

# Plus 50 Completion Strategy: Year Four Evaluation Results

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LFA Group enhances the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations through highly customized research, strategy development, and evaluation services.

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# Plus 50 Completion Strategy: Year Four Evaluation Results

The American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Plus 50 Completion Strategy, funded by Lumina Foundation, provides grants to 17 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. At the onset of this initiative the primary goal

of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy was that grantee community colleges would serve 9,000 adult students over the age of 50 across four years, with 3,600 (40%) students completing a degree, certificate, or not-for-credit certificate. To assess the progress of community colleges, the AACC engaged Learning for Action (LFA) at the beginning of the implementation to conduct an evaluation of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy. In the fourth and final year of implementation (2013-2014) of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy, LFA worked with each of the 17 grantee community colleges, including six colleges that participated since the first year of the grant (2010-2011). This report presents data from all four years of the evaluation.

Exhibits 1-3 on the following page summarize the key findings across all four years of the evaluation. At the end of the four-year implementation the colleges involved in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy far exceeded the goals of serving 9,000 Plus 50 students and of having 3,600 of those students complete a degree or credential: 20,514 Plus 50 students were served and 8,877 of those students (43% of the total served) completed. Furthermore, colleges reported data on 1,217 participants who secured employment. Certainly the number of participants who are *reported* as employed does not reflect the number of participants *actually* employed, due to the fact that employment data are often extremely difficult to obtain, and only 12 of the colleges were able to provide that data.

These results demonstrate the success of the strategy in serving Plus 50 students and supporting them to complete degrees or credentials. The findings also reflect the resourcefulness of the colleges in finding new and effective ways to serve the Plus 50 student population at community colleges across the country.

Over the Four Years of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy:	
20,514	Students have participated in a Plus 50 Program
8,877	Plus 50 program participants have completed a credential

**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	Year 4 2013-2014	Cumulative Total
Degrees Completed	191	616	713	615	<b>2,135</b>
Credit Certificates Completed	167	358	369	400	<b>1,294</b>
Non-Credit Certificates Completed	1,183	1,728	1,867	670	<b>5,448</b>
<b>Total Completions</b>	<b>1,541</b>	<b>2,702</b>	<b>2,949</b>	<b>1,685</b>	<b>8,877</b>
<b>Total Employed<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>210</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>1,217<sup>2</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>The cumulative number is the same as the number reported in year four, 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	Year 4 2013-2014	Cumulative Total
Number of Students Working with Completion Coaches/Advisors	359	1,043	2,829	1,661	<b>5,892</b>
Number of Students Receiving Financial Aid Supports	720	779	947	1,132	<b>3,578</b>
Number of Students who Attended Career Development Workshops	407	702	915	673	<b>2,697</b>
Number of Linkages the Programs Made with Local Employers	40	460	4,862	4,865 <sup>1</sup>	N/A <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One college (Southwestern Illinois College, SWIC) accounts for 4,500 employers participating in employee linkage programs in year four. 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 365 for Year 4.

<sup>2</sup> A cumulative number is not provided because the data on employment *undercount* the number and percent of program participants who have landed jobs, as only a subset of colleges are able to provide these data, since employment data are often extremely difficult to obtain.

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

<b>Workforce Programs, Courses, and Students Enrolled</b>	<b>Year 1 2010-2011</b>	<b>Year 2 2011-2012</b>	<b>Year 3 2012-2013</b>	<b>Year 4 2013-2014</b>	<b>Cumulative Total</b>
<b>Number of Workforce Programs Offered</b>	189	395	421	380	NA <sup>1</sup>
<b>Number of Students Completing Workforce Courses</b>	3,463	5,829	7,215	4,007	<b>20,514<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Number of Instructors who have Participated in Professional Development Designed to Support their Ability to Work with Plus 50 Students</b>	77	337	399	468	NA <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 17 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 completion coaches or concierges, and other types of support. The 17 colleges estimated that they reached 280,904 individuals in the 2013-2014 year, which represents a slight increase from 280,346 reached in 2012-2013. On average, *each* college reached 17,557 individuals through their outreach programs.

The averaged reached is skewed, however, by a few colleges that reach a very large number of Plus 50 students. Pasco Hernando reported reaching “25,000+” students overall during the 2013-14 academic year. Furthermore, Atlantic Cape reported reaching an estimated number of 120,000 individuals through the outreach program; but also stated that their Continuing Education Program Guide (produced 3 times a year) reaches approximately 240,000 potential plus 50 students each year. Exhibit 4 lists examples of outreach activities that were utilized at different colleges this year.

#### Exhibit 4: Examples of Colleges' Outreach Approaches

- Developing and enhancing websites, internal/external newsletters, blogs, and social media
- Presenting at information sessions, conferences, panel discussions, and other community or leadership events
- 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
- Placing newspaper and radio advertisements
- Publishing articles in local journals and newspapers
- Contacting alumni, current and potential students by email and postcards
- Mass distribution of flyers and posters

## 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 provides examples of the workforce programs offered in 2013-14.

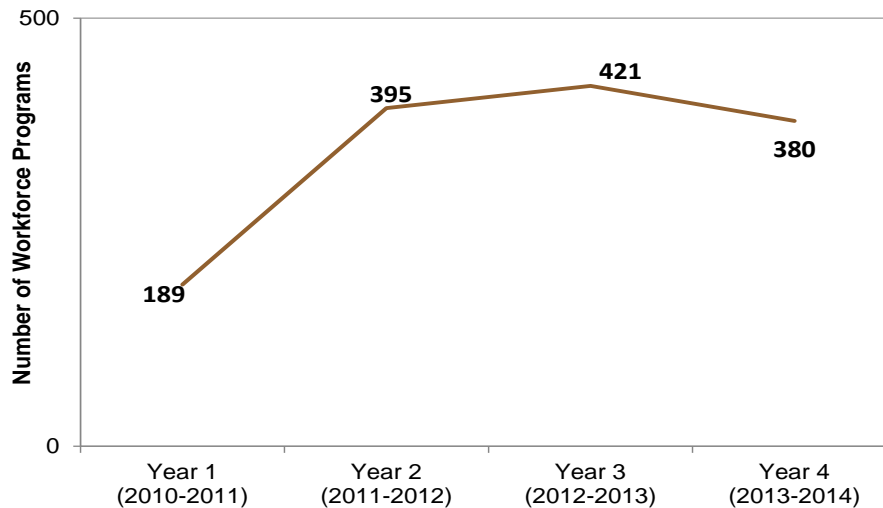
#### Exhibit 5: Examples of Workforce Programs Offered in 2013-2014

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Accounting                     | ▪ Human Services Information Technology |
| ▪ Agriculture                    | ▪ Medical Assistant                     |
| ▪ Business Administration        | ▪ Nursing                               |
| ▪ Computer Science / Programming | ▪ Paramedic                             |
| ▪ Criminal Justice               | ▪ Pharmacy Technician                   |
| ▪ Culinary Arts                  | ▪ Phlebotomy                            |
| ▪ Education                      | ▪ Surgical Technology                   |
| ▪ Emergency Medical Services     | ▪ Welding                               |
| ▪ Health Information Technology  |   |

Exhibit 6, on the following page, shows the number of workforce programs offered over the course of the four 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 421 workforce programs. In year four, 17 colleges offered a total of 380 workforce programs.
- The per-college average number of programs was relatively consistent over the four year period. Colleges averaged 24 programs in year one, 25 programs in year two, 23 programs in year three, and 22 programs in the final year.

**Exhibit 6: Number of Workforce Programs that Colleges Offered between 2010-2014**



Number of Colleges Offering Workforce Programs				Average Number of Workforce Programs per College			
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
8	16	18	17	24	25	23	22

## Courses and Plus 50 Student Enrollment

### Student Enrollment in Workforce Courses

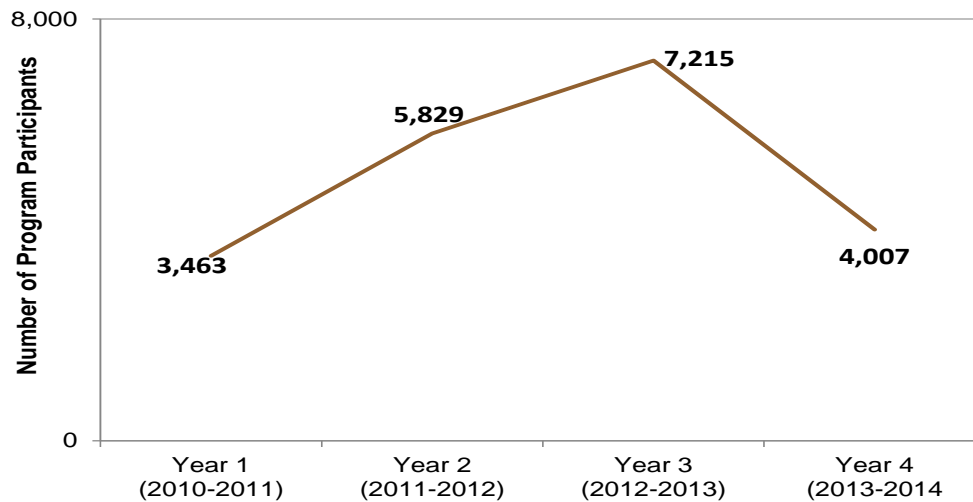
Exhibit 7 shows the number of students enrolled in workforce courses across all four years, as well as the estimated cumulative number of students served.

In year one, seven colleges enrolled 3,463 students in workforce courses. In year two, that number increased to 5,829 students enrolled in workforce courses across 18 colleges. In year three, 7,215 students enrolled in workforce courses across 18 colleges. In year four there was a decline, and 4,007 students completed workforce courses across 17 colleges. On average, colleges had 236 students taking workforce courses during year four. **Cumulatively, Plus 50 programs have served 20,514 students through workforce courses over the past four years.**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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 overestimates the total number served. However, since most colleges are serving students through accelerated programs, most of the students who appear in a given year of the data will not appear in other years of that data – therefore the overcount will tend to be minor; adding the totals across years provides a good estimate of the cumulative total.



### Exhibit 7: Number of Plus 50 Students in Workforce Courses



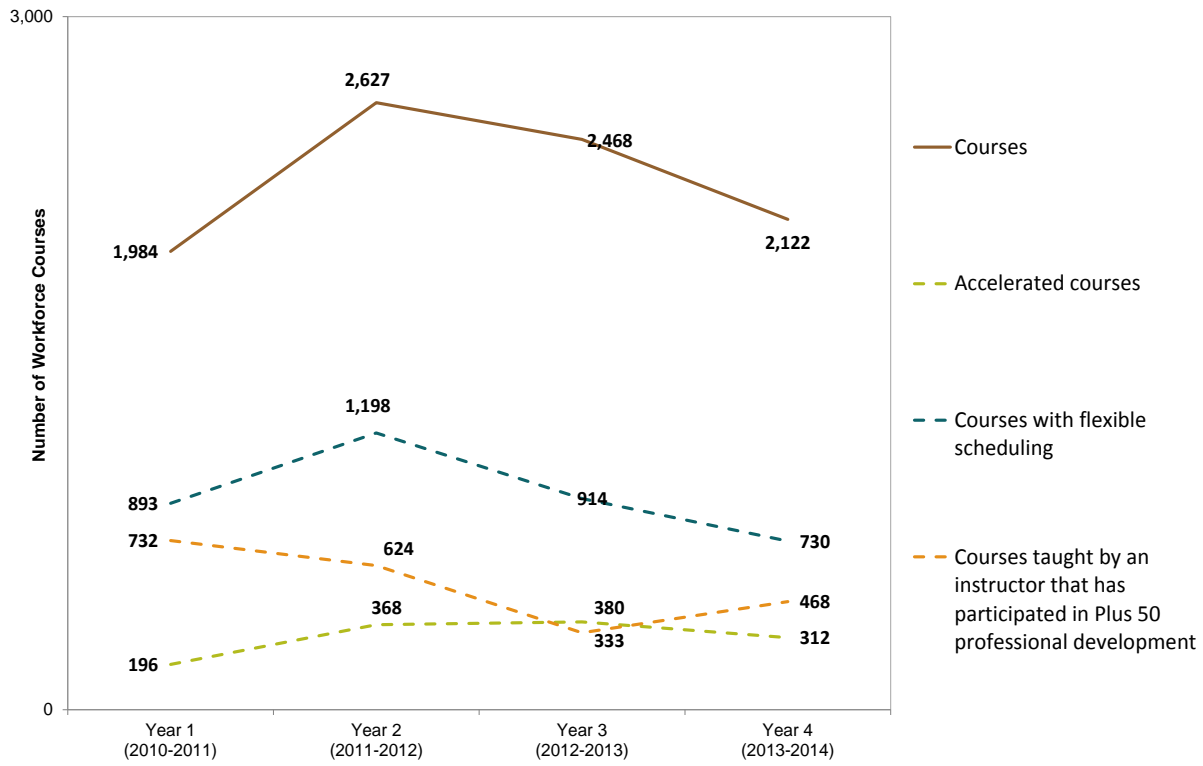
Number of Colleges Offering Workforce Courses				Average Number of Plus 50 Students in Workforce Courses per College				Total Number of Students Served
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	
7	18	18	17	501	324	400	236	20,514

### 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 four was 2,122. The number of workforce courses offered increased significantly from year one (1,984) to year two (2,627), however they steadily decreased from year two to year four. Of these 2,122 workforce courses offered, a subset was offered in different formats as described below.
- Of the 2,122 workforce courses offered in year four, 312 (15%) were accelerated courses to help Plus 50 students' complete courses more quickly, resulting in an average of 26 accelerated courses per college. This is proportionate with years two and three (when 15% respectively was the percent for those two years), and an increase from year one when 10% of classes were accelerated.
- 730 courses with flexible scheduling, such as courses offered in the evenings or on weekends, were offered at 11 colleges in year four. Courses with flexible scheduling constituted 34% of total workforce courses.
- 468, or 22% of total courses, were taught by instructors who had undergone specialized professional development training in teaching to the unique learning styles of Plus 50 learners in year four, which is a 41% increase over the 333 courses or (13%) of all courses in year three.

### Exhibit 8: Workforce Course Offerings

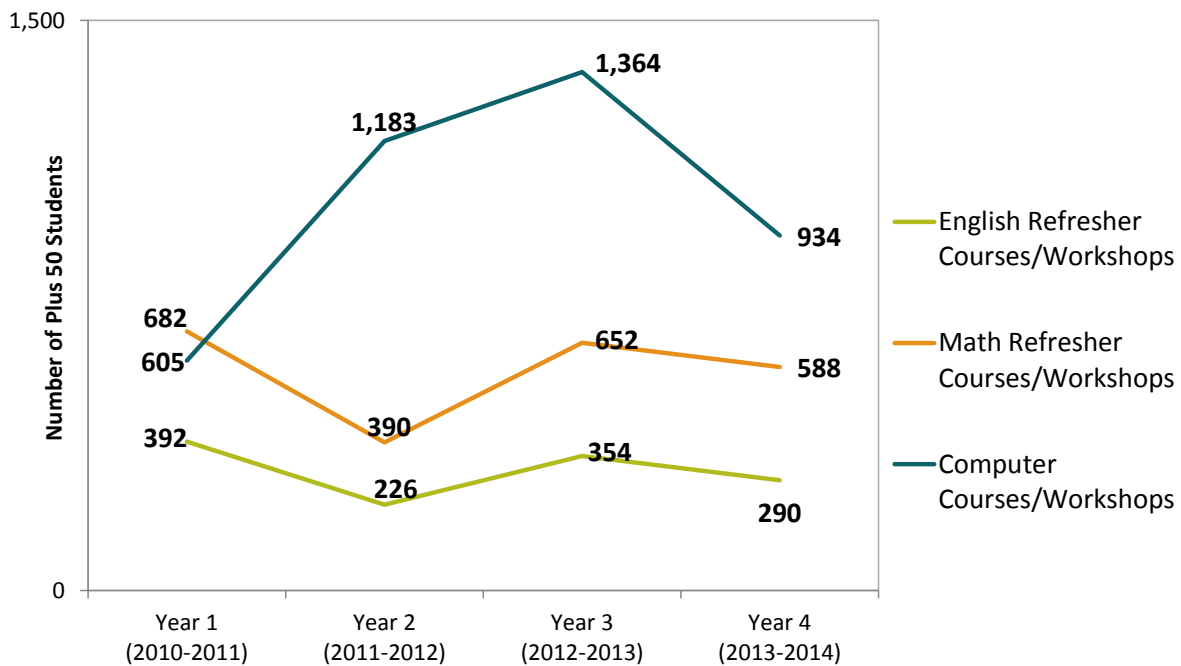





Offering Type		Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering				Average Number of Workforce Courses per College			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Total courses	8 (100%)	15 (100%)	18 (100%)	<b>16</b> <b>(94%)</b>	248	175	137	<b>133</b>
	Accelerated	7 (88%)	9 (60%)	12 (67%)	<b>12</b> <b>(71%)</b>	28	41	32	<b>26</b>
	Flexible scheduling	7 (88%)	10 (67%)	14 (78%)	<b>11</b> <b>(65%)</b>	128	120	65	<b>66</b>
	Taught by instructors with Plus 50 PD	3 (38%)	7 (47%)	7 (39%)	<b>8</b> <b>(47%)</b>	244	89	48	<b>59</b>

## 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 four 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 Students taking Courses per College			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Math Courses/workshops	7 (88%)	13 (76%)	11 (61%)	<b>12 (71%)</b>	97	30	59	<b>49</b>
	English Courses/workshops	6 (75%)	11 (65%)	9 (50%)	<b>10 (59%)</b>	65	21	39	<b>29</b>
	Computer Courses/workshops	6 (75%)	12 (71%)	13 (72%)	<b>12 (71%)</b>	101	99	105	<b>78</b>

- The total number of students taking math courses and workshops declined between year one (682) and year four (588), with an average of 49 students enrolled in math courses and workshops per college during the final year.

- The trend is similar for English courses. Although ten colleges offered these courses in year four, the total number of students enrolled in English courses declined from 392 in year one, to 290 in year four. There were 29 students on average per college in year four, compared to 39 in year three, 21 in year two and 65 in year one.
- 934 Plus 50 students at 12 colleges took computer courses or workshops in year four, averaging 78 students per college. This compares to 605 in year one; 1,183 in year two; and 1,364 in year three.

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.

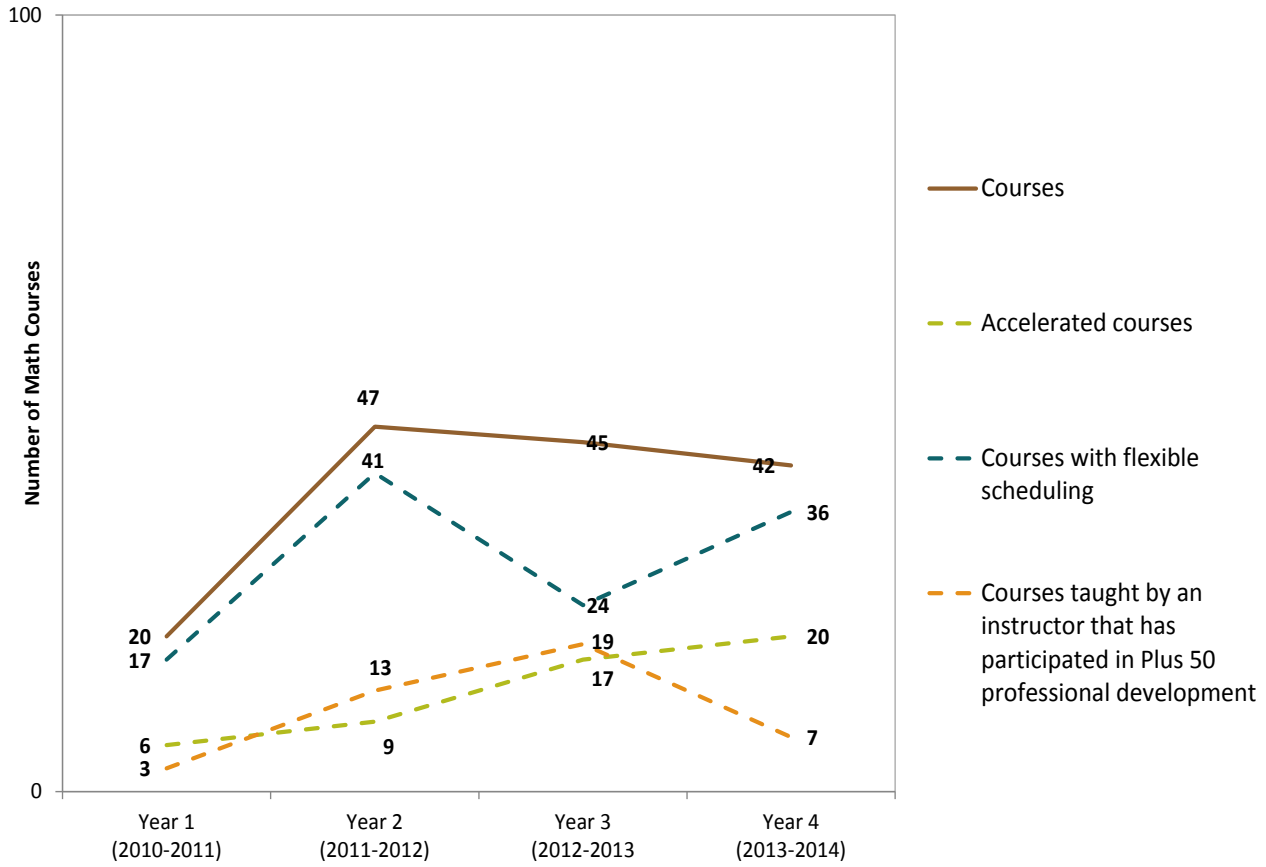
## **Math, English, and Computer Course Offerings**

### **Math Courses**

- Twelve colleges offered 42 math courses in year four, compared to 11 colleges offering 45 math courses in year three, 13 colleges offering 47 math courses in year two, and seven colleges offered 20 math courses in year one.
- Of the 42 total math courses offered in year four, 86% were offered as flexible courses, 17% were taught by instructors that had been professionally trained to meet the needs of Plus 50 students, and 48% were offered as accelerated courses.
- Math courses with flexible scheduling and accelerated courses increased from year three to year four, while total courses and courses taught by instructors with Plus 50-specific professional development training both decreased.

Please see Exhibit 10 on the following page.

### Exhibit 10: Math Course Offerings

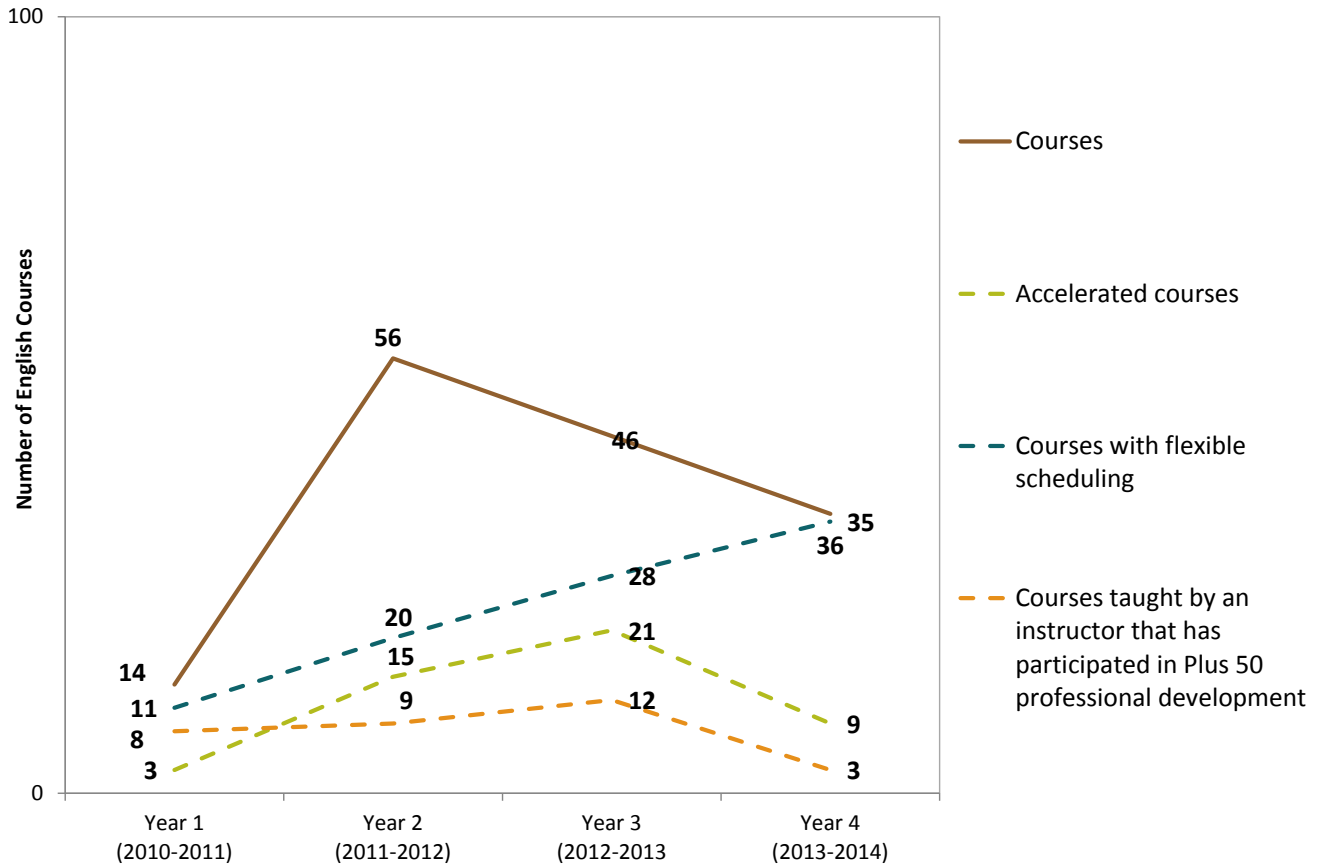


Course Type		Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering (Math)				Average number of Courses / Workshops per College (Math)			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Total	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	11 (100%)	<b>12</b> <b>(71%)</b>	3	4	4	4
	Accelerated	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	6 (55%)	<b>4</b> <b>(24%)</b>	1	1	3	5
	Flexible Scheduling	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	9 (82%)	<b>8</b> <b>(47%)</b>	2	3	3	5
	Taught by Instructors with Plus 50 Professional Development	7 (100%)	13 (100%)	6 (55%)	<b>3</b> <b>(18%)</b>	1	1	3	2

### English Courses

- Nine colleges offered 36 English courses in year four, compared to 9 colleges offering 46 English courses in year three, 13 colleges offering 56 courses in year two, and five colleges offering 14 courses in year one.
- Of the 36 total English courses offered in year four, 97% were offered as flexible courses, 8% were taught by instructors with professional development geared toward Plus 50 students, and 25% were offered as accelerated courses.

Exhibit 11: English Course Offerings

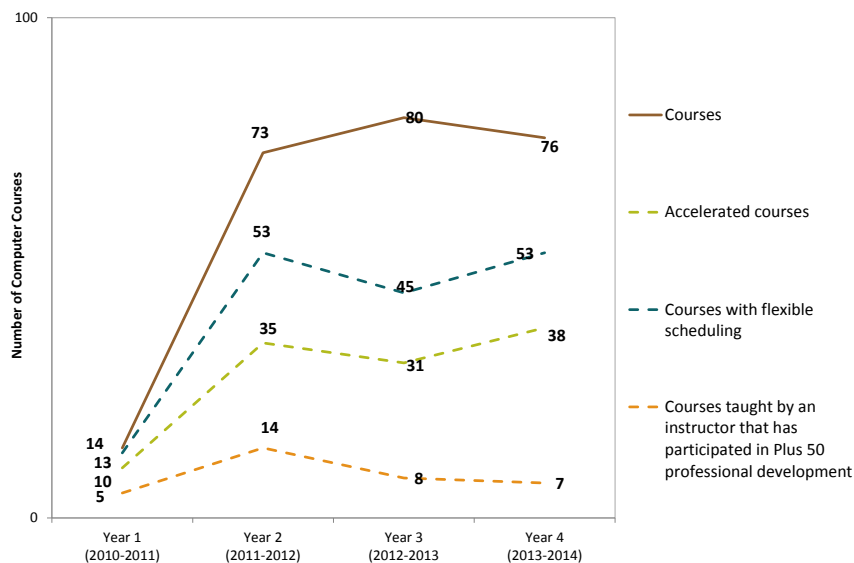






Course Type		Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Offering (English)				Average number of Courses / Workshops per College (English)			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Total		5 (100%)	13 (100%)	9 (100%)	<b>9 (53%)</b>	3	4	4	<b>4</b>
Accelerated		5 (100%)	13 (100%)	7 (78%)	<b>2 (12%)</b>	1	1	3	<b>5</b>
Flexible Scheduling		5 (100%)	13 (100%)	7 (78%)	<b>7 (41%)</b>	2	2	4	<b>5</b>
Taught by Instructors with Plus 50 Professional Development		5 (100%)	13 (100%)	4 (44%)	<b>2 (12%)</b>	2	1	3	<b>2</b>

### Computer Courses

- Fifteen colleges offered 76 computer courses in year four, while 13 colleges offered 80 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 76 computer courses offered in year four, 70% were offered as flexible courses, 9% were taught by instructors with Plus 50 professional development, and 50% were offered as accelerated courses.
- While the total number of computer courses decreased from year three, there were more accelerated courses and courses offered with flexible scheduling during year four.

**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 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Total	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	13 (100%)	<b>15</b> <b>(88%)</b>	2	6	6	5
	Accelerated	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	8 (62%)	<b>6</b> <b>(35%)</b>	1	1	1	6
	Flexible Scheduling	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	11 (85%)	<b>10</b> <b>(59%)</b>	1	4	4	5
	Taught by Instructors with Plus 50 Professional Development	6 (100%)	13 (100%)	5 (38%)	<b>5</b> <b>(29%)</b>	2	3	6	1

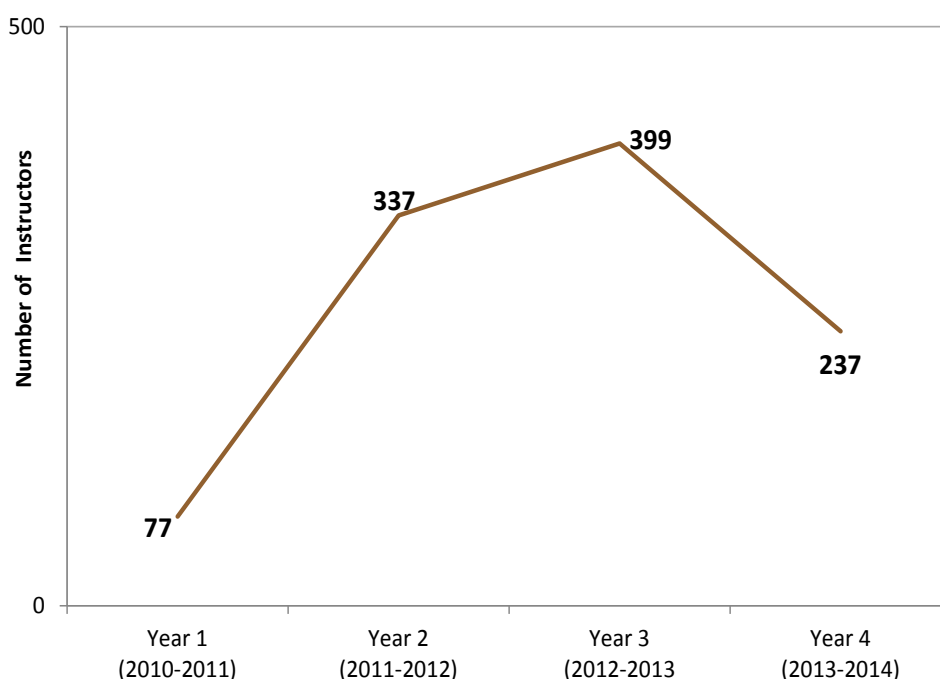


## Professional Development

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 (see Exhibit 13).

- A total of 237 instructors at 11 colleges participated in professional development as part of the Plus 50 program in year four, compared to 399 instructors at 12 colleges in year three, 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 in the first three years and decreased sharply in year four: 26 in year one, 28 in year two, 33 in year three, 22 in year four.

**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 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
3 (38%)	12 (71%)	12 (67%)	<b>11</b> <b>(65%)</b>	26	28	33	<b>22</b>

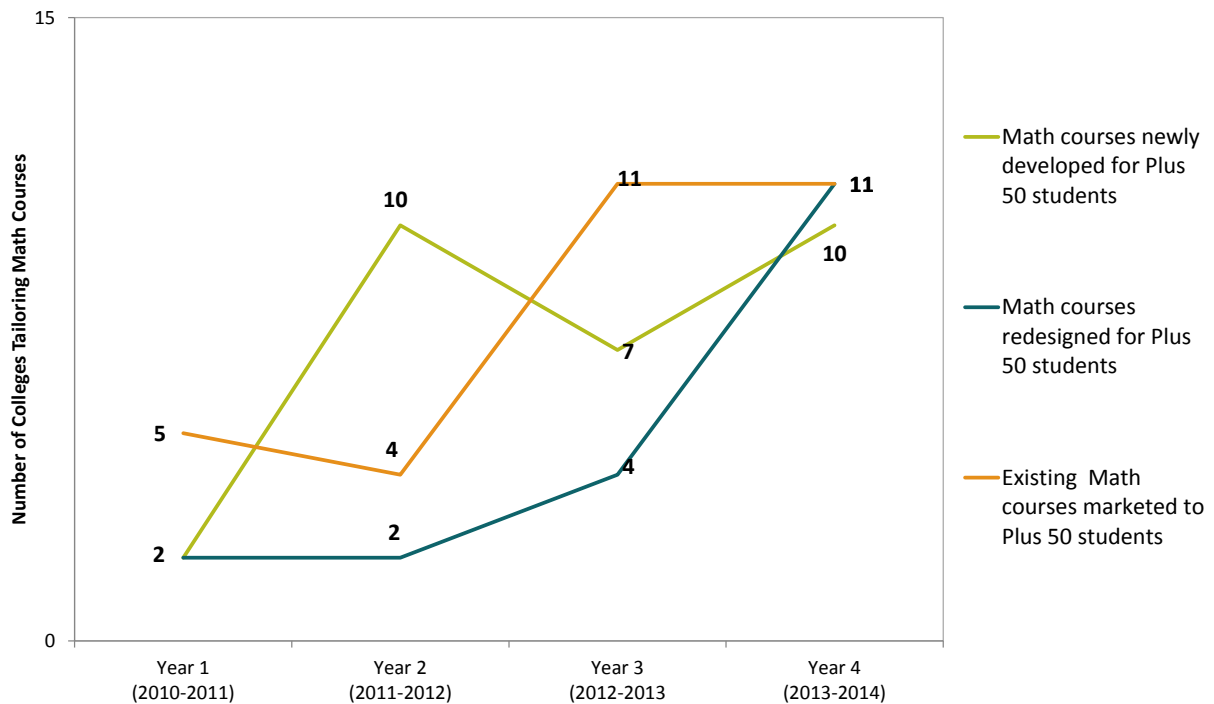
## Tailoring Approach

Exhibit 14, 15, and 16 on the following pages, show 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

- Ten colleges (59%) developed new math classes for Plus 50 learners in year four, compared to seven colleges in year three, ten colleges in year two, and two colleges in year one.
- Eleven colleges (65%) redesigned math classes to meet the needs of Plus 50 students in year four, compared to four colleges in year three, and two colleges in years one and two.
- Eleven colleges (65%) marketed math courses specifically to Plus 50 learners in year four.

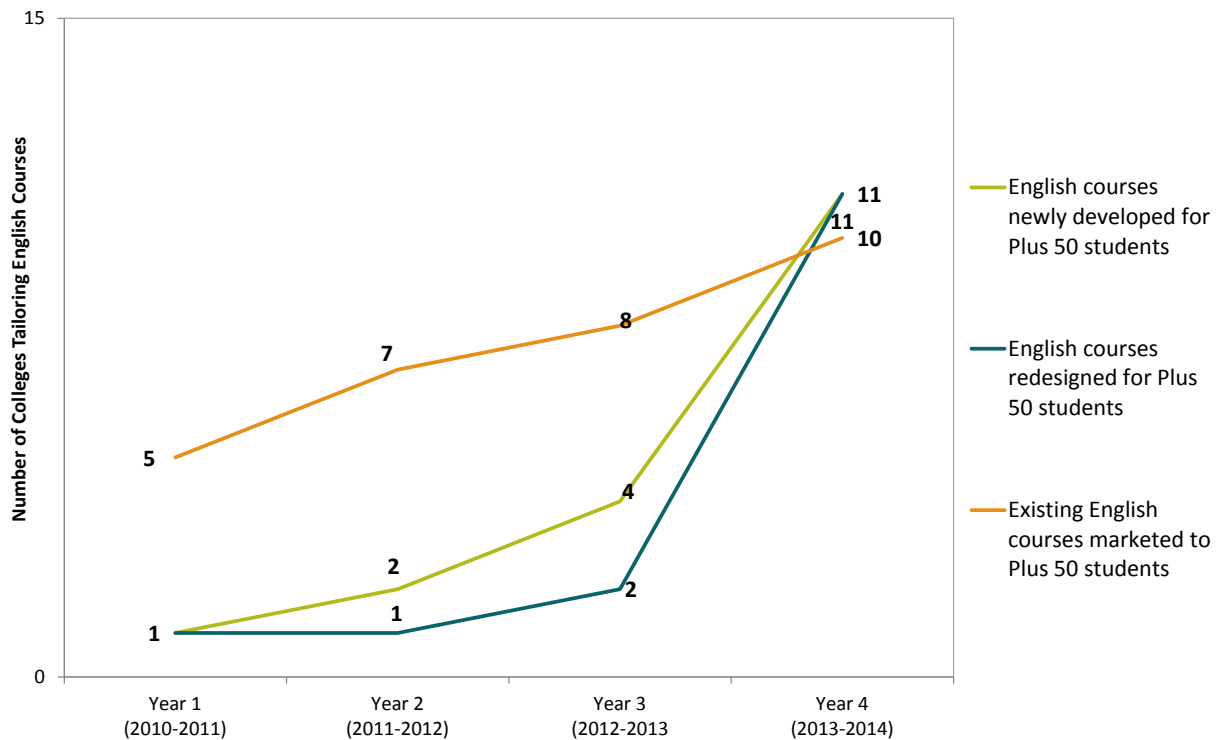
**Exhibit 14: Colleges tailoring Math Courses**



## English Courses

- Eleven colleges (65%) developed new English classes for Plus 50 learners in year four, compared to four colleges in year three, two colleges in year two, and one college in year one.
- Eleven (65%) redesigned English courses to meet the needs of Plus 50 students in year four, compared to two colleges in year three, and one college in years one and two.
- Ten colleges (59%) marketed English courses specifically towards Plus 50 learners in year four, compared to eight colleges in year three, seven colleges in year two, and five colleges in year one.

**Exhibit 15: Colleges tailoring English Courses**



## Computer Courses

- Fourteen colleges (82%) developed new computer classes to meet the needs of Plus 50 students in year four, a marked increase from eleven colleges in year three, nine colleges in year two, and five colleges in year one.
- Fourteen colleges (82%) redesigned computer courses to meet the needs of Plus 50 students in year four, an increase from eight colleges in year three, nine colleges in year two, and three colleges in year one.
- Shifting away from simply marketing computer classes to plus 50 learners, the increase in new computer classes or redesigned computer classes is further exemplified in year four, during which 13 colleges (76%) marketed computer courses specifically towards Plus 50 students, a decrease from 14 colleges in year three.

Exhibit 16: Colleges tailoring Computer Courses

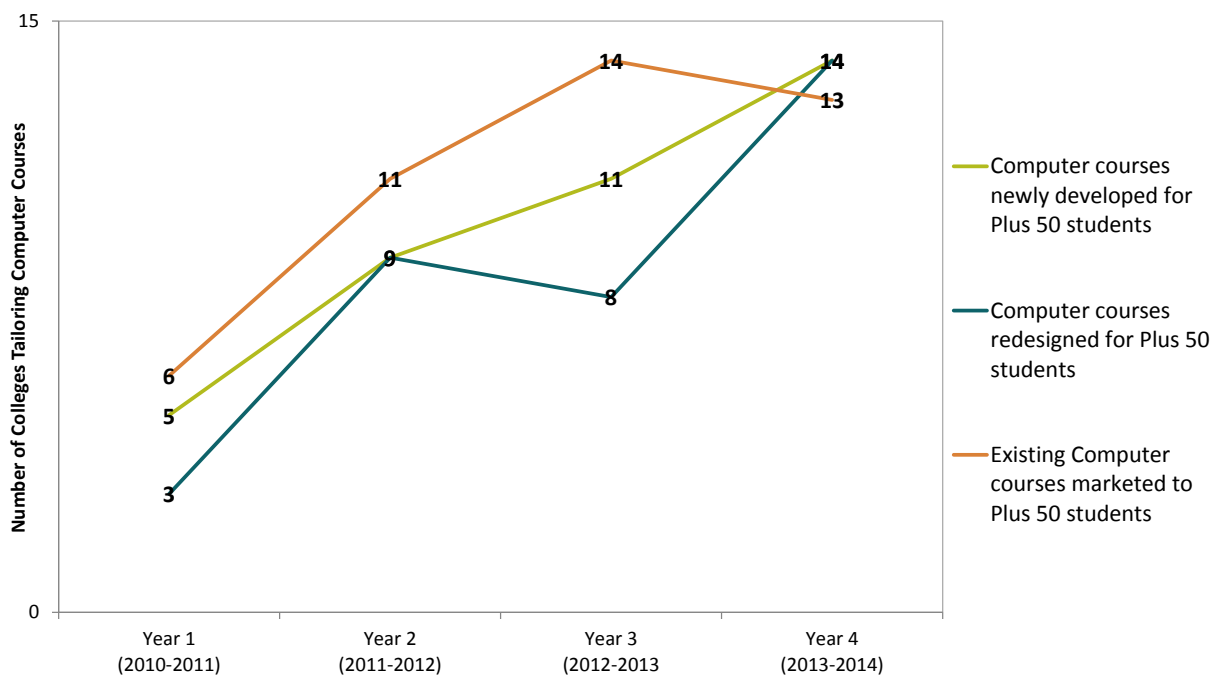


Exhibit 17 shows the number and percent of colleges providing information on course tailoring.

**Exhibit 17: Colleges offering math, English, and computer**

		Number & Percent of Colleges offering math, English, and computer			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Developed New Courses	7 (100%)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)	<b>15 (88%)</b>
	Redesigned Courses	7 (100%)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)	<b>15 (88%)</b>
	Marketed Courses	7 (100%)	17 (100%)	18 (100%)	<b>14 (82%)</b>

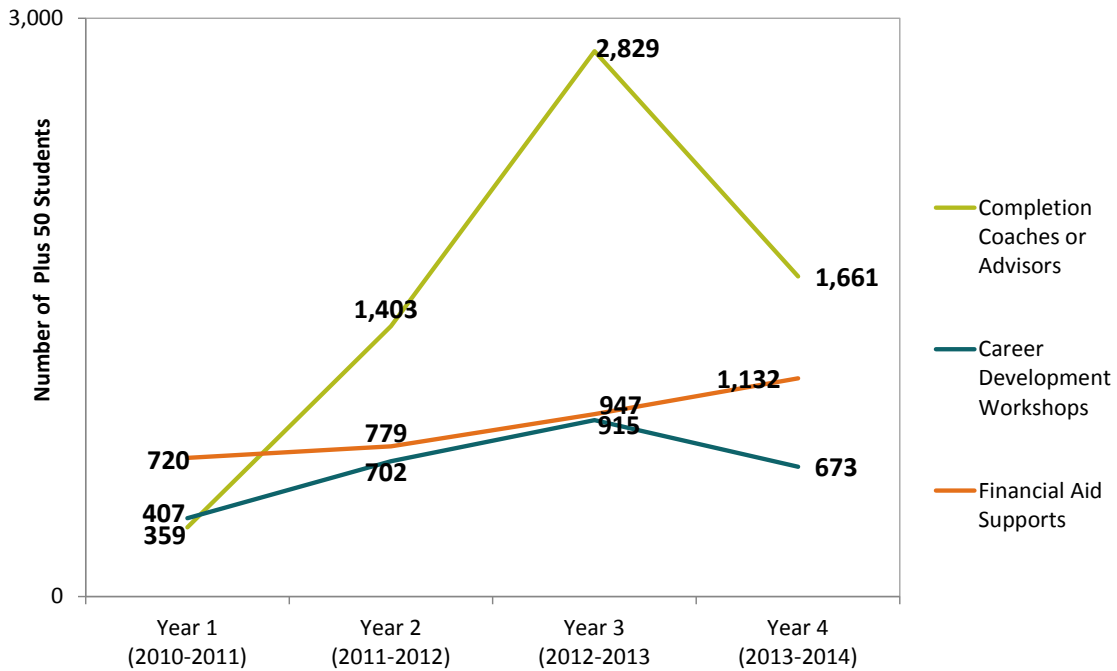
## Additional Program Components Supporting Completion and Employment

### 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 18 on the following page shows the number of students benefiting from support services across all four years.

- 1,132 students (42%) at 12 colleges received support services in learning about and applying for financial aid in year four, compared to 947 (13%) students at 14 colleges in year three, 779 students (13%) at 12 colleges in year two, and 720 students (21%) at six colleges in year one.
- 1,661 students (36%) at 14 colleges utilized completion coaches in year four, which is a significant decrease from 2,829 students at 15 colleges in year three.
- 673 students (24%) at 14 colleges attended career development workshops in year four, a decrease from 915 students from 15 colleges in year three.

### Exhibit 18: Support Services Offered



Type of Support Offered		Number & Percent of Colleges with this Type of Support				Average Number of Students Receiving Support per College			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Financial Aid Support Services	6 (75%)	12 (71%)	14 (78%)	<b>12 (71%)</b>	120	65	68	<b>94</b>
	Completion Coach/Advisor	5 (63%)	4 (82%)	15 (83%)	<b>14 (82%)</b>	72	184	189	<b>119</b>
	Career Development Workshops	3 (38%)	11 (65%)	15 (83%)	<b>14 (82%)</b>	136	64	61	<b>48</b>

### 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.

- 4,865 employers at 10 colleges were part of a formalized employer linkage program in year four,<sup>2</sup> compared to 4,862 employers at 12 colleges during year three, 460 employers at eight colleges in year two, and 40 employers at two colleges in year one.

## 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, and can provide a head start for plus 50 students who are striving to complete a degree or certificate in a limited amount of time to quickly get back to work or change careers.
- **Completion outcomes:** The central goal of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy is supporting Plus 50 students to complete a community college credential. Exhibit 20 provides details on the 8,877 total completions awarded over the four years of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy.
- **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. The number of colleges arranging for this possibility for their Plus 50 students increased from seven to 17 over the first three years of the program, but dipped to seven again in year four.

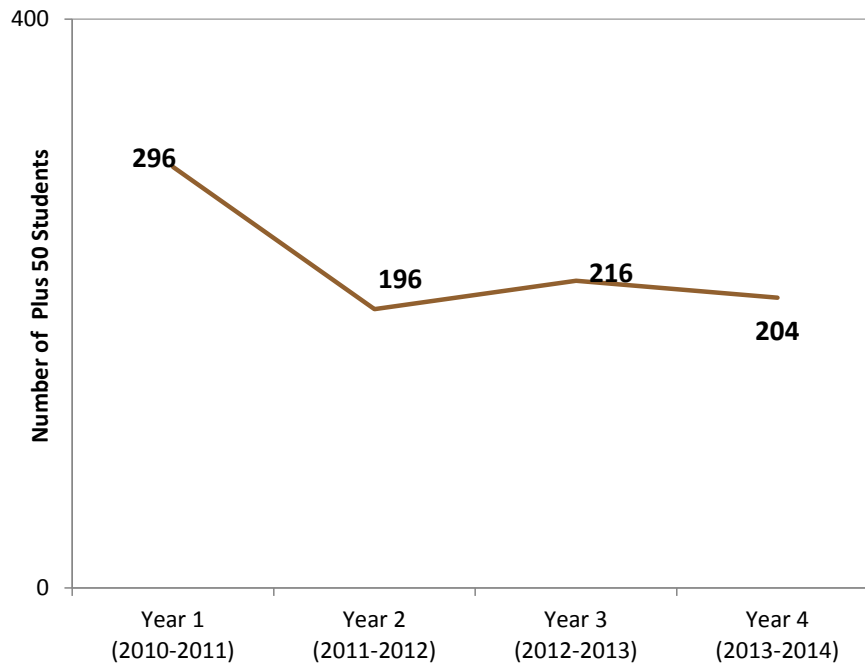
- In year four, 204 students at sixteen colleges earned credit for prior learning, compared to 216 students at eight colleges in year three, 196 at 13 colleges in year two, and 296 students at seven colleges in year one.
- Over the past four years, 912 Plus 50 students have received credit for prior learning.

Please see Exhibit 19 on the following page for more information about earning credits for prior learning.

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<sup>2</sup> One college (Southwestern Illinois College, SWIC) accounted for 4,500 employers participating in employee linkage programs in year four. 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 365 in year four.

## Exhibit 19: 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 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Years 1-4
7 (88%)	13 (76%)	17 (94%)	7 (41%)	43	15	13	29	912

### Completion Outcomes

At each of the 17 participating colleges, Plus 50 students completed degrees and credit certificates, while 11 colleges had Plus 50 students complete non-credit certificates in year 4.

Exhibit 20 on the following page shows the breakdown of different types of completion over the four years of the implementation. Degree programs are generally two years in length, while the length of certificate programs varies by field of study.

#### Degrees

- In year four, 615 students completed degrees at 17 colleges, compared to 713 students completing degrees at 18 colleges in year three, 616 students completing degrees in year two at 17 colleges, and 191 students at eight colleges completing degrees in year one.
- The number of students completing degrees per college average for year four was 36, compared to 40 of students in year three, 39 in year two, and 24 of students in year one.

#### Credit Certificates

- In year four, 400 students completed credit certificates at 17 colleges, compared to 369 students at 18 colleges in year three, 358 students at 16 colleges in year two, 167 students at eight colleges in year one.

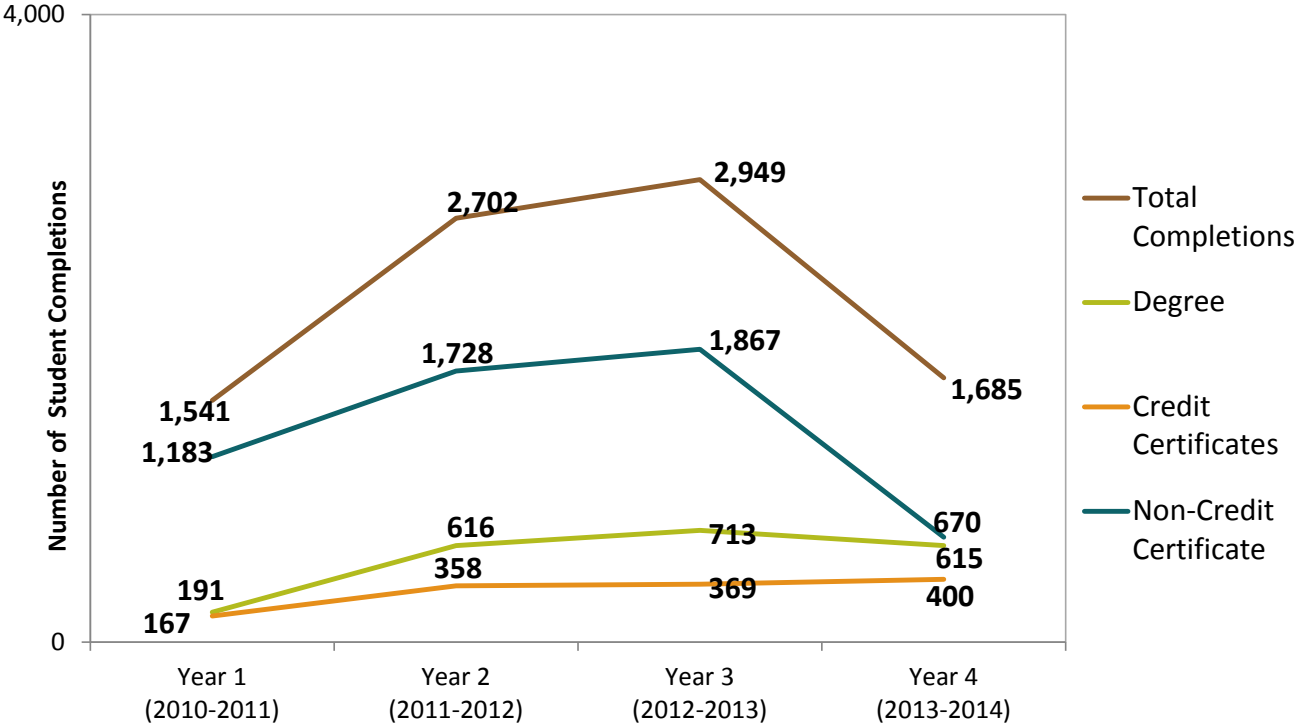


- This year, the per-college average increased from 21 students in year one to 61 students per college receiving credit certificates in year four.

**Non-credit Certificates**

- In year four, 670 students completed non-credit certificates at 12 colleges, a decrease from 1867 students at 14 colleges in year three; 1,728 students at 16 colleges in year two; and 1,183 students at four colleges in year one.
- The per-college average number of students completing non-credit certificates decreased from 296 to 61 between year one and year four.

**Exhibit 20: Number of Students Completing Degrees and Certificates**

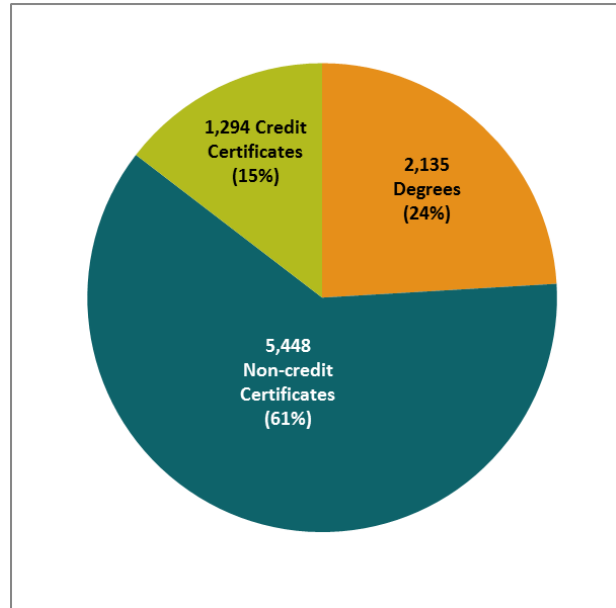


Completion	Number & Percent of Colleges Offering Degrees and Certificates				Average Number of Student Completions			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Total Completions	8 (100%)	18 (100%)	18 (100%)	17 (100%)	193	159	163	99
Degrees	8 (100%)	17 (94%)	18 (100%)	17 (100%)	24	39	40	36
Credit Certificates	8 (100%)	16 (89%)	18 (100%)	17 (100%)	21	24	21	24
Non-credit Certificates	4 (50%)	16 (89%)	14 (78%)	11 (65%)	296	115	132	61

Exhibit 21 provides information about the 8,877 total completions awarded over the four years of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy:

- 2,135 degrees were awarded (24%).
- 1,294 credit certificates were awarded (15%).
- 5,448 non-credit certificates were awarded (61%).

**Exhibit 21: Completions over Four Years:  
Total of 8,877 Completions**



### Employment Outcomes

Over the four years, participating colleges have counted **1,369 Plus 50 students securing employment since leaving the program**. Although the data are presented *by year* for all of the other results, for employment we use only the cumulative number. This is because of the “lag” inherent in employment data: students may not become employed during the same year that they participated in the program (for example, a student may have participated in year two, and not become employed until year three). Therefore, colleges keep track of *all* their participants over the years, and add to the number of those employed as students find jobs.

Over the Four Years of the Plus 50 Completion Strategy:	
1,369	Plus 50 Program participants became employed

It is also important to note that the employment number is an undercount, for two reasons. First, employment data are difficult to track, and not all colleges track it (13 colleges tracked these data in year four) – so this number does not include students who become employed after participating in programs at the other colleges participating in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy. Second, even for this subset of colleges, most colleges do not have access to an employment database, and so they must use individual follow-up using an 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.