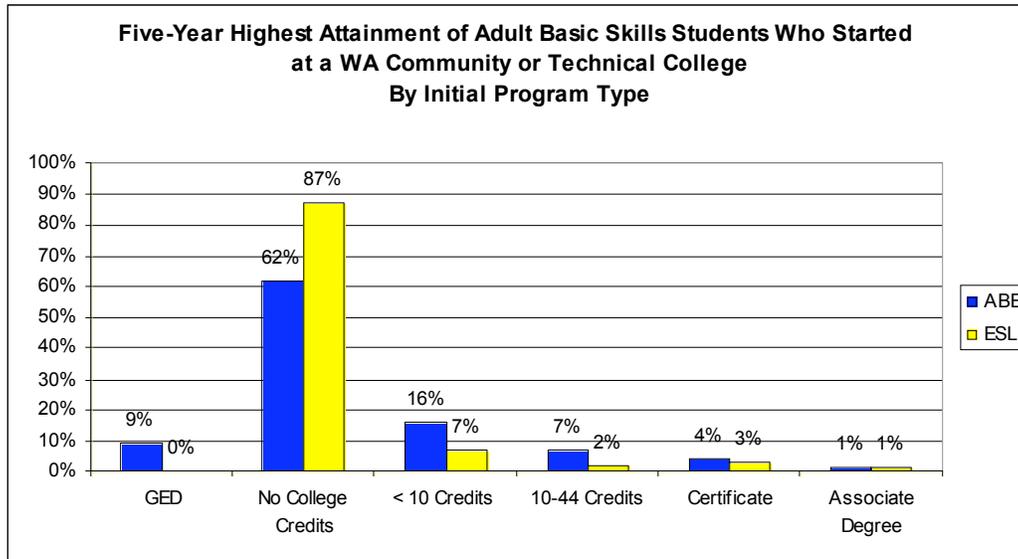
- **School reform alone cannot fix these problems.** About two-thirds (65 percent) of our 2020 workforce is already beyond the reach of our elementary and secondary schools.<sup>5</sup> And even if that were not true, the education trends for youth entering the workforce are going in the wrong direction. As Commission papers have pointed out, reading and math skills of teenagers have been flat for 15 years now, with the result that the U.S. is the only industrialized country in which younger adults (aged 25-34) are less educated than the previous generation (aged 45-54, their parents' generation).<sup>6</sup>

If as a nation we are to avoid ever worsening inequality in skills and income, and to meet the employer demand for skilled workers so that our economy can prosper, then we must enable more adults to gain marketable postsecondary credentials. In fact, the current potential pool of skilled workers among prime-age adults—defined here as the nearly 50 million people aged 18 to 44 with a high school diploma or less—is equal to the next 17 years of high school graduating classes.<sup>7</sup> *The bottom line is that we need to “grow our own” skilled workforce for the future from within the workforce we already have.*

In Washington State, two landmark studies in 2005 helped policymakers understand this complex story in a way that crystallized for them the adult and postsecondary education policy changes needed to help both employers and lower-skilled workers meet the economic challenges they faced. In one study the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges analyzed education and labor market outcomes over five years for 35,000 students and determined that the “tipping point” for students to experience a substantial earnings payoff from college was about a year of occupational credits plus a credential.<sup>8</sup> (Other state and national research has reached similar conclusions.) Specifically, the tipping point study found that students who earned at least 30 occupational quarter credits plus a credential experienced the following payoffs:

- \$2,700 more per year for workforce students entering with a high school diploma; \$1,700 more for those entering with a GED.
- Even larger increases for lower-skilled students and those with limited English. English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students reaching the tipping point earned \$7,000 more per year; adult basic education (ABE) students earned \$8,500 more annually than comparable students who did not reach it.
- By contrast, those in short-term customized training did not gain enough skills to reach the tipping point. These students earned \$3,800 less per year than comparable students who did stay long enough to reach the tipping point and \$6,800 less per year if they started from ABE.
- Despite the large payoff for adult education students reaching the tipping point, the study found that few of them got that far—just 5 percent of ABE students and 4 percent of ESL students (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Community College Adult Basic Skills Education Outcomes**  
 (from Prince and Jenkins, 2005)



Later that year, Washington’s three boards responsible for higher education, community and technical colleges, and coordination of workforce development conducted a joint study to determine what workforce skills employers needed currently and in the future, and whether the state was meeting that need. The study concluded that,

“The state’s current supply of workers who have completed mid-level preparation—more than one year but less than four years of postsecondary training or education—will meet only 83 percent of the expected employer demand during 2007-2012. Increasing the supply of workers with mid-level preparation at the rate of population growth will not close the gap and meet employer demand. It will take policy changes to increase sufficiently this sub-baccalaureate capacity.”<sup>9</sup>

These two studies, taken together, clarified for policymakers that helping more adults reach the tipping point would also help employers meet their need for more workers with mid-level skills. As a result, the state decided to increase funding and adopt new policies aimed at this goal—such as creating Opportunity Grants, a new student aid program for low income, working adults and expanding I-BEST, an initiative to integrate adult education and English language services with occupational training to help lower-skilled adults improve basic skills and earn occupational credentials at the same time. (Both of these programs are described in more detail in Section 3 of this brief.)

## **Section 2. What stands in the way of more lower-skilled adults entering and succeeding in postsecondary education and training?**

If education, and especially postsecondary education, is increasingly essential for obtaining family-supporting jobs, why do few lower-skilled adults seek to increase their skills? According to the Digest of Education Statistics, in 2001 only about one in four adults with less than a high school education participated in any kind of education or training, as compared to one-third of high school graduates and more than half of adults with some college experience. About six percent of these lower-skilled adults were enrolled in adult basic or secondary education or ESL classes.<sup>10</sup>

More troubling is that most lower-skilled adults who do participate in education or training—whether adult basic, secondary, or postsecondary education—do not persist long enough to earn any kind of credential.

- Adult education students do not typically persist long enough to advance even one grade or English ability level. A national survey of programs in 2002 found that adult education students received an average of 80 to 100 hours of instruction in a year—and this is likely an overestimate, as it excludes students who did not stay for at least 12 hours. The most commonly reported length of stay was 30 to 50 hours, with 51 to 80 hours the next most common.<sup>11</sup> By comparison, research suggests students need on average at least 100 hours of instruction to advance a grade level and 110 hours to move up one level in English ability.<sup>12</sup>
- The majority of adult education students do not earn a GED, even over the long run. While longitudinal studies that track adult education student outcomes over several years are rare, those studies that do exist have found that most adult education participants do not participate beyond a few months and that most (typically 70 percent or more) do not earn a GED.<sup>13</sup>
- While earning a GED does significantly increase the chances that a lower-skilled adult will enroll in postsecondary education, the majority of GED graduates do not do so. Only 12 percent completed more than one year of college by the time they were in their late twenties; three percent earned at least an Associate degree. Data on GED graduates later in life (including those in their 50s) shows that 30 percent of GED graduates ultimately enrolled in some postsecondary education but did not earn a degree, while eight percent earned a Bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>14</sup>
- A much smaller share of adults without either a high school diploma or a GED enter postsecondary education or training (about 11 percent), despite the fact that the “ability to benefit” policy allows them to receive federal Pell grants if they can demonstrate their ability through performance on a standardized test to benefit from college.
- Most adults entering postsecondary education or training with lower skills fail to complete a credential, whether or not they have a high school diploma or GED. This reflects in part the higher dropout rates of nontraditional students generally, such as working adults, and in part the higher dropout rates of students enrolled in college remediation.
  - **Nontraditional students are only about half as likely as traditional students to complete a degree within 5 years.** For example, just 27 percent earned an associate degree in that time, compared with 53 percent of traditional undergraduates, and they were no more likely to still be enrolled. Highly nontraditional students—those who have four or more nontraditional

characteristics, such as being on their own financially, not having a high school diploma, having children, or attending part-time—are only about one-fifth as likely to complete a degree.<sup>15</sup>

- **Just 30 percent of first-time undergraduates enrolling in remedial reading courses completed a certificate or degree within eight years** of leaving high school, compared with 69 percent of those not needing any remediation.<sup>16</sup> This has major implications for adult education, as most GED graduates (85 percent in one study<sup>17</sup>) entering postsecondary education require further remediation. While this is high, it is worth noting that lower-skilled adults in college are not limited to the GED population; some 61 percent of all first-time students who were 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1992 and entered community colleges enrolled in at least one remedial course.<sup>18</sup>

There are three major factors behind these discouraging outcomes: (1) a lack of alignment between federal and state adult education, job training, and postsecondary policies; (2) the financial, personal, and family challenges facing lower-skilled adult students; and (3) the weak capacity in adult and postsecondary education and training institutions to respond effectively to these students' challenges.

*(1) Lack of alignment between adult education, job training and postsecondary policies in support of the workforce education needs of lower-skilled adults*

Lower-skilled adults typically need services from more than one education and training program, often housed in different agencies, in order to gain the skills and postsecondary credentials required for many family-supporting jobs. Yet each of these programs is focused typically only on its own internal goals and outcomes, not on outcomes across services. Federal and state policies tend to reinforce rather than break down these silos, with the end result that no entity is responsible for making sure the different education and training services are working effectively in combination with each other.

- **Few states track education and economic outcomes for lower-skilled adults over time; across adult, job training, and postsecondary education services; and into the labor market.** As a result, they lack the program and labor market data to align and integrate education and training services for lower-skilled adults or to tie these services more closely to employer workforce needs. This is not due primarily to a lack of technical capacity. For example, in 2003, through data matching across agencies, 34 states were able to use unemployment insurance wage record data to track labor market outcomes for adult education participants, and 26 states could use administrative records to examine postsecondary enrollment by adult education students.<sup>19</sup> Among state postsecondary education systems, 40 states can track individual postsecondary education outcomes over time and 23 state postsecondary education databases are linked to some other state database, typically to unemployment insurance wage records.<sup>20</sup>
- **Adult education services are not typically aimed at preparing students either for careers or for postsecondary education or training, yet a majority of adult education students have these goals.** A 2003 national survey of adult learners found that 44 percent had “high school completion” as a goal and that another 34 percent were seeking “a better job.” And among those taking the GED test in 2001, 30 percent were taking the test for “employment” goals, while 66 percent had the goal of “further education.”<sup>21</sup>
  - Federal performance measures allow adult education programs not to focus on preparation for postsecondary education and training, because they only require states to track postsecondary enrollment for those students who enter adult education with that goal—a tiny fraction of all students. For example, in program year 2003-2004, 30 percent of adult education students with a

postsecondary goal entered postsecondary education. Yet this represented just 1.7 percent of all adult education students that year.<sup>22</sup>

- Most adult education programs devote virtually no funding to counseling,<sup>23</sup> which is not surprisingly given how under-funded the programs typically are. This lack of career and education counseling likely limits the number of adult education students who set postsecondary education as a goal. And in the absence of career exploration and planning, the GED becomes the default goal for students, despite the fact that it neither pays off substantially in the labor market nor prepares students well for postsecondary education and training.
- **Postsecondary education and training does not typically coordinate, dual enroll, or align services with adult education in the way that it increasingly does with high schools.**
  - Alignment of postsecondary entry requirements and adult education content is challenging because there is no one standard for postsecondary education and training readiness, nor could there be, given the wide range of postsecondary programs and the skills needed to succeed in them. For example, the skills needed to succeed in a welding certificate program are vastly different from those needed for a nursing program. This means that there is no substitute for the postsecondary and adult education systems working together to customize remediation to various career and education pathways. While this is starting to happen in a few states, as described in Section 3, it still appears to be rare.
  - The different assessments used in postsecondary and adult education also hinder alignment of content and entry and exit criteria. Moving to common assessments is difficult, in part because each system must use different assessments approved by the federal government for separate adult education and student aid purposes.
  - The lack of alignment means there is often substantial overlap in the population served by adult education and college remediation, and sometimes competition for those students. For example, adults whose literacy or numeracy skills are in the range of 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency might be served by either adult education or remediation programs at open-entry colleges. This overlap is not necessarily bad if there is collaboration rather than competition in providing services; for example, dual enrollment/dual credit partnerships (which allow students to earn college credits while completing high school) have flourished between high schools and colleges. However, little of this kind of collaboration currently seems to exist between adult education programs and colleges.
- **Federal job training to lower-skilled individuals has declined under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and there is very little collaboration with adult education.** WIA, enacted in 1998, was a significant departure from the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (JTPA), the federal workforce legislation that preceded it. While JTPA was a program that was targeted to low-income individuals, youth, and dislocated workers, WIA mandated universal access to a set of core services through a new system of One-Stop career centers, and it required that adults move through core and intensive services first, before being given training (called “sequential eligibility”).

Sequential eligibility provisions, along with the new mandate for universal services and decreasing funding, have led to a decline in the provision of training services under the new law.<sup>24</sup> The number of adults exiting the program who received training declined 26 percent between 1998, the last full

year of JTPA, and 2004. Further, the number of exiting adults in federal job training who were low-income declined by almost a third, from 96 percent in 1998 to 65.5 percent in 2004.<sup>25</sup>

The WIA performance measures and the lack of targeting requirements in the law have led to fewer training services for lower-skilled individuals and those with other barriers to employment, such as limited English proficiency.<sup>26</sup> For example, in 2005, only 2.1 percent of exiters who received training services under the WIA Title I Adult program had completed the eighth grade or less, whereas 47 percent of exiters who received training services were high school graduates, and 25.2 percent had completed some postsecondary education.<sup>27</sup> In program year 2005, only 3.7 percent of program exiters who received training were limited English proficient.<sup>28</sup>

Under WIA, ABE and ESL are allowable training activities in conjunction with other types of training, but in program year 2005, only 3.6 percent of exiters who received training services under the WIA Title I Adult program received ABE or ESL in conjunction with other types of training services.<sup>29</sup> And less than one percent of program exiters who received intensive or training services between April 2004 and March 2005 were co-enrolled with adult education.<sup>30</sup>

The requirement (with certain exceptions) to provide training through vouchers, or Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), compounds these problems. Vouchers only work well when the services that individuals need are readily available in the education and training marketplace. This is not the case for lower-skilled individuals seeking postsecondary credentials, because postsecondary education and training is typically not accessible to them without the kinds of innovations in policy and practice described in Section 3 of this Brief.

## *(2) Financial, personal, and family challenges facing lower-skilled adult students*

The overburdened lives of lower-skilled adults contribute greatly to their high dropout rates in adult and postsecondary education and training, and federal and state policies do too little to help. Typically, these students are juggling work, family, and school responsibilities; have financial and logistical barriers, such as lack of transportation and child care; and have limited knowledge of career options and related education and training opportunities, which can cause them to flounder in their selection of programs and courses. Many also lack both the confidence and the network of social support to overcome these challenges. In addition, because they may be the first among their families and friends to attempt postsecondary education and training, the complex bureaucracies of financial aid, course registration, and so on in the postsecondary world may be even more daunting to them than to other students.<sup>31</sup>

Financial issues, and especially the need to work full time, likely loom largest among these personal and family challenges, in both direct and indirect ways. For most lower-skilled adults, the indirect costs of education—such as housing and food—are far greater than actual tuition, books, and fees. For example, the average cost of tuition and fees at public two-year colleges—where most lower-skilled adults enroll—was \$2,191 in 2005. The total average cost for commuter students at those institutions, however, was \$11,692, because living expenses were more than twice as much as tuition and fees.<sup>32</sup> When students must work full time or close to it (30 hours or more) to cover those living expenses, this has very negative effects on their ability to complete programs.<sup>33</sup> While this is currently more commonly an issue for postsecondary education or training than for adult education, if adult education moves to increase the average hours of instruction—as it surely must if it wants to increase its effectiveness—this problem of how students pay for living expenses while leaving time for studies will certainly become important.

Federal and state policies tend to compound these financial problems because they are not tailored to the needs of low-income, working adults.

- **Federal and state financial aid leaves a large gap between what postsecondary education and training costs and the resources of lower-skilled adults.** A recent study of working poor adults in the 2003-2004 school year found that after all aid was awarded, students were still left with nearly \$4,000 in unmet financial need.<sup>34</sup>
- **The “work penalty” in federal student aid policy reduces federal aid in response to earnings by low-income working students, even when they are earning far below the poverty line.** For example, adult students without children can keep only about \$6,000 in earnings per year to cover all their living expenses—just 61 percent of the poverty line—before their student aid is cut. Those with children fare a little, but not much, better: they can keep earnings equal to only roughly 80 percent of the federal poverty level before they are hit with the work penalty.<sup>35</sup> While Congress recently increased how much income these students may keep, the change will not take effect until mid-2009 and still leaves adult students without children well below the poverty level.<sup>36</sup>
- **Most states do not extend aid to students attending less than half time,** as many working adults do; yet these adults often cannot afford to reduce their work hours enough to take more than one course a semester. In addition, college remediation sometimes is not covered by state student aid.<sup>37</sup>
- **Federal policies discourage the pooling of federal job training funds under the WIA Title I with federal student aid for the same individual,** viewing that as “double dipping,” even though either source alone fails to come close to covering the true costs to a low income worker of upgrading his or her skills.<sup>38</sup> And WIA typically only pays for direct educational costs, such as tuition and fees. Although WIA can provide “needs-related payments” to program participants to cover other expenses associated with training, in Program Year 2005 only 3.1 percent of low-income individuals who exited the program after receiving intensive or training services received needs-related payments.<sup>39</sup>
- **Childcare is often unaffordable for low-income adults in adult or postsecondary education classes.** Because federal and state childcare subsidies are in short supply, they are typically reserved for welfare recipients meeting work requirements and for other low-income adults for time spent working—not time spent in class. For example, just 11 percent of the families receiving federal childcare subsidies nationally in 2005 were given aid so that they could participate in education or training. Another five percent were in some combination of employment and education.<sup>40</sup>
- **Federal welfare-to-work policies under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant now make it harder for states to allow lower-skilled parents to stay in adult and postsecondary education for long enough to earn an occupational credential.** This takes away an important past source of funding for living expenses and support services for lower-skilled parents in postsecondary education and training.

Improving these federal and state policies would take some of the financial pressure off lower-skilled adults in education and training. Most would still need to work while in school, though hopefully for fewer hours. This makes it critical to garner greater employer support for skill upgrading for lower-skill employees, whether that takes the form of allowing worksite services, providing tuition

reimbursement or paid release time for class, or collaborating on creating new kinds of training for those lower-skilled workers. However, most employers do not currently invest in such workers. In fact, two of the strongest predictors of whether a worker will receive employer support for upgrading his or her skills are higher initial education attainment and a household income of at least \$50,000.<sup>41</sup> Those with low skills and low wages are left out.

*(3) Weak capacity in adult and postsecondary education and training institutions for effectively responding to these students' challenges or for innovating for better alignment*

Beyond financial aid issues, adult education and postsecondary education and training institutions typically have little capacity to help lower-skilled adults overcome the many challenges to successful participation that they face, or for innovation to improve program effectiveness.

- **Adult education programs are especially hampered in their ability to respond to student needs and to engage in innovation by the severe under-funding of the system.** The most recent available data shows that the federal government, states, and localities together spend a median amount of just \$645 per student in adult education annually.<sup>42</sup> This lack of funding results in many of the following capacity issues:
  - Most adult education programs offer only four to six hours of instruction a week, which makes progress very slow and may contribute to high attrition.
  - Outside of prison-based programs, more than half of adult education instructors are part-time staff, and about one-fourth are volunteers. Just one of four instructors is full-time. This affects the availability of the workforce for professional development, which hinders innovation and replication of effective practices. It also translates into low pay and benefits, and few opportunities for professional advancement.<sup>43</sup>
  - Adult education programs spend a median amount of less than one percent of their budgets on professional development, which again, greatly limits the ability of programs to improve.
  - Adult education programs typically lack resources for support services of any kind, though more than one-third of programs report receiving in-kind support from other sources for such services as child care, transportation, and psychological counseling.
  - Just two percent of adult education programs offer weekend services, though half of adult education participants are employed and presumably would be more able to participate on the weekend, as their higher-skilled counterparts do in such institutions as the University of Phoenix.<sup>44</sup>
  - There is little structure or consistent expectations of adult education students in terms of attendance, homework, and academic progress. For example, most programs are “open entry, open exit,” with students able to enroll at any time—which means new students may be coming into a class continually. Yet some research suggests that greater structure and consistency in adult education classes may be what students with sometimes chaotic lives need most.<sup>45</sup>

- **Community colleges are the postsecondary institutions in which lower-skilled adults are most likely to enroll, and they, too, typically have few resources available for supporting student success or for investing in program innovation and replication.**
  - Given very high student-to-counselor ratios (they can exceed 1000:1), lower-skilled adults in community colleges are likely to find little help available in navigating student aid or registration, or in accessing academic support, such as tutoring. As a result, many students—not just lower-skilled ones—flounder, accumulate credits that do not build toward a credential, and ultimately drop out.
  - Course schedules are frequently geared toward traditional students and meet at times that are hard for working adults to attend. In addition, for-credit programs typically enroll new students only at the beginning of semesters or quarters, so that students must often wait months before they can enroll.
  - Because most states do not have dedicated funding streams for student support services at community colleges, these services are the first to be cut in tough budget times and are inadequately funded even in good times, especially since funding structures for postsecondary education typically are based on enrollments rather than on completions.
  - The federal government invests its higher education dollars almost entirely in helping students afford college, with very little invested in services to help students succeed once they are enrolled—spending about 55 times as much on grant aid as on success services<sup>46</sup>. So community colleges receive little federal funding for services or program innovation to help students succeed.
  - Community colleges typically do not get funding for innovative new programs until students are enrolled in them, making it difficult to cover the start-up costs of creating new curricula, such as integrated remediation and occupational skills, breaking programs into modules, or other strategies.

### **Section 3. Policy strategies for increasing attainment of postsecondary credentials that help lower-skilled workers and employers compete economically**

The previous sections of this report highlight: (1) the looming threat to economic growth and individual opportunity that stems from our country’s mediocre and worsening workforce skills, and (2) the inadequacy of our current set of federal and state public policies to address this threat. In particular, few of our public policies focus on helping lower-skilled adults gain marketable postsecondary credentials, even though it is quite clear that such credentials—whether technical certificates and diplomas, or associate or bachelor degrees—are increasingly essential for individuals to qualify for family-supporting jobs and increasingly in demand by employers seeking a competitive edge.

This section describes innovative strategies that states are pursuing to address these issues and recommends changes in federal and state policies to help more lower-skilled adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials. These recommendations are grouped into three areas:

- Increase capacity over time to track individual outcomes across adult and postsecondary education and training services and into the labor market, and set goals for improvement

- Integrate adult education/ESL services with postsecondary education and training to increase attainment of credentials leading to family-supporting jobs
- Adapt financial aid policies to the needs of lower-skilled adults, and support their success in adult and postsecondary education and training.

While this last area may seem less directly relevant to the work of the Commission, it is included here because of the dismal credential completion rates in adult and postsecondary education for lower-skilled adults, rates that are likely to pose an insurmountable obstacle to progress in this area if their root causes are not confronted.

*(1) Increasing capacity over time to track individual outcomes across adult and postsecondary education and training services and into the labor market, and set goals for improvement*

Lower-skilled adults typically need a comprehensive set of services—going beyond what any one adult education or postsecondary education program typically provides—in order to earn credentials that can increase their earnings substantially. This means that different agencies and programs must work together much more closely than they do now in order for those services to be effective. Yet typically agencies are focused on meeting performance and reporting requirements that track results program by program, not across services, because program-specific outcomes are what they are held accountable for.

Recognizing that what is not measured cannot be improved, in recent years states and the federal government have taken some steps toward changing this. Kentucky, for example, now tracks postsecondary transition rates for all GED graduates and sets performance goals for increasing those transitions over time. KYAE improved the rate of GED graduates enrolling in postsecondary education from 12 percent in 1998-99 to 21 percent in 2005-2006. Setting this goal, along with other activities to encourage a focus on transitions, helped make the state a national leader in postsecondary transitions by adult education students. And, beginning in 2007-2008, local adult education providers will earn performance funding for each GED graduate transitioning to postsecondary education.<sup>47</sup> This adult education transition effort is part of a much more comprehensive set of goals and related performance measures that cut across Kentucky’s adult and postsecondary education programs.

North Carolina also sets performance goals and awards performance funds for transitions from remediation into postsecondary education and training. The progress of basic skills students is one of six state outcome indicators for which community colleges can earn performance funds. According to a recent Workforce Strategy Center report, the most successful colleges have earned close to \$1 million, which provides flexible money that can be used to support new program development or other special initiatives.<sup>48</sup>

As noted in Section 2, an essential prerequisite to such efforts is creating the data capacity in states (and ideally nationally) to document the progress of lower-skilled adults over time, through services provided by multiple education and training agencies, and into the labor market. Such data analysis can also quantify and compare the supply, demand, and payoff in the labor market of various credentials for different groups of adults, as the Washington State study did. States and localities need to be able to use labor market, demographic, and program data to determine what employers and lower-skilled workers most need from public education and training services, where adults are falling through the gaps, and which changes in policy and practice can most improve outcomes. States and

localities can then use these analyses to set shared and individual goals for components of the public workforce system (including colleges), focus innovation and replication efforts, and continuously improve their services over time.

### **State policy recommendations**

- **Designate an entity in the state to lead and guide cross-agency goal setting and performance measurement related to lower-skilled adults earning marketable credentials.** Successful collaborations between adult education and postsecondary education and training providers can take place in a variety of settings and do not necessarily depend on adult education and postsecondary education being governed by the same agency. Regardless of which agency administers adult education at the state level, though, there has to be some state body with the authority to hold adult education, workforce, and postsecondary agencies collectively responsible for outcomes for lower-skilled adults. In Kentucky, for example, the Council on Postsecondary Education houses adult education, community and technical colleges, and four-year institutions even though each has separate funding and governing structures. In Washington State, the Workforce Education and Training Coordinating Board oversees the collective efforts of its workforce development, adult education, and community college systems. In addition, because adult education in Washington is administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, that Board has the authority to analyze and make improvements in how well adult and postsecondary education services function together to benefit lower-skilled adults.
- **Keep the overarching focus of these cross-agency goal-setting efforts on the bottom-line goal of lower-skilled adults earning credentials that lead to family-supporting jobs.** Interim steps, such as increasing transitions from adult education to postsecondary education, can be a valuable part of this so long as the combined efforts of the adult education, workforce, and postsecondary systems are moving the needle on the overall goal. But if they are not—for example, if more adults transition but very few finish—then that should not be viewed as good enough.
- **Put in place data-sharing agreements between the relevant adult education, training, and postsecondary agencies to allow tracking of individual outcomes for lower-skilled adults over time, across workforce programs, and into the labor market.** While there are some legal and technical challenges to creating the necessary data capacity in this area, states that have made it a priority—such as Florida, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington—have found ways to overcome these obstacles while protecting individual privacy, according to a 2005 study by Jobs for the Future.<sup>49</sup> In most cases, the barriers arise from the lack of any compelling reasons to invest the time and resources needed to put in place data-sharing agreements and to do the analyses, especially since agencies typically have a host of program-specific data they are required to collect and analyze for federal program reporting.
- **Do wider tracking and set broader goals for adult education transitions into postsecondary education than those required for federal funding.** Currently few states go beyond the federal reporting requirement of tracking postsecondary transitions only for the small number of adult education students who enter the program with college as a goal. States will need to set higher expectations for themselves on this if they want to substantially increase transitions.

- **Set performance goals for postsecondary education that include transitions from college remediation into for-credit coursework.** While some lower-skilled adults enter postsecondary education through the adult education system, others simply go directly to community colleges and are enrolled in college remediation (typically referred to as developmental education). If states are to increase attainment of postsecondary credentials by lower-skilled adults, they therefore will need to look not only at adult education transitions, but also at transitions from college remediation into for-credit coursework. California and Kentucky have each recently completed major studies on this issue, with agendas for improving the effectiveness of remediation statewide. Colorado, Indiana, and Illinois all have pilots underway aimed at improving completion and successful transitions from college remediation into for-credit programs.
- Ensure that state accountability systems for postsecondary education and training accommodate the needs of nontraditional students, including lower-skilled adults. States can unwittingly create disincentives for postsecondary education and training institutions to serve lower-skilled adults through performance systems that include measures—such as time to degree—that are not adjusted for nontraditional students who, for example, may take longer to complete because they are working and taking care of children.<sup>50</sup>

### **Federal policy recommendations**

- **Revise the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act,** as recently recommended in a comprehensive study on student unit record data by the Lumina Foundation, to accommodate state and federal data needs for accountability and evidence-based program improvement purposes while still protecting individual privacy.
- **Make transitions to postsecondary education one of the purposes of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.** Despite transitions to postsecondary education being included in the performance goals for federal adult education funding, they are not included among the purposes of the Act. The purposes of the Act are still framed in terms of the end goal being high school completion.
- **Build capacity in states to report on postsecondary transition rates over time for all adult education students, and move toward setting federal performance goals for this.** As noted earlier, the current requirement to report postsecondary transition rates only for students who enter adult education with a postsecondary goal has the effect of making transition rates look much higher than they actually are, as few students enter adult education seeing themselves as college material. It also means local providers do not get credit for one of their most important accomplishments: helping adults gain enough skills and confidence to see that they can succeed as learners and reach higher in their education and career goals. About half the states already have the ability to data match student records between adult and postsecondary education; incentives and technical assistance should be provided to help the other states gain this capacity. Ultimately, the federal government should require reporting on postsecondary transitions for all adult education students over time, for example, within five years after enrolling in adult education. It could then use this data to work with states to set performance goals in this area.

- **Refocus federal job training on providing high-quality job training and education that leads to family-supporting wages and benefits.** This could mean, for example, requiring that a floor be set on what share of program resources should go to training; 50 percent has been suggested as a reasonable minimum.<sup>51</sup> Such a policy is important given the decline in training described in Section 2. States can also put in place requirements to invest a minimum amount in training. For example, Florida implemented a policy that requires that at least 50 percent of WIA Title I funds be allocated to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). As a result, in 2005, 64 percent of Florida’s expenditures went to ITAs.

(2) Integrating adult education/ESL services with postsecondary education and training to increase attainment of credentials leading to family-supporting jobs

As states and the federal government consider what kinds of policy and program innovation can help more lower-skilled adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials, they should be careful not to close one gap (e.g. adult education to postsecondary) only to leave students falling through another one (e.g. college remediation to for-credit courses). That is why the most exciting state innovations currently underway are those that combine services from adult education with postsecondary education and training so that adults can bypass college remediation, using adult education to increase their skills to the level needed for their postsecondary program while simultaneously beginning their occupational or academic college coursework—helping them to persist in their studies and earn marketable credentials faster. Some of these programs are not limited to adults who have already earned a high school diploma or GED.

These initiatives share some of the features of dual enrollment, high school-to-college initiatives typically aimed at higher-skilled youth, such as “early college.” These features include dual or concurrent enrollment in adult education and postsecondary education and training, dual credit (e.g., toward high school diplomas and postsecondary credentials), and integration of academic and occupational course content. Some of the programs involve co-instruction by adult education or ESL faculty with college academic or technical faculty. These kinds of integrated adult and postsecondary education efforts are likely to be most effective when tailored to local needs, based on careful analyses of regional labor markets and the demographics of communities’ lower-skilled adult populations.

In Washington State, for example, the Integrated Basic Skills and Skills Training (I-BEST) initiative aims to increase the number of adult ed/ESL students who reach the “tipping point” found in the study described earlier in this brief. I-BEST started as a pilot in a handful of colleges but now operates statewide. Features of I-BEST include:

- Each I-BEST program must be part of a certificate or other occupational program with a proven ability to place its graduates in higher-wage jobs. (The current standard for this is wages greater than \$12 an hour, with a higher wage standard in Seattle of \$14 an hour.)
- I-BEST pairs ABE/ESL instructors with professional/technical instructors in the classroom to provide integrated basic skills and job training. Instructors co-teach about half time, and the rest of their time each teaches the same students contextualized basic skills and occupational skills separately.
- The goal of I-BEST is for individuals to earn a for-credit occupational certificate and to raise their basic skills and/or English proficiency to the level needed to take the next career and education steps, ideally avoiding or decreasing the need for college remediation.

- I-BEST programs range from one to three quarters in length. Current programs are in such fields as office occupations, allied health, automotive technology, energy technology, electronics technology, manufacturing, information technology, and offset printing.
- I-BEST students in the ESL pilots earned five times more college credits and were 15 times more likely to complete job training than traditional ESL students. The success of the pilots persuaded the state to take the program statewide, offering colleges enhanced formula funding (1.75 FTE) for students in the program to take into account the extra costs of two instructors, revising curricula, coordinating instruction, and additional student supports.<sup>52</sup>

Kentucky is also integrating adult education, college remediation, and occupational training, using the Career Pathways initiative, which it began in 2003 as the vehicle. The state had already taken the first step toward making Career Pathways more accessible to lower-skilled adults in 2006 when it brought college remediation services into the Pathways projects. The current collaboration with adult education is especially impressive given that different agencies operate adult education and community colleges at the local level. The Career Pathways Remediation project involves the following elements:

- Local teams apply for state grants. These teams must include at least one instructor each from adult education, college remediation, general education at the college, and career/technical education at the college.
- The grants fund curricular redesign and integration of remediation, occupational training, and academic transfer coursework. For example, the grants might fund faculty stipends for the time needed to contextualize curricula, or to “chunk” longer programs into shorter segments, to come up with more flexible schedules (such as weekend and evening courses), and create online or workplace learning components.
- The grants also cover professional development and technical assistance. All of the grant activities are aimed at creating integrated remediation customized to specific occupational career pathways in such fields as allied health, construction, and manufacturing.

Kentucky has a history of local collaboration between K-12 agencies operating adult education and community colleges on postsecondary transition. The state has supported these local efforts through such activities as crosswalking college and adult education assessments to enable localities to align adult education and college remediation content and entry and exit criteria. The most comprehensive of these local transition partnerships has rebranded adult education so that the differing roles of it and the college are invisible to the students. The Education Enrichment Services (EES) Center in Louisville appears to be part of the college, though it is actually a partnership between adult education, the community college, and two local universities. The Center uses co-instruction by adult education and college remediation faculty and shared curricula and assessments between the two programs. The college waives developmental education tuition for students at the Center. The EES Center has some impressive accomplishments to date:

- EES has jointly enrolled 5,000 students.
- 88 percent of them have bypassed at least one college developmental education course, with estimated savings to students of \$400,000 in tuition costs in 2005-2006 alone.
- 72 percent of its students have been retained.<sup>53</sup>

Oregon is a third state that sees integration of adult education with postsecondary education and training as the shape of the future. Oregon has embarked on Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Transition to Education and Work Initiative (OPABS) with the goal of initiating adult education systems change that is sustainable, with formal links to postsecondary education and to One-Stop Centers. The vision is ultimately for this to become the way the whole adult education system operates in Oregon. Currently there are six development sites for the initiative and they are engaged in (a) curriculum and module development, revision, and pilot testing, and (b) integrating occupational information focused on Oregon's high-demand occupations.\*\*

The state plans for the initiative to result in a series of courses (bridge, pre-bridge, and career/college readiness) with lesson plans based on a standard format that are ready for use by other adult education faculty: teachers' guides for each course that will facilitate instructors' delivery of OPABS courses; advising modules on topics that can facilitate adult learner transition to postsecondary education, training, and/or work; and a module on referral of adult learners to One-Stop services.

To engage in the kind of groundbreaking work taking place in Washington, Kentucky, and Oregon requires fundamentally rethinking the content and goals of adult education. The end goal becomes not the GED (which typically still means that adults have to enroll in college remediation) but rather the skills needed for the next step up to jobs and related education and training opportunities in a career pathway, with reducing or eliminating the need for college remediation being part of the goal. Increasing success for lower-skilled adults in postsecondary education and training also means changing college remediation content and delivery to increase persistence and completion in those services, something that is part of the Kentucky Career Pathways initiative and is also being addressed by a number of states and colleges involved in the *Breaking Through* initiative, funded by national foundations to spark innovation in college remediation that can lead to more lower-skilled adults earning workforce-related postsecondary credentials. In addition, *Shifting Gears*, another foundation-supported initiative, is working with Midwestern states to change state policies to support more lower-skilled adults earning in-demand postsecondary credentials.

This kind of integrated adult and postsecondary education and training in workforce demand areas also requires much closer ties at the regional level between adult education and employers than is usually the case. For example, state initiatives such as Illinois' Critical Skills Shortage Initiative, Kentucky's Career Pathways, Pennsylvania's Industry Partnership Program, and Washington's Skills Panels all provide mechanisms for adult and postsecondary education and training providers at the regional level to work with workforce boards and business and industry to identify occupations and industries that face worker shortages and can offer family-supporting wages.<sup>54</sup> Many of these career pathways are accessible to lower-skilled adults if they gain technical skills and credentials. These initiatives define program success in terms of what employers and workers need to compete successfully in the regional economy. This can help the various education and training agencies and institutions get beyond the sometimes conflicting internal goals of their programs to focus on common goals that are meaningful for regional economic success and to align their services toward helping adults reach those goals.

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\*\* Health services (e.g., medical assisting, medical records), industrial and engineering systems (e.g., welding, construction), and business and management (e.g., marketing, sales).

## State policy recommendations

- **Pilot integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training approaches aimed at helping various lower-skilled populations move into in-demand occupations that offer family-supporting wages.** Funds for these pilots can come from a variety of sources, such as the Governor’s WIA discretionary funds, as in Oregon; from the TANF program, as in Arkansas; or from the state’s customized training program, as in Kentucky.
- **Put in place statewide mechanisms that bring together employers and adult and postsecondary education and training providers at the regional level to address critical local workforce needs, and ensure that lower-skilled adults are included.** The examples noted above of career pathways and other similar initiatives show that state leadership can play an important role in sparking regional collaboration across agencies and between the public and private sectors in tackling workforce skill challenges. While lower-skilled adults are not always a focus of these efforts, they can be—if the state explicitly identifies them as important to meeting workforce needs. For example, the Illinois Critical Skills Shortage Initiative focused in the beginning on higher-skilled jobs and workers but has intentionally worked in recent years to build adult education bridges into these higher-skilled career pathways.
- **Anticipate state policy and funding issues important for taking integrated approaches to scale and sustaining them by using local pilots to identify needed state policy and funding formula changes.** For example, these are likely to include state policies on adult education and postsecondary education assessment and referral criteria, policies on performance accountability, state processes for postsecondary program approval, and policies regarding dual enrollment and dual credit, among others. To the extent key policies are determined at the local level, states can facilitate alignment and integration by requiring or creating incentives for putting in place formal agreements and processes that create seamless pathways through adult education and postsecondary education and training, at least in some high-demand occupations that offer family-supporting jobs and careers.
- **Include college remediation services as a focus of state policy change to create integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training approaches.** There is little point in improving adult education transitions to postsecondary education and training if former adult education students then become stuck in college remediation coursework and never go on to earn a postsecondary credential. If college remediation is included as a partner in transition efforts, then services can be designed to ensure that lower-skilled adults master the content necessary to enter their chosen postsecondary program while still in adult education. This can also help them avoid using up their scarce financial aid funds on remediation by failing to make “satisfactory progress” toward their certificate or degree.<sup>55</sup>
- **Use state grant funds for up-front costs related to program start-up, such as curricular redesign and contextualization of remediation, but determine early on the business model for funding the ongoing operational costs of integrated services.** Integrated adult and postsecondary education and training services typically cost more to create and to run day-to-day than traditional services (though integrated services can prove more cost effective over the long run if they significantly improve outcomes). Beyond the start-up costs, ongoing expenses may include such things as co-instruction, joint planning, and student case management. It is important for states to quantify the additional costs, as well as the

education and economic outcomes of services, in order to specify and justify building those extra costs into base funding for the services. Otherwise integrated programs are likely to end when state grants for them do.

- **Explore whether the state could adopt more creative and flexible policies with regard to how it uses state adult education funds beyond required federal match.** Three of every four dollars spent on adult education nationally are state and local funds, yet federal requirements drive adult education policy at the state and local level. In other arenas, such as welfare programs, states have found new flexibility by being creative in separating state expenditures from federal ones to free themselves to a greater extent from federal constraints.
- **Align policies in state-funded training programs outside adult and postsecondary education,** such as state-funded incumbent worker or customized training programs, to encourage integration of these services with adult education. For example, in response to employer demand, Massachusetts changed its policies in its Worker Training Fund to allow use of these incumbent worker training funds for basic skills and English language services.<sup>56</sup>
- **Track outcomes of pilots and compare costs/benefits to those of existing policies in order to scale up what works.** For example, Washington State has steadily expanded the I-BEST model, even though it costs substantially more than traditional adult education services. This expansion would not have been possible if the state had not been able to quantify how much more likely I-BEST students were to persist and complete credentials and what those credentials were worth in the labor market to adults who otherwise were consigned to very low earnings.<sup>57</sup>

### **Federal policy recommendations**

- **Clarify that nothing in the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act bars use of funds for integrated programs and other transition activities.** While some states and localities are currently supporting integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training services with federal adult education funds, there seems to be a common misperception at the state and local level that federal policy does not allow such approaches. While nothing in AEFLA appears to prohibit such activities, the Act could be revised to make it perfectly clear that such services are allowed, provided that there are mechanisms in place to allocate adult education resources to these activities in proportion to the amount of adult education content in them. For example, if a program integrates English language and job training services, and half of the program's content is English language instruction and half of it is job-specific skills training, then a reasonable interpretation of the law would be that adult education funds could support half of such a program's costs.
- **Provide federal leadership in adult education to encourage greater use of integrated adult and postsecondary education and training services.** This leadership could include such activities as helping to align assessments across federal adult education and postsecondary education and training or clarifying that integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training is allowed under federal policy. The Education Department's Career Pathways initiative is a positive first step in this area.
- **Encourage integrated approaches in college remediation through federal grants to colleges under the Higher Education Act for creation of workforce-related bridge**

**programs and other innovation aimed at increasing persistence and completion.** For example, a pending proposal in the House of Representatives would create “Jobs to Careers” grants to colleges for innovation in college remediation that would increase access and success in workforce programs.<sup>58</sup>

- **Strengthen ties between colleges and business workforce needs through federal grants to colleges under the Higher Education Act.** Another pending proposal in Congress would create a federal Business Workforce Partnerships initiative that funds partnerships between colleges and employers. The partnerships would link credit-bearing college programs to business workforce needs, adapt college offerings to workers’ schedules, map and develop career and educational pathways, expand worksite learning opportunities, and assist students with job placement.
- **Strengthen WIA requirements and incentives to provide training to low-skilled and low-income individuals.** As noted in Section 2, WIA is training a smaller share of low-income adults than JTPA used to, and individuals with very low education levels are receiving less training than those with more education. These troubling numbers suggest that under WIA, there is a weaker job training infrastructure to serve lower-skilled adults, whether they are transitioning from adult education services or trying to enter training directly, than there was a decade ago. To reverse this trend, the law should include requirements to target limited resources to low-skilled and low-income individuals. In addition, WIA should mandate the adjustment of performance standards for the characteristics of the participants to avoid “creaming” and encourage the provision of services to low-skilled individuals and populations with barriers to employment.
- **Give local areas more flexibility under WIA to design training programs that meet the needs of lower-skilled adults.** Local areas should be able to use contracts to fund training, and not just ITAs, depending on individuals’ needs and services available locally. *The ability to use contracts in WIA is especially critical for creating new, innovative services that combine adult education with occupational training for lower-skilled individuals.* It is also easier under contracts than ITAs to provide training to groups or cohorts of lower-skilled adults with similar needs, which can provide important peer support to participants.
- **Encourage greater use of co-enrollments under WIA Title I and adult education (WIA Title II).** Co-enrolling lower-skilled adults in federal job training and adult education services is a promising strategy for pooling the resources and expertise of both systems to help more lower-skilled adults earn occupational credentials. Yet as noted in Section 2, from April 2004 to March 2005, less than one percent of all program exiters that received intensive or training services through the Title I WIA adult program were co-enrolled with adult education. Clearly, federal leadership is needed to encourage more states and localities to do this.
- **Create a joint Department of Labor/Department of Education initiative to provide sustainable funding for integrated adult education and postsecondary education and training services.** Each of these federal departments has made discretionary grants relevant to this work, whether the new ABE Career Pathways initiative, the WIRED initiative, or Labor’s integrated training/ESL projects. And the two departments have collaborated on regional forums on Career Pathways. But what is needed most now is for them to make joint, ongoing investments in integrated programs to develop models that can be funded permanently with sustainable funding streams (such as WIA Titles I and II, federal student aid). These programs

should be linked to regional, high-demand jobs, as WIRED is, but targeted to lower-skilled adults and involving dual enrollment in adult education and postsecondary occupational programs.

(3) *Adapting financial aid policies to the needs of lower-skilled adults and support their success in adult and postsecondary education and training*

Integrating adult and postsecondary education and training for lower-skilled adults can help increase persistence and completion by shortening the timeline for earning marketable credentials and by helping adults see the relevance of remediation to their career goals through contextualization. However, lower-skilled adults face a number of other challenges to success as described in Section 2 of this brief. Federal and state policies can help them overcome these by addressing the affordability of participating in adult and postsecondary education and training and by putting in place services that support lower-skilled adults as they navigate through adult education, training, and college, and strive to juggle the competing demands of work, school, and family.

In addition to keeping tuition affordable, states can make postsecondary education and training more accessible financially to lower-skilled adults by having substantial financial aid programs that work for nontraditional students.<sup>59</sup> As noted in Section 2, the biggest expense that adults face when they seek postsecondary credentials is the cost of supporting themselves (and often, children or other family members, too) while they are in school.

Adult-friendly state financial aid programs may feature more inclusive standards of eligibility, making aid available for students attending less than half time who are enrolled in certificate or degree programs, as in the three state programs described below—for students taking remedial and non-credit occupational programs (if articulated to certificates and degrees) and for those taking shorter modules that are part of certificate or degree programs. The Georgia Hope Grant program, for example, covers both remediation and modules, such as the Quickstart Certified Specialist programs. Other traits of adult-friendly assistance regimes are that students can combine aid with Pell grants up to the total cost of attendance, aid is not merit-based, and aid is available for year-round study.

One example of a state aid program supportive of working adults is Illinois' Monetary Award Program (MAP). MAP is a need-based student aid program that covers tuition and fees for students who do not have a BA, including those who attend less than half time. MAP used to require that students be enrolled at least half time to qualify for aid, but the policy was changed after a study showed that the majority of less-than-half-time students at any point in time were enrolled at least half time on average over their college careers and were only temporarily attending less than half time. A pilot showed that these students could be as successful as others and ultimately MAP was expanded to cover less-than-half-time enrollment. For the 2007–2008 school year, MAP will expand to support year-round study. Similarly, Minnesota's State Grant program allows students taking as few as three credits to qualify. Minnesota supplements these grants with additional state funding for Child Care Grants and State Work-Study jobs for needy students.

In 2007 Washington's legislature expanded the Opportunities Grant Program, which began as a pilot initiative in 2006, to a \$23 million initiative that ultimately will operate statewide. Opportunity Grants are aimed at increasing low-income students' access to and success with postsecondary credentials at the associate degree level or below. Opportunity Grants cover tuition and fees at community/technical colleges (up to the cost of community colleges), private career schools, and approved apprenticeship programs, as well as providing an additional \$1000 annually for books, tools and supplies. Students

attending less than half time are eligible. The Opportunities Grant Program has two features that go beyond the more traditional aid programs in Illinois and Minnesota. First, public colleges receive \$1,500 per full-time equivalent enrollment in the program at that institution, which must be used to provide individualized student success services. Second, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges works with local colleges and workforce boards to identify programs that are designated as eligible for Opportunities Grant support, basing these decisions on which credentials are in high demand in regional labor markets. Lastly, the state has begun piloting local partnerships with Workforce Development Councils that will support Opportunity Grant students with business and labor mentors in the fields of study, who can help arrange ways for the students to engage in career exploration, job shadowing, and internships.<sup>60</sup>

The addition of student success funding in Washington State's Opportunities Grant program is very significant because colleges typically do not have a dedicated funding stream for such services. In addition to Washington's approach of pairing student support funding with financial aid grants, several other states are investing in increasing student success through other mechanisms. In Illinois, the Student Success Grant involves targeted funding from the Illinois Higher Education Board budget that is allocated to each community college, which provides student services based on that campus' student needs. It can be used for services such as personal, academic or career counseling; assessment and testing; mentoring and persistence and completion programs. The grant is geared toward students who are academically at risk, economically disadvantaged, or disabled. In FY 2002, \$13.3 million in Student Success Grants supported 305,000 students at Illinois community colleges (by contrast, federal student services funding in IL that year totaled \$7 million). During a state fiscal crisis, the program was severely cutback, but partial funding has recently been restored.<sup>61</sup>

Kentucky has funded intensive student success services for low-income parents enrolled at the state's community and technical colleges through the Ready to Work (RtW) initiative. At the center of RtW is a statewide network of Ready to Work Coordinators based at each community college. Their job is to help low-income student parents succeed by providing intensive case management, work-study jobs (which allow RtW parents to earn up to \$2,500 annually while in school at jobs connected to their field of study), and peer support groups (such as those formed by providing initial college readiness classes in cohorts). RtW coordinators also provide or facilitate access to assessment, tutoring, mentoring, career counseling, financial aid, job development, job placement, and post-placement services. In addition, participants have access to TANF support services such as childcare and transportation aid. To date, RtW students have achieved higher GPAs and program completion rates than the average Kentucky community college student, and RtW has the highest increases in earnings and in steady work of any TANF activity in the state. The longer the participation in RtW, the bigger the wage increase.<sup>62</sup> In recent years, the state has expanded RtW services to adult education students nearing completion of the GED to help them successfully finish and transition into postsecondary education and training.

What these various state initiatives have in common is a combination of financial assistance, help with logistical issues such as childcare and transportation, and personalized support in persisting at and succeeding in postsecondary education and training activities. Neither federal nor state postsecondary education assistance typically provides all three of these things to the same students, but it is likely that all three are necessary for lower-skilled, low-income adults to persist and complete postsecondary credentials.

## State policy recommendations

- **Make state student aid available to less-than-half-time students if they are enrolled in certificate or degree programs.** Federal Pell grants are available to students enrolled in as little as one course at a time, which is important for adults who may have to work full time and may only be able to manage one course in addition to their other family and work responsibilities. State aid should be available to these students, too. While states are understandably reluctant to expand aid to adults who are not serious about completing a certificate or degree, policy can be tailored to address these concerns by giving aid only to those less-than-half-time students enrolled in certificate or degree programs.
- **Allow state student aid to be used for remedial education and for *at least some non-credit occupational programs that are articulated to certificates and degrees.*** Lower-skilled adults, by definition, will usually need to take remedial coursework and/or English language courses in addition to their for-credit coursework. When state student aid does not cover such remediation, this can substantially limit postsecondary access for lower-skilled students. In addition, many adults first enter postsecondary through short-term noncredit job training programs. Where such programs are articulated with for-credit certificate and degree programs, it makes sense to provide state student aid for the noncredit part as well as the credit parts of the total occupational pathway, *at least in high demand occupational areas.* For example, although some Certified Nursing Assistant programs are noncredit, the content overlaps with the entry-level portion of nursing degree programs.
- **Allow state student aid to be combined with Pell grants, up to the total cost of attendance.** Given that independent Pell grant recipients have, on average, unmet financial need of more than \$5000 annually, it makes no sense to make them ineligible for state aid, as some states do. These low-income adults need multiple sources of aid if they are to succeed in postsecondary education and training; otherwise they wind up working full time to cover their college costs and living expenses which leaves too little time to devote to their studies.
- **Make state student aid available to students without a high school diploma or GED.** Federal student aid is already available to students who do not have a high school diploma or GED, so long as such students pass an “ability to benefit” test showing that they have the skills needed to benefit from postsecondary education or training. State aid should be available on the same basis.
- **Use state funds to encourage promising models that support adult and postsecondary education success by lower-skilled adults, track outcomes, and scale up what works.** Some of these promising models include providing intensive case management; delivering education and training services in cohorts (sometimes called “learning communities”); and mandating that at-risk students take college success courses that provide career exploration, study skills, time management, and other content critical for succeeding in postsecondary education. Most of these things are not common practice in adult education; for example, only one in five programs enrolls students in cohorts (typically called “managed enrollment”).<sup>63</sup>
- **Allow occupationally focused adult and postsecondary education and training to meet work requirements for TANF recipients.** Including these activities in TANF as vocational educational training is one of the best ways for states to increase their work participation rates while helping lower-skilled parents earn credentials that can substantially increase their earnings.<sup>64</sup>

## **Federal policy recommendations**

- **Reduce the “work penalty” in federal student aid.** When determining eligibility for federal financial aid, the need analysis should allow single, independent students to keep a significantly greater share of their earnings. Current Income Protection Allowance levels make it too difficult for low-income adults and older youth to support themselves and their families and go to college.
- **Ensure that every student receiving a Pell Grant is helped to succeed.** Attach a Student Success Grant to every Pell Grant, to ensure that students receive the services they need to stay in college. Too many students fail to complete. The Student Success Grant would offset the costs to colleges of program innovation and of providing student services to increase persistence and completion. Such funding could be especially important for the success of lower-skilled adults who may need extra support to succeed.
- **Allow individuals who lack high school credentials to prove their readiness for college and qualify for federal financial aid by successfully completing six credits of for-credit coursework in lieu of taking an “ability to benefit” test.** Currently students without a high school diploma or GED can only qualify for federal financial aid if they pass an “ability to benefit” test. Yet experimental pilots conducted by the Department of Education show that students without high school diplomas who were allowed to receive financial aid after successfully completing six credits went on to have higher GPAs and to complete more credits than students with high school diplomas.
- **Make financial aid more responsive to the needs of nontraditional students.** Frequently, working adults find it difficult to attend college in traditional schedule formats because of competing demands of work and family. A pilot project should be undertaken to provide financial aid to undergraduate students pursuing postsecondary education in compressed or modular formats. In addition, students should be allowed to receive a second Pell Grant for summer school, so that they can attend year-round and finish school more quickly.
- **Revisit federal TANF policy to allow greater use of occupational postsecondary education and training to meet federal work requirements.** Recent legislative and administrative changes to TANF to increase work requirements and constrain the use of adult and postsecondary education and training make no sense given the increased earnings that in-demand postsecondary credentials can bring.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Helping more adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials is critical to the twin national goals of increasing economic competitiveness and sharing the benefits of economic prosperity more widely. Given how many adults have lower literacy and numeracy skills, limited English proficiency, or both, remediation and English language instruction linked to postsecondary education and training in demand occupations and industries has to be part of the solution for increasing postsecondary attainment. The state and federal policy recommendations included in this Brief would go a long way toward making such services more available, accessible, and effective for lower-skilled adults.

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<sup>2</sup> *Working Hard, Falling Short America’s Working Families and the Pursuit of Economic Security*, Tom Waldron, Brandon Roberts and Andrew Reamer with assistance from Sara Rab and Steve Ressler. October 2004, Working Poor Families Project, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.

<sup>3</sup> “Capitol Column,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> *Strengthening State Policies To Increase The Education And Skills Of Low-Wage Workers*, Adair Crosley, and Brandon Roberts, Spring 2007, Working Poor Families Project, Chevy Chase, MD.

<sup>5</sup> *Sector Initiatives and Community Colleges: Working Together to Provide Education for Low-Wage Working Adults*, Workforce Strategies Initiative Update, Issue 4, April 2007, Aspen Institute, Washington, DC.

<sup>6</sup> *Forces Changing Our Nation’s Future: The Comparative Performance of U.S. Adults and Youth on International Literacy Assessments, the Importance of Literacy/Numeracy Proficiencies for Labor Market Success, and the Projected Outlook for Literacy Proficiencies of U.S. Adults*, Andrew Sum (Northeastern University), Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (for the National Commission on Adult Literacy), June 2007, New York, NY; *Mounting Pressures Facing the U.S. Workforce And The Increasing Need For Adult Education And Literacy*, Dennis Jones and Patrick Kelly (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems), Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (for the National Commission on Adult Literacy), May 2007, New York, NY.

<sup>7</sup> Author calculations from Census Bureau data from the March 2006 Current Population Survey and from *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates 1998 to 2018*, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, December 2003, Boulder, CO.

<sup>8</sup> *Building Pathways to Success for Low Income Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice From a Statewide Longitudinal Study*, David Prince and Davis Jenkins, 2005, Community College Research Center, New York, NY. The data in the bullets following this paragraph are also from this publication.

<sup>9</sup> *A Skilled and Educated Workforce: An assessment of the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to meet employer demand*, December 2005, a joint report by the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Olympia, WA, [http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs/2005\\_Related\\_SEW-1.pdf](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs/2005_Related_SEW-1.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, Table 354, [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d05/tables/dt05\\_354.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d05/tables/dt05_354.asp).

<sup>11</sup> *Adult Education in America: A First Look at Results from the Adult Education Program and Learner Surveys*, Claudia Tamassia, Marylou Lennon, Kentaro Yamamoto, and Irwin Kirsch, 2007, Educational Testing Service Princeton, New Jersey. Table 1.7.

<sup>12</sup> “Persistence: Helping Adults Education Students Reach Their Goals,” John P. Comings, Chapter 2 in *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy 2007*, National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Cambridge, MA; *Adult English Language Instruction in the United States: Determining Need and Investing Wisely*, Margie McHugh, Julia Gelatt, and Michael Fix, July 2007, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC.

<sup>13</sup> See *Improving basic skills: The effects of adult education in welfare-to-work programs*, Johannes M. Bos, Sue Scrivener, Jason Snipes, Gayle Hamilton, 2001, MDRC, New York, NY; *Building Pathways to Success for Low*

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<sup>14</sup> “The General Educational Development (GED) Credential: History, Current Research, and Directions for Policy and Practice,” op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> *The Condition of Education, Special Analysis 2002, Nontraditional Undergraduates*.  
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/analyses/nontraditional/index.asp>

<sup>16</sup> *The Condition of Education 2004*, Indicator 18, U.S. Department of Education.  
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<sup>17</sup> Hamilton, J. (1998), *First-time students entering a two-year public college with a GED*, Fall 1991 to Fall 1996, Gainesville, GA: Gainesville College as cited in “The General Educational Development (GED) Credential: History, Current Research, and Directions for Policy and Practice,” op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> *The Condition of Education 2004*, Indicator 18, U.S. Department of Education.  
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<sup>19</sup> *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Year 2003–2004 Report to Congress on State Performance*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> *Critical Connections: Linking states’ unit record systems to track student progress*, Peter Ewell and Marianne Boeke, January 2007, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, Boulder, CO.

<sup>21</sup> As cited in “The General Educational Development (GED) Credential: History, Current Research, and Directions for Policy and Practice,” op.cit.

<sup>22</sup> *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Year 2003–2004 Report to Congress on State Performance*, op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> *Adult Education in America: A First Look at Results from the Adult Education Program and Learner Surveys*, op.cit., Table 1.4.

<sup>24</sup> Ganzglass, Evelyn. Testimony for the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, Committee on Education and Labor, June 28, 2007. Available at:  
[http://www.clasp.org/publications/wia\\_testimony\\_062807.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/wia_testimony_062807.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Abbey Frank and Elisa Minoff, *Declining Share of Adults Receiving Training under WIA are Low-Income or Disadvantaged*, Center for Law and Social Policy, 2005,  
[http://www.clasp.org/publications/decline\\_in\\_wia\\_training.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/decline_in_wia_training.pdf). 1998 data come from the Job Training Partnership Act, the predecessor program to WIA. The definitions of “terminees” and “exiters” are comparable under the two programs. Data on JTPA participants are drawn from the SPIR database. This data can be found in the Social Policy Research Associates WIASRD Databook, PY 2002.

<sup>26</sup> The Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that WIA performance measures have caused reluctance on the part of local staff to provide WIA-funded services to job seekers who may be less likely to find employment or experience earnings increases when placed in a job. Government Accountability Office (GAO-03-884T), *Workforce Investment Act: Exemplary One-Stops Devised Strategies to Strengthen Services, but Challenges Remain for Reauthorization*, June 18, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. PY 2005 WIA Summary Report – Adults (Derived from PY 2005 WIASRD) March 2007. Available at: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/WIASRD/PY2005/Adult05-Summary-Rpt.pdf>

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<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. PY 2005 WIA Summary Report – Adults (Derived from PY 2005 WIASRD) March 2007. Available at: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/WIASRD/PY2005/Adult05-Summary-Rpt.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. PY 2005 WIA Summary Report – Adults (Derived from PY 2005 WIASRD) March 2007. Available at: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/WIASRD/PY2005/Adult05-Summary-Rpt.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) (2006). *2004 WIASRD Databook. Table II-21. Services Received by Adult Exiters from April 2004 to March 2005 who received Intensive or Training Services, by Selected Characteristics*. P. 45. Available at: [http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/PY\\_2004\\_WIASRD\\_Databook.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/PY_2004_WIASRD_Databook.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See *Staying the Course: Factors Influencing Enrollment and Persistence in Adult Education*, 2006, Michelle Tolbert, MPR Associates, Inc.; “*Persistence: Helping Adults Education Students Reach Their Goals*,” op.cit.; *Low Income Adults in Profile, Improving Lives Through Higher Education*, Bryan Cook with Jacqueline E. King, February 2004, American Council on Education, Washington, DC; and *College as a Job Advancement Strategy: Final Report on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project*, David J. Fein and Eric Beecroft, January 2006, Abt Associates, Washington, DC.

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<sup>33</sup> *College as a Job Advancement Strategy: Final Report on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project*, op.cit.; *Undergraduates who work: National postsecondary student aid study*, Laura Horn and Andrew Malizio, 1998, NCES 98-137, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, DC.

<sup>34</sup> *College Access for the Working Poor: Overcoming Burdens to Succeed in Higher Education*, Courtney McSwain and Ryan Davis, July 2007, Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, DC.

<sup>35</sup> Analysis by Amy-Ellen Duke, Center for Law and Social Policy, in correspondence with Congressional staff, June 2007.

<sup>36</sup> “*Higher Education Budget Reconciliation Bill Will Expand Access to Postsecondary Education and Training for Low-Income Adults*,” Amy-Ellen Duke and Julie Strawn, forthcoming, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC.

<sup>37</sup> *Money Matters: How Financial Aid Affects Nontraditional Students in Community Colleges*, Victoria Choitz and Rebecca Widom, 2003, MDRC, New York, NY.

<sup>38</sup> *Recommendations for Reauthorization of Title I of the Workforce Investment Act Adult and Youth Programs*, Allegra Baider, Evelyn Ganzglass, and Linda Harris, July 2007, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. PY 2005 WIA Summary Report – Adults (Derived from PY 2005 WIASRD) March 2007. Available at: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/WIASRD/PY2005/Adult05-Summary-Rpt.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> *Child Care and Development Fund Data Tables, Fiscal 2005*, Table 10, June 2007, Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.  
[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/data/ccdf\\_data/05acf800/table10.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/data/ccdf_data/05acf800/table10.htm)

<sup>41</sup> *Participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: 2000–01*, Kim, K., M. Collins Hagedorn, J. Williamson, C. Chapman, 2004, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.

<sup>42</sup> Author’s calculation of median federal and state combined expenditure per student in Fiscal 2003, data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. The ETS Adult Education Program survey found a similar average spending level, \$626 per student.

<sup>43</sup> *Adult English Language Instruction in the United States: Determining Need and Investing Wisely*, op.cit.

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<sup>44</sup> All of the data in the first four bullets comes from *Adult Education in America: A First Look at Results from the Adult Education Program and Learner Surveys*, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> “*More Curriculum Structure: A Response to ‘Turbulence,’*” John Strucker, in *Focus on Basics*, November 2006, National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>46</sup> If one includes in access spending only Pell Grants, Campus-Based Programs, LEAP, and Academic Competitiveness Grants, the total is about \$15 billion for FY 2006 compared with \$273 million in the TRIO Student Support Services program.

<sup>47</sup> *A New Framework for Adult Education*, May 2007, Kentucky Office of Adult Education.

<sup>48</sup> *Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity*, Christopher Mazzeo, Brandon Roberts, Christopher Spence, and Julie Strawn, December-2006, Workforce Strategy Center, New York, NY.

<sup>49</sup> *State Data Systems and Privacy Concerns: Strategies for Balancing Public Interest*, Jack Mills, February 2005, Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA.

<sup>50</sup> *State Systems of Performance Accountability for Community Colleges: Impacts and Lessons for Policymakers*, Kevin J. Dougherty and Esther Hong, July 2005, Community College Research Center for Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA.

<sup>51</sup> Ganzglass, Evelyn. Testimony for the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, Committee on Education and Labor, June 28, 2007. Available at: [http://www.clasp.org/publications/wia\\_testimony\\_062807.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/wia_testimony_062807.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> For the research report on outcomes in the initial I-BEST pilots, see [http://www.sbctc.edu/college/assessment/i\\_best\\_research\\_report\\_05-2.doc](http://www.sbctc.edu/college/assessment/i_best_research_report_05-2.doc). For the current state guidelines used in replicating I-BEST statewide see [http://www.sbctc.edu/college/education/ibest\\_application\\_10\\_02\\_07.doc](http://www.sbctc.edu/college/education/ibest_application_10_02_07.doc).

<sup>53</sup> February 2007 author correspondence with Trish Schneider, EES Coordinator, Adult and Continuing Education, Jefferson County Public Schools.

<sup>54</sup> For more information on these initiatives see *Wising Up: How Government can Partner with Business to Increase Skills and Advance Low-Wage Workers*, Amy-Ellen Duke, Julie Strawn, and Karin Martinson, 2006, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC; and *Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity*, op.cit.

<sup>55</sup> For a helpful summary of these issues, see “The Open Door Policy: Hidden Barriers to Postsecondary Education for Nontraditional Adult Learners,” Deepa Rao, in *Focus on Basics*, November 2004, National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>56</sup> *Wising Up*, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> For details of most recent I-BEST expansion, see *Legislation Affecting Employment and Training for Low-Income State Residents: Brief on the 2007 Washington State Legislative Session*, David Kaz, May 2007, Seattle Jobs Initiative, Seattle, WA. For the research report on outcomes in the initial I-BEST pilots, see link in Note 49.

<sup>58</sup> For details see *Recommendations to the House Committee on Education and Labor Regarding Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act*, Julie Strawn and Amy-Ellen Duke, April 2007, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC.

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<sup>59</sup> Some of this discussion is drawn from the author's previous work on this topic in *Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity*, op.cit.

<sup>60</sup> *Legislation Affecting Employment and Training for Low-Income State Residents: Brief on the 2007 Washington State Legislative Session*, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> *Investing In Success: Educational Supports for Illinois Community College Students*, Rachel Unruh, February 2006, Women Employed, Chicago, IL.

<sup>62</sup> Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, Program Review and Investigations, LRC Research Report No. 321, June, 2004, Frankfort, KY.

<sup>63</sup> *Adult Education in America: A First Look at Results from the Adult Education Program and Learner Surveys*, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> *Implementing the TANF Changes in the DRA: "Win-Win" Solutions for Families and States, Second Edition*, Center for Law and Social Policy and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 2007, Washington, DC.

<sup>65</sup> *Improving Access to Education and Training for TANF Participants*, Elizabeth Lower-Basch, May 2007, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC.