Plus 50 Completion Strategy:
Year Three Evaluation Results

August 26, 2013

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Plus 50 Completion Strategy: Year Three Evaluation Results

The American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Plus 50 Completion Strategy, funded by the Lumina Foundation, provides grants to 18 community colleges for the purpose of Plus 50 program development and implementation. The colleges' Plus 50 Programs provide training and career development for adults over the age of 50 in order to help them re-enter into the workforce, pursue new careers, or advance their current careers. The primary goal of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy is that grantee community colleges will serve 9,000 adult students over the age of 50 across four years, with 3,600 (40%) completing a degree, certificate, or not-for-credit certificate. To assess whether grantee community colleges are on track, the AACC engaged Learning for Action (LFA) to conduct an evaluation of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy. In the third year of implementation (2012-2013) of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy, LFA worked with each of the grantee community colleges, including eight colleges that participated since the first year of the grant (2010-2011). This report presents data from all three years of the evaluation.

Over the Three Years of the Plus 50 Strategy:	
16,507	**Students have participated in a Plus 50 Program**
7,192	**Plus 50 program participants have completed a credential**

Exhibits 1-3 summarize key the key findings across the first three years of the evaluation. To date, the colleges involved in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy have exceeded the goal, as they have served 16,507 plus 50 students, and 7,192 (44%) of these students have completed a degree or credential. Furthermore, 715 (10%) of these students have secured employment since completing their program.

Exhibit 1: Summary of Key Data Points: Credential Completion and Employment Outcomes

Credentials and Employment	Year 1 2010-2011	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Cumulative Total
Degrees Completed	191	616	713	1,520
Credit Certificates Completed	167	358	369	894
Non-Credit Certificates Completed	1,183	1,728	1,867	4,778
Total Completions	1,541	2,702	2,949	**7,192**
Total Employed[1]	210	400	715	715[2]

[1] The data on employment *undercount* the number and percent of program participants who have landed jobs, as employment data are often extremely difficult to obtain. Therefore, only a subset of colleges is able to provide these data.
[2] The cumulative number is the same as the number reported in year three, because each year when colleges report the number of students employed, they report the number of students who have gained employment so far, no matter which year they participated in the program.

Exhibit 2: Summary of Key Data Points:
Support Services Provided

Support Service	Year 1 2010-2011	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013
Number of Students Working with Completion Coaches/Advisors	359	1,043	2,829
Number of Students Receiving Financial Aid Supports	720	779	947
Number of Students who Attended Career Development Workshops	407	702	915
Number of Linkages the Programs Made with Local Employers	40	460	4,862[1]

[1] One college (Southwestern Illinois College, SWIC) accounts for 4,500 employers participating in employee linkage programs in year three. Due to its geographical location, the employer network for SWIC is large and well-developed, and providing employer linkages is a central component of SWIC's programming. If we exclude SWIC from the total count, the number of employer linkages is 362.

Exhibit 3: Summary of Key Data Points:
Workforce Programs and Participation in Workforce Courses

Workforce Programs, Courses, and Students Enrolled	Year 1 2010-2011	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Cumulative Total
Number of Workforce Programs Offered	189	395	421	NA[1]
Number of Students Enrolled in Workforce Courses	3,463	5,829	7,215	**16,507**[2]
Number of Instructors who have Participated in Professional Development Designed to Support their Ability to Work with Plus 50 Students	77	337	399	NA[3]

[1] A cumulative number is not provided, because many of the same workforce programs are offered across years and across colleges. The total could be ascertained if the colleges "unduplicated" the information, but this is not asked of the colleges, due to burden this would place on program staff to account for unique programs across years.

[2] This number is not unduplicated and the cumulative number slightly overestimates the total number served. See section on "Student Enrollment in Workforce courses" for a more detailed description.

[3] This number could not be unduplicated, due to burden this would place on program staff to account for unique instructors across years.

Outreach Strategies

All 18 grantee colleges have a formal outreach plan to attract, support, and retain plus 50 students. Colleges used various strategies, ranging from highly personalized communication to far-reaching advertisement campaigns, with fliers, radio spots, and newspaper ads. More targeted approaches included hosting open houses and information sessions for plus 50 students, as well as connecting

plus 50 students and potential students with customized mentorship and support. The 18 colleges estimated that they reached more than 280,000 individuals in the 2012-2013 year, which represents a slight decline from 343,000 reached in 2011-2012. On average, *each* college reached 15,574 individuals through their outreach programs. Exhibit 4 lists examples of outreach activities that were utilized at different colleges this year.

Exhibit 4: Examples of Colleges' Outreach Approaches

- Working with other departments to help plus 50 students access specialized services (i.e. career and academic counseling)
- Holding Open houses and informational meetings for potential students
- Attending and sponsoring career fairs
- Attending national and regional conferences for adult learners
- Developing websites, blogs, and newsletters
- Placing newspaper and radio advertisements
- Articles in local journals and newspapers
- Contacting students and potential students by phone, email, and postcards
- Presentations at community meetings and forums

Workforce Programs

The breadth of workforce programs offered reflects the diversity of current workforce needs as well as the interests of plus 50 students. The purpose of these programs is to equip plus 50 students with the skills and expertise necessary to enter and remain in the workforce, and to advance in their careers.

Exhibit 5: Examples of Programs Offered in 2012-2013

- Accounting
- Agriculture
- Business Administration
- Computer Support Specialist
- Criminal Justice
- Culinary Arts
- Early Childhood Education
- Electrician
- Emergency Medical Services
- Health Information Technology
- Human Services
- Journalism
- Mechanics Technology
- Medical Assistant
- Nursing
- Pharmacy Technician
- Phlebotomy

Exhibit 6 shows the number of workforce programs offered in each of the three evaluation years.
- During year one, eight colleges offered a total of 189 workforce programs. In year two, this number increased to 395 workforce programs offered by 16 colleges. In year three, 18 colleges offered a total of 421 workforce programs.
- The per-college average number of programs was relatively consistent over the three year period. Colleges averaged 24 programs in year one, 26 programs in year two and 23 programs in year three.

Exhibit 6: Number of Workforce Programs that the Colleges Offer
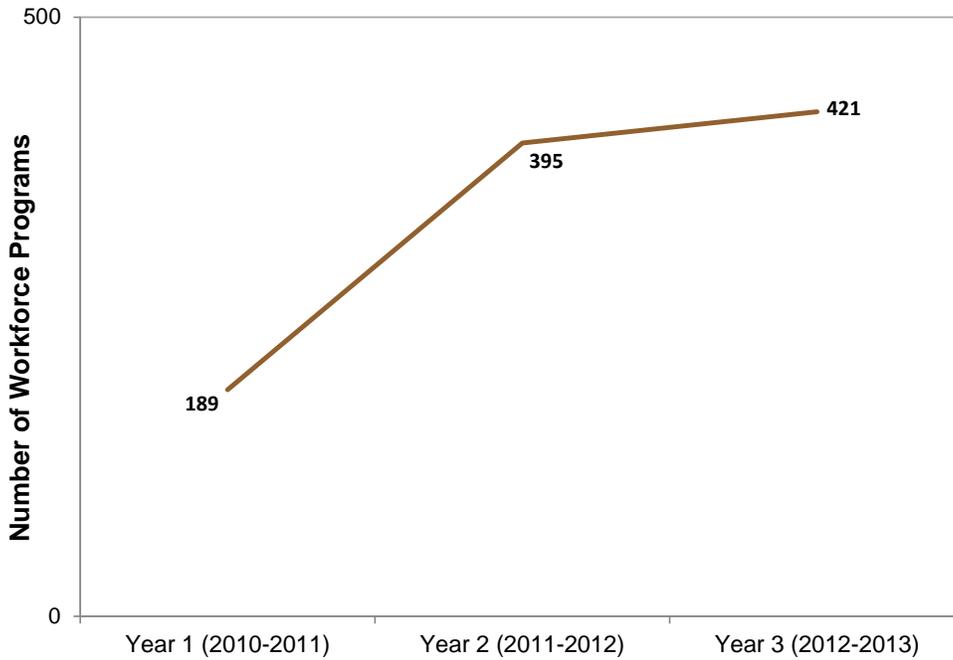
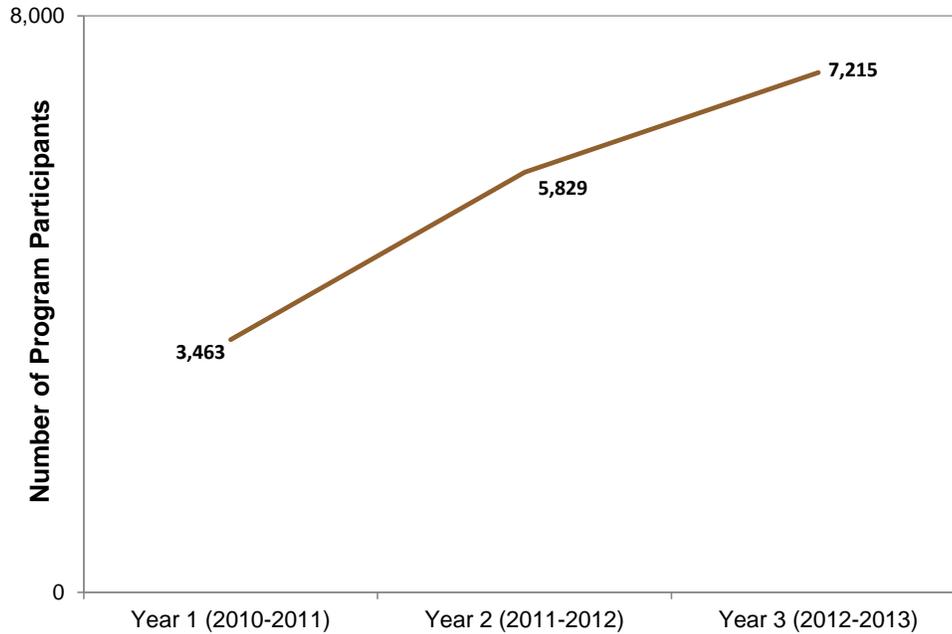| Number of Colleges Offering Workforce Programs			Average Number of Workforce Programs per College		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
8	16	18	24	26	23

Courses and Plus 50 Student Enrollment

Student Enrollment in Workforce Courses

Exhibit 7 shows the number of students enrolled in workforce courses in years one, two, and three, as well as the estimated cumulative number of students served.

- In year one, seven colleges enrolled 3,463 individual students in workforce courses.
- In year two, that number increased to 5,829 individual students enrolled in workforce courses across 18 colleges.
- In year three 7,215 individual students enrolled in workforce courses across 18 colleges.
- On average, colleges had 400 students taking workforce courses during year three.
- **Cumulatively, Plus 50 programs have served 16,507 students through workforce courses over the past three years.**[1]

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[1] This number is not unduplicated from year to year. Requesting colleges to unduplicate year-over-year numbers is an undue grantee burden. Therefore, the cumulative number slightly overestimates the total number served. However, since most

Number of Colleges Offering Workforce Courses			Average Number of Plus 50 Students in Workforce Courses per College			Total Number of Students Served
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
7	18	18	501	324	400	16,507

Workforce Course Offerings

Exhibit 8 highlights the change over time in terms of total number of workforce course offerings, and also of the different *formats* in which workforce courses are offered: accelerated courses; courses taught with flexible scheduling; and courses taught by instructors who have participated in professional development targeted toward enhancing the ability of instructors to work with older learners.

- The total number of workforce courses offered by participating colleges in year three was 2,468. This number decreased slightly from 2,627 in year two, which was significantly more than the 1,984 courses offered in year one. Of these 2,468 workforce courses offered, a subset of which were offered in different formats as described below.

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colleges are serving students through accelerated programs, most of the students who appear in year one of the data will not appear in year two or three.

- Of the 2,468 workforce courses offered in year three, 380 (15%) were accelerated courses to help plus 50 students complete courses more quickly, resulting in an average of 32 accelerated courses per college. This is consistent with year two (14% of all workforce courses were accelerated in year two).
- 914 courses with flexible scheduling, such as courses offered in the evenings or on weekends, were offered at 14 colleges. Courses with flexible scheduling constituted 37% of total workforce courses.
- 333, or 13% of total courses, were taught by instructors that had undergone specialized professional development training in teaching to the unique learning styles of plus 50 learners in year three. This is slightly less than half of what it was in year two.

Exhibit 8: Workforce Course Offerings
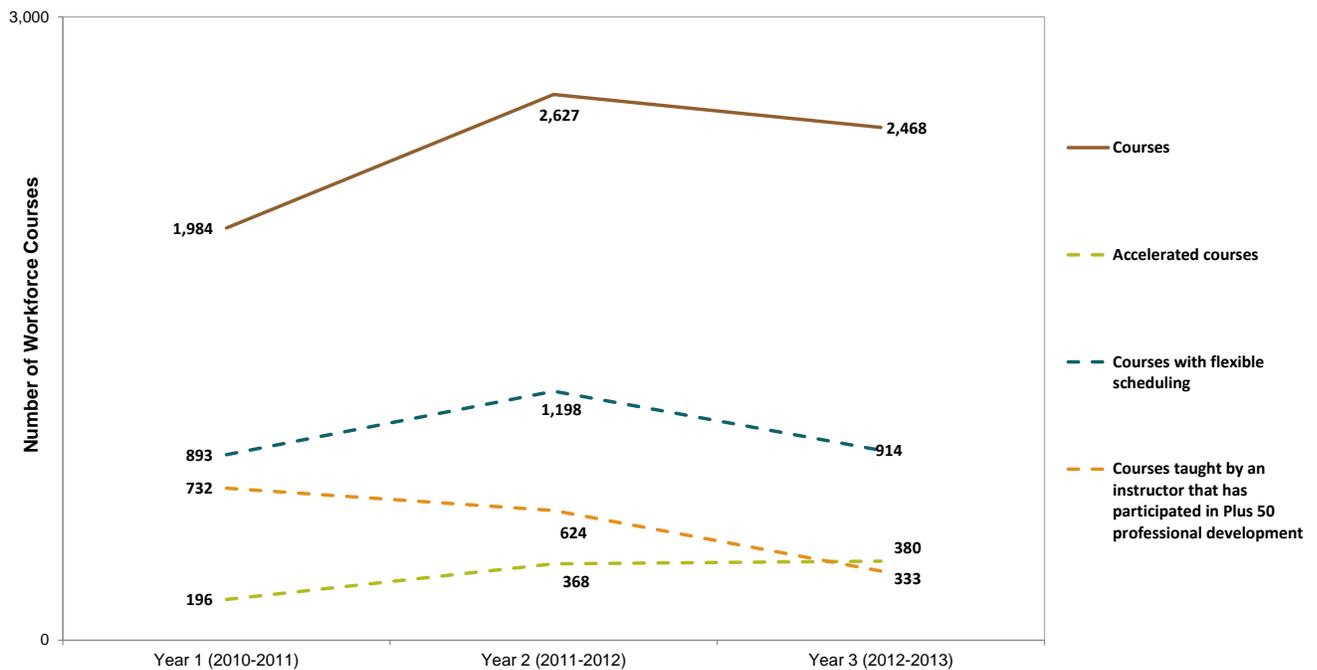
Offering Type	Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering			Average Number of Workforce Courses per College		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Total courses	8 (100%)	15 (100%)	18 (100%)	248	175	137
Accelerated	7 (88%)	9 (60%)	12 (67%)	28	41	32
Flexible scheduling	7 (88%)	10 (67%)	14 (78%)	128	120	65
Taught by instructors with Plus 50 PD	3 (38%)	7 (47%)	7 (39%)	244	89	48

Student Enrollment in Math, English, and Computer Courses and Workshops

Skill-building courses and workshops in math, English, and computers are an important component of many colleges' Plus 50 programs. These skill-building courses enhance successful completion of degrees, credit certificates, and non-credit certificates for plus 50 students. Exhibit 9 shows the number of students in math, English and computer courses over the three years of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy. The provision of these courses varies based upon the needs of the plus 50 students.

Exhibit 9: Number of Plus 50 Students in English, Math, and Computer Courses
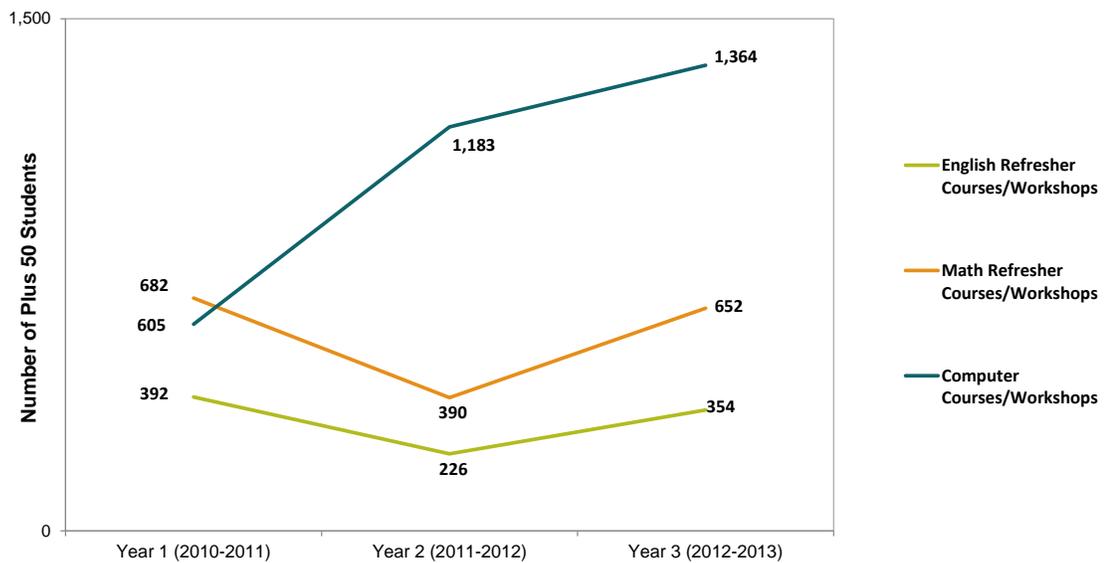
Courses Offered		Number & Percent of Colleges with This Type of Offering			Average Number of Student taking Courses per College		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Math Courses/workshops	7 (88%)	13 (76%)	11 (61%)	97	30	59
	English Courses/workshops	6 (75%)	11 (65%)	9 (50%)	65	21	39
	Computer Courses/workshops	6 (75%)	12 (71%)	13 (72%)	101	99	105

- The total number of math courses and workshops declined between year one (682) and year two (390), and rose in year three to 652 students enrolled. In year three an average of 59 students enrolled in math courses and workshops per college.
- The trend is similar for English courses. Although nine colleges offered these courses in year three (decline from year two), the total number of students enrolled declined from 392 in

year one, 226 in year two, and then rose to 354 students in year three. There were 39 students on average per college in year three, compared with 21 in year two and 65 in year one.[2]

- More than 1,300 plus 50 students at 13 colleges took computer courses or workshops in year three, averaging 105 students per college. This compares to 605 in year one and 1,183 in year two. This increase is due to the addition of more colleges to the Strategy beginning in year two; average enrollment per college remained about the same (it was 101 in year one and 99 in year two).

Exhibits 10-12, on the following pages, show the numbers of math, English, and computer courses offered, as well as how they break out in terms of the formats in which they were offered.

## Math, English, and Computer Course Offerings

Math Courses
- Eleven colleges offered 45 math courses in year three, compared to 13 colleges offering 47 math courses in year two, and seven colleges offered 20 math courses in year one.
- Of the 45 total math courses offered in year three, 53% were offered as flexible courses, 42% were taught by instructors that had been professionally trained to meet the needs of Plus 50 learners, and 38% were offered as accelerated courses.
- While math courses taught by instructors with plus 50-specific professional development training and accelerated courses increased from year two, total courses and courses with flexible scheduling both decreased.

Please see exhibit 10 on the following page.

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[2] Some of the differences between year one and years two and three for math and English may have been an artifact of what colleges have been *counting* as math and English. Some colleges participating in year one counted plus 50 enrollment in standard remedial courses. The Plus 50 approach is to support students with courses tailored to their needs, and standard remedial or development education does not meet this standard. Therefore the numbers in years two and three may be a more authentic reflection of offerings that adhere to the Plus 50 Standards of Excellence.
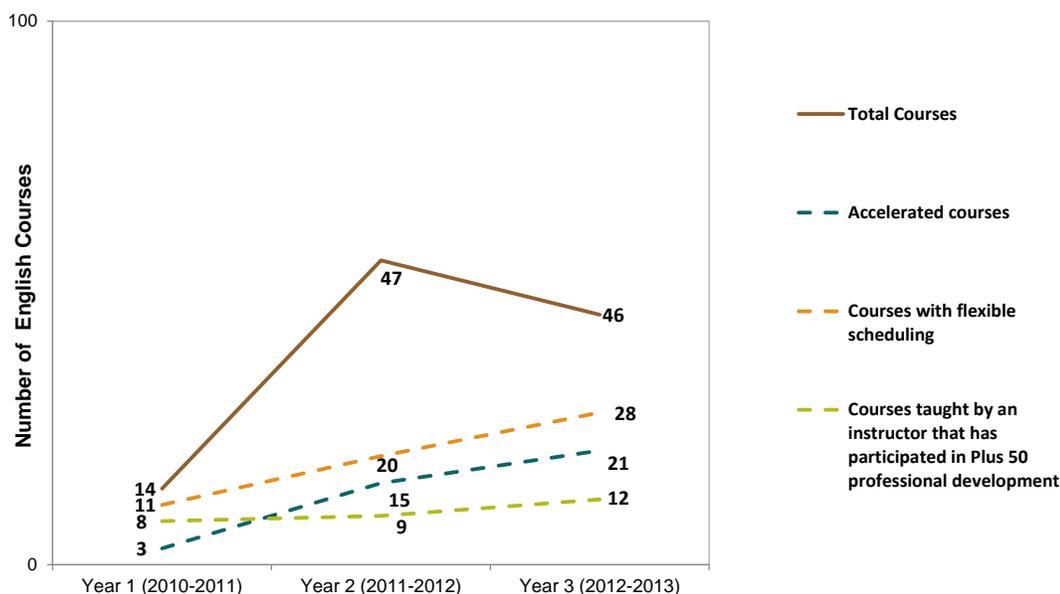
Exhibit 10: Math Course Offerings
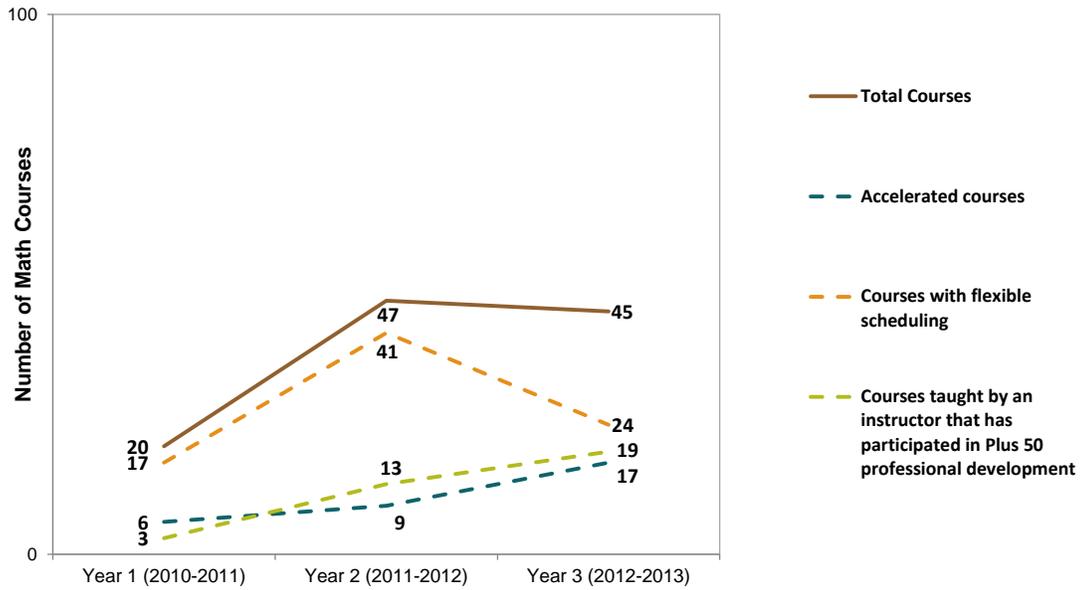
Course Type		Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering (Math)			Average number of Courses/ Workshops per College (Math)		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Total	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	11 (100%)	3	4	4
	Accelerated	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	6 (55%)	1	1	3
	Flexible Scheduling	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	9 (82%)	2	3	3
	Taught by Instructors with Plus 50 Professional Development	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	6 (55%)	1	1	3

English Courses

- Nine colleges offered 46 English courses in year three, 13 colleges offered 56 English courses in year two, and five colleges offered 14 English courses in year one.
- Of the 46 total English courses offered in year three, 61% were offered as flexible courses, 26% were taught by instructors with professional development geared toward plus 50 students, and 46% were offered as accelerated courses.
- While the total number of English courses decreased from year two, accelerated courses, courses with flexible scheduling, and courses taught by instructors with plus 50 specific professional development all increased.

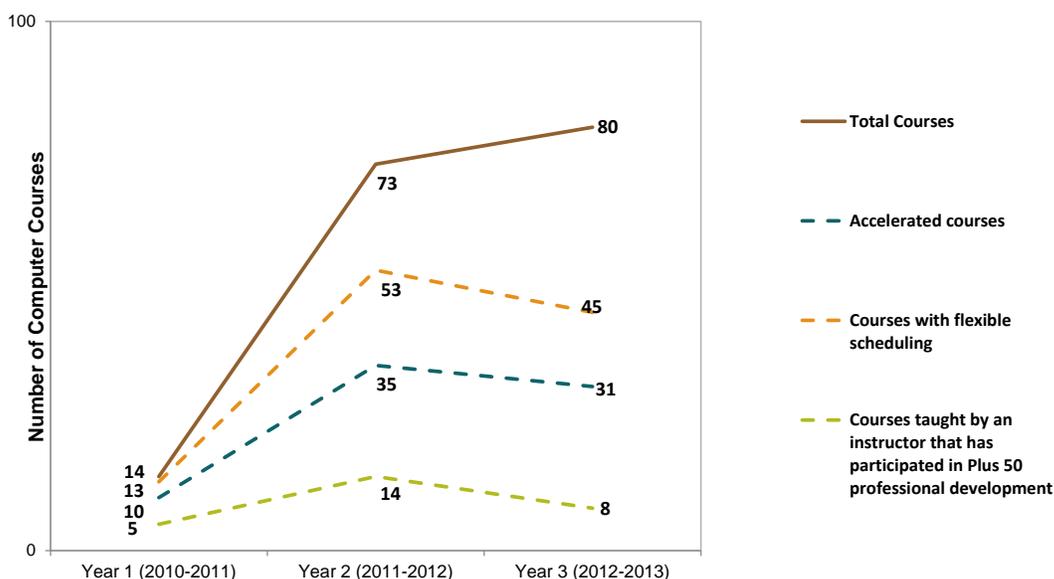**Exhibit 11: English Course Offerings**

Course Type		Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering (English)			Average number of Courses/ Workshops per College (English)		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Total	5 (100%)	13 (100%)	9 (100%)	3	4	4
	Accelerated	5 (100%)	13 (100%)	7 (78%)	1	1	3
	Flexible Scheduling	5 (100%)	13 (100%)	7 (78%)	2	2	4
	Taught by Instructors with Plus 50 Professional Development	5 (100%)	13 (100%)	4 (44%)	2	1	3

Computer Courses

- Thirteen colleges offered 80 computer courses in year three, 13 colleges offered 73 computer courses in year two, and six colleges offered 14 computer courses in year one.
- Of the 80 total computer courses offered in year three, 56% were offered as flexible courses, 10% were taught by instructors with plus 50 professional development, and 39% were offered as accelerated courses.
- While the total number of computer courses increased from year two, there were fewer accelerated courses, courses with flexible scheduling, and courses taught by instructors with plus 50 specific professional development training in year three.

Exhibit 12: Computer Course Offerings

Course Type	Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering (Computer)			Average number of Courses/ Workshops per College (Computer)		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Total	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	13 (100%)	2	6	6
Accelerated	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	8 (62%)	1	1	1
Flexible Scheduling	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	11 (85%)	1	4	4
Taught by Instructors with Plus 50 Professional Development	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	5 (38%)	2	3	6

Professional Development

Plus 50 students have unique learning styles. A component of two-thirds of the colleges' Plus 50 program is specialized professional development opportunities for instructors to learn how to meet the educational needs of plus 50 students.

- A total of 399 instructors at 12 colleges participated in professional development as part of the Plus 50 program in year three, compared to 337 instructors at 12 colleges in year two, and 77 instructors at three colleges in year one.
- The per-college average number of instructors who are trained to serve plus 50 students steadily increased: 26 in year one, 28 in year two, and 33 in year three.

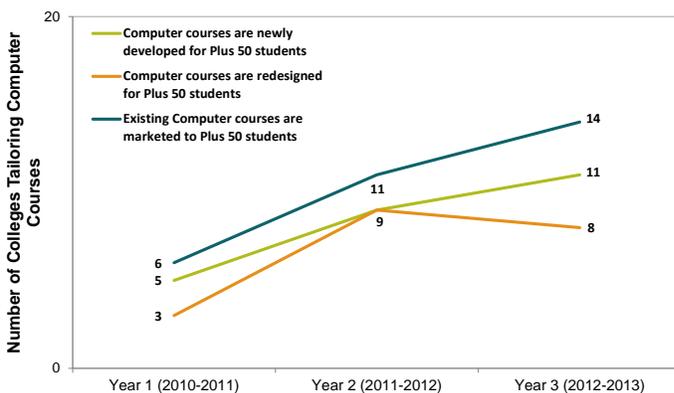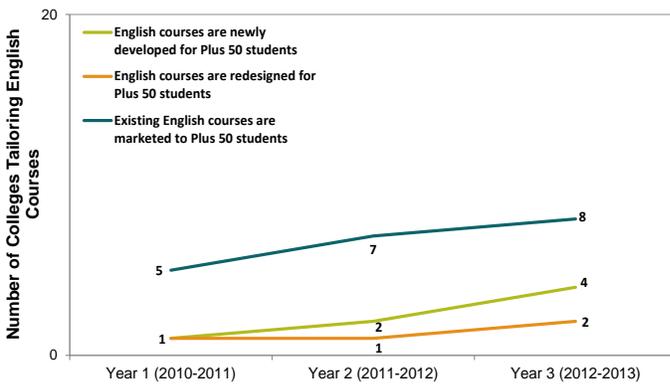### Exhibit 13: Professional Development of Plus 50 Instructors
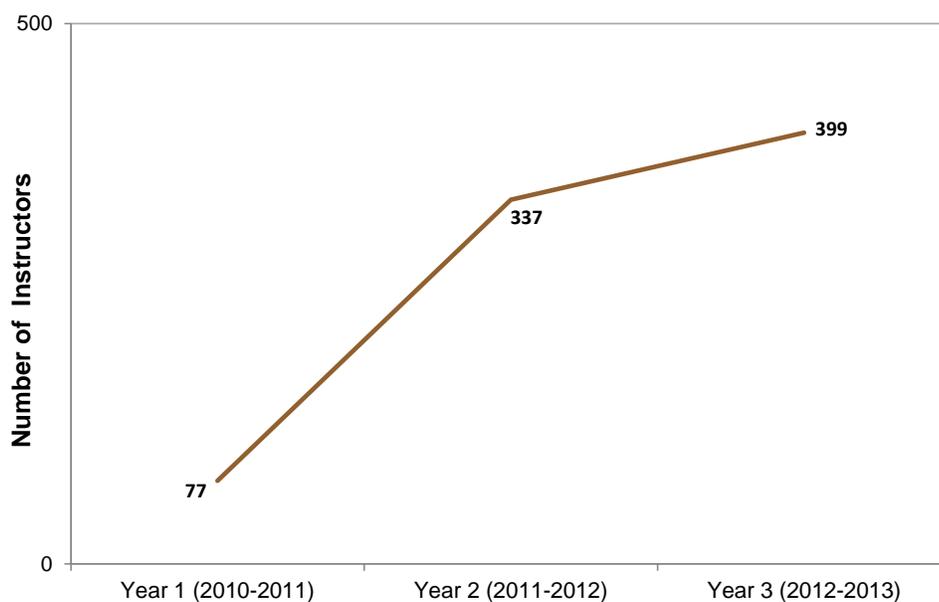
Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering			Average Number of Instructors per College		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
3 (38%)	12 (71%)	12 (67%)	26	28	33

Tailoring Approach

Exhibit 14, on the following page, shows the breakdown of how math, English, and computer courses were tailored to meet the needs of plus 50 students. Courses were newly developed, redesigned, or marketed specifically to plus 50 students.

Math Courses

- Seven colleges (39%) developed new math classes for plus 50 learners in year three, compared to ten colleges in year two and two colleges in year one.
- Four colleges (22%) redesigned math classes to meet the needs of plus 50 students in year three, compared to two colleges in years one and two.
- Eleven colleges (61%) marketed math courses specifically to plus 50 learners in year three, increasing from four colleges in year two and five colleges in year one.

English Courses

- Four colleges (22%) developed new English classes for plus 50 learners in year three, compared to two colleges in year two and one college in year one.
- Two colleges (11%) redesigned English courses to meet the needs of plus 50 students in year three, compared to one college in years one and two.
- Eight colleges (44%) marketed English courses specifically towards plus 50 learners in year three, compared to seven colleges in year two, and five colleges in year one.

Computer Courses

- Eleven colleges (61%) developed new computer classes to meet the needs of plus 50 students in year three, a marked increase from nine colleges in year two, and five colleges in year one.
- Eight colleges (44%) redesigned computer courses to meet the needs of plus 50 students in year three, compared to nine colleges in year two, and three colleges in year one.
- In year three, 14 colleges (78%) marketed computer courses specifically towards plus 50 students, compared to 11 in year two and six in year one.

Please see the corresponding table (Exhibit 15) on the following page with the number and percent of colleges providing information on course tailoring.

Exhibit 15: Colleges providing tailoring information

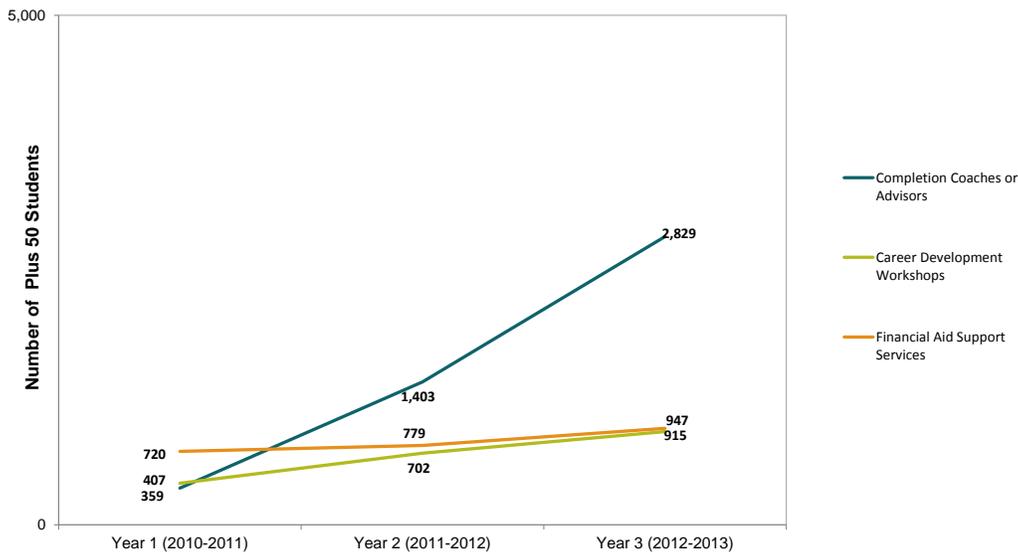| Number of Colleges		Number & Percent of Colleges Providing Information on Tailoring		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Developed New Courses	7 (100%)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)
	Redesigned Courses	7 (100%)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)
	Marketed Courses	7 (100%)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)

Additional Program Components Supporting Completion and Employment

Support Services

Colleges offered the following tailored support services to plus 50 students: coaches or advisors who assisted students in ensuring plus 50 students' courses would fulfill requirements and result in a completed degree or certificate, and also provide general advice in navigating the college experience and in identifying additional resources and supports; financial aid advising that included information sessions on plus 50 students' options and the application process and provided technical assistance in applying for financial aid; and workshops geared toward choosing a career and developing professionally for re-entry into the workforce. Exhibit 16 on the following page shows the number of students benefiting from support services in year one, two, and three.

- 947 students (13%) at 14 colleges received **support services in learning about and applying for financial aid** in year three, compared to 779 students (13%) at 12 colleges in year two, and 720 students (21%) at six colleges in year one.
- 2,829 students (39%) at 15 colleges utilized **completion coaches** in year three, doubling from 1,043 students (18%) at 14 colleges in year two, and 359 students (10%) at five colleges in year one.
- 915 students (13%) at 15 colleges attended **career development workshops** in year three, compared to 702 students (12%) at 11 colleges in year two, and 407 students (12%) at three colleges in year one.

Exhibit 16: Support Services Offered

Type of Support Offered		Percent of Colleges with this Type of Support			Average Number of Students Receiving Support per College		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Financial Aid Support Services	6 (75%)	12 (71%)	14 (78%)	120	65	68
	Completion Coach/Advisor	5 (63%)	4 (82%)	15 (83%)	72	184	189
	Career Development Workshops	3 (38%)	11 (65%)	15 (83%)	136	64	61

Employer Linkages

Community colleges that are working to support the career growth of their students sometimes work directly with employers or employer groups. Colleges add this program component for a variety of purposes. Some examples are: collaborating with employers on developing curricula; receiving local labor market information on the most valuable skills that employers currently seek; encouraging employers to understand the value of hiring plus 50 employees; and working with employers to place students directly into jobs. By working with employers in these ways, Plus 50 programs help to smooth the transition for program participants from completion to employment.

- 4,862 employers at 12 colleges were part of a formalized employer linkage program in year three, compared to 460 employers at eight colleges in year two, and 40 employers at two colleges in year one.
- One college accounted for 4,500 of the employer linkages in year three.[3]

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[3] One college (Southwestern Illinois College, SWIC) accounted for 4,500 employers participating in employee linkage programs in year three. Due to its geographical location, the employer network for SWIC is large and well-developed, and providing

Completion and Employment Outcomes

This section of the report shows:

- **Credit for prior learning outcomes:** Earning credit for prior learning is an essential part of helping plus 50 students successfully complete their programs; therefore the evaluation tracks the number of program participants who successfully obtain credits for prior learning.
- **Completion outcomes:** The central goal of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy is supporting plus 50 students to complete a community college credential. The evaluation shows the number of program participants who received degrees, credit certificates, and non-credit certificates.
- **Employment outcomes:** Finally, the ultimate goal of completion is to support students to obtain credentials with labor market value: credentials that lead to employment or support career advancement. This section shows available data on program participants' employment.

Credit for Prior Learning

Reducing time to completion is a beneficial motivator for plus 50 students and the number of colleges arranging for this possibility for their plus 50 students has increased from seven to 17 over the three years of the program.

- In year three, 216 students at eight colleges earned credit for prior learning, compared to 196 at 13 colleges in year two and 296 students at seven colleges in year one.
- Over the past three years combined, 708 plus 50 students have received credit for prior learning.

Please see exhibit 17 on the following page for more information about earning credits for prior learning.

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employer linkages is a central component of SWIC's programming. If we exclude SWIC from the total count, the number of employer linkages is 362.

Exhibit 17: Number of Students Receiving Credit for Prior Learning
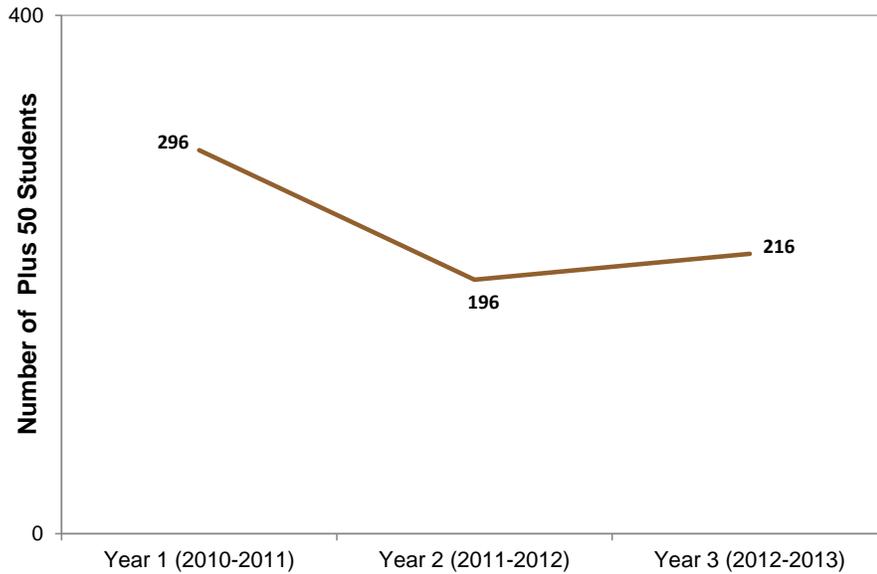
Number & Percent of Colleges Offering Credit for Prior Learning			Average Number of Students Receiving Credits for Prior Learning per College			Total Number of Students Receiving Credit for Prior Learning
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1, 2, & 3
7 (88%)	13 (76%)	17 (94%)	43	15	13	708

Completion Outcomes

At each of the 18 participating colleges, plus 50 students completed degrees, credit certificates, or non-credit certificates in year three. Exhibit 18 on the following page shows the breakdown of different types of completion over three years. Degree program are generally two years in length, while the length of certificate programs vary by field of study. The growth in completion of degree and longer-term certificate programs is evident in year three.

Degrees
- In year three, 713 students completed degrees at 18 colleges. This increased from 616 students completing degrees in year two and 191 students at eight colleges completing degrees in year one.
- This increase is reflected in the per college average which rose significantly from 24 students in year one to 39 in years two and 40 students in year three.
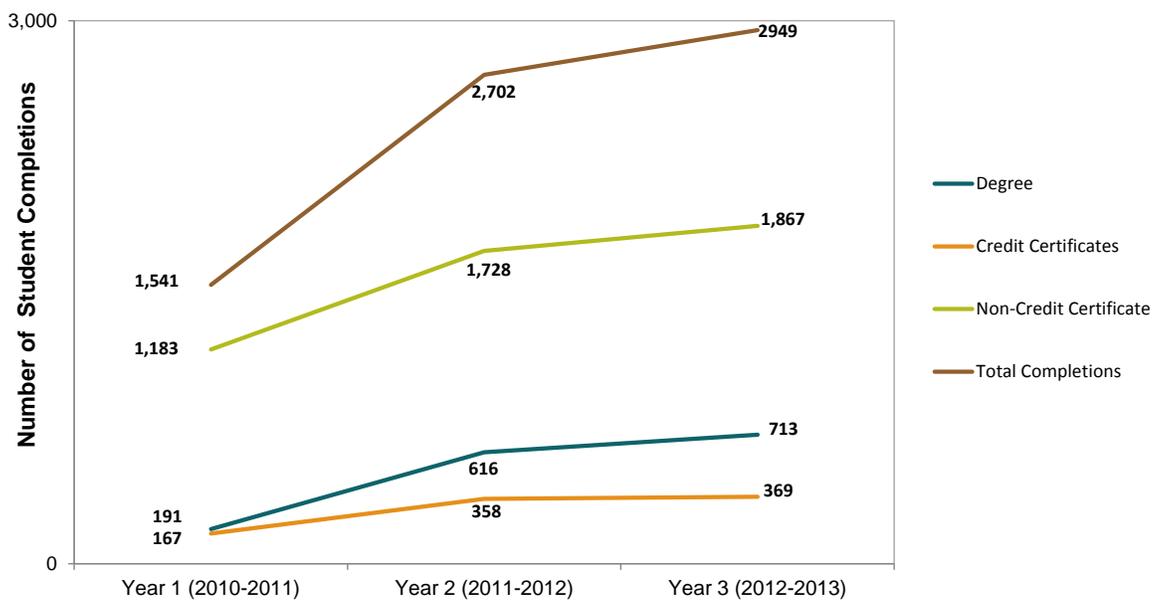
Credit Certificates
- In year three, 369 students completed credit certificates at 18 colleges, compared to 167 students at eight colleges in year one and 358 students at sixteen colleges completed credit certificates in year two.

- The per college average increased from 21 students in year one to 24 in year two. It fell back to 21 students in year three.

Non-credit Certificates
- In year three, 1,867 students completed non-credit certificates at 14 colleges, a slight increase over 1,728 students at 16 colleges in year two and 1,183 students at four colleges in year one.[4]
- While the raw numbers increased, the per college average number of students completing non-credit certificates decreased from 296 to 115 between year one and year two. In year three, the per college average number of students rose to 133.

Exhibit 18: Number of Students Completing Degrees and Certificates

Completion	Number & Percent of Colleges Offering Degrees and Certificates			Average Number of Student Completions		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Total Completions	8 (100%)	18 (100%)	18 (100%)	193	159	163
Degrees	8 (100%)	17 (94%)	18 (100%)	24	39	40
Credit Certificates	8 (100%)	16 (89%)	18 (100%)	21	24	21
Non-credit Certificates	4 (50%)	16 (89%)	14 (78%)	296	115	132

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[4] In year three, College of Central Florida accounts for 1,320 of the non-credit certificates completed.

Exhibit 19 provides information about the 7,192 completions awarded over the three years of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy:

- 1,520 degrees were awarded (21%).
- 894 credit certificates were awarded (12%).
- 4,778 non-credit certificates were awarded (67%).

Employment Outcomes

Twelve colleges have tracked employment outcomes. These colleges have counted **715 plus 50 students securing employment since leaving the program**. This number is an undercount, even for this subset of colleges: most colleges do not have access to an employment database, and so they must use individual follow-up by online or phone survey to determine employment outcomes. With the generally low response rates of these methods, colleges are unable to track many former students who are likely employed.

Exhibit 19: Completions over Three Years: Total of 7,192 Completions