

# NEWS



ONE DUPONT CIRCLE, NW, SUITE 410, WASHINGTON, DC 20036-1176 • [T] 202/728-0200 • [F] 202/833-2467

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Contact: Norma Kent, 202/728-0200, x209  
[nkent@aacc.nche.edu](mailto:nkent@aacc.nche.edu)

## **BABY BOOMER COLLEGE PROGRAM REACHES COMPLETION GOAL TWO YEARS EARLY**

*18 community colleges involved in AACC Plus 50 Completion Strategy assisted 9,292 students with 46% of them already completing high-value degrees or certificates*

WASHINGTON, DC – A national program to help students age 50 and over coming back to college to train for new jobs has reached its goals two years ahead of schedule and is revving up to assist more people.

Approximately 9,292 student baby boomers were assisted in the last two years by the 18 colleges participating in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy, organized by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Forty-six percent of those students, approximately 4,243 of them, completed degrees or certificates over the last two years.

Organizers at AACC were thrilled to see the program reach its four-year goals two years ahead of schedule. “We are delighted to see the colleges assisting so many adults age 50 and over who are going back to college to re-train for new jobs and re-invent their careers,” said Mary Sue Vickers, director of the program at AACC.

Vickers and the college staff are not planning to rest on their laurels. Rather, they’re planning to assist even more people over the next two years. The four-year program is funded by Lumina Foundation.

When asked how the 18 colleges involved in the program could be so successful, evaluators point to a number of factors in a newly-issued report, available on AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative website at <http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu/Pages/OurAccomplishments.aspx>

The 18 community colleges involved in the program nearly doubled the number of workforce training courses available for baby boomers in the second year of the project. Baby boomers took courses in accounting, business administration, criminal justice, early childhood education, health information technology, human services, mechanics technology, computer support, nursing, pharmacy and phlebotomy.

Colleges used a number of outreach and support strategies to help students succeed. They worked across college departments to help students access specialized services like career and academic counseling. They held open houses and informational meetings for potential students and sponsored career fairs.

Key support services provided for students included offering “completion coaches” to assist students in reaching their education goals, helping students apply for and receive financial aid, offering computer skill-building courses and career development workshops, and forging linkages with employers.

Organizers say the evaluation bodes well for the remaining two years of the project. AACC is currently accepting grant applications from member community colleges to participate in a new project that will train 10,000 older workers for new jobs in education, healthcare and social services. For grant information and to apply, go to <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/plus50rfp>

The colleges involved in the program are: Atlantic Cape Community College (Mays Landing, N.J.), Cape Cod Community College (West Barnstable, Mass.), Century College (White Bear Lake, Minn.), Clover Park Technical College (Lakewood, Wash.), College of Central Florida (Ocala, Fla.), Hazard Community and Technical College (Hazard, Ky.), Joliet Junior College (Joliet, Ill.), Monroe Community College (Rochester, N.Y.), Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (Green Bay, Wis.), Northeastern Junior College (Sterling, Colo.), Pasco Hernando Community College (New Port Rickey, Fla.), St. Louis Community College (St. Louis, Mo.), Santa Fe College (Gainesville, Fla.), Southern Arkansas University Tech (Camden, Ark.), Southwestern Illinois College (Belleville, Ill.), Spoon River College (Canton, Ill.), University of Alaska - Anchorage Community and Technical College (Anchorage, Alaska) and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (Valdosta, Ga.).

Lumina Foundation currently funds the participation of 18 community colleges in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy, which is helping baby boomers complete degrees or credentials. AACC's Plus 50 Initiative began with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies and originally involved 15 colleges, and then expanded to 32 more colleges.

For more information about the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC, see <http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu>

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The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is a national organization representing more than 1,100 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest and fastest growing sector of higher education, enrolling more than 13 million credit and non-credit students annually. More information is available at <http://aacc.nche.edu>