

**HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**

Business and Community Services Division

Culinary Assistant / Line Cook



Adult Education / ESOL



Pharmacy Technician



Nursing Asst. / Medical Asst

**New England Commission of Higher Education &
The Lumina Foundation**

Case Study - October 2023

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I. Institutional Overview:

Holyoke Community College (HCC) is the first two-year college in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, opening in 1946. Today, Holyoke Community College is located on a 135-acre campus just off Interstate 91 in Holyoke, (Hampden County) as well as at over 10 other training/adult learning regional sites. The college serves approximately 7,000 students annually, offering 74 credit degrees and certificates as well over 40 non-credit adult education/workforce development programs through the Business and Community Services Division (BCS). HCC serves individuals from over 70 communities in MA & Northern CT. Students primarily come from Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties, with the largest numbers coming from the cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee. More than 30% of the credit students identify as Hispanic/Latinx and over 40% identify as BIPOC while over 57% of non-credit students identify as BIPOC with 80% of the BIPOC students being Hispanic/Latinx. HCC is designated as a federal Hispanic Serving Institution.

The college's mission is to Educate. Inspire. Connect. Holyoke Community College aspires to be a college of academic excellence known for helping students overcome barriers to success. A significant emphasis is put on wrap-around services for all students which address issues of access, poverty, inclusion, and equity; two examples would be HCC's Thrive Center and Food Pantry and the English Language Learner supports through both credit and non-credit programs, including Accelerated Career English. This wrap-around approach is supported by several regional collaborations with other educational institutions, school districts, municipalities, state departments, area businesses and community-based organizations; indeed, collaboration is in HCC's DNA. BCS is designed to serve and engage the community.

II. Qualitative Benchmarks

a. **Mission and Purposes** – HCC’s Strategic Plan has four (4) primary pillars within its Strategic Framework, they are: 1) ***Teaching and Learning*** – enhance and expand innovative teaching and learning practices that result in a quality education for all and ultimately leads to student success. 2) ***Equity and Student Success*** – collaborate with the area communities we serve to increase equity – in terms of access, opportunity, and support. 3) **Workforce Development and Transfer** – a focus on employment and helping individuals advance their educational and or career goals. 4) **Financial Sustainability** – HCC seeks ways to continue to offer high quality educational programs by identifying unique funding sources and innovative approaches, like braiding various funding sources. For example, the BCS JumpStart program offers a variety of entry level training programs and is funded by five different sources: the MA Department of Transitional Assistance, MassHire Hampden County, SNAP Pathway to Work, the Access to Recovery program, the college itself as well as private pay individuals or businesses. Financial Sustainability not only applies to the delivery of programs but also it is important for the participants. Almost all training programs are funded by grants and or contracts which enable the programs to be free to the participants including any related fees or materials (e.g., training, books, uniforms, transportation and exam fees) Springfield has the second-highest poverty rate in the state with 87.5 percent of children in poverty and Holyoke follows with an 85.3 percent poverty rate and therefore it is imperative that we offer training for free or at minimal cost.

This one-college approach means that BCS is actively involved in the implementation of all the frameworks but certainly has centered its work around

increasing equity and student success by improving access to opportunity and advancement through an employment focus and a pathway approach. The process to integrate credit and noncredit work is evolving and it can be demonstrated by joint grant applications, the realignment of programs, and shared processes for data, budget analysis and assessment. During the development of the College's Strategic Plan at least eight (8) members of BCS attended weekly meetings and participated in the Strategic Plan (2018) development for over a year. The more recent Strategic Plan Refresh (2022) included feedback and idea development from all sectors of the college. In 2023, BCS developed its own divisional strategic plan which flows from the College's Plan and Budget.

BSC has a unique focus within each strategic plan pillar. For ***Teaching and Learning*** BCS has implemented an Asset-Based approach which recognizes that the adult learner is a partner in their own education and development. It is important to recognize the starting point for each participant and to regularly identify and assess methods and supporting activities which will help the individual define and achieve success. A team-based project approach often reflects what is needed in today's workplace and so each participant plays a role in defining their own educational/training/learning plan, they are the captain of the team. A high level of engagement is important to allow for maximum flexibility for the participant and a high level of adaptability for the program. Intake, planning, on-going assessment, feedback, follow-up are all key elements.

For ***Equity and Success***, it is imperative that the College, especially through non-credit programming, is an integrated part of the community. Working with neighbors, community-based-organizations, educators, businesses, state/regional/municipal governments, and various civic and cultural groups is a part of the necessary collaboration

to create and maintain a training network. Our noncredit workforce training and education programs (including Adult Basic Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Transition to College, and Gateway to College) meets community members where they are, and therefore enables the college to connect more deeply with communities and individuals who reflect greater racial and ethnic diversity, at a higher number than the College's credit programs. BCS programs are designed to address historical inequities and thus facilitate individual participants to overcome those barriers. No educational or training initiative is simple, there are varying levels of engagement and integration that are necessary. At present HCC is engaged with a local health care organization on a variety of fronts including joint membership in the Western Massachusetts Regional Anchor Collaborative, the partnership in the Alliance for Digital Equity, joint training efforts in the Nursing Assistant to Patient Care Technician pathway, Pharmacy Tech - Pre-Apprenticeship, Medical Assistant, the development of a pathway to Practical Nursing and a shared desire and agenda to improve the quality of life of individuals in Holyoke and Springfield through investment in individuals, schools, and neighborhoods along with other key stakeholders.. At the same time, this joint effort requires a level of engagement and integration with the local cities and towns especially community-based-organizations, neighborhood, and cultural groups. Being part of the community, not a visitor to it, is imperative for the *community college* and its non-credit operation.

Workforce Development and Transfer represent an outcomes-based approach to non-credit efforts. It is about getting individuals to the next step in their Learning Plan. Our goal is to help a person get a job (a start), get a better job (a career track) and

to do their job better (increased productivity and advancement). Transfer, although part of the primary work of the credit programming at the college, is another approach to career development where additional education and training is necessary or required. We hope to impart to our participants and students that learning is a lifelong continuum. Regarding “transfer” HCC’s non-credit operations focus on transition to college and career, it is about college and career readiness while moving a person to their desired next step. If non-credit programming is the on-ramp to education and training, then transition efforts offer the ability to change lanes toward an individual’s goals.

Financial Sustainability: Non-credit programs only receive limited support from the State Appropriation and therefore the structure of non-credit often has a strong emphasis on grant and foundational support as well as contracts with area businesses. These different funding sources require non-credit programs to be flexible and nimble. Of the approximate \$7M budget of BCS about 25% is from State Appropriations. Non-credit programs spend a significant amount of time and human resources to develop these alternative funding sources. The infrastructure necessary for grant and contract development and implementation is significant. The resulting partnerships and collaborations also become significant because non-profit operations often acknowledge that partnership is the only way to achieve the desired shared outcomes.

Although outcomes for the purposes of assessment are often clear in non-credit programming due to grant funding requirements and reporting, in 2022 and 2023 the division has worked to define its assessment process for each department and program. We are currently working with the office of Institutional Effectiveness to

incorporate non-credit data/outcomes into the College's program of Assessment. For BCS the primary data points are enrollment, retention, completion, attainment of industry recognized credentials and job placement. By using the same student management system as the credit programs the information on non-credit students is available and used in assessment, e.g., demographics, retention, success, pathway outcomes and more. Given that the majority of BCS funding is grant or contract based each program often requires a detailed narrative, outcomes analysis and budget review be submitted to the funding source, no matter if it is the State, an area foundation, or a contract with a business. BCS is working to aggregate all these reports into a divisional report.

BCS's relationship to the college's mission and strategic plan is often one of being the entry ramp to training and education programs at the college. BCS is often the primer for training, education, or employment. Noncredit flexibility gives us the ability to work with individuals where they are at – whether they are looking for a High School Credential or Equivalency, short-term workforce development skills training for entry level employment, English language learner supports, micro and stackable credentials which help the individual advance at school or work., preparation for transition to college or to find a career pathway. For example, HCC's nursing program requires that students complete a non-credit Nursing Assistant training and earn their state certification. Credit for Prior Learning and articulated credits play a significant role in helping individual students succeed in a timelier and more cost-effective manner.

b. Planning and Evaluation

As noted above BCS is engaged in the planning and budget process of the college to a high level. The college processes are mimicked in each division and to the extent possible

in each department or for each program. Budgeting starts at the program/ department level and allows for the annual adoption of new goals, objectives, and priorities. One example has been the priority for English language instruction to meet a community need. In Springfield approximately 46% of the population (70,000+ individuals) identify as Hispanic/Latinx, while in Holyoke approximately 53% of the population (approximately 20,000 persons) identify similarly. Over the past 20 years HCC has built its English Learning programs in partnership with the State, MassHire Hampden County, and many Adult Education providers in the area. The work of both credit (ESL) and non-credit (ESOL-community based) programs have made HCC the leading provider in the region. We have integrated the MA STEP program (ESOL contextualized workforce development skills training) and the Accelerated Career English program into the program for individuals who are seeking to improve their language skills for job placement and/or certification for a particular job.

Whether it be language learning or workforce development skills training, key performance measures are identified and tracked. Division, department, and the individual staff goals are assessed annually. Programs are reviewed in terms of enrollment, completion, certification, transition, transfer and job placement. The college is currently working on integrating the non-credit data into its assessment and evaluation process and improving our college-wide capacity to do so. We are moving from manual processes to an integrated system. Advancement from one language level to the next, or certification for a particular occupation are regularly monitored and part of the division's required reporting internally, to the Commonwealth and or Federal Government, grant funders or business and community partners.

For the adult learner, program evaluation might result in avoiding unintended consequences which might hamper their success, or it might lead to the building of individual confidence and motivation. For example, within dual enrollment for traditional college going students, HCC has developed a series of programs that share non-credit classes to limit the impact on financial aid and on Satisfactory Academic Performance while at the same time providing content in manageable bites to build success and momentum for the adult learner. Integrating flexibility and adaptability into the planning and evaluation process can lead to cost savings, the avoidance of educational speed bumps and the building of self-esteem and confidence for the individual for whom this is a new experience.

The way people learn and interface with course content was also integrated into the design. For example, many of the individuals who were unemployed, underemployed who had limited work experience and limited educational attainment were seeking basic math, language, and digital skills prior to starting occupational skills training. This pre-training approach was adopted broadly and provided a mechanism to provide a strong foundation while building self-confidence. For the language learner, a contextualized approach is important and significant. It provides the opportunity to build vocabulary and knowledge using the words of the specific occupation. It provides the opportunity for more connections which foster learning.

State, municipal, community and business partners are engaged on a variety of levels: Program and curriculum design, classroom participation, industry and community tours, mock interviews, and job placement. Well over 100 businesses and community partners are engaged with the BCS to varying levels. About five years ago, HCC began

to pursue a grant from the Commonwealth Corporation to train individuals for healthcare occupations. A series of meetings with health care businesses, the regional workforce system, community partners/trainers and educational providers followed. The regional need for Medical Assistants was identified; the lead partner identified an annual need for 80 Medical Assistants. The effort has evolved over time to adjust to varying workforce demands, evolving compensation models, Covid and the change in the culture of work.

Through the College's strategic plan, a dashboard of metrics is tracked in real time and identifies areas of strength and challenge. Several factors are tracked:

- Non-credit enrollment,
- Job Placement,
- Disaggregated job placement for our BIPOC students,
- Credential attainment,
- An increase in workplace experience opportunities: shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, clinical experience,
- Non-credit students transitioning to the college (HCC).

c. Organization and Governance/Institutional Resources

The Business and Community Services division has 7 full-time employees funded by the college's operating budget. Another 12 individuals are full time employees funded by grants and contracts and there are also 70+/- part-time faculty and staff who provide instruction and support services funded primarily by grants. BCS provides non-credit services to approximately 3,000 individuals a year with a combined budget of approximately \$7M.

For a period, BCS was seen as a separate unit of the college. In the last 15 years the division has become more integrated with the mission, values, goals, and objectives of the institution. The VP for BCS is on the college cabinet, division representatives sit on the College Advisory Council as well as various subcommittees of the CAC and the

standing or ad hoc committees of the college, including budget and strategic planning. Members of BCS also serve on community boards on behalf of the entire college as part of its overall program of outreach. Noncredit programming has been identified in the College's Strategic Plan as playing an important role in the college's success. (As noted above, (Strategic Framework 3).

BCS's engagement with the community led to a significant growth in English Language Learning programs, the development of dual enrollment programs, the establishment of a food pantry and career closet on campus, the development of several regional workforce development collaboratives, and the recognition that engagement at all levels is important: community, business, civic, federal/state/local government and within the college itself. Enhanced efforts to promote business engagement with various programs that include hands-on, clinical, simulation and actual work experiences are prominent. Over time these efforts have evolved and play a significant role in the work of all units of the college. Non-credit programming is not seen as separate from the college but moving toward complete integration, and often the R&D arm of the college.

Student support issues are addressed together for both credit and non-credit efforts, like the distribution of technology and distribution of the President's Student Emergency Fund.

The physical resources of BCS are significant to allow for adequate instruction and student support. The emphasis is not necessarily on square footage but more importantly on flexibility/adaptability. This is demonstrated at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts institute in downtown Holyoke. The CAI is a facility jointly operated for credit and non-credit programming the staff is integrated and has developed many joint initiatives. In addition

to credit and non-credit classes CAI offers a downtown location for community events and at the same time has become the focus of a number of outreach efforts - e.g., the food truck for wellness and nutritional education.

d. Academic Program and Educational Effectiveness

BCS provides programing in several large buckets:

- Adult Education (HS credential or equivalent)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages.
- Workforce Development.
- Transition to College and Careers
- Workforce Testing and Assessment
- Professional and Personal Development

Non-credit programs and courses are designed to meet several standards which identify relevant competencies and outcomes:

- College standards for courses which are designed like credit classes, i.e., meet the academic standards of the college, e.g., Medical Assistant (often these courses are offered off the semester schedule or to a specific business or organization).
- Industry recognized credentials, including micro-credentials.
- State exam or certification requirements.
- Funder requirements

A model of continuous improvement has been implemented to adapt to the changing needs of the employers and community as well as changing state regulations. It is common for training managers, program coordinators, support staff and faculty to gather in order to adjust a program or class. Classes regularly evolve. Many certifications and credentials have state requirements that change. Grant reporting is a significant tool in implementing this continuous improvement approach. And as noted earlier the desired outcomes are well defined.

Although employment has always been the primary outcome for BCS programs, transfer pathways are growing and evolving. Credit for prior learning, articulation

agreements, challenge exams or the assignment of credit upon completion of the certificate (E.g., Nursing Assistant Certification equals 6 college credits) are increasing. HCC has focused on several areas – Health, Computer Information Systems, Cyber Security, and Hospitality. With our credit colleagues the scaffolding of programs has been a primary focus the past year, currently we are looking at programs in Allied Health – CNA, Medical Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, Human Community Health Worker, Behavioral Health Associate/Technician.

Most non-credit programs include:

- Intake and Referral
- Pre-training preparation
- Career Counseling and Academic Advising
- Classroom instruction (including virtual)
- Assessment of the student achieving a specific competency
- Hands on skills training and practice
- Workplace experience
- Job Placement Services
- In most cases, 3-month career follow-up

e. Students

Non-credit students are enrolled in HCC's Student Information System are given a college identification card and have access to all the college's student services, including but not limited to the Library, the Center for Academic Program Support, the Thrive Center, the Athletic Center, and their student record – credit and non-credit separately.

For academic year 2023, BCS had a headcount of 2,356 students with enrollments of over 3,850. Fifty-Eight percent (58%) of the non-credit students identified as BIPOC, with 80% of the BIPOC population identified as Hispanic/Latinx. Over 75% of the non-credit identified as female. Most students come from Hampden County (75%) with that being concentrated in Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee. There were over 2,000

registrations in workforce development courses and programs and over 1,500 enrolled in Adult Education/ESOL. Most of the non-credit students identify as low income and/or on public assistance. (Funding requirements express a preference that the college enroll the unemployed, underemployed, those who identify as BIPOC and as low-income individuals.)

Student success is tracked in BCS by each department or program according to the metrics/outcomes discussed earlier. In addition to a director or coordinator there are advisors, career counselors, tutors and sometimes mentors for each participant in a non-credit program. For example, the CISCO Cyber Security program, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, is directed by a training manager and has a lead teacher, two supplemental instructors and at least 3 student support and success staff shared by HCC and MRC. This support network works with each cohort (10-15) and is designed to provide wrap around service in conjunction with the training. For CISCO, and other programs, issues like transportation, childcare, housing, food insecurity, language ability, accessibility to technology and wireless connectivity, digital literacy, personal/financial literacy, health, poverty, citizenship, a driver's license, and workplace credentialing are all issues which need to be addressed at intake.

f. Teaching and Learning Scholarship

The staffing of faculty and student support positions is often challenging due to the variety of occupational trainers as well as the sheer number of individuals enrolled in the programs. Classes run with qualified faculty and often continue to teach for many years. As BCS adjusts to the needs of the community and area businesses the need for

faculty or staff with specialized knowledge or capabilities is more apparent. Because workforce or adult education trainings are often the primary focus of a program or department team solutions are sought out. It is common to say the Adult Learning team or the Jump Start team or the team of a particular grant, a team approach to addressing the students educational and support needs is crucial. All faculty and staff have the appropriate degree within their field of expertise or significant relevant work experience to teach or do their job. The college's Academic and Student Affairs division is supportive of the non-credit programming and are often partners at the table to discuss opportunities for innovation or program integration. Reports to the Trustees, the launching or completion of training programs, student successes, new initiatives and more are shared with the entire community and celebrated.

There are significant opportunities for professional development through the division or other college divisions, the college's Learning Collaborative, state funders and many of our grant partners. Recently two staff members participated in a Human Centered Design "Spring" on curriculum development which was sponsored by our local partner and the National Fund. Each supervisor works with staff to recommend these learning opportunities.

g. Integrity, Transparency and Public Disclosure

Programs are presented on the college website (www.hcc.edu) and there are several collateral courses and marketing materials that are presented to the participants to emphasize the expectations of the program and the desired outcomes. The following link is one example of program information on the college's website:

<https://www.hcc.edu/courses-and-programs/workforce-development/free-job-training-programs/jump-start>. Again, the learner is a partner in the process. Intake usually concludes with a program/class orientation. A syllabus is shared on the first day of class and discussions are held in terms of college and employer expectations. Throughout the training support staff stay connected with learners. Recognition that many adult learners have a lot going on in their lives requires us to take notice of their attendance, participation, as well as their academic performance. The goal is to support the student and provide additional supports that lead to success.

III. Conclusion:

BCS's mission is to provide an entrance ramp to education and career opportunities for traditionally underserved populations. At present, some of the programs include Nursing Assistant (including ESOL Nurse Aide), Pharmacy Technician, Hotel Worker, Line Cook, ESOL Culinary, Medical Assistant, Customer Service, Cyber Security, English Language Learning, Accelerated Career English and more. Overall, BCS has a program/course completion rate between 75 and 80 percent. Employment is our primary goal for occupational training programs; job placement of completers, on average, ranges from 70-80%. BCS places over 500 individuals into jobs in the region annually and transitions approximately 100 individuals to the credit programs of the college.

Non-credit work is community based. It is dynamic because of engagement with participants, CBOs, businesses, and cultural entities. Flexibility and Adaptability are imperative. But always the starting point is with the learner, being ready for where they might start will enable HCC to move them toward success.