Plus 50:

Year One Evaluation Report

November 2009

LFA maximizes the impact of social-profit organizations through rigorous evaluation, research, and strategy development.

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I. Introduction: What is the Plus 50 Initiative?

The American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Plus 50 Initiative is a three-year initiative launched in June 2008 and funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies. It was created to support a pilot group of two-year institutions to develop or expand campus programs that engage plus 50 learners. The initiative focuses on three types of programmatic implementation: workforce training and career development; learning and enrichment; and volunteering. Programs also include the services and supports that allow plus 50 learners better access to community college offerings.

Need for the Initiative

What are the Needs and Interests of the Baby Boom Generation?

With the baby boom generation (the 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964) approaching typical retirement age, there is an increased focus on what this age cohort will do in its later years. As Americans become healthier and live longer, they are less interested in traditional retirement.

> A baby boomer turns 60 every 7.5 seconds.[1]

Baby boomers are not likely to follow in the footsteps of previous generations. Many of those that do not need to work for income will seek work to stay active and engaged, and others without the resources to carry them through their retirement years will work because they need to.[2] Forecasts predict that this group will indeed stay in the workforce longer: the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the number of workers age 55-64 will increase by 36.5% between 2006 and 2016, and the number of workers age 65 and older will increase by over 80%.[3] In addition to boomers desire to continue working, labor shortages are projected in many sectors of the economy with the aging workforce.[4] Employers will need to recruit and retain older workers to fill this gap. Plus 50 workers and the employers who hire them are both focused on retooling and job retention.

There is also a great need for this age cohort to provide value through volunteering; the skills of the plus 50 population represent a critical resource for nonprofits, schools, and faith-based groups seeking to improve communities and lives. And baby boomers are interested in staying connected by giving back to their communities through volunteering, as well.

This group represents a tremendous resource to the nation in terms of experience, skills, and leadership capacity. To leverage their human capital in employment or volunteer positions, many baby boomers need further education and training, as well as programs that can connect them with work and volunteer opportunities. Institutions that are able to do that will help to fulfill an important societal need.

Whether they stay in their current positions, re-skill for changing career demands, pursue new employment opportunities, volunteer in their communities, or take classes to enrich their lives, the plus 50 population is ready to explore new options and open new doors. The need to support the baby boomers through ongoing education in order to leverage their potential drives the Plus 50 Initiative.

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[1] AARP. (2009). *Tougher Penalties Needed When Seniors Are Fleeced.* Retrieved October 2, 2009 from: http://www.aarp.org/states/wa/advocacy/articles/tougher_penalties_needed_when_seniors_are_fleeced.html

[2] MetLife Mature Market Institute (2006). Living Longer, Working Longer: The Changing Landscape of the Aging Workforce – A MetLife Study. Westport, CT: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008). Spotlight on Statistics: Older Workers. Retrieved February 5, 2009 from: www.bls.gov/spotlight/2008/older_workers

[4] MetLife Mature Market Institute (2006).

The Vision for How Community Colleges Can Meet the Needs Of Plus 50 Learners

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to the growing needs of the plus 50 population. Community colleges have a long tradition of welcoming non-traditional students and are known for providing creative programming that meets evolving community needs.[6] The diversity of community college offerings from one college to the next indicates the innovation and flexibility community colleges offer their diverse student body, including plus 50 learners. Additionally, community colleges' strong partnerships with other local organizations allow them to connect plus 50 students to a large variety of work and volunteer opportunities.

> Scores of colleges, both two- and four-year institutions, have committed to radical reforms in how they serve nontraditional adult students. In most cases that means improving outreach, loosening up schedules, granting interim certificates, teaching more classes online, providing better advising, improving developmental education, and awarding credit for life and work experience. Community colleges, which have long catered to nontraditional students, not surprisingly make up the vanguard of this transformation.[5]

Initiative Goals

The overarching goal of the Plus 50 Initiative is to support community colleges' ability to substantively and continuously engage in helping plus 50 learners lead purposeful lives through education, work, and service. To reach this goal, the initiative focuses on developing and expanding the program offerings of the grantee colleges, striving to reach more plus 50 students by expanding plus 50 offerings to additional community colleges, and putting the interests of plus 50 students at community colleges on the public agenda. The specific goal areas listed below include short- and long-term goals, not all of which are expected to be realized by the end of the three-year initiative. To reach the desired impact, many goals will be achieved years after the Plus 50 Initiative is complete – leaving a compelling legacy of the initiative.

Supporting Grantee Colleges' Development and Expansion of Plus 50 Programs

AACC supports the pilot group of grantee colleges in their efforts to increase offerings to the plus 50 population in three areas: (1) workforce training and career development; (2) learning and enrichment; and (3) volunteering. The initiative not only focuses on expanding the *quantity* of offerings, but also fosters innovation in *how* the colleges meet the particular needs and interests of this age cohort. This means developing new courses and redesigning existing ones, as well as developing and expanding support services that enable access to community college programming.

Another aspect of the initiative's goal to support the expansion of plus 50 programs is growing the number of community colleges offering this programming beyond the initial grantee cohort. A long-term goal of the initiative is that 300 community colleges will implement and sustain plus 50 programs.

Supporting the Growth of Plus 50 Programming through Advocacy

To foster the growth and sustainability of Plus 50 programming, key advocates, partners, and policies must bolster support at community colleges. For the Plus 50 Initiative, this advocacy includes engaging a National Advisory Committee composed of key stakeholders who can provide their insight and influence and help build partnerships to provide support and opportunities. Advocacy is likewise accomplished through producing new knowledge and leveraging the media to place the needs of plus 50 community colleges students on the public agenda. Finally, the initiative is also working to secure policies at local and national levels that are friendly to plus 50 learners.

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[5] Headden, S. (2009). *No More Kid Stuff: Colleges and Universities Take a Mature Approach to Serving Adult Students.* Lumina Foundation.
[6] American Association of Community Colleges (2009). Community Colleges in Their Communities. Retrieved on February 3, 2009 from: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Trends/Pages/communitycollegesintheircommunities.aspx

Creating a Roadmap to Support Future Plus 50 Offerings

A third overarching goal of the initiative is to disseminate information that will enable community colleges to implement, promote, and sustain high-quality plus 50 programming. Specific goals include: (1) building a business case that supports plus 50 programming; (2) capturing lessons learned from the pilot colleges to identify the "standards of excellence" that define high-quality programming; and (3) develop knowledge and tools that community colleges can use to develop and implement their own plus 50 programs.

Initiative Design

Plus 50 Grantees

Thirteen colleges are grantees of the Plus 50 Initiative, and each implements at least two of the three initiative tracks. The grantee colleges work within three-college teams: one mentor college matched with two demonstration colleges.[7] These teams are designed so that they can share resources and support. Mentor colleges have more experience serving plus 50 students' needs, and lend their experience to benefit demonstration colleges.

Exhibit 1 below provides an overview of the Plus 50 program tracks that each grantee implemented in year one. All of the grantees are implementing workforce training courses and/or career development services for plus 50 students, most are offering learning and enrichment courses, and about half of the grantees are offering volunteering programs.

Exhibit 1

Plus 50 Grantee Programs				
		Plus 50 Program Tracks		
College	Mentor or Demonstration	Workforce Training and/or Career Development Services	Learning and Enrichment	Volunteering
Cape Cod Community College	Mentor	✓		✓
Central Florida Community College	Mentor	✓	✓	✓
Century College	Mentor	✓	✓	✓
Clark College	Mentor	✓	✓	✓
Community Colleges of Spokane	Mentor	✓	✓	
Clover Park Technical College	Demonstration	✓	✓	
Joliet Junior College	Demonstration	✓		✓
Luzerne County Community College	Demonstration	✓	✓	
Richland College	Demonstration	✓	✓	✓
Santa Fe College	Demonstration	✓	✓	
St. Louis Community College	Demonstration	✓	✓	
Wake Technical Community College	Demonstration	✓	✓	
Western Dakota Technical Institute	Demonstration	✓		✓

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[7] The initiative began with five three-college teams: fifteen colleges. Two demonstration colleges are no longer participating in the Plus 50 Initiative, so two of the five teams now consist of a Mentor-Demonstration pair.

Programmatic Focus Areas

The initiative focuses on three programmatic tracks: workforce training and career development, learning and enrichment, and volunteering. Plus 50 programming also includes support services that increase access of the plus 50 learner to community colleges.

Workforce Training and Career Development

Workforce training and career development are courses and services that help people upgrade their skills for the purposes of re-entering the workforce or advancing their careers. Colleges offer a wide range of training programs and career services, including workshops in resume writing and job interviewing, computer refresher courses, and certificate programs that help students train for new careers, as well as job placement services and community partnerships with employers. Student-level outcomes for the workforce training and career development track include:

- Improving, increasing, and/or learning new skills;
- Increasing excitement about re-careering;
- Learning about new job possibilities;
- Preparing for a job search;
- Securing a job; and
- Receiving job promotions, raises, and new responsibilities.

Learning and Enrichment

Learning and enrichment courses are general studies (such as math and foreign language) or personal interests (such as cooking and yoga) that students enroll in for academic development, to relieve stress from their busy lives, and for personal enrichment. Student-level outcomes for the learning and enrichment track include:

- Identifying as a lifelong learner;
- Generating new excitement about learning; and
- Increasing knowledge.

Volunteering

This focus area includes programs and services that support plus 50 learners in finding opportunities to volunteer their skills and talents in their communities. Services can include issuing a directory of volunteer opportunities and matching skilled volunteers with nonprofits. Student-level outcomes for the volunteering track include:

- Increased interest in, and enthusiasm for, volunteering;
- Getting placed in a volunteer job;
- Feeling useful as a volunteer;
- Feeling a sense of community through volunteering; and
- Knowing how to go about finding a volunteer job that is a good fit.

Support Services

As part of their Plus 50 programs, grantees are implementing services and supports to increase access of plus 50 students to the community colleges. Some of these barriers include lack of awareness of the courses and activities geared to the plus 50 population, difficulties integrating into campus life, physical challenges (e.g. needing large print on handouts), and financial barriers. To address these barriers and to help attract and retain plus 50 students, Plus 50 colleges are investing in support services, including:

- Services that facilitate the integration of plus 50 students into the college;
- Supports that facilitate physical access; and
- Supports to increase the financial feasibility of college courses.

Supports for Grantee Program Implementation

A central component of program design is the system of supports for the grantee colleges. This system of supports consists of ongoing advice and counsel to the grantees from AACC staff, information and resources that AACC staff make available, annual convenings for grantees, a National Advisory Committee for the initiative, local advisory committees for each college, and marketing and public relations resources made available to the grantees.

American Association of Community Colleges

For 89 years, the AACC has been the leading advocate for the nation's community colleges, which currently number nearly 1,200 and serve more than 12 million students annually.[8] Its membership comprises 95 percent of all public two-year colleges – the largest, most accessible, most diverse sector of U.S. higher education. As institutions committed to access, community service, and lifelong learning, community colleges have long focused on the needs of adults who are already in the workforce, many of whom are seeking new skills and knowledge for changes in their lives and careers.

AACC is a "high engagement funder" that provides a wide range of supports and resources that help the grantee colleges to develop and implement high-quality programming.

- **AACC's staff work actively with the colleges to help them meet their own program goals.** AACC staff provide a great deal of technical assistance and resources to the colleges. They consult on program design; conduct site visits to the colleges; and take the lead on aggregating and disseminating knowledge and tools that the colleges can use to support their programming.
- **As part of its work to aggregate and disseminate knowledge that can support Plus 50 programming, AACC sends a newsletter out every two weeks, and posts a huge variety of resources and information on its Website.** The newsletter contains updates on the community colleges, the latest plus 50 news stories, and resources to support plus 50 programming in each of the three programmatic areas. The AACC Plus 50 Website is designed to provide the field with the knowledge and tools that it needs to implement and promote community college programming for plus 50 students. Those visiting the Website will find: all the past newsletters; practical tips for implementing the programs; public relations and marketing materials; examples of promising practices from the grantees' programs; links to Plus 50 news stories; student success stories; AACC Plus 50 publications; past presentations given by AACC staff and Plus 50 grantees; and links to literature relevant to programming to plus 50 students.
- **Grantee colleges participate in an annual convening.** Starting at the initiative launch, AACC hosts a grantee convening each year. At this convening, colleges learn from one another, and AACC hosts sessions and working groups that bring additional resources to the colleges. The marketing and public relations firms present the latest tools and templates to the grantees. The National Advisory Committee members also attend this convening.

National and Local Advisory Committees

The initiative leverages the expertise of a National Advisory Committee. The National Plus 50 Advisory Committee include representatives from Civic Ventures, AARP, Senior Corps, American Council of Education, the Institute for Competitive Workforce at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and four former community college presidents. The Advisory Committee convenes to offer their expertise to AACC staff, as well as to the grantee colleges. To date, conversations with the Advisory Committee have focused on important discussions including program sustainability and Plus 50 standards of excellence.

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[8] American Association of Community Colleges. 2009 Fact Sheet. Retrieved on November 5, 2009 from: http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu/docs/marketing/AACC_Plus50_FactSheet.pdf.

In addition to the National Advisory Committee, each college forms a Plus 50 Advisory Committee. As a requirement of the grant, these committees include college stakeholders and community partners. Plus 50 program staff at grantee colleges leverage the local expertise of their advisory committee to help design and implement their Plus 50 programming.

Marketing and Public Relations

As part of its active work on behalf of the colleges, AACC engages firms to support the colleges in their marketing and public relations. Reingold, the marketing firm, creates Plus 50 branding templates that the colleges can use and adapt to their own marketing materials. They have also created Website templates (micro-sites) for colleges to build tailored Plus 50 Initiative Websites that seamlessly integrate with their own college Websites. Reingold allows Plus 50 grantees to leverage the work of one firm. The strong Plus 50 brand and the work of Reingold increases grantees' marketing efficiency while offering flexibility for colleges to accomplish their individual goals.

Steppingstone, the public relations firm, works to increase public awareness and maximize media exposure for the Plus 50 Initiative. Steppingstone's work includes providing the colleges with talking points, speech templates, and press release templates. Steppingstone allows AACCC and grantees to share a consistent story of the initiative and how community colleges are meeting the needs of plus 50 learners.

Knowledge Dissemination

The ultimate goal of the Plus 50 Initiative extends beyond that of supporting individual colleges to implement programming for plus 50 students; its ultimate goal is systemic change. As part of the Plus 50 vision, high-quality programming tailored to the needs of plus 50 students will eventually be institutionalized in community colleges nationwide. A critical ingredient for systemic change is the dissemination of knowledge to practitioners in the field, and AACC is actively working to produce, aggregate, and disseminate knowledge to stakeholders who will be agents of change. As part of this effort, AACC uses several approaches. The Plus 50 team at AACC:
- Works with Reingold and Steppingstone to increase the public profile of the initiative through marketing and media exposure;
- Hosts a Plus 50 Initiative Website that serves as a large repository of information and resources related to Plus 50 programming;
- Sends out the bi-weekly newsletter *Ageless Learning*;
- Commissions publications that inform the field regarding plus 50 issues and interests at community colleges;
- Presents information on Plus 50 programming and implementation at conferences nationwide (inviting grantees and co-presenters); and
- Has developed a Webinar series to promote the concept of Plus 50 programming and to support colleges in their work of implementing their own Plus 50 programs.

Advocacy

Knowledge dissemination is one way that AACC is putting programming for plus 50 students at community colleges on the public agenda. This knowledge dissemination is also an approach to advocacy, and AACC is pursuing advocacy goals in other ways as well. Part of the initiative design includes engaging members of the National Advisory Committee to function as national spokespeople for the interests of plus 50 students, and for the ways that Plus 50 programming can meet the needs of these students.

AACC engaged LFA Group[9] to conduct the Plus 50 evaluation. LFA developed a mixed-method evaluation designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the initiative and support continuous improvements over the course of the three-year initiative. The primary elements measured include grantees' implementation progress, participant satisfaction, and capturing lessons learned and promising practices from the first year of the initiative. To measure the many components of the initiative, LFA collected data using several methods: conducting interviews with program staff at each of the grantee colleges and with AACC staff; asking grantees to complete program implementation data collection worksheets; and partnering with grantees to administer participant surveys for the students taking part in Plus 50 programming. Please refer to Appendix A for more information on the Evaluation and Appendix B for the data collection instruments.

Preview of Findings

The Plus 50 Initiative has achieved tremendous success in the first year. Grantee colleges have expanded their offerings, are tailoring these offerings to the needs of the plus 50 population, and students are highly satisfied with courses and services. AACC has gotten excellent reviews from its grantees in its ability to support them in their program implementation. It has also made significant contributions to the field in order to pave the way for an expansion of Plus 50 programming to community colleges nationwide. Highlights from evaluation findings include:

Workforce Training and Career Development

- At baseline, grantee colleges offered 24 unique credit courses and 30 unique non-credit courses as part of their workforce training programming that served plus 50 students; in year one, these numbers grew to 537 credit and 373 non-credit courses across the grantee cohort.
- Enrollment in workforce training courses for plus 50 students grew from 455 to 1,464 for credit courses, and from 367 to 1,766 for non-credit courses.
- In year one, 322 plus 50 students participated in tailored career workshops and 203 plus 50 students participated in tailored career counseling.
- 89% of plus 50 students agreed that the Plus 50 workforce training program helped them acquire new job skills.
- 72% of plus 50 students attributed landing a job to their participation in Plus 50 workforce training programs.
- 86% of plus 50 students explored new career options as a result of their engagement with Plus 50 career development services.

> [What was valuable to me was that] in addition to the knowledgeable instructors, it was good meeting and interacting with mature job seekers who were in my situation.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

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[9] Formerly LaFrance Associates, LLC.

Learning and Enrichment

- As the recession began in late 2007 and the demand for workforce training courses at community colleges grew, colleges responded by shifting their program emphasis to workforce training. As a result, the pattern of change for learning and enrichment courses shows a decline in credit courses (from 39 to 22) and only a slight increase in non-credit courses (from 1,288 to 1,376).
- Enrollment in plus 50 credit courses declined from 635 to 334, and increased for non-credit courses from 9,455 to 9,941.
- 97% of plus 50 students agreed that their participation in learning and enrichment classes increased their knowledge and helped keep their minds active.
- 98% of plus 50 students enjoyed returning to school and 89% felt more connected to their community.

> When I was in college many years ago, I had to take courses relating to my degree. [Theses learning and enrichment courses] give me an opportunity to explore other areas.
>
> They kept my mind active and kept me involved in the community.
>
> *Plus 50 Participants*

Volunteering

- The number of plus 50 students who accessed volunteer matching services increased from zero at baseline to nearly 200 during year one, and among these 106 students were placed in volunteer jobs.
- 93% of volunteers agreed that their skills and experience were put to good use by the organizations they volunteered with.
- 90% agreed that by volunteering, they had obtained work experience that they could include in a resume.
- 92% of volunteers agreed that volunteering helps them to feel more connected to the community.

> I volunteer for Operation Care Package (sending care packages to the troops overseas). I am touched by the number of people who thank me for spending my time volunteering to collect money and items for the troops.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Fundamentals of Implementation at Plus 50 Colleges

Plus 50 grantees high-quality program implementation also depends on *how* these offerings are put in place. Key components of Plus 50 programming adopted by Plus 50 colleges in year one includes: needs assessments, tailoring of course offerings, marketing and outreach, plus 50 student integration, and community partnerships.

- Colleges that conducted needs assessments of their local plus 50 population found them to be extremely helpful in program development;
- Colleges tailored courses in a variety of ways, including: offering short-term courses; offering credit for life experience; and ensuring that instructors had the pedagogical skills to tailor their instruction to plus 50 learners.
- Colleges used diverse methods to bring plus 50 students to campus, including: harnessing the power of the internet (Plus 50 Websites, blogs, and e-newsletters); tailoring course catalogues and brochures; working with local media; and establishing the Plus 50 brand.
- Colleges offered a wide range of supports and services to facilitate plus 50 learners' integration into community college campuses. These included: facilitating physical access (e.g. offering transportation services); providing financial support and referrals; and implementing student services tailored to plus 50 learners (advising and counseling, concierge services, new student orientation, and a system for easy registration).
- Colleges extol the virtues of community partnerships to provide support in program implementation. Community partners have helped colleges in such ways as being members of advisory committees,

providing marketing support, referring customers, helping with course and workshop development, instructing or hosting workshops, partnering in career counseling events, and providing grants for special projects.

Sustainability

The grantee colleges have made considerable progress in making their programs sustainable. Their sustainability strategies include:
- Using courses to bring in revenue;
- Raising additional funding from public agencies and private foundations;
- Building an internal constituency at the college that supports the Plus 50 program;
- Institutionalizing program components as part of a college's standard operations;
- Writing the program into the college budget ; and
- Leveraging the work of partnerships.

AACC Support for Grantees' Program Implementation

In year one, AACC staff invested in grantees in many ways that go beyond the grant dollars. Initiative-wide supports successfully implemented in year one include:
- AACC staff's accessibility, responsiveness, and mentorship, which provided ongoing support for finding programmatic and process solutions;
- Marketing and public relations support that increased the capacity of all grantees to advertise their programs and establish a consistent communications strategy across the initiative;
- Hosting an online learning community and in-person convening that facilitated learning exchanges, including the sharing of best practices and lessons learned; and
- Establishing mentor/demonstration college relationships that fostered connections across small groups of colleges to individualize the learning exchange process.

> The Plus 50 Initiative has captured the attention of our own [college and university system], our system public information office, as well as our local community newspapers.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Knowledge Dissemination

AACC has succeeded in creating a robust infrastructure for knowledge dissemination, and has disseminated a great deal of information to the field as part of its effort to create systemic change.
- In year one, the Plus 50 Initiative and its grantees have been featured in 160 media spots reaching over 74 million readers, viewers, and listeners.
- AACC and eleven grantee colleges have presented at nine regional and national conferences on the lessons learned and promising practices for Plus 50 program implementation.
- AACC publishes a Plus 50 e-newsletter, which is distributed every two weeks. The circulation is about 370 recipients.
- Since the Plus 50 Website went live in late 2008, the average number of visits per month went from 470 in the last quarter of 2008, to 4,434 in the second quarter of 2009.
- AACC commissioned a National Survey of programming for plus 50 students at community colleges, as well as a brief designed to make the business case to community colleges for tapping into the growing market of plus 50 learners. Both are available on the Plus 50 Website.
- In year one, AACC developed a series of Webinars (rolling out in year two) designed to disseminate the essential knowledge and tools that will allow community colleges nationwide to implement their own programming for plus 50 students.

II. The Fundamentals of Plus 50 Programming

Program implementation is not simply a matter of offering enrichment and training courses, career services, and volunteering programs. High-quality program implementation also depends on how these offerings are put in place. Do colleges base program planning on assessing the needs of their target population? Do they sufficiently tailor their offerings to those needs? Do they leverage expertise of community partners? The sections below address the five fundamentals of implementation: conducting a needs assessments, tailoring course offerings, marketing and outreaching, integrating plus 50 students, and forming community partnerships. How effectively were community colleges able to implement them? And what were the lessons learned about how to do them well?

The Fundamentals of Plus 50 Programming
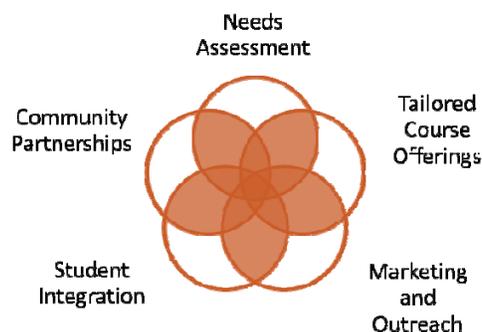
Conducting a Needs Assessment

Needs assessments allow Plus 50 colleges to understand the needs, interests, and objectives of their local plus 50 populations. Colleges can use the results of a needs assessment to inform program development, ensure that offerings effectively meet the students' needs, and promote the success of plus 50 students. In addition to helping determine and tailor program and service offerings, needs assessments can help community colleges make the case for these programs to other people in their college and to funders. Conducting a needs assessment helps demonstrate the need for and relevance of programs for the plus 50 population.

Several of the colleges had conducted needs assessments even before they applied for the Plus 50 grant, and several more conducted needs assessments during the grant's first year. These colleges have found that needs assessments were vital to really understanding what their customers wanted. Using the results of these assessments, they were able to better understand how to tailor their offerings to plus 50 students. Using the assessments, some colleges were able to better understand that the local plus 50 population had a greater need for workforce training courses than it did for enrichment courses. Assessments also revealed to one college the importance of segmenting the plus 50 population into age groups. In particular, those 50-64 had interests that differed from those 65 and over. Having an understanding of these different segments was helpful both in tailoring plus 50 programming to these age groups, and in marketing offerings.

> Our experience [is]: don't go into a community and tell them what they need. Let them tell us what classes, seminars, and programs would be of interest to them. […] Some make the mistake of going into communities [without] knowing what they need. [If you assume you know what they need], you might be sorely disappointed.
>
> *Demonstration College*

> If we hadn't done the [needs] assessment […] we would have wasted our time, effort, and money. Our community was very focused on employment issues due to the economic downturn…. [Without the needs assessment] we would have created coursework that did not fit the needs of our … participants. We found the whole [needs assessment] process very effective.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Course Offerings that Meet the Needs of Plus 50 Students

Plus 50 students are very different "consumers" of education than are younger adult learners. To ensure that plus 50 learners engage successfully in coursework offered as part of a Plus 50 program, grantee

colleges are tailoring their offerings in a variety of ways. Grantee colleges are designing new courses and redesigning existing courses with the needs and interests of plus 50 learners in mind. Colleges are tailoring instructional delivery (scheduling, pace, credit for life experience, etc). They are also providing professional development to instructors in an effort to ensure that pedagogy meets the learning needs of this age cohort.

Tailoring Instructional Delivery to Meet the Needs of Plus 50 Students

Accelerated Courses and Programs

Some students may be attending college for enjoyment and personal enrichment only, and these students may be perfectly happy with courses that take the entire quarter or semester. But for plus 50 students who need to upgrade their skills to enter or re-enter the job market, time is usually a major consideration. These students do not want to enter a program that could take them several years to complete; instead, they are interested in learning or brushing up on skills quickly, or in obtaining certification on an accelerated schedule. Colleges also recognize that plus 50 learners finding themselves out of work and needing to retool require that courses be available immediately; it is a hardship for them to have to wait for the next semester to enroll. Grantee colleges have recognized both of these needs, and are actively working to implement short-term training programs, including very short-term offerings that students can enroll in before the next semester arrives.

> Short-term [course offerings] are very much in demand [as] opposed to something long-term over many semesters. We're looking at short-term programming that gets people out and on their way.
>
> *Demonstration College*

On student surveys, many reported that they appreciate the accelerated pace of courses they were currently enrolled in. Other students also called this out as an area for improvement, asking for their programs to be accelerated. Students appreciated the short-term option when it was available, and when it was not available, they often requested it. This feedback from participants emphasizes the importance of having short-term programming available to students who need to build their human capital and return to the workforce quickly.

> [The classes] provided pertinent information to improve my skills in a timely fashion.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Credit for Life Experience

Closely related to the issue of accelerated programs is the issue of credit for life experience. For learners in the workforce training and career development track this was one of the most common themes in the open-ended survey questions that asked about how the classes could better meet the students' needs. Many students felt that they should be able to translate their work or life experience into progress toward a credential or certification. When there is a way for plus 50 students to do this, it would shorten the amount of time that they had to spend in school. It would also honor the value of their experience; as one student pointedly noted, his/her life experience was "working in the field for 16 years."

> Credit for life experience would make it more possible for me to work toward a license or degree.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Convenient Schedule

Having courses offered at convenient times and places was very important to the students. Reviews were mixed, however; some were very satisfied with the schedule and others asked for it to be more convenient. Several of the students who valued the convenience of the class did so

> The time the class met was very convenient.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

because the class was online, and therefore could easily fit into any schedule.

The mixed reviews indicate that some colleges may have done a better job at creating convenient schedules than others; some classes may meet at more convenient times than other classes; and what is convenient to one student is inconvenient to another student (or all three). What is clear is that schedule convenience is important, and that colleges should continue to put effort into scheduling classes in a way that is convenient for a large proportion of their plus 50 students.

> Please schedule more convenient hours or alternate hours.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Age Homogeneity and Heterogeneity in the Classroom

Another factor that made some students feel comfortable in the learning environment was attending classes with others their own age. One student pointed out that when the class is "offered to a cohort of people over age 50" this group has "very similar concerns and situations." No matter what one's age, it is always comforting to be in a group of others facing similar challenges – and this appears to have been an especially important selling point for plus 50 students taking workforce training courses. Many of them may have shared the fact that they were looking for a new job or to advance their careers at a time in their life when they expected to be winding down toward retirement.

> I felt comfortable taking this class, because there were people my age taking it.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

This is not to say that students were universally looking to take part in classes in which all of their classmates were 50 or older. There were also a few students who called out the benefits of being in a multi-generational classroom. One said that s/he "enjoyed the diversity of ages of my fellow students and felt very much a part of the group." The students who pointed to their enjoyment of age diversity also mentioned that this works when the teachers make an effort to ensure that everyone participates, or even when they call attention to the age diversity: "the age differences were addressed and I found that helpful."

> The classes I had were a mixed age population. That was good for interfacing with the work environment that I eventually joined.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Focusing on Instructor Capacity to Match Pedagogy to Plus 50 Learning Styles

Plus 50 colleges are making efforts to ensure that the teaching style for classes offered to plus 50 students fits with the learning styles of plus 50 students. For example, a program associate from one college spoke about taking an asset-based approach to working with plus 50 students. These courses explicitly capitalize on the skills and capacities those students bring into a classroom – in particular, how their work and life experience provide them with perspectives that can be shared with other students to enrich the learning experience for all. A program director from another college reported that only those instructors with experience teaching to students over 50 are hired to staff the courses associated with their program.

> I must say that the classes were taught in a manner that took into consideration that plus 50 [students] had skill levels different from younger [students]. Excellent teaching techniques.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Responses on student surveys confirmed that tailoring pedagogy is indeed important to plus 50 students. When asked open-ended questions about what was most valuable about classes, there were many who felt that the classes were geared to their learning style. Among the qualities of the learning environment that students appreciated were: instructors welcoming many questions, a lot of student/teacher interaction, and the ability to proceed at one's own pace.

> The teacher was very sensitive to all [the] needs [of the students in my age group].
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

While there were many comments from students who felt very comfortable in their learning environments, there were others who felt that this was an area for improvement. There were a few students who asked that classes be more participatory, and that there be more opportunities for one-to-one interaction with teachers. There were also a few students who felt that their professors did not have a sufficient understanding of the learning styles of people over 50, although one admitted that "some of us have higher expectations than students under 30."

> [Classes could better meet my needs if teachers] were able to recognize different learning styles.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Some teachers are better able than others to tailor their teaching styles so that plus 50 students feel comfortable in the learning environment. Clearly, the ability to deliver this type of pedagogy is a specialized skill. The fact that students commented on it as often as they did calls out its importance as an area of focus for the grantee colleges. Recognizing the importance of this teaching skill, several Plus 50 colleges are offering professional development workshops or other opportunities designed to provide faculty with the information they need about appropriate pedagogical strategies. During the first year of the initiative, 77 faculty members participated in professional development opportunities offered by four Plus 50 colleges (see Exhibit 2). A few Plus 50 colleges included workshops on their plus 50 programs and the specific needs of the plus 50 population during the colleges' annual professional development days for faculty and staff. These workshops focused on various topics, such as tips for teaching older adults and generational learning differences.

Exhibit 2

Number of Plus 50 Colleges with Professional Development for Faculty (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Professional development for faculty	Mentor Colleges	0	3
	Demonstration Colleges	0	1

In addition to offering campus-wide professional development opportunities, some colleges are working with specific internal departments and divisions on how to engage plus 50 students in the classroom and to develop curriculum to meet the specific learning needs of plus 50 learners. Plus 50 staff have shared newsletters and articles, offered webinars, and engaged in discussions about how to adapt techniques for effectively teaching plus 50 learners. One college has even paid for staff to attend external trainings and workshops to increase the college's capacity to serve the plus 50 population. Several colleges reported

> [The Plus 50 program director] met with staff from several departments in one-to-one sessions and at staff meetings. This included members of the Business Technology unit, Culinary Arts, the Service Learning program, and the Teaching and Learning program.
>
> *Mentor College*

that these professional development opportunities have already started to stimulate conversations throughout the colleges about, for example, how credit programs can be tailored for the educational needs of plus 50 students, and "ways to integrate learning outcomes for plus 50 students into curriculum planning on an ongoing basis."

Marketing and Outreach to Bring Plus 50 Students to the Program

Reaching out to plus 50 learners in a systematic way to attract them to offerings at community colleges is an important part of program implementation. Colleges must raise awareness about their Plus 50 programs in order to generate enrollment, which in turn boosts revenue and makes programming sustainable. Plus 50 colleges are using a wide variety of marketing and outreach efforts to raise the visibility of Plus 50 programming and attract students to the campus, and these strategies are described in this section.

Media Coverage

Plus 50 colleges' hard work in the areas of marketing and public relations has paid off. All of the colleges have reached out to the local media, and have been featured in newspaper articles, radio spots, and online updates. Local media outlets have shown increased interest in the plus 50 population and colleges have been working to keep these stories coming. Local newspapers often cover Plus 50 course offerings and stories about student successes. Several colleges are featured regularly in ads, columns, and other articles appearing in newsletters and magazines targeted to the plus 50 demographic. This has raised the profile of the colleges' Plus 50 programs, and brought new students to the campus.

> One of the greatest successes has been how well the local media has responded to this initiative. […] This has in turn provided an influx of registrations from the community.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Establishing and Using the Plus 50 Brand

With the support of marketing and public relations consultants hired by AACC, Plus 50 community colleges received logos, photos, templates, and guidelines to brand the Plus 50 program. The Plus 50 brand also represents the entire initiative, further strengthening the brand and visibility of Plus 50 programs nationwide.

Harnessing the Power of Websites, Blogs, and Electronic Newsletters

Plus 50 colleges were savvy users of college Websites, blogs, and e-newsletters to spread the Plus 50 programming message. Additionally, Plus 50 colleges' e-mail listservs helped colleges communicate to specific audiences, spread consistent messages, and get the word out about last minute updates.

Student feedback from the surveys shows that, across the grantee cohort, 86% of the students are either "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with the Web pages that colleges have tailored to the plus 50 student (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Plus 50 Colleges' Webpages
(n=270)

Not at all, 14%

Very Much, 36%

Somewhat, 50%
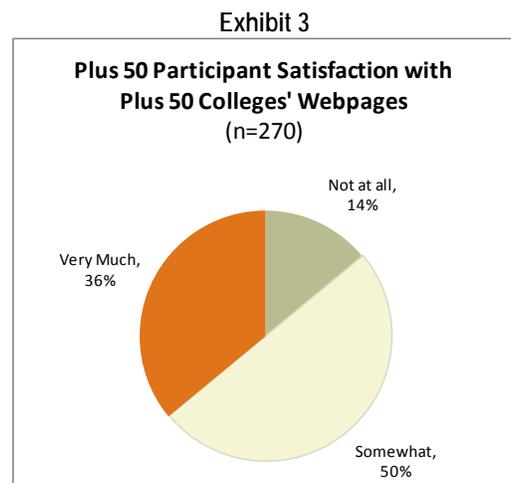
Using Plus 50 Students' Stories to Raise Awareness

Some Plus 50 colleges capitalized on the experiences of plus 50 students to tell the story of their programs and/or services. Through student blogs, student videos, and word of mouth, more plus 50 students connect to community colleges. Hearing the stories from and about plus 50 students helps others to envision themselves as students at the college, and to feel excited and encouraged about the new possibilities of participating in community college programming.

Getting the Word Out Through College Catalogues, Brochures, and Fliers

Traditional community college marketing opportunities such as course catalogues, brochures, and college magazines continue to play an important role in getting the word out about Plus 50 programs and services including direct mail. Some colleges are collaborating with organizations such as their local AARP to share targeted "ready-made" mailing address lists.

Feedback on the surveys shows that students have found the course catalogues that focus on offerings for plus 50 students to be useful: 88% are "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with these course catalogues, with over half of the students giving the highest satisfaction rating (see Exhibit 4).

> Always go back to the student successes – if you can develop relationships with your participants and keep communicating with them and what their successes are – people want that real-life experience to relate to.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Exhibit 4

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Plus 50 Course Catalogs
(n=361)

Not at all, 12%
Very Much, 53%
Somewhat, 35%

Offering Open Houses to Bring Plus 50 Learners into Community College Campuses

To welcome plus 50 learners into the community college campus, increase awareness of their programming, and facilitate an easier process of connecting to and registering for Plus 50 programs, some colleges held open houses. These open houses served as an opportunity to engage many stakeholders in the community college including admissions staff, faculty, and volunteers to welcome and market offerings to plus 50 learners.

> These [open house] nights have grown from a few participants to almost 100 at our last event.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Community Outreach

Plus 50 program staff are hitting the streets of their communities to meet some of the plus 50 learners they are hoping to serve and to raise awareness about Plus 50 offerings at their colleges. Many Plus 50 program staff attend local events such as open houses and job fairs to talk about their program offerings and establish a presence in the community. Some colleges have invited community members to attend focus groups to talk about what kinds of programs and services they would like to see at their community college.

> We chose a couple of areas where we didn't have good market penetration and we held "discussion groups" in the libraries. The groups are free to participants. It's a way for people to come in and get exposure to our program.
>
> *Mentor College*

Support Services

Many plus 50 learners are out of their comfort zones, given that they may have been out of college for several decades, or have never attended college. To help these students navigate the college system and become familiar with the colleges' offerings, Plus 50 colleges are implementing a variety of support services, including advising and counseling, concierge services, new student orientation, and a system for streamlined registration. Exhibit 5 below shows the increase in the number of colleges offering each type of service.

Exhibit 5

Number of Plus 50 Colleges with Support Services that Facilitate Integration of Plus 50 Students into the College (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Advising and counseling services	Mentor Colleges	1	2
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2
Concierge services	Mentor Colleges	0	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2
New student orientation	Mentor Colleges	1	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2
System for easy registration	Mentor Colleges	1	3
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2

Advising and Counseling Services

Research into the experience of plus 50 students returning to college shows the critical nature of advising. When students who have not been in a school environment – sometimes for decades – they need someone to help them find their initial footing and decide what classes to take, where to find resources, and what goals to set. Although colleges typically have advising and counseling available to all students, the standard counseling that is aimed at the traditional student will most likely not prove sufficient. Plus 50 students need advisors that understand their specific situations – their constraints and assets.

In year one, four colleges focused on this critical need, and provided advising services tailored specifically to the needs and interests of students age plus 50. For the colleges concentrating in this area, part of the program entails designating one person as the "Plus 50 advisor." This person has the skills, knowledge. and resources they need to provide advice to those of this age group. They also become a primary point of contact for the plus 50 student as s/he navigates through the college. These advisors are often located within Student Services and are available for one-

> The plus 50 students come to [the advisor] generally with little knowledge of the college system. They appreciate having a one-stop enrolling process that is staffed with a Plus 50 [advisor] who can provide detailed information about the campus.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Exhibit 6

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Advising and Counseling Services
(n=157)

Not at all, 16%
Very Much, 41%
Somewhat, 43%
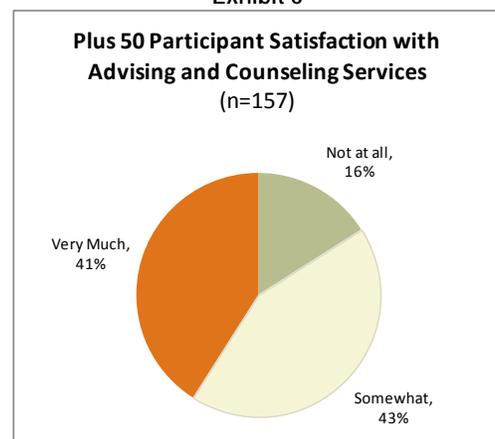
to-one and group sessions with plus 50 adults to provide detailed information on educational opportunities at the college, career counseling, local career opportunities, retirement planning, and financial assistance. These Plus 50 advisors serve as gateways into the college for the plus 50 population.

Feedback from students at colleges with tailored advising and counseling services suggest that colleges are meeting a plus 50 student need: 84% of respondents said that they were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with these services, with 41% being very satisfied (see Exhibit 6).

Concierge Services

There are moments in a student's career when they need the more intensive support of an advisor, but there are also times when they simply need a person with information at his/her fingertips to point them in the right direction. To fulfill this need, some colleges provide "concierge services" specifically for their plus 50 students. This can be a staff person or a volunteer who can direct plus 50 students to services, supports, and events that can meet their needs. A Plus 50 concierge can introduce prospective and current plus 50 students to the college's array of opportunities and resources that are specifically tailored for this population. An example is someone sitting at a desk in the student services center who can hand out plus 50 course catalogues, explain enrollment processes, tell people when the next new student orientation is, and connect them to financial assistance opportunities for which plus 50 students are eligible.

Exhibit 7

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Concierge Services
(n=121)

Very Much, 27%
Not at all, 38%
Somewhat, 35%

In the first year of implementation, three colleges offered concierge services for plus 50 students. In the case of these three colleges, concierge services were folded into other services and typically were provided by the plus 50 advisors or career counselors that were part of the plus 50 career services. Student feedback indicates that students tended to have lower satisfaction with concierge services than with the more intensive advising services: 62% said that they were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with their concierge experience (compared with 84% for advising and counseling services). Please refer to Exhibit 7.

New Student Orientation

Colleges always have a new student orientation. However, it is geared toward traditional students – and the "standard" orientation is not likely to address the issues of an older student returning to campus after many years. For students at a very different stage of life than those students in their 20s and 30s, these tailored orientations can be very helpful.

Three grantee colleges designed a new version of the orientation specifically for plus 50 students. One Plus 50 College offers monthly "Adult Learner Information" nights, where representatives from the college's various departments such as Enrollment Management, Workforce Development, Counseling and Advising, and Continuing Education present information that target plus 50 learners. These sessions are designed to address some of the

Exhibit 8

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with New Student Orientations
(n=143)

Not at all, 24%
Very Much, 36%
Somewhat, 41%
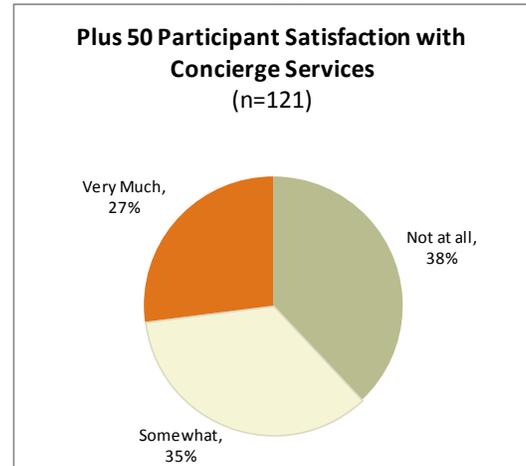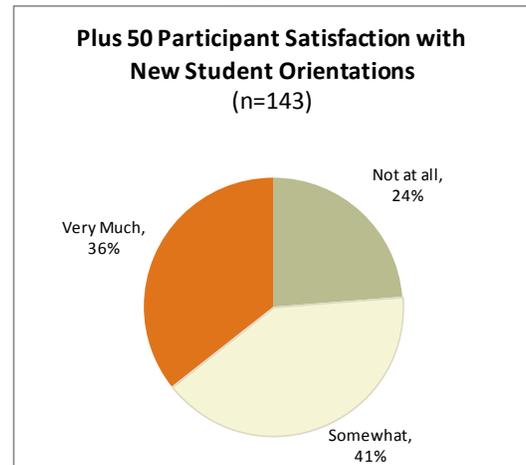
common questions and concerns facing plus 50 adults entering or returning to college. Student feedback on surveys suggests that new student orientations tailored to plus 50 learners have been able to meet student needs about three quarters of the time (see Exhibit 8).

System for Easy Registration

To reduce challenges in navigating the college's system, five Plus 50 colleges instituted tailored registration processes for plus 50 students during the first year of the initiative (up from one college at baseline). Another Plus 50 college tailored their registration process by working with the Admissions Department to offer in-person registration and paper applications for plus 50 students without the computer skills to navigate the college's online registration system.

Although "easy registration" is not a very glamorous program component, several colleges mentioned how important it is in supporting the participation of plus 50 customers. Program staff from one of the colleges said that it is very important to be "administratively friendly" to the plus 50 group. Feedback from student surveys reinforces this viewpoint. Results shows that the streamlined registration processes are very popular: 89% of students said that they were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with the streamlined registration processes that had been put in place for plus 50 students, and 57% gave this service the highest satisfaction rating. Please refer to Exhibit 9.

> The registration process has a lot of steps. We do it for them – if they had to jump through all those hoops they might give up. The college has also allowed us to skip a few steps [for the plus 50 students].
>
> *Demonstration College*

Exhibit 9

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Streamlined Registration Processes
(n=329)

Not at all, 11%

Very Much, 57%

Somewhat, 32%

Facilitating Physical Access

For students over 50, getting to campus or classes is more likely to be a challenge than it is for students under 50. Sometimes physical comfort and accessibility can be an issue as well (e.g., those over 50 are more likely to have a hard time reading small print). Exhibit 10 below shows the growth in the number of colleges offering supports to facilitate physical access to the college specifically for plus 50 students.
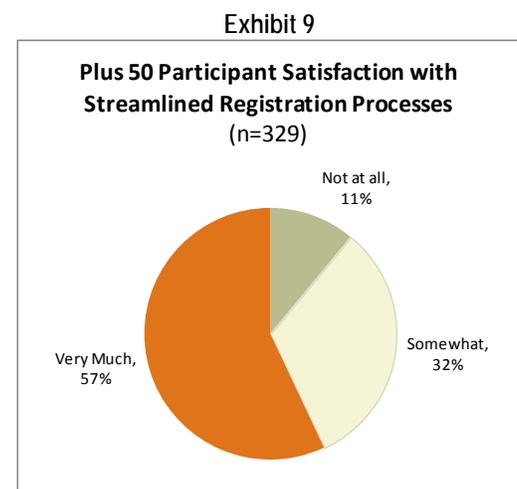
Exhibit 10

Number of Plus 50 Colleges with Support Services that Facilitate Physical Access for Plus 50 Students (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Ensuring physical comfort and accessibility	Mentor Colleges	3	4
	Demonstration Colleges	2	4
Facilitating transportation	Mentor Colleges	1	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	1
Offering courses at convenient off-campus venues	Mentor Colleges	4	4
	Demonstration Colleges	3	4
Offering courses through distance learning formats	Mentor Colleges	0	2
	Demonstration Colleges	2	4

Ensuring Physical Comfort and Accessibility

This type of support includes strategies such as ensuring that there is comfortable seating, providing handouts with large type, or making sure that classes are offered in a location that does not require walking up and down a lot of stairs. This might also include assistive technology for hearing and vision considerations. Even before the launch of the initiative, five colleges already used such strategies. Three additional colleges adopted them by modifying and equipping plus 50 classrooms with assistive technology. For example, one community college is piloting the use of dual monitors so that instructional materials can be enlarged on the screen to accommodate students with vision impairment. Another community college has designated "smart rooms" equipped with the latest technology to facilitate and maximize learning. Finally, many colleges are ensuring courses are accessible by simply making course materials and handouts available in large print.

On their surveys, students gave high marks to the efforts of colleges to ensure physical comfort and accessibility: 87% said they were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with these types of services (see Exhibit 11).

Transportation

Transportation services are part of the Plus 50 program at two colleges. During the first year of the initiative, one college continued to offer transportation services to help reduce physical barriers to accessing the college campus among plus 50 students. The community college will pick up students from central points in the community and give them rides to campus. At another community college, transportation to and from field training sites is included as part of their Plus 50 workforce training program. The van is also equipped to transport anyone with disabilities or special needs.

Student feedback on surveys shows that this is an area where colleges have been less successful in meeting the needs of plus 50 students: 44% reported that they were "not at all" satisfied (see Exhibit 12). However, it is possible that these satisfaction ratings stemmed from the fact that some students did not actually know that specialized transportation was available to them. Therefore, they may have been reporting on a perceived *lack* of transportation services, rather than their experiences with the specialized transportation services themselves. Colleges may want to explore this further, to find out whether plus 50 students have the relevant information about transportation that is tailored to their needs.

> The dual monitor pilot proved to be very successful. [...] They use dual monitors so they can enlarge the text so they can read on one monitor and do their work on another.
>
> *Mentor College*

Exhibit 11

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Services That Ensure Physical Comfort and Accessibility
(n=286)

Not at all, 13%
Somewhat, 42%
Very Much, 45%

Exhibit 12

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Transportation Services
(n=90)

Very Much, 28%
Not at all, 44%
Somewhat, 28%
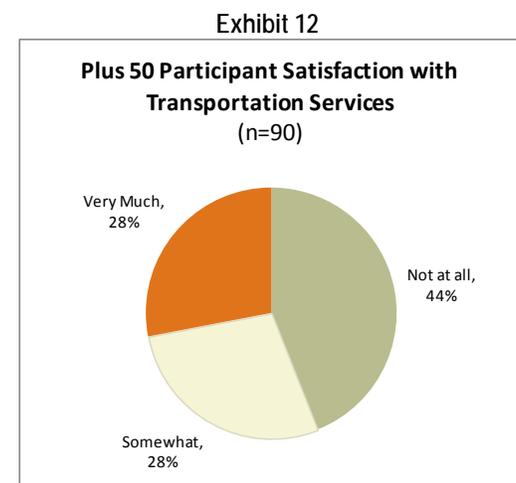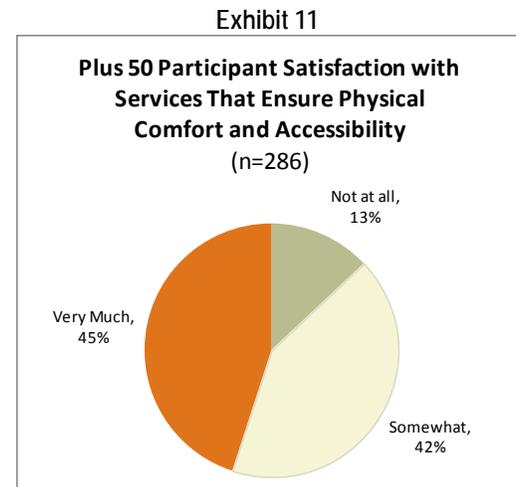
Alternative Classroom Venues

Community colleges often offer courses off campus as part of their strategy to make courses more convenient and accessible. Grantee colleges are making use of this strategy specifically for their Plus 50 programs as well. About half of the grantees already offered off-campus venues for courses at baseline, though one demonstration college added off-campus courses during year one. Some examples of where grantees offered courses include: national parks, museums, libraries, community centers, corporate education centers, YMCAs, senior centers, and churches.

In addition to offering courses at convenient off-campus locations in the community, community colleges often provide courses via distance learning formats. This is another strategy that Plus 50 colleges are using to make coursework more convenient for their target population. For example, one grantee offers a leadership development

> I loved that it was an online class. […] It worked well with my schedule.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

course delivered through iTV where plus 50 students have the opportunity to learn and connect with other leaders and participants across three different college sites. Additionally, many of the colleges offering distance learning courses do so through internet platforms where students can view and download course content online, communicate with the instructor and other students through email and chat rooms, and post completed assignments electronically.

Making Community College More Affordable

For some plus 50 adults, the cost of college courses can be a significant challenge. To address this challenge, several Plus 50 colleges are offering direct financial aid, referrals to sources of financial aid, and financial assistance workshops. Financial aid is, of course, something that is available to all students, but the sources of financial aid often tend to be more limited for plus 50 students. In addition, sources of financial aid that can be particularly helpful to this age group tend to be less well known. Exhibit 13 below shows the growth in the number of colleges offering financial assistance support tailored specifically for plus 50 students. Prior to the initiative, only one college offered direct financial aid and no colleges offered referrals to sources of financial assistance or financial aid workshops. By the end of year one, four grantees had added direct financial assistance. A few colleges leveraged part of their AACC grant to subsidize program fees, and one college offered their transitional workshops at no cost to the students.

Exhibit 13

Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Number of Plus 50 Colleges with Financial Support Services for Plus 50 Students (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Financial aid	Mentor Colleges	1	2
	Demonstration Colleges	0	3
Referrals to sources of financial aid	Mentor Colleges	0	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	3
Financial assistance workshops	Mentor Colleges	0	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2

In response to the growing unemployment rate and as a way to encourage both community service and plus 50 students to enroll in training courses, one community college offered plus 50 students free tuition for one three-unit credit or non-credit course upon completion of ten hours of volunteering. The tuition waivers are funded by the college's foundation and distributed through the college's Plus 50 Workforce Center. Another college awarded Opportunity Grants which provide a minimum of $2,700 per quarter to be

applied towards tuition, books, and supplies to plus 50 environmental sciences students. Also, several colleges are partnering with national nonprofit associations and federal programs to provide tuition assistance for low-income adults and dislocated plus 50 students to be applied towards workforce training and career development programs. Four Plus 50 grantees provided referrals to sources of financial aid, such as listing specific plus 50 grants and awards in their monthly Plus 50 newsletters, and three colleges offered financial assistance workshops.

Exhibit 14 below shows the changes in the number of plus 50 students who participated in financial support services from baseline to year one. It is evident that grantees served more students over the course of the first year of the initiative in regards to financial support: 312 referrals to sources of financial aid were provided and 258 plus 50 students received direct financial assistance. As shown in Exhibit 15, on average demonstration colleges served more students with financial support than did mentor colleges.

Financial Support Services
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 14

Number of Plus 50 Students Who Participated
(All Colleges)

Exhibit 15

Increase in Average Number of Plus 50 Students
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)
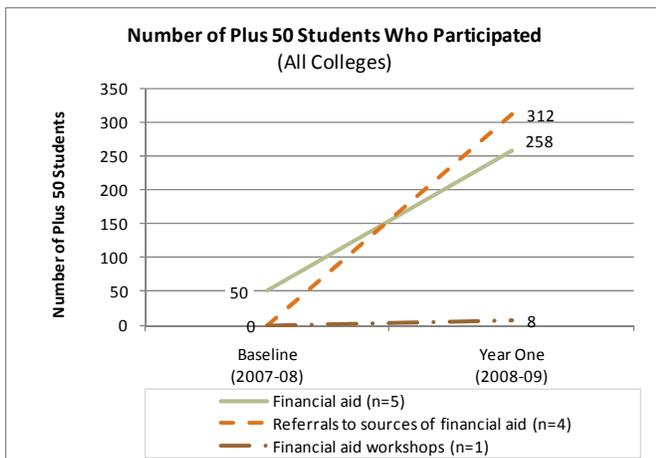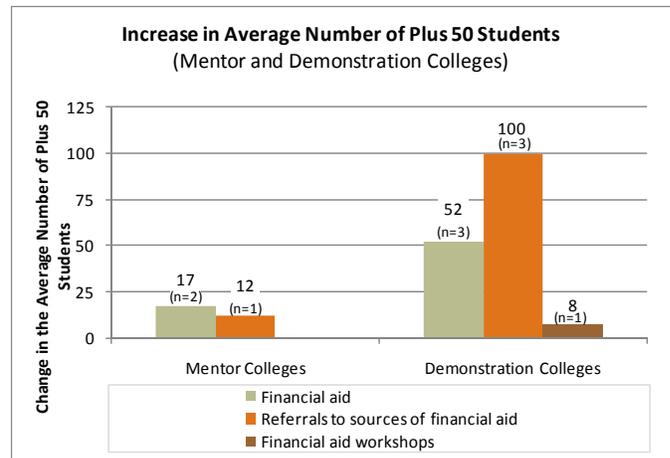
The work that grantee colleges have done to provide financial aid and to connect students with financial aid has made it possible for many more plus 50 students to access community colleges courses. This is a very clear benefit to students in this age group – many of whom are taking workforce training courses as a way to enter or re-enter the workforce.

On student surveys, plus 50 students were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the financial assistance services that were tailored to people in their age group. Students showed high satisfaction with these services, with 80% saying that they were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied, and almost half giving these services the highest satisfaction rating (see Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Financial Assistance Services
(n=127)

Not at all, 21%

Very Much, 47%

Somewhat, 33%
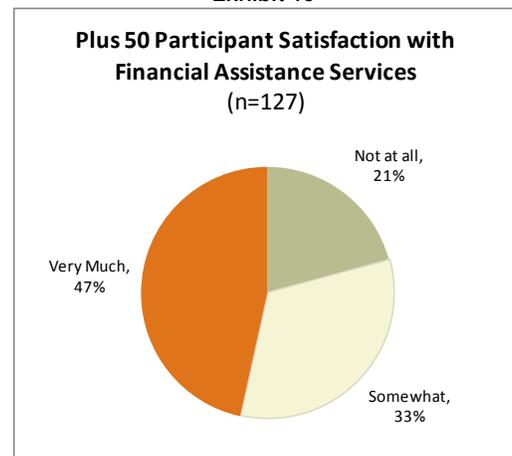
Program staff extol the virtues of involving community partners in their programming. Colleges are developing and leveraging strategic partnerships with individuals and organizations to increase their reach and raise awareness of Plus 50 programs. Developing partnerships with community organizations has proven particularly effective in generating local interest and enrollment in Plus 50 courses because it establishes buy-in from groups with established constituencies that are often unfamiliar with the Plus 50 brand.

> The community partners have become invaluable to [our college's] Plus 50 successes.
>
> *Mentor College*

Colleges point to these partnerships as a key ingredient for program success because they offer mutual beneficial opportunities to share resources such as mailing lists, event sponsorship, and content knowledge, allowing programs and organizations to improve the quality and reach of their programs and services. Partners provide a wide range of supports, described below.

Membership in the College's Plus 50 Advisory Committee

As part of the initiative design, for every grantee college, community partner agencies participate in an advisory committee to the Plus 50 program. This is a way for community partners to have regular communication with program staff, and to offer their expertise and connections to additional resources in a timely way. Plus 50 colleges have used the community partnerships developed through their advisory committees as jumping-off points for initiating relationships with other community groups and organizations.

> Members of our workforce advisory have told us there are many highly educated people who are displaced and looking for short-term training/re-training courses in fields with guaranteed job prospects.
>
> *Mentor college*

Marketing Support

Community partners provide a wide range of marketing support to the colleges. They offer free publicity, advertising, and outreach for the Plus 50 program, and they provide marketing expertise to program staff. Four colleges reported in their Progress Reports to AACC that community partners had given their programs free publicity and supported specific outreach efforts. An especially good example of this comes from two colleges, each of which has a partnership with their local AARP. These colleges have used the AARP mailing list. This has provided instant access to the target market, with no effort on the part of the college to compile this list.

> We used the existing distribution channels of AARP to get hundreds of people to an event. […] The time and intensity of creating or buying mailing lists: we wouldn't have time to do this.
>
> *Mentor College*

Other colleges have also pointed to the way that partners have had specific expertise in outreach, which they used on behalf of the plus 50 program. Program staff from one college spoke about the way that they had been looking in the wrong place for their target market, but were able to get coaching and assistance from their partners and then tapped into a large market that has continued to supply customers. Program staff from another college spoke about a specific person on staff at a community partner agency who has deep connections "with the 60+ citizens in our community." She has been able to get the word out about this college's Plus 50 program, and "really helped us grow our membership."

> When we first started the program, we tried to recruit at retirement communities, but those were folks who wanted lifelong learning, or wanted credit courses they could take for free. […] We redirected our strategy, partnering with our local workforce agency and our employment office. They post our marketing materials on their Website and refer people here.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Referring New Customers to the Plus 50 Program

Almost half of the grantees reported on the fact that they have also enlisted their community partners in referring their own clients and members to the community college Plus 50 programs. While program staff say that sometimes these referrals result in new participants in volunteering programs, the main benefit is receiving new students in training programs (such as nursing or truck-driving), or people who want to use the career development services (such as workshops or job fairs). This probably does not denote that workforce partners are better at referring people; more likely it is a function of the fact that – due to the current economic climate – plus 50 individuals have an increasing need for workforce training and career development.

> What works well [is] working with the local Workforce Development Council. We get a lot of student referrals from workforce agencies. They handle dislocated workers – that drives a lot of our students to our campus.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Course or Workshop Development

Over half the Plus 50 grantees say that community partners have either developed courses or workshops for their programs, or else collaborated with them in developing courses or workshops. When partners work on developing courses, this type of support contributes to sustainability (because once courses are self-sustaining, they will outlast any grant that contributed to their initial development).

> [An organization that works with people in the "second act" of their careers] created the Plus 50 Transitional Workshop curriculum for [our college].
>
> *Demonstration College*

Instruction and Hosting for Workshops or Seminars

In addition to developing workshops and courses, community partners often provide free instruction, or host entire workshops or seminars. Staff from five colleges reported that this is the case for their partners. At one college, Best Buy provides curriculum development and instructors for technology courses: GPS navigation, digital camera, and HDTV. For another college, a community partner develops the course and hosts a digital camera class. For a third college, the Manager of Volunteer Services from a community partner gave a presentation to plus 50 participants on volunteerism.

> [Our community partner] leads a course, once a month for nine months. […] They provide instructors for free.
>
> *Mentor College*

Partnership in Job fairs and Career Counseling Events

Program staff from three colleges reported that community partners have worked with them on job fairs or career counseling events. For one of the colleges, a trade association of healthcare employers participated in a healthcare job fair sponsored by the college's Career Counseling Office – and the job fair featured Plus 50 job opportunities. For another college, the local workforce council assists with teaching interviewing skills. These are all ways to help raise the visibility of the Plus 50 program at the community colleges, and can strengthen partnerships by bringing together new organizations to share resources.

> Workforce Investment Boards have partnered [with us] to offer an annual Job Search Expo and Job Fair.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Grants for Plus 50 Program Special Projects

Three grantee colleges reported that they receive funding from partners for training programs or various special projects. For example, one college received a grant from their local WIB to offer a training program in healthcare informatics and Alzheimer's disease care. Another college received a mini-grant for marketing. A third college received one grant to develop student profile videos (that are posted on its Plus 50 Website), and another grant to establish a financial literacy library.

What Makes Community Partnerships Successful?

The staff from every Plus 50 program could identify the many benefits of working with community partners. They also acknowledged that these partnerships do not run themselves, and need an investment of time and money to be successful. A program director from one college reported that it was challenging to find the time that s/he really wanted in order to work more closely with the community partners. The program had met its annual goals, but had had to postpone some of the more innovative work they were planning on undertaking with partners. A program associate from another college pointed out that partnerships are a two-way street: not only did partners contribute to the Plus 50 program, but the Plus 50 program contributes resources to its partners as well: "We'll ask partners to do things for less money than what it costs them, and they'll ask us to do things for less money than what it really costs us. You can't say no."

Therefore, a truly successful partnership is one in which each can invest sufficient resources, and each feels as if the benefits of partnership outweigh the costs. Staff at one college spoke about the fact that it is important to always attend community partner meetings, even if time constraints make this difficult: "If they don't pay your salary, you can skip [the meetings]. But the more you can go to these meetings, the stronger the partnerships are." Going to

> We try to make sure it's good two-way communication, take their input and advice to help us do better. To try and make sure you let them know how valuable they are to you. You can't thank these folks enough.
>
> *Demonstration College*

these meetings "builds up social capital and goodwill." Another way to build up this goodwill is to truly listen to the advice that the partners have to offer, and to display gratitude for what the partner offers to the Plus 50 program.

Conclusion

Five fundamental categories mark successful implementation of Plus 50 programming: basing program development on a needs assessment; tailoring course offerings; integrating plus 50 students effectively; creating compelling marketing and outreach; and developing thriving community partnerships. Each of these five fundamentals supports the others to create exciting learning environments tailored to diverse group of plus 50 learners.

Courses, naturally, are central to Plus 50 programming for learning and enrichment, as well as for workforce training. While later chapters focus specifically on program implementation of these tracks, this chapter gives an overview of course offerings. It provides some background information on the ways in which colleges have used courses to develop their Plus 50 programming, as well as how these courses are counted for the purposes of evaluation. Finally, the chapter shows results for community college enrollment in courses associated with Plus 50 programming, as well as overall for the plus 50 age group.

How Community Colleges Incorporate Courses into their Plus 50 Programming

For the grantee colleges, individual courses and programs are fundamental to their Plus 50 offerings. For learning and enrichment programs, colleges are making sure that plus 50 students have access to courses that will inspire them, reignite a love of learning, open new horizons, or let them return to an interest they left behind earlier in life. For workforce training and career development programming, colleges have several strategies. With dedicated personnel, they are steering plus 50 students to courses they can use to brush up on marketable skills, or to workforce training programs. They are also tailoring and developing workforce training programs to make them more accessible and useful to plus 50 students looking to jump-start a career.

Developing New Courses, Redesigning Courses, and Marketing Existing Courses

Community colleges can take three distinct approaches to increasing their course offerings. They can (1) design new courses tailored to plus 50 students; (2) redesign existing courses so that they fit the needs and interests of the plus 50 learner; and (3) use courses that the college already offers and market them specifically to this age cohort (for example, listing a set of courses in a catalogue specifically designed for students 50 and over). Colleges have taken all three approaches, although (as the next two chapters will show) marketing existing courses is the most popular approach. This makes sense, because it is far less resource-intensive to market a course that has already been designed and offered than it is to create a new course or customize an existing course.

A Shift in Emphasis from Enrichment Courses to Workforce Training Courses

The colleges that have a learning and enrichment track also have a workforce training and career development track. And over the course of the initiative's first year, these colleges have seen a shift in demand away from courses taken for personal interest, in favor of workforce training courses. The downturn in the economy has prompted this shift, with plus 50 learners needing to enroll in classes that will help them find a job.[10] Some of these students are displaced workers, and some are coming out of retirement after seeing their savings dwindle.

Courses Offered for Plus 50 Students
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)
Exhibit 17

Number of Unique Courses Offered for Plus 50 Students
(All Colleges)

Learning and Enrichment Courses (n=12)
Workforce Training Courses (n=12)

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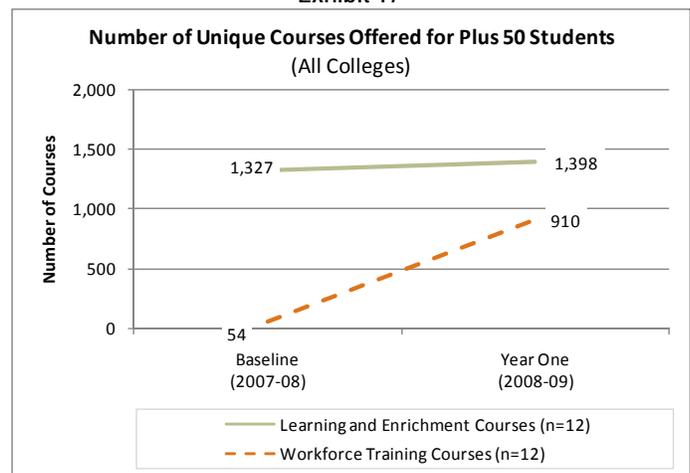
[10] Dembicki, M. (February 2009). *Economy Prompts Shift in Plus 50.* Community College Times, Vol. XXI No. 4.

The effort of the colleges to meet the demand for workforce training courses is evident in Exhibit 17. This exhibit shows the change in two types of courses offered to plus 50 students (enrichment and workforce training), specifically as part of plus 50 programming. There was a slight rise in the number of enrichment courses, and a dramatic rise in the number of workforce training courses. Colleges are primarily focusing their Plus 50 programs on workforce training: **Plus 50 grantees collectively offered 856 more workforce training courses for plus 50 students in year one than at baseline**. This is a reflection of two things: the initiative encouraged colleges to move beyond the focus of enrichment for this age group, and to meet the workforce training needs of plus 50 students as well. This rise also reflects the response of the colleges to the downturn in the economy, which resulted in growing needs of the plus 50 age cohort for workforce training courses.

Credit and Non-Credit Courses

Colleges can offer courses on a credit and/or non-credit basis. What is the difference between credit and non-credit courses? It is generally not the *content* of the course: sometimes the same course is even offered for credit *and* on a non-credit basis at the same college. Or there may be two courses with virtually the same curriculum and learning objectives, but one may have been developed as a credit offering, and the other as a non-credit offering. Credit courses, however, can be applied to an academic degree (at community colleges, this is an Associate's degree), and non-credit courses cannot.[11]

As part of their Plus 50 programs, grantee colleges offer credit courses, non-credit-courses, or both. The Plus 50 grantees have focused a majority of their course offerings on *non-credit* courses and programs. This is due to three reasons. First, non-credit courses can be developed much more quickly than can credit courses: unlike non-credit courses, credit courses must undergo a time-consuming review process to ensure they conform to a set of criteria set by the college's academic review board. In fact, over the past two decades there has been a steep rise in the number of non-credit offerings at two-year institutions, as community colleges have used their ability to develop non-credit programs to meet the evolving needs of the community in a timely fashion.[12] The second reason is that plus 50 students are generally not interested in earning an academic degree. Instead, they take a class for enrichment or personal interest – or, if they are taking a class to further a career, they are simply interested in learning a skill or earning certification or credentialing.[13]

The third reason for the popularity of offering non-credit courses is also related to the issues involved in meeting the local demand for workforce training courses. In order to return to the workforce as quickly as possible, students want to build their skills or earn their credentials as soon as possible. As a consequence, students are most often interested in short-term offerings. Colleges have much more flexibility to create short-term courses and programs in the non-credit arena.

The need to bring new programs online quickly for plus 50 students has been acutely felt, especially in the workforce training arena. The economic crisis has forced many plus 50 learners to upgrade workforce training skills and reconsider retirement and career options, creating a large demand for workforce training programs. Several grantee colleges have redirected their efforts toward workforce training courses and career development services, as will be discussed below. The ability of colleges to create non-credit programs has been especially helpful in their efforts to bring new workforce offerings to the plus 50 student. The skills needed by the labor force are changing quickly, and community colleges seeking to meet

[11] Milam, J. (2005). *The Role of Non-credit Courses in Serving Non-Traditional Learners.* In Pusser, B. (Ed.), Arenas of Entrepreneurship: Where Nonprofit and For-Profit Institutions Compete. New Directions for Higher Education, 129. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 55-68.
[12] Nock, M. M., and Shults, C. (2001). *Hot Programs at Community Colleges.* Washington DC: Community College Press.
[13] Certification and credentialing are different from academic degrees. Programs can result in an industry certification, such as American Welding Society certifications, or Automotive Service Excellence certifications. Students may also use programs to work toward occupational licenses that are requirements for job placement (such as nursing and teaching). Programs allow students to complete course requirements and prepare for the licensure test. This type of licensure is regulated by the government. Courses or programs also sometimes simply offer a certificate of completion that is not regulated by industry *or* a government authority.

the needs of the local workforce must be able to expedite the launch of new career and technical education offerings.[14]

From the perspective of the college, credit and non-credit courses both have advantages and disadvantages. In a majority of states, the formula for the state funding of community colleges is based on credit enrollment, and does not include non-credit enrollment. This means that a college is forgoing revenues from state funding whenever it offers a non-credit course. Community colleges *may* charge higher tuition for non-credit to make up for this shortfall. However, while non-credit courses generate sufficient revenue to cover production and promotion costs, this revenue only partially covers staff salaries and benefits.[15] Despite this drawback, the development of non-credit programs continues to flourish at community colleges, since colleges can use non-credit education to quickly and flexibly meet the needs of those in its service area, and the student demand for such courses is robust. Colleges also may receive grants to fund non-credit courses.

Counting Courses Offered to the Plus 50 Student

This evaluation seeks to quantify the extent to which grantee colleges have expanded their offerings for the plus 50 student. The quantity of course offerings can be counted in two ways: the *unique number* of courses; and the *total number* of courses. The unique number is the number of individual courses that are offered at least once during the year to this population, and represents the size of the *"course portfolio"* for this population. The total number represents the aggregate number of courses offered, taking into account when a course was offered multiple times. (For example, there might be two unique courses, each offered three times during the year; the total courses would therefore be six.) The total number of courses represents the *"course capacity"* for this population: it is the extent of opportunities that plus 50 students have to take courses tailored to their needs and interests.

> ### Counting Courses: Unique v. Total
>
> The **unique number** of courses represents a college's **"course portfolio:"** the number of unique courses that are offered at least once during the year to this population.
>
> The **total number** represents a college's **"course capacity"** to serve the plus 50 population: the aggregate number of courses offered, taking into account when a course is offered multiple times.

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[14] Harmon, R. and MacAllum, K. (2003). *Documented Characteristics of Labor Market-Responsive Community Colleges and a Review of the Supporting Literature.* US Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Washington DC.

[15] Milam, J. (2005). *The Role of Non-credit Courses in Serving Non-Traditional Learners.* In Pusser, B. (Ed.), Arenas of Entrepreneurship: Where Nonprofit and For-Profit Institutions Compete. New Directions for Higher Education, 129. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 55-68.

Exhibit 18 provides aggregate enrollment numbers for the grantee colleges. The bottom line shows the total number of plus 50 students enrolled in courses that grantee colleges included as part of their Plus 50 programming. (This number at baseline was already quite high due to the fact that mentor (and some demonstration) colleges already had programs and courses targeted to students in this age group.) The top line shows the change in the total number of plus 50 students enrolled at all the colleges (in *any* course, *including* courses that grantee colleges included as part of their Plus 50 programming).

The graph shows that although the total number of plus 50 students enrolled college-wide at grantee colleges decreased over the last year, **the number of students enrolled in courses associated with the Plus 50 Program increased by approximately 2,500 individuals.** This increase can be traced at least partially to the fact that there are more courses associated with Plus 50 programming. Survey data from students participating in Plus 50 programs also suggest that program outreach is drawing plus 50 students to the college. During the 2008-2009 academic year, 77% of survey respondents took a workforce training course for the first time, and 38% of survey respondents took an academic and enrichment course for the first time (see Exhibit 19).

Why, then, did overall enrollment in this age group decline for the grantee colleges in the aggregate? One explanation may be the downturn in the economy. While the disappearance of retirement savings might draw some students to campus for workforce training courses, it can have the opposite effect for courses that people take for enrichment and personal interest. It may be that many plus 50 students no longer had the time or disposable income to enroll in such courses because they had to cut back on non-essential expenses or had to return to the workplace. It is hoped that in future years of the initiative, the ability of Plus 50 programming to draw students to campus will positively affect enrollment numbers overall.

Plus 50 Student Enrollment College-wide, and in Courses that are Part of Plus 50 Programs (Changes from Baseline to Year One)
Exhibit 18
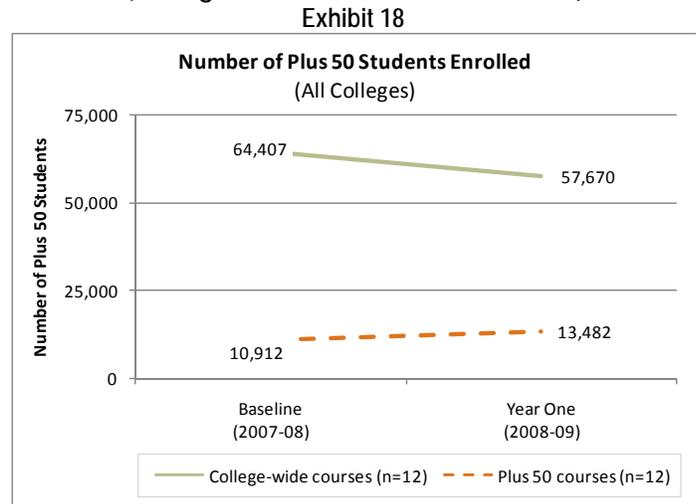
New Plus 50 Students Enrolled in Courses that are Part of the Plus 50 Programs (Year One)
Exhibit 19
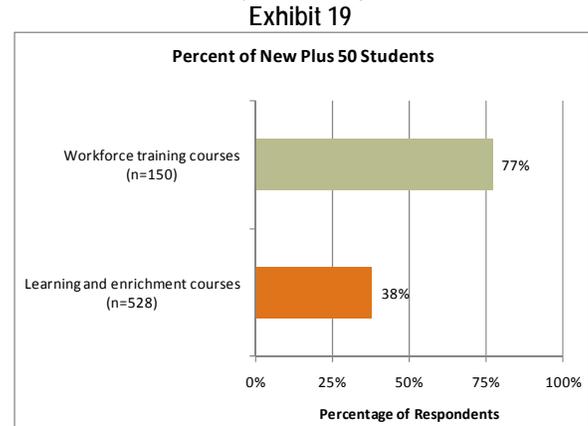
Conclusion

Plus 50 community colleges use a variety of approaches to provide course offerings that meet the needs of plus 50 learners. They have developed new courses and redesigned existing courses, but the most common strategy is to market existing courses. In developing new courses, community colleges have concentrated on non-credit programming. Despite some disadvantages in terms of sacrificing the state funding that often comes with credit courses, the non-credit approach is a popular one that allows colleges to accelerate course development and to flexibly respond to the needs of the community.

Data from the first year also show that grantee colleges have increased their portfolios of learning and enrichment courses, but the very dramatic growth has been for workforce training courses. This is partially due to the fact that colleges historically have a large portfolio of enrichment courses that are marketed to those who are retired and have time to take courses for personal fulfillment. It also reflects the economic downturn that has engendered a much greater demand among plus 50 students for courses that they can use to increase their human capital.

Overall enrollment of students 50 and older has declined across the grantee colleges. At the same time, however, enrollment in courses specifically associated with Plus 50 programs has risen during the first year of the initiative. Student survey data show that students taking workforce training courses are much more likely to be coming to the college for the first time in 2008-2009. These results again reflect the demand for workforce training in this age group – and they also reflect the ability of grantee colleges to successfully meet this demand.

IV. Workforce Training and Career Development Programs

Background: Community Colleges and Workforce Development

Community colleges play a critical role in the nation's workforce development, supplying vocational and technical education which millions of students access every year as they seek to build skills they can use in the workplace.

These educational programs are becoming increasingly important, as much job growth is accounted for by jobs for which the employer seeks an applicant with an Associate's degree or vocational credential. In fact, in looking at projected job growth broken out by degree or credential required, projections are higher in this area than for any other degree. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasting shows that between 2006 and 2016, the jobs that require an Associate's Degree or vocational credential will grow by 16%. This is especially impressive in comparison to jobs requiring a higher degree: growth is projected to be 15% for *all* the jobs that require a bachelor's, master's, doctoral, or professional degree (such as MD or JD) *combined*.[16]

> In many respects, community colleges are the epicenter of the US post-high school … training system.
> - *The President's Council of Economic Advisors*

Community colleges provide an extensive variety of workforce training courses and programs that students can enroll in to advance in their careers. The programs are diverse in subject matter (nursing, green construction, truck driving, information technology, landscaping, Microsoft Office, HVAC, pharmacy technician, and more). There is also diversity in the ways in which community colleges certify that the student has reached a specific level of skill. The types of coursework offered include:

- Training for industry certification;
- Training in preparation for industry certification testing;
- Training courses or programs with a certificate of completion;
- Customized training (training courses developed at the request of a particular business or employer, teaching skills to meet that employer's needs); and
- Individual courses that teach people specific job-related skills, but do not offer any type of certification.

Students can use certificates to demonstrate skills to potential employers and to advance their careers.

What Colleges Include in their Plus 50 Workforce Training and Career Development Programming

Community colleges excel at providing workforce training and career development programs to the community. It is also integral to the community college mission to welcome the "non-traditional student," a group which includes the plus 50 learner. However, while community colleges have certainly welcomed this group, they have rarely focused on *tailoring* workforce and career programming to their needs. The Plus 50 grantee colleges are filling this programming gap. As part of their projects, grantee colleges are tailoring coursework to plus 50 students, for example developing new workforce training courses for the plus 50 population, redesigning existing courses to tailor them to the needs and learning styles of this age cohort.

Grantee colleges also tailor their career development services to the plus 50 age group. The types of services they offer include:

- Career counseling;
- Career workshops;
- Job placement support;
- Job fairs; and
- Services to entrepreneurs.

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[16] Executive Office of the President, Council of Economic Advisors. (2009). *Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow*.

There has been a dramatic growth in the number of workforce training courses that grantee colleges are offering specifically as part of a Plus 50 program. Colleges more commonly concentrate their offerings in non-credit programming: five colleges use credit workforce training courses as part of their programs, 11 colleges use non-credit courses, and some of these colleges offer both credit and non-credit courses. Enrollment of plus 50 students in courses that colleges offered as part of their programming increased dramatically: the enrollment in credit courses increased more than three-fold, while the enrollment in non-credit courses increased almost five-fold.

Growth in Credit Workforce Training Courses

The charts in Exhibits 20 and 21 below show how credit courses were used as part of Plus 50 programming. First, out of the 13 grantee colleges (all of which have a workforce training and career development track), only five colleges take the route of including credit courses as part of their programming: one mentor college and four demonstration colleges. Also, the number of new and redesigned credit courses is very small at both baseline and year one: under five both years.

In contrast, there has been very fast growth in the number of existing courses marketed to plus 50 students. Across the five colleges, the portfolio of courses offered shot up from 21 to 537, and the *average* growth in the number of existing marketed credit courses in a college's portfolio is around 100 for both mentor and demonstration colleges.

Unique Credit Workforce Training Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 20   Exhibit 21
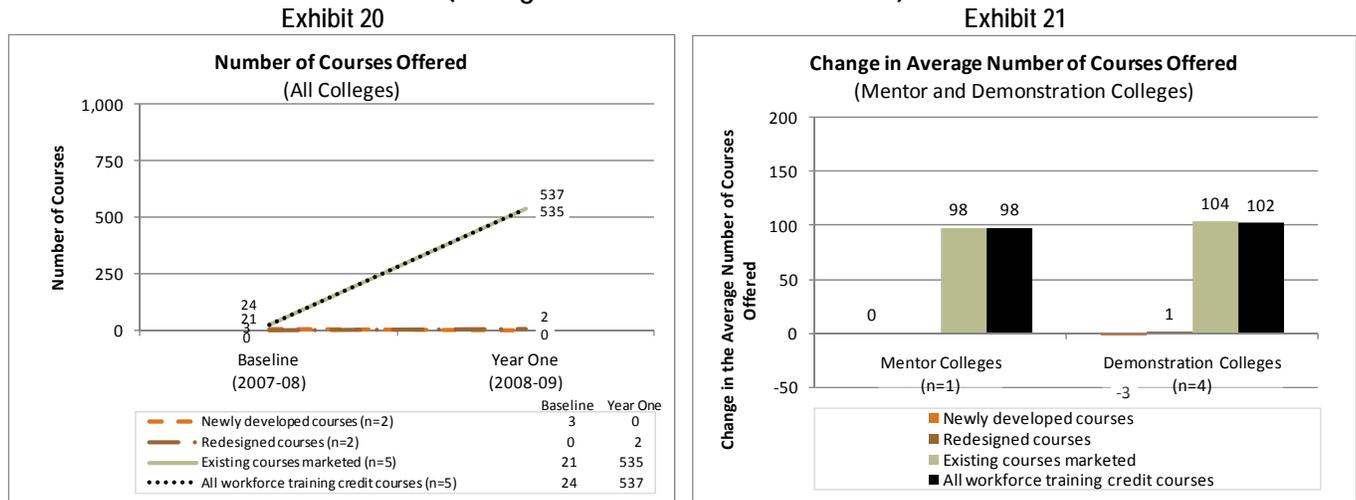
Looking at the *total* number of credit workforce training courses, we see that the story in Exhibit 22 reflects the story in Exhibit 20. Nearly all the growth in course capacity is accounted for through the marketing of existing courses (a portfolio of 537 credit workforce training courses translated into 825 courses being offered in total; 817 of these courses were marketed, eight redesigned, and zero new).

In comparing Exhibit 23 to Exhibit 21, we can see that there is a difference between how the four demonstration colleges *used* the portfolio of credit workforce training courses, compared to how the mentor college used them. Average growth in the number of unique courses was very similar, but there was greater growth in the number of times that demonstration colleges (on average) offered these courses during the year.

Total Credit Workforce Training Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 22

Number of Courses Offered
(All Colleges)

	Baseline	Year One
Newly developed courses (n=2)	6	0
Redesigned courses (n=2)	0	8
Existing courses marketed (n=5)	61	817
All workforce training credit courses (n=5)	67	825

Exhibit 23

Change in Average Number of Courses Offered
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

Legend: Newly developed courses; Redesigned courses; Existing courses marketed; All workforce training credit courses

Growth in Non-Credit Workforce Training Courses

Now we turn to the non-credit workforce training courses. Using non-credit courses as part of Plus 50 programming is a much more popular strategy, with 11 of the 13 colleges using non-credit courses. But the *number* of unique courses in a given college's portfolio tends to be smaller for non-credit than for credit: across 11 colleges, the number of non-credit courses in year one (in the aggregate), was 373, compared with 537 credit courses in the aggregate across only four colleges. So while colleges are more likely to include non-credit courses as part of their programming, when they do use them, they tend to include a smaller volume of courses.

Looking Exhibit 24, we can see that there is significant growth in the portfolio of non-credit courses: from 30 to 373. Once again, as with credit courses, most of this growth is accounted for by the marketing of existing courses, rather than redesigning or developing new courses (at year one, 329 of the 373 courses offered to this demographic were courses that were in course catalogues before the Plus 50 initiative). However, redesigning and developing new courses is a more popular strategy for *non-credit* courses than it is for *credit* courses. Again, this is due to the fact that colleges can more easily innovate in the non-credit arena, as the process for developing credit courses is much more time-intensive, and requires review and approval from the academic side of the institution.

We can also see from Exhibit 25 that mentor colleges had much greater average growth in marketing existing courses than did demonstration colleges. Since mentor colleges often have a longer history of offering courses to the plus 50 population, this growth likely indicates mentor colleges' ability to draw from a sizeable pre-existing course load and market these classes to plus 50 students as a result of the Plus 50 Initiative.

Unique Non-Credit Workforce Training Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 24

Number of Courses Offered
(All Colleges)

	Baseline	Year One
Newly developed courses (n=9)	8	29
Redesigned courses (n=8)	4	15
Existing courses marketed (n=11)	18	329
All workforce training non-credit courses (n=11)	30	373

Exhibit 25

Increase in Average Number of Courses Offered
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)
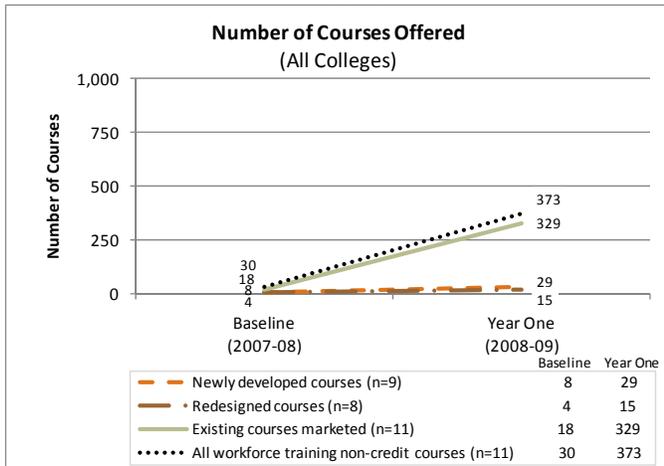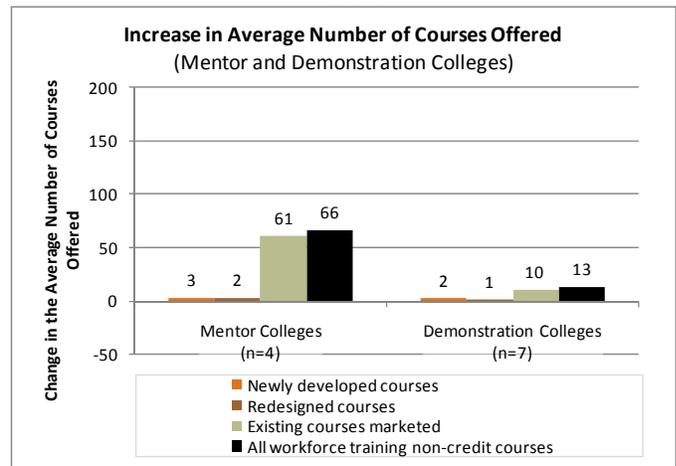
Exhibit 26 below shows the growth across colleges in the total number of non-credit workforce training courses offered to plus 50 students, and Exhibit 27 shows the average increase in this number, separated out by mentor and demonstration colleges. Across 11 colleges, the capacity to serve the plus 50 population with non-credit courses grew from 98 to 801 in the first year (with the number in year one being mostly accounted for by 687 existing courses that were marketed for this population). As with Exhibit 25 above, we see that mentor colleges showed greater average growth in their total capacity to offer non-credit workforce training courses to plus 50 students.

Total Non-Credit Workforce Training Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 26

Number of Courses Offered
(All Colleges)

	Baseline	Year One
Newly developed courses (n=9)	17	55
Redesigned courses (n=8)	9	59
Existing courses marketed (n=11)	72	687
All workforce training non-credit courses (n=11)	98	801

Exhibit 27

Increase in Average Number of Courses Offered
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)
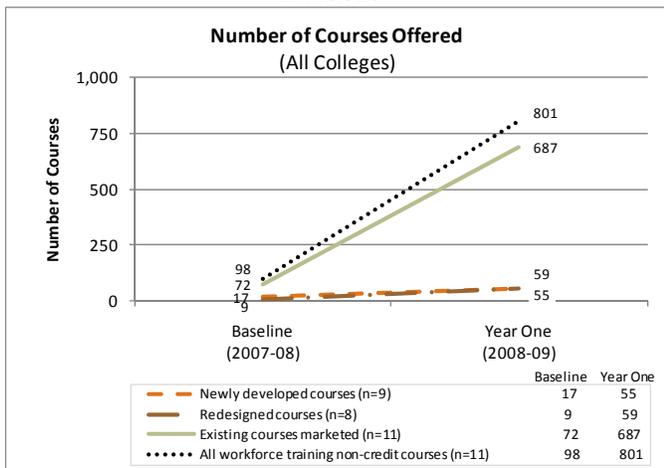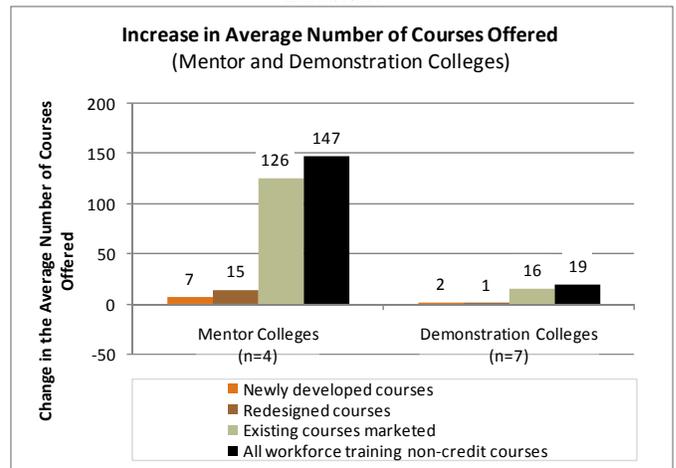
Computer Courses for the Plus 50 Student

One type of workforce training course deserves special mention: computer courses tailored to plus 50 students to provide them with a newfound level of comfort with technology. Some experts see lack of comfort with computers as "the biggest educational barrier to

> While learning new technology, I became more relaxed with using the computer.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

postsecondary education" for plus 50 adults,[17] and it can be a barrier to advancing one's career as well. Offering a computer course specifically for plus 50 students is a popular approach among the grantee colleges, and they have taken creative approaches to this class. One college helps plus 50 learners overcome their fear of computers by offering the "Computers for the Terrified" course. The course gives plus 50 learners background on computing concepts as well as hands-on experience with basic computer skills, Windows programs, and file management. Plus 50 learners can also enroll in the follow-up course, "Beyond Computers for the Terrified."

Another college offers an innovative intergenerational Keyboarding and Basic Computer Operations class designed for plus 50 adults who have little or no experience using a computer. The course is delivered by high school students who are recruited and trained to teach plus 50 learners how computers work, how they are used, and the difference between hardware and software.

Survey data showed that students found the technology skills courses to be very valuable: 88% of courses were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with the basic computer courses targeted to meet the needs of plus 50 learners (see Exhibit 28). These computer courses geared to the needs and learning styles of plus 50 students aim to provide basic instruction in a supportive environment that makes the students feel much more comfortable and confident about using computers. They can then use these skills in a work context, and add specific technology skills to their resumes. Students appreciated all of these aspects of the course – specifically calling out the fact that their comfort level with technology had increased greatly. One student wrote that the classes "made me feel more secure – I have always been scared of Word and email and now I'm not."

Students also very much appreciated the ways in which the technology classes helped to make them more competitive in the job market. They were able to learn the skills that are commonly required in the workplace, and then in turn were able to place those skills on a resume. What students learned in the computer classes also simply bolstered their confidence – and confidence is critical during a job search.

> [The class] increased my comfort level on the computer.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Exhibit 28

Plus 50 Participant Satisfaction with Basic Computer Trainings
(n=206)

Not at all, 13%

Very Much, 56%

Somewhat, 32%
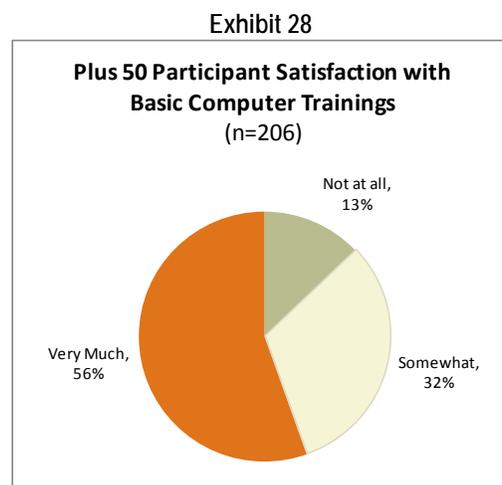
> The classes helped me to prepare to re-enter the job market by improving my computer skills.
>
> Learning Word and Excel [made me] feel more confident in getting a job.
>
> *Plus 50 Participants*

Enrollment of Plus 50 Students in Workforce Training Courses

Just as there were dramatic increases in the numbers of workforce training courses offered, there were large increases in *enrollment* for these courses from baseline to year one as well. The number of plus 50 students enrolled at five colleges in Plus 50 program-related credit courses increased from 455 to 1,464. The number of plus 50 students enrolled at 11 colleges in non-credit Plus 50 program-related courses increased from 367 to 1,766. Please refer to Exhibit 29 below.

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[17] American Council on Education. (2007). *Reinvesting in the Third Age: Older Adults and Higher Education.*

Enrollment of Plus 50 Students in Workforce Training Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 29	Exhibit 30

Exhibit 29

Number of Plus 50 Students Enrolled
(All Colleges)

455
367
1,766
1,464

Baseline (2007-08) — Year One (2008-09)

Credit courses (n=5) — Non-credit ourses (n=11)

Exhibit 30

Increase in the Average Number of Plus 50 Students Enrolled
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

Mentor Colleges: 113 (n=1), 125 (n=4)
Demonstration Colleges: 224 (n=4), 129 (n=7)

Credit courses — Non-credit courses
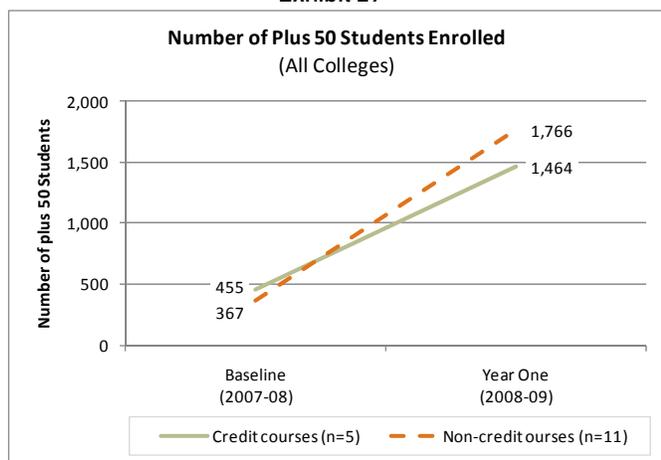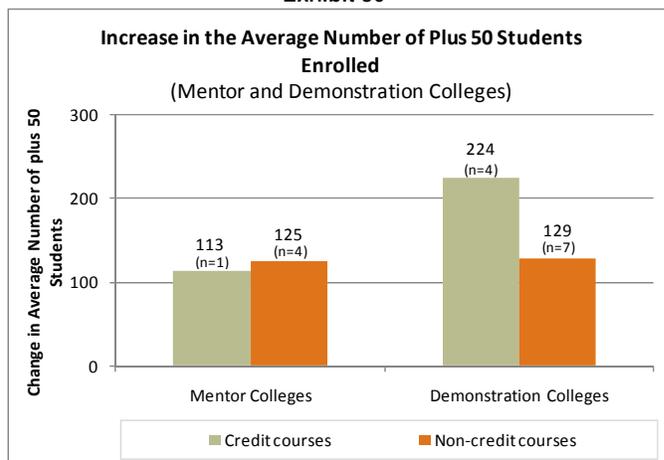
Developing and Expanding Career Services for Plus 50 Students

Research into plus 50 students at community colleges shows when plus 50 students use career services for the "standard student," these services fall short.[18] Looking for a job, updating job search skills, or changing careers is a very different thing for those 50 and over than it is for those in their 20s and 30s, or even those in their 40s. For career services to truly meet the needs of plus 50 workers, they need to be tailored to this age group. As part of their career services program implementation, the Plus 50 colleges have been working to make sure that their services are tailored specifically to the needs, interests, and objectives of the plus 50 client with new career goals. This section of the report discusses the progress they have made in their first year of program implementation, and provides examples of promising practices.

Career Counseling and Career Workshops

In the first year of implementation, five colleges offered career counseling services to plus 50 clients, and three colleges offered career workshops. For both of these types of services, there was growth in the number of colleges offering these services when compared to the baseline year (although one mentor college that offered career workshops in the baseline year did not offer them during year one).

> [What was valuable to me was] refreshing the job search procedure and fine-tuning my resume. [...] It gave me energy to move out of old habits; a fresh outlook on the future.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Exhibit 31

Growth in the Number of Colleges with Career Counseling and Workshop Services for Plus 50 Students (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Career Counseling	Mentor Colleges	1	3
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2
Career Workshops	Mentor Colleges	2	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2

---

[18] Portland Community College Taskforce on Aging. (2007). *Boomers go to College: A Report on the Survey of Students 40 and Older.*

As more colleges are offering these services, and as colleges with these services are expanding the number of clients that they serve, we are seeing significant growth in the number of plus 50 clients who are served. For career counseling, there was one college serving 20 clients in the baseline year, and five colleges serving 203 clients in year one. For career workshops, there were two colleges serving 62 clients in the baseline year, and three colleges serving 322 clients in year one. Please refer to Exhibit 32.

When we look at the growth in the average number of clients served broken out by mentor and demonstration college, we see that mentor and demonstration colleges show similar growth for career counseling (see Exhibit 33). However, growth in the average number of clients served through career workshops at demonstration colleges is much larger than at mentor colleges.

Career Counseling and Career Workshops
(Changes from Baseline to Year One in Number of Clients Served)
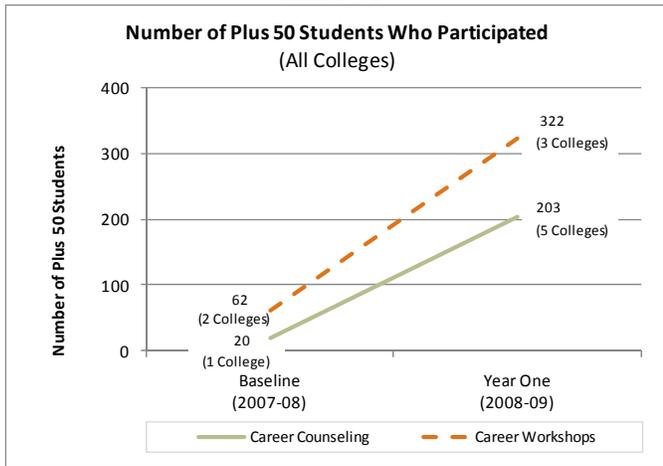
Exhibit 32	Exhibit 33
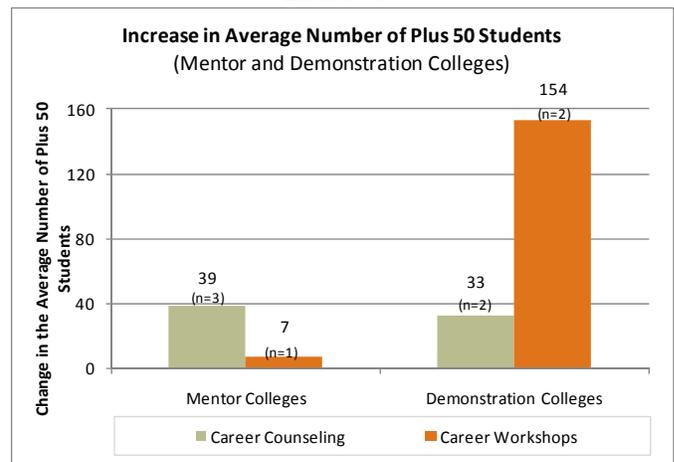
One college has a series of career workshops offered, with topics rotating each week. The workshop topics include: resume writing, interviewing skills, career research, internet job search, and networking. These workshops are not generic – they are designed specifically to help "the mature worker face the challenges of obtaining employment after the age of 50."

> The resume writing workshop ... was immensely helpful. Especially having someone else look at [my resume] and give me pointers on improving it. I've been getting more calls lately.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Support in Finding Job Openings: Job Listings, Job Matching, and Job Fairs

The table below shows the growth in the number of colleges offering specific services that support plus 50 clients in locating job openings they can apply for. There is only one college offering job listing in year one, and that college offered it during the baseline year as well. This is a less popular approach than job matching: job matching is a service in which staff work to link prospective employees to employers. No colleges offered this during the baseline year, and the number grew to three colleges in year one. Only one college had a job fair that was tailored to plus 50 participants in the baseline year, and four had them in year one. Please refer to Exhibit 34 below.

Colleges also reported on the number of employers that worked with them in developing these supports for their plus 50 clients. There was little change in job listing: ten employers were on the list during the baseline year, and nine during year one. With the growth in the number of colleges offering the other two services, there was more growth in employer participation as well. For job matching, the three colleges

newly implementing this service worked with seven employers during year one. For job fairs, one college worked with 88 employers during the baseline year, and four colleges worked with 192 employers during year one.

Exhibit 34

Growth in the Number of Colleges
with Services to Support Plus 50 Students in Finding Job Openings
(Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)

Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Job Listing	Mentor Colleges	1	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	0
Job Matching	Mentor Colleges	0	1
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2
Job Fairs	Mentor Colleges	1	2
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2

Exhibits 35 and 36 below show the change from baseline to year one in terms of the number of clients served by the job listing and job matching services. Exhibit 35 shows that the number of clients served by the job listing service was approximately the same in both years (down to 50 from 54). For job matching, the number of clients served went from zero to 76. Exhibit 36 shows that the mentor college served more clients than did the two demonstration colleges (on average).

Job Listing and Job Matching
(Changes from Baseline to Year One in Number of Clients Served)

Exhibit 35	Exhibit 36

To provide support to plus 50 clients in terms of job matching, one college leverages its strong relationships with the school boards in two local counties. Working with these school boards, the college has developed a program to help plus 50 individuals with a temporary teaching certificate find permanent teaching jobs in reading, math, and science. The college works to recruit plus 50 adults who are still contemplating teaching full-time, and trains them to teach in high-need subject areas. After completing 21 credit hours of classroom instruction and field work, partners from the two school boards assist with the placement of graduates.

One college has collaborated with its local workforce system to host several job fairs during the first year of the grant. While this job fair is open to people of all ages, employers valuing the workforce experience that comes with age place a tent sign in their information booths that say "Plus 50 Friendly."

Providing Services to Entrepreneurs

When some consider their careers in the third stage of life, they are interested not in landing another job, but in working for themselves. Several colleges have created offerings tailored to plus 50 entrepreneurs. In the baseline year, one college offered such services; during the first year, this number grew to four (all four colleges were newly offering these services in year one; the college offering it in the baseline year discontinued the service).

Exhibit 37

Number of Colleges with Career Development Services for Plus 50 Students (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Services to entrepreneurs	Mentor Colleges	0	1
	Demonstration Colleges	1	3

The number of students who participated in these services to entrepreneurs grew dramatically in year one: from five during the baseline year to 118 during year one. Please refer to Exhibits 38 and 39 below.

Services to Entrepreneurs
(Changes from Baseline to Year One in Number of Clients Served)

Exhibit 38

Number of Plus 50 Students Who Participated
(All Colleges)

Exhibit 39

Increase in Average Number of Plus 50 Students
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)
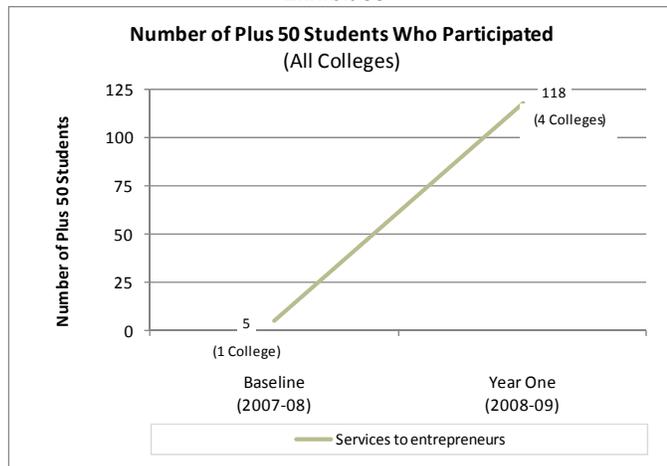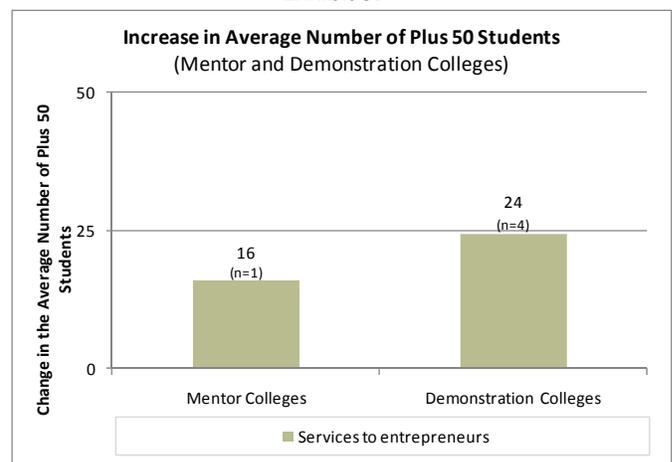
One college has been building a partnership with SCORE, a group of former business executives known as the "Counselors to America's Small Businesses." As a result of this partnership, SCORE counselors are coming to campus to work with plus 50 students interested in making career changes and starting their own businesses. This college also offered a workshop for plus 50 students entitled: "Are you ready for a change – is 'entrepreneur' the next step?"

Another college has developed an intensive six-week course called "Plus 50 Entrepreneur" that teaches the principles of small business ownership and operations. Topics include business terms, forms and risks of ownership, marketing, record keeping, legal aspects and insurance needs, finding capital, financial planning, and tax considerations.

Reaching out to Employers to Create a Pipeline to Employment

Several colleges are not only working with individuals to help them build skills and conduct a job search, but are also creating connections with employers, and linking programs with potential employment. From baseline to year one, the number of colleges using this strategy grew from one to five (see Exhibit 40).

Exhibit 40

Number of Colleges with Career Development Services for Plus 50 Students (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Outreach to employers	Mentor Colleges	1	3
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2

For example, one college works with employers who need tax preparers. Plus 50 program staff work with these employers to develop the curriculum for the tax preparation courses. These companies also provide the training materials, and sometimes provide the instructors as well. Then, at the end of the class, those students with the best test scores are hired into the companies that helped develop the course.

For another college, the entire program is designed to make connections between training and an employer: the National Park Service (NPS). The college has partnered with NPS to create a training program that includes both classroom and field training with NPS rangers. Partners include Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Badlands National Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, and Wind Cave National Park. After completing the program, participants are qualified applicants for volunteer opportunities and seasonal jobs as park guides and interpretive rangers – both locally and nationwide.

> In our training programs, we have training partners that work with us on designing curriculum for training programs. We do that so we're sure that when we put people in the field that they've been trained in a way that employers will be receptive to [hiring] them.
>
> *Mentor College*

> We are proud to partner with the National Park Service to train those who are plus 50 for interesting job opportunities.
>
> *Demonstration College*

How has Plus 50 programming helped students reach their career objectives?

Plus 50 students participating in Plus 50 programming filled out surveys that asked them to rate the extent to which taking workforce training courses and using the career services had helped them meet their career goals. Students were also asked open-ended questions about the strengths of the programming, and how the programming could be improved. The results are extremely positive, with students reporting that both the courses and career services are of high quality, and they are largely receiving the support they need to work toward their career objectives.[19]

> The classes made me more aware of where I wanted to be going in my career at this time in my life. Also reviewing my skills and abilities, personality traits and strengths, I was able to direct my energy toward solid decisions.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

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[19] Note that respondents were offered a "does not apply: this was not my goal" option, so that they would not provide "disagreement" answers when courses or services did not meet a goal due to the fact that the course or service was not *designed* to meet that particular goal.

Student Satisfaction with Workforce Training Courses and Programs

The results of the student surveys reveal that students are very satisfied with what they are getting out of their workforce training courses. Exhibit 41 shows that about 90% agree that the courses have helped them to acquire new skills or improve upon their current job skills, and 81% agree that the coursework is helping them make progress toward a license or certificate. In addition, 87% say that taking the training courses is helping them to prepare for a job search. The results in Exhibit 42 show that a remarkable 72% agree that their workforce training program has helped them to get hired into a job. Smaller proportions of

respondents say that workforce training courses have helped them to climb the ladder in jobs that they already have, although 63% do say that courses have helped them to advance in their jobs. Fewer than half of the respondents say that courses have helped them to get a promotion or a raise (46% and 49% respectively). Even the results with the lowest average marks demonstrate that workforce training courses are helpful. Taken together the results from this group of respondents show that these programs are resulting in very positive outcomes for students.

Plus 50 Workforce Training Programs Helped Me To…

Exhibit 41

	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Acquire new job skills (n=105)	5%	7%	30%	59%
Improve my technology skills (n=93)	5%	7%	31%	57%
Improve my job skills (n=104)	5%	6%	35%	55%
Work toward obtaining a license or certificate (n=73)	10%	10%	26%	55%
Prepare for my job search (n=107)	5%	8%	33%	54%

Percentage of Respondents

Exhibit 42

	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Land a job (n=91)	15%	13%	32%	40%
Advance in my job (n=41)	22%	15%	39%	24%
Get a promotion (n=37)	24%	30%	24%	22%
Get a raise (n=37)	24%	27%	30%	19%

Percentage of Respondents

Student Satisfaction with Career Development Services

The results of the student surveys show that students have high levels of satisfaction with how career development services are helping them to adequately prepare for a job search. Between about 75% and about 85% agree that the services have helped them in several areas related to this: exploring new career options; advancing a career or embarking on a new career; defining career objectives; learning new job search skills; preparing for a job search; and finding jobs to apply for. Please refer to Exhibits 43-44 below. A comparison of the results for how the services have helped students land a job (47% agree) with how *training* programs have helped students land a job (72%, as reported

above) suggests that training is a critical element in actually getting hired – and that training is more helpful in getting hired than are career services. Nevertheless, these results are showing very positive student outcomes: career services are supporting students in learning job search skills, preparing for a job search, locating job openings, and finding a job.

Plus 50 Career Development Services Helped Me To…

Exhibit 43

	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Explore new career options (n=88)	3%	11%	40%	46%
Explore starting my own business (n=39)	23%	28%	21%	28%
Advance my career or embark on a new career (n=76)	5%	16%	33%	46%
Define my career objectives (n=83)	5%	13%	41%	41%

Exhibit 44

	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Learn new job search skills (n=88)	5%	11%	39%	46%
Prepare for my job search (n=88)	2%	11%	42%	44%
Locate jobs I might apply for (n=77)	10%	16%	35%	39%
Land a job (n=61)	20%	33%	13%	34%

Some students used career services in order to explore entrepreneurial interests. The student feedback for these services was generally not as positive as it was for the other aspects of career services. Fewer than half (49%) of the respondents agreed that the services had helped them to explore starting their own business (see Exhibit 43). This could be an area for improvement that some of the grantee colleges may want to concentrate on during year two of their Plus 50 program implementation.

Getting Adequately Prepared for the Job Search

In their open-ended comments, students called attention to the great help the career services offered that supported them in preparing for a job search. Repeatedly, students listed that they had received assistance to: define career objectives; move one's career in a new direction; create or update resumes; learn job-hunting skills; network; learn how to efficiently look for job openings; and use technology to hunt for jobs.

> Attending the workshop on resume writing was most beneficial and helped me rewrite my ten year old resume.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Feeling Supported in the Job Search

Students found that the support offered by career services was very valuable. Several students spoke about how wonderful the staff are. Several wrote about the fact that they appreciated the one-to-one counseling they received, and one wrote that "counselors understand my situation." Also, students felt that they were warmly received – for example, they valued "the words of encouragement" and the "moral support." Another student said that the most valuable attributes of the career services were "the friendly and helpful people working in the Plus 50 office."

> The staff was great and helped me meet the goal of what I would do when I grew up.
>
> [I had] abundant support from staff who exhibited a sincere desire to help me succeed … and I did.
>
> *Plus 50 Participants*

Career Services Tailored to the Plus 50 Age Group

Grantee colleges are making strides in tailoring career services to the needs of the plus 50 population. In open-ended feedback, several clients wrote about how much they appreciated the attention that was paid to the assets of, and challenges that face, the plus 50 job seeker. It is clear that one of the most important determinants of program quality is the ability of the staff to address the particular issues that plus 50 individuals face in today's job market. When clients felt that staff fully understood their situation, they were very satisfied with the services that they received.

The more critical feedback offered by some clients is further evidence that staffs' skills are very important to program quality. While some gave the career services high marks, others wrote that the services needed additional tailoring. One person felt that there was a need for a staff person "that is our age […] and understands what we are going through." Others agreed that there was a need for staff people who were themselves over 50. Others simply pointed out that they needed staff who had the training and resources to work effectively with this age cohort – one said, "the career counselor was not helpful. She was not experienced in helping mature adults."

Another important aspect of tailoring career services to the plus 50 student turned out to be the extent to which a comfortable space was created for peers to come together. A common piece of feedback was around the fact that clients felt they were no longer alone – that there were others out there who were sharing the same experience.

> [What was valuable to me was] speaking finally with a person who understands the age problem and job market in our society.
>
> [The staff person] was very understanding of what the job search for someone over 50 might require and was very encouraging and helpful.
>
> *Plus 50 Participants*

> [What would better meet my needs is] having some staff members who understand the special challenges of the over 50 group.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

> [What was valuable to me was] finding that there are others in the same position I am in.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Developing Connections with Employers that Plus 50 Participants can Leverage to Find Jobs

When asked about what could be improved about the career services, many students wrote about the need for staff to provide additional connections with employers. There are plus 50 clients of career services who certainly struggle in the job market. This is common with the employment outlook in 2009, but clients are aware that these problems become more difficult as the job-seeker ages. One participant said, "the difficulty of finding employment increases each year after 50."

> Staff with knowledge of employers who value the experience of mature employees is very crucial.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

What many clients said that they wanted from career services are staff who have deep knowledge of the employers who *would* find their work and life experience to be assets. That way they could connect plus 50 job applicants with potential employers – employers who would have a sincere interest in hiring them. One person filling out the survey had this despondent comment: "Are there employers who value the experience of mature employees? I've attended your job fair and found there were few employers [who did] other than employment agencies, and they were primarily looking for temporary workers." Another asked for career services staff to "learn which companies may hire a plus 50 person."

> Mainly, [career development services could better meet my needs] if they have more contact with employers who honestly want to hire older employees, and help us get those good paying jobs.
>
> We need more placement possibilities: where, when, and who might be looking for these skills in older individuals.
>
> *Plus 50 Participants*

Conclusion

All 13 colleges implemented workforce training and career services programming in year one. The number of courses these colleges offered as part of programming tailored to plus 50 students showed enormous growth for both credit and non-credit courses. Reflecting the growth in course offerings, enrollment grew a great deal as well. Colleges also worked hard to tailor career services to plus 50 clients, developing career workshops and career counseling approaches specifically for this age cohort. In year one, Plus 50 workforce training courses served over 3,200 students and career services served over 700 students[20].

The results of student surveys show that customers are extremely satisfied with the workforce training courses and career services. Large majorities of survey respondents reported that courses and services helped them to acquire skills, make decisions about new career directions, prepare for the job search, and land new jobs. These survey results show that community colleges were able to meet an important need of plus 50 students, especially as the economic downturn increased the demand for courses and services that would be able to support this age cohort in finding employment.

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[20] There is likely an overlap in the count of participants served for workforce training courses and career services as participants may have accessed both courses *and* services. Similarly, students may have taken both credit and non-credit courses in the same semester and they may have utilized more than one service provided.

V. Learning and Enrichment

Background

Learning and enrichment courses include general studies (such as math and foreign language) or personal interests (such as cooking and yoga) that students enroll in for academic development, to relieve stress from their busy lives, and for personal enrichment.

One of the motivations of the plus 50 population in attending community colleges is simply to "learn for learning's sake." This is the idea that the act of learning – whether or not it contributes to another utilitarian goal, such as advancing a career – has value in and of itself.[21] Plus 50 students are taking these courses out of intellectual curiosity, for pleasure, or to take on an intellectual challenge. Sometimes these courses relate to (or spark) a career interest, but furthering a career is usually not the primary motivation for enrolling in them. The courses range from horticulture to art history; from wine-tasting to biology. Some enrichment courses (like wine-tasting) are more likely to be non-credit ones offered through Continuing Education, and others (like biology) are more likely to be credit courses offered through the Academic Division.

Non-credit enrichment courses are often designed to appeal to students looking for personal interest courses taken purely for enjoyment, and colleges interested in attracting plus 50 students see these courses as ones that are easily marketed to this demographic group. This is because plus 50 students are typically not looking to accumulate college credits, and for those students that are looking for personal interest courses, non-credit enrichment courses fit the bill. Consequently, enrichment offerings represent the "low-hanging fruit" of creating programming for plus 50 learners. And indeed, enrichment programming is a popular focus area among the grantee colleges, with 10 of the 13 colleges[22] including it explicitly as part of their programming courses related to enrichment, personal interest, and general studies.

What Colleges Include in Their Learning and Enrichment Programs

Plus 50 learning and enrichment courses serve a wide variety of plus 50 student interests and objectives. Students may take credit courses in the pursuit of an associate's degree; they may take courses that dovetail with career advancement goals; and they may take these courses purely for personal interest. Colleges have put a lot of effort into offering a great diversity of course content and formats tailored to the needs of plus 50 learners.

In addition to offering courses that meet plus 50 learners' personal interests, several colleges are repurposing enrichment courses to address economic concerns. The financial crisis has forced many plus 50 adults to reconsider the feasibility of their retirement plans. Many are seeking to re-career or re-enter the workforce, and demand for courses that allow plus 50 learners to explore possible career interests is high. To meet this need, some grantee colleges have implemented workshops and courses that they still consider to be technically part of enrichment, but that focus on employment and economic concerns. Workshop content includes retirement planning, writing children's books, and cost-saving techniques such as how to cut your grocery bill in half, and how to buy a car in today's economy.

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[21] American Council on Education. (2008). Mapping New Directions: Higher Education for Older Adults. Retrieved on February 3, 2009 from: http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/CLLL/Reinvesting/MapDirections.pdf

[22] Ten grantee colleges offered Plus 50 learning and enrichment track programming in year one of the initiative. Two additional colleges offered Plus 50 courses that did not fall under workforce training or career development so they classified them as enrichment.

In the first year of the initiative, Plus 50 colleges developed new learning and enrichment courses, and also enhanced existing enrichment programming for plus 50 students. At baseline, nine colleges already had some learning and enrichment programming specifically for plus 50 students already in place, and during the first year, 12 colleges enhanced and/or developed new learning and enrichment opportunities for plus 50 students (see Exhibit 45).

> We're on track with enrichment. That was our strength, that wasn't an area we chose to grow.
>
> *Mentor College*

Exhibit 45

Number of Colleges Offering Enrichment Courses for Plus 50 Students (Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)			
Course Type	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Credit	Mentor Colleges	0	1
	Demonstration Colleges	1	1
Non-credit	Mentor Colleges	4	4
	Demonstration Colleges	5	7

On average, colleges decreased the number of unique and total credit courses and increased the number of non-credit courses for plus 50 students. Plus 50 student enrollment showed similar trends, with decreases in credit enrollment and increases in non-credit enrollment.

Learning and Enrichment Credit Courses

Of the 12 grantee colleges offering Plus 50 learning and enrichment programming, only two had a focus on credit courses. Their results are shown in Exhibits 46 and 47 below. During the first year of the initiative, Plus 50 colleges decreased the number of unique credit courses that they offer to plus 50 students. This reduction can be explained in part by the decrease in demand for learning courses that has accompanied the large increase in demand for workforce training courses and career development services. Exhibit 47 shows the change in the number of unique learning credit courses offered, broken out for mentor and demonstration colleges. The one mentor college offering credit courses has increased its course offerings by marketing more existing courses to plus 50 learners. The demonstration college offering credit courses for plus 50 students has seen decreases in newly developed courses *and* in existing courses marketed to plus 50 learners. The demonstration college has discontinued the marketing of 21 existing unique courses to plus 50 learners, which accounts for about three-fourths of the reduction.

Unique Credit Learning and Enrichment Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One) [23]

Exhibit 46

Number of Courses Offered
(All Colleges)

- – – Newly developed courses (n=1)
- ·–· Redesigned courses (n=1)
- ——— Existing courses marketed (n=2)
- ········ All learning and enrichment credit courses (n=2)

Exhibit 47

Change in the Average Number of Courses Offered
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

- ■ Newly developed courses
- ■ Redesigned courses
- ■ Existing courses marketed
- ■ All learning and enrichment credit courses
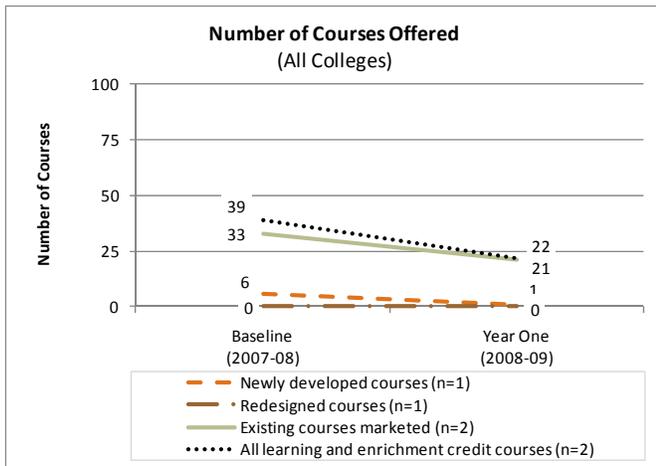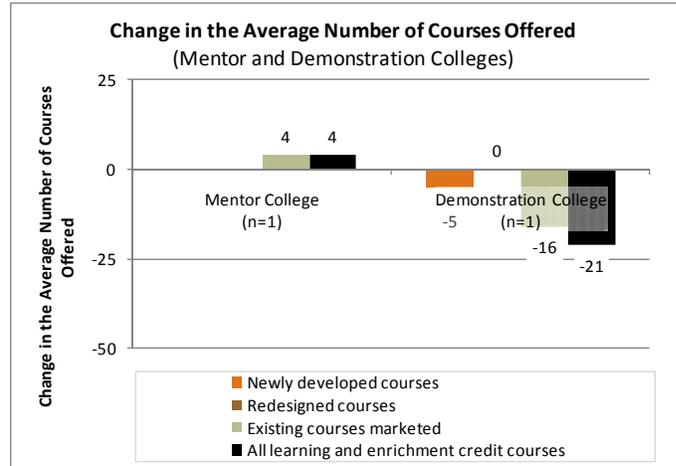
The pattern is similar when looking at the *total* number of credit courses (see Exhibit 48). For these two colleges, the course capacity of credit courses declined a great deal between baseline and year one. Again, this is mostly explained by the fact that the demonstration college no longer offered (as part of its Plus 50 programming) in year one many of the courses it had offered during the baseline year. Several factors can explain this. This college may have decided that these courses, formerly marketed to or developed for plus 50 students, were not sufficiently tailored to students in this age cohort. Also, colleges have typically put a greater emphasis on non-credit courses.

Total Credit Learning and Enrichment Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 48

Number of Courses Offered
(All Colleges)

- – – Newly developed courses (n=1)
- ·–· Redesigned courses (n=1)
- ——— Existing courses marketed (n=2)
- ········ All learning and enrichment credit courses (n=2)

Exhibit 49

Change in the Average Number of Courses Offered
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

- ■ Newly developed courses
- ■ Redesigned courses
- ■ Existing courses marketed
- ■ All learning and enrichment credit courses
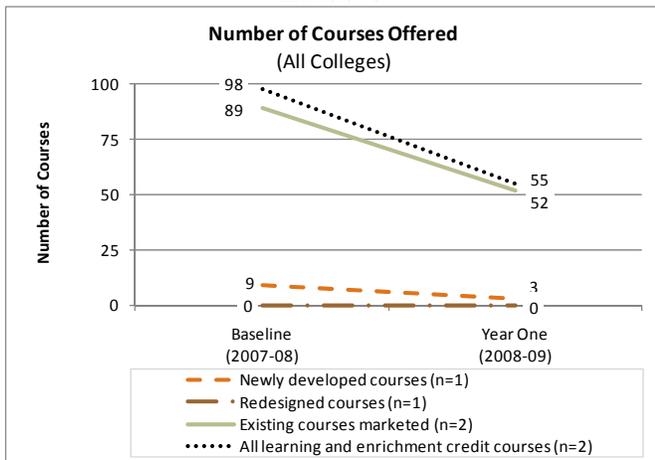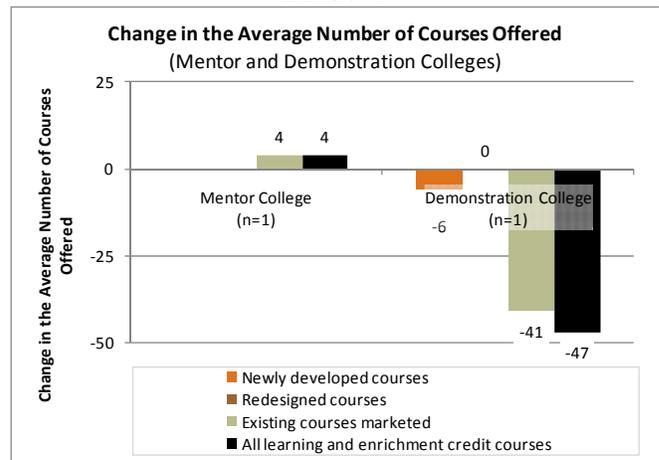
Learning and Enrichment Non-Credit Courses

Although colleges have scaled back their *credit* learning courses, there were slight increases in non-credit enrichment programming during year one. The total number of Plus 50 non-credit enrichment courses in the aggregate portfolio across the 12 colleges rose from 1,288 in the baseline year to 1,376 in year one (see

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[23] Though only ten grantee colleges offered learning and enrichment tracks as part of their Plus 50 grant, two additional colleges reported data on enrichment courses that supplemented workforce training. Data on all twelve colleges counting enrichment courses as part of their programming is included as part of this report.

Exhibit 50). The average number of unique non-credit enrichment courses offered to plus 50 learners increased among demonstration colleges, but *decreased* among mentor colleges. On average, demonstration colleges offered an additional 14 unique non-credit courses and mentor colleges offered six fewer non-credit courses (see Exhibit 51). A significant proportion of the change for both mentor and demonstration colleges can be accounted for by examining the change in the number of existing unique courses marketed to plus 50 learners. Mentor colleges tended to take these courses out of their portfolio, and demonstration colleges tended to add them.

Unique Non-credit Learning and Enrichment Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 50	Exhibit 51

Exhibit 50 — Number of Courses Offered (All Colleges)

Baseline (2007-08) to Year One (2008-09):
- All learning and enrichment non-credit courses (n=12): 1,288 → 1,376
- Existing courses marketed (n=12): 1,010 → 1,022
- Newly developed courses (n=12): 278 → 339
- Redesigned courses (n=11): 0 → 16

Exhibit 51 — Change in the Average Number of Courses Offered (Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

Mentor Colleges (n=4): Newly developed courses 9, Redesigned courses 3, Existing courses marketed -18, All learning and enrichment non-credit courses -6

Demonstration Colleges (n=8): Newly developed courses 3, Redesigned courses 1, Existing courses marketed 11, All learning and enrichment non-credit courses 14

Exhibits 52 and 53 indicate that even though colleges have scaled back development and redesign of unique enrichment courses, they have been capitalizing on the courses that they developed and redesigned by offering them frequently. Though mentor colleges decreased the number of unique non-credit enrichment courses marketed to plus 50 learners, they increased the number of times remaining non-credit enrichment courses were offered. Both mentor and demonstration colleges show average increases in total non-credit learning and enrichment courses, across newly developed, redesigned, and marketed courses.

Total Non-credit Learning and Enrichment Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 52	Exhibit 53

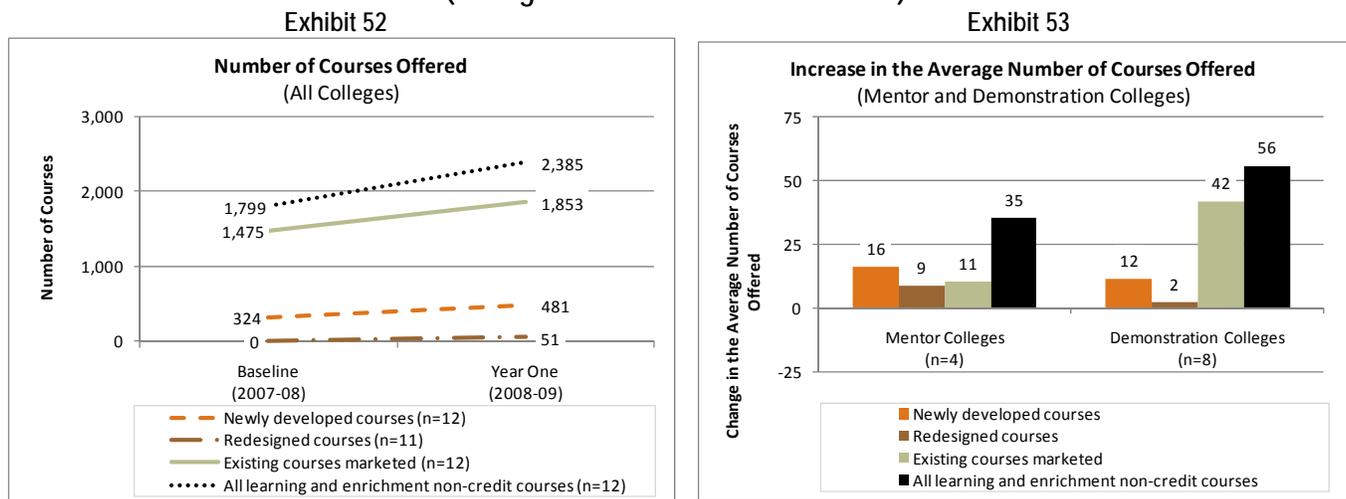
Exhibit 52 — Number of Courses Offered (All Colleges)

Baseline (2007-08) to Year One (2008-09):
- All learning and enrichment non-credit courses (n=12): 1,799 → 2,385
- Existing courses marketed (n=12): 1,475 → 1,853
- Newly developed courses (n=12): 324 → 481
- Redesigned courses (n=11): 0 → 51

Exhibit 53 — Increase in the Average Number of Courses Offered (Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

Mentor Colleges (n=4): Newly developed courses 16, Redesigned courses 9, Existing courses marketed 11, All learning and enrichment non-credit courses 35

Demonstration Colleges (n=8): Newly developed courses 12, Redesigned courses 2, Existing courses marketed 42, All learning and enrichment non-credit courses 56
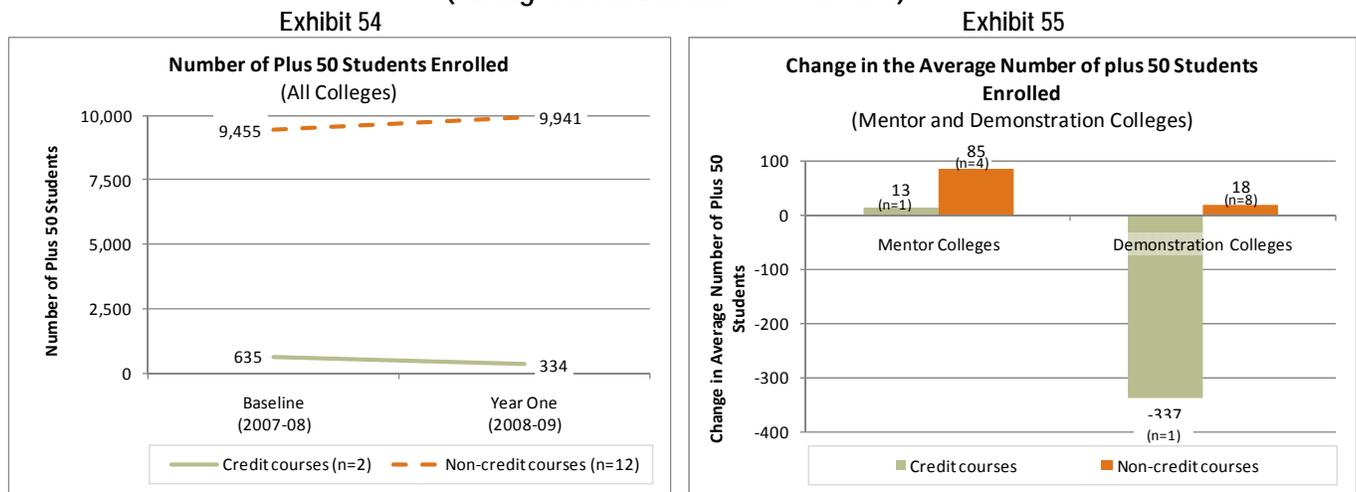
Despite changes in need and demand, many colleges continue to develop innovative enrichment programming for their plus 50 students. Plus 50 program staff enlisted the help of other departments within their colleges and collaborated with community partners to develop and implement ideas for innovative enrichment courses. For example, one college designed and piloted wine and cooking courses in a highly specialized kitchen classroom. Plus 50 program staff worked in collaboration with an advisory committee comprised of members from the college and the community. Courses incorporate content on everything from wine tasting to information on local agriculture, ethnic cooking, and nutrition. The college piloted several courses in Spring 2009 and has an extensive curriculum of 14 classes prepared for Fall 2009. The Wine and Cooking School has been featured in several local newspapers. Representatives of the county's wine industry have also shown interest in the program, requesting interviews with Plus 50 program staff.

Enrollment of plus 50 Students in Learning and Enrichment Courses

Total enrollment of plus 50 students in enrichment and learning courses increased from baseline to year one, with 10,275 (9,941 non-credit and 334 credit) plus 50 learners enrolled in grantee colleges' enrichment courses (see Exhibit 54). Enrollment of plus 50 students in non-credit courses increased from baseline to year one, while enrollment in credit courses decreased. Exhibit 55 shows the large decrease in credit enrollment among demonstration colleges as compared to slight increases in non-credit enrollment. In addition, mentor college credit enrollment showed a slight increase.

Enrollment of Plus 50 Students in Learning and Enrichment Courses
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 54

Number of Plus 50 Students Enrolled
(All Colleges)

Exhibit 55

Change in the Average Number of plus 50 Students Enrolled
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

Student Satisfaction with Learning and Enrichment Offerings

Surveys of program participants were designed to measure learning and enrichment outcomes such as identifying as a lifelong learner, generating new excitement about learning, and increasing knowledge. Survey results indicate that plus 50 learners are most interested in taking enrichment courses to increase their knowledge and skills and to keep their minds active. In responses to open-ended questions, plus 50 learners reported that the enrichment classes served their needs by providing a broad range of learning opportunities for building on existing knowledge and skills and pursuing new interests.

> I am retired and want to continue the intellectual and emotional connection that is missing and classes help me be involved and informed.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

In responses to survey questions, program participants talked about how valuable the courses were for providing opportunities for intellectual growth. Almost all Plus 50 program participants agree that the enrichment courses helped them to keep their minds active and increase their knowledge (see Exhibits 56 and 57). In addition, about half (49%) of participants agree that the learning and enrichment courses helped them to move toward earning a degree.

Plus 50 Learning and Enrichment Courses Helped Me To…

Exhibit 56

	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Increase my knowledge (n=304)	1%	2%	26%	71%
Learn new skills (n=285)	2%	4%	33%	61%
Pursue workforce training or career development at this college (n=101)	9%	17%	29%	45%
Move toward earning a degree (n=73)	25%	26%	19%	30%

Percentage of Respondents

Exhibit 57

	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Keep my mind active (n=285)	1%	2%	27%	70%
Enjoy returning to school (n=191)	1%	1%	38%	60%
Find out about additional topics I would like to study more (n=242)	2%	3%	48%	47%
Feel more connected to the community (n=222)	3%	8%	48%	41%

Percentage of Respondents

Plus 50 learners highlighted the value in having courses that provide opportunities for them to build on previous coursework, knowledge, and experience. The courses not only allow plus 50 learners to revisit and augment existing knowledge and interests, but also help plus 50 learners to keep their knowledge and skills current. Many plus 50 learners have already earned degrees, and are looking for courses that will challenge them.

The variety of enrichment programming available at Plus 50 colleges provides opportunities for plus 50 learners to do everything from writing children's books to taking cooking classes to learning new languages. Nearly all survey respondents agree that Plus 50 enrichment classes increased their knowledge and helped them to learn new skills. Plus 50 learners pointed out that the enrichment courses helped them hone their interests and goals and develop plans for pursuing further training or coursework that might contribute to earning a degree or certificate.

In addition to valuing the intellectual stimulation of Plus 50 enrichment courses, students also expressed appreciation for the social aspect of Plus 50 enrichment programming. In responses to open-ended questions, students talked about looking forward to getting out of the house and attending classes with like-minded people. They found that sharing new experiences with other plus 50 learners reduces feelings of isolation, and fosters feelings of community. Plus

> They were the most inspiring, thrilling classes I've taken and I have an M.A. […] Her classes were exactly what I hoped to take during retirement. I felt alive and excited.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

> I learned skills and techniques in an area that I had not had time to pursue prior to retirement. The mature learning is a joy and fills my needs.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

> The social, mental community-building. Being with other intelligent people who are seeking education beyond careers is extremely important to me!
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

50 students were enthusiastic about sharing the learning experience with others.

Plus 50 learning and enrichment programming also includes courses on health and well-being. These courses provide valuable opportunities for students to focus on physical and mental health with other students 50 and older. Participants emphasized the value of having exercise courses tailored to plus 50 learners, since taking exercise courses offered to all age-groups can sometimes be intimidating.

> The exercise environment was suited to my age. I was out of shape and this level of class allowed me to get back into shape within a group of my peers.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

When asked what was most valuable to them about the Plus 50 enrichment classes, participants indicated that the variety, flexibility, sociality, and intellectual stimulation all contributed to a very enjoyable experience. The variety of course schedules at some colleges allowed participants to select from daytime, evening, and weekend classes. In addition, some courses were offered in modified formats, meeting far fewer times and/or over a shorter length of time.

> I tried something I had never tried before. I got to get out of the house and do something besides errands. It gave me something to look forward to.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Plus 50 participants' main suggestion for improving colleges' enrichment offerings was to offer more classes. Plus 50 learners pointed to more course topics and formats that would interest them and also expressed disappointment that some classes they had been looking forward to were cancelled. This indicates that though demand for enrichment and learning may not be as strong as it was before the economic crisis, it is still of great interest among plus 50 learners.

Conclusion

During year one of the initiative, the number of Plus 50 colleges that explicitly included courses related to enrichment, personal interest, and general studies as part of their programming grew from nine to ten. Grantee colleges decreased their credit course offerings, but increased non-credit course offerings. Reflecting the net increase in course offerings, Plus 50 colleges also saw an increase in enrollment in the courses specifically associated with their Plus 50 programs. Plus 50 learning and enrichment courses served a combined total of over 10,000 students in year one[24]. Student surveys show high levels of satisfaction with courses and continued demand for learning and enrichment programming tailored to students 50 and older.

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[24] There is likely an overlap in the count of participants served since students may have taken both credit and non-credit courses in the same semester.

VI. Volunteering Programs

Background

The plus 50 population is highly educated and skilled, and those leaving the workplace have the potential to apply their wisdom, experience, and talents to "doing good."[25] The skills of the plus 50 population represent a critical resource that nonprofits, schools, and faith-based groups can tap into to help meet many societal and environmental needs. And at the same time, volunteering represents an opportunity for plus 50 individuals as well: an opportunity to stay active, engaged, and connected with other people.[26] Baby boomers have higher rates of volunteerism than do previous generations,[27] and continuing to capitalize on their capacity and desire to volunteer will have profound effects for community organizations. However, despite the constant need for skilled volunteers and high interest in volunteering among baby boomers, it can be difficult for plus 50 individuals to connect with meaningful volunteer jobs that are sufficiently challenging and that fully utilize their skill levels. Community colleges can support plus 50 volunteers and community organizations to connect with one another.

What Colleges Include in Their Volunteering Programs

Volunteer programs and services support plus 50 learners in finding opportunities to volunteer their skills and talents in their communities. The grantee colleges support plus 50 individuals in finding and pursuing volunteer opportunities by:
- Providing volunteer listing services;
- Providing volunteer matching services;
- Using plus 50 volunteers for their Plus 50 programs; and
- Compiling volunteer resources into a volunteer resource packet.

These volunteering services, as well as progress on implementation of these volunteering services among Plus 50 colleges, are described in greater detail below.

Developing and Expanding Volunteering Programs for Plus 50 Students

By the end of year one, two colleges offered volunteer listing services and four colleges offered volunteer matching services to connect plus 50 adults with volunteer opportunities (see Exhibit 58 below). In addition, several colleges that are not explicitly implementing the volunteering track are involving plus 50 volunteers in the implementation of their Plus 50 programs: a total of 11 colleges had plus 50 volunteers serving in a variety of capacities for their plus 50 programs during the first year. This is an innovative way that colleges are providing plus 50 members of the community with volunteering opportunities. Furthermore, this demonstrates that nearly all grantee colleges are capitalizing on the perspectives and experiences of plus 50 individuals to improve and enhance their programs for the larger plus 50 population.

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[25]Points of Light Foundation (2004). *50+ Volunteering: Working for Stronger Communities.* Retrieved on February 3, 2009 from: http://www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/programs/50plus/POLF_2004_Boomer_Pub.pdf

[26] Civic Enterprises. (2008). *More to Give: Tapping the Talents of the Baby Boomer, Silent and Greatest Generations.* Retrieved on February 3, 2009 from: http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/general/moretogive.pdf

[27] Corporation for National & Community Service (2007). *Baby Boomers and Volunteering: Findings From Corporation Research.* Retrieved on February 3, 2009 from: http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0307_boomer_research.pdf

Exhibit 58

Number of Colleges with Volunteering Programs for Plus 50 Students
(Among 5 Mentor Colleges and 8 Demonstration Colleges)

Service	College Type	Baseline (2007-08)	Year One (2008-09)
Volunteer listing	Mentor Colleges	1	2
	Demonstration Colleges	0	0
Volunteer matching	Mentor Colleges	1	2
	Demonstration Colleges	0	2
Using plus 50 volunteers[28]	Mentor Colleges	0	5
	Demonstration Colleges	0	6

Volunteer Listing

In the baseline year, one college offered volunteer listing services; during the first year, the number of colleges offering such services grew to two colleges. One college lists volunteer opportunities in their monthly Plus 50 newsletter that is distributed to plus 50 students. Exhibits 59 and 60 below show the growth of Plus 50 volunteer listing services between baseline and year one of the initiative. Among the colleges who provided listings of volunteer opportunities specifically for the plus 50 population, the number of organizations listing volunteer jobs increased from 78 to 88, and the number volunteers using these listing services increased from 128 to 198. On average, 35 more plus 50 students accessed volunteer listing services during the first year of the initiative than they did prior to the initiative.

Volunteer Listing Services
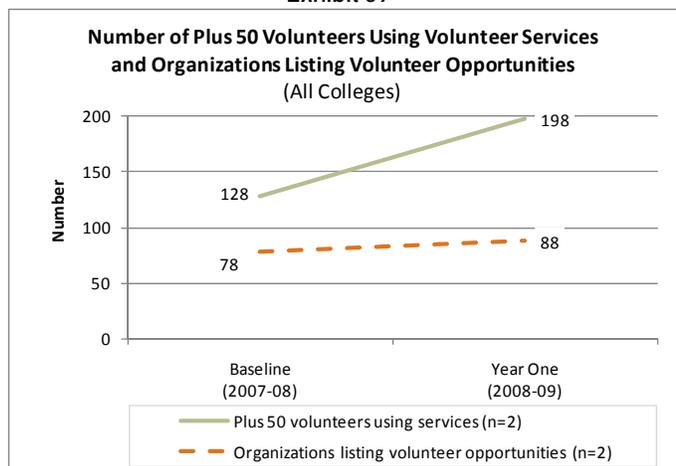### (Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 59

Number of Plus 50 Volunteers Using Volunteer Services and Organizations Listing Volunteer Opportunities (All Colleges)

Exhibit 60

Increase in the Average Number of Plus 50 Volunteers Using Volunteer Services and Organizations Listing Volunteer Opportunities (Mentor Colleges)
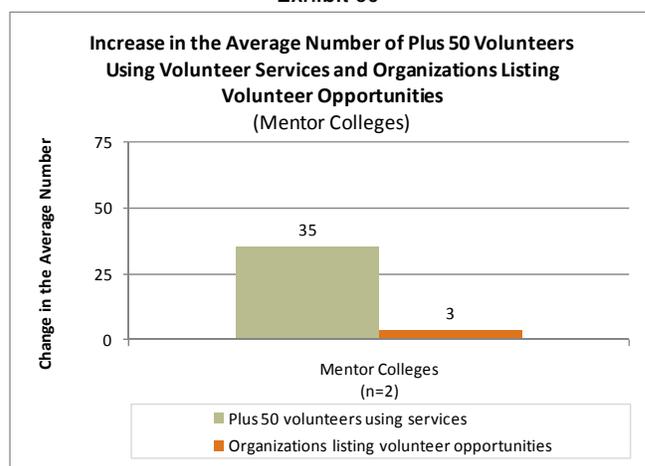
Volunteer Matching Services

In addition to listing available volunteer opportunities for plus 50 students, some colleges are taking their volunteering programs a step further and are actively matching skills of participants to volunteer opportunities that maximize the utilization of those skills. One college already began developing their volunteer matching program in the baseline year by reaching out and developing relationships with 27

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[28] The astute reader may recall that Exhibit 1 shows that seven colleges are implementing the volunteering track. Four additional colleges, that are not explicitly implementing the volunteering track, are using plus 50 volunteers for their Plus 50 programs. These additional colleges are included here in Exhibit 58.

community organizations seeking volunteers. However, the process of matching plus 50 students with volunteer opportunities was implemented for the first time during the first year of the initiative.

The number of colleges with volunteer matching services grew from one college at baseline to four colleges implementing these services in year one. Exhibits 61 and 62 below show significant growth in access and utilization of volunteer matching services. The number of organizations listing volunteer opportunities with grantees more than doubled (from 27 organizations at baseline to 61 organizations at year one). Across the four colleges who offered volunteer matching services, the number of plus 50 students who accessed these services grew to nearly 200 participants at year one. Among these were 106 students who were actually placed in volunteer opportunities. Exhibit 62 shows that both mentor and demonstration colleges served an average of 50 additional students in year one. Demonstration colleges showed greater average growth in the number of plus 50 volunteers actually placed in volunteer opportunities than mentor colleges.

Volunteer Matching Services
(Changes from Baseline to Year One)

Exhibit 61

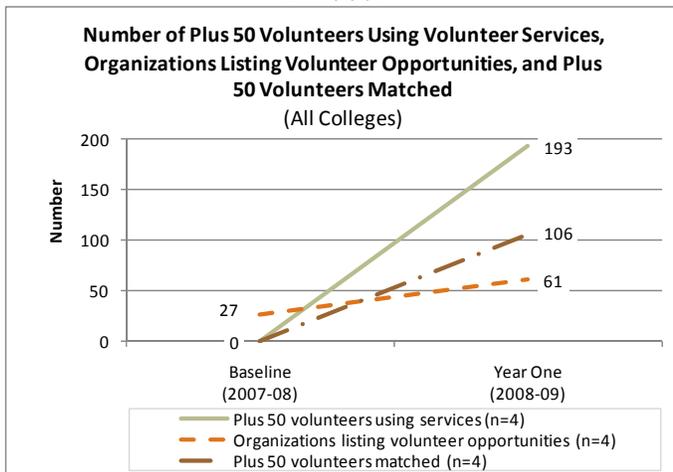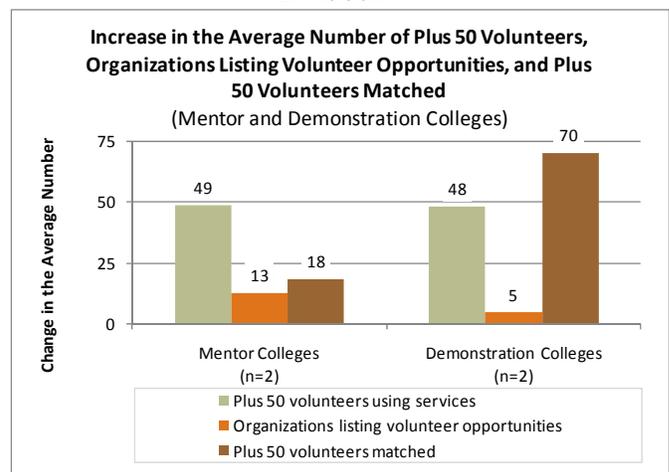**Number of Plus 50 Volunteers Using Volunteer Services, Organizations Listing Volunteer Opportunities, and Plus 50 Volunteers Matched**
(All Colleges)

Exhibit 62

Increase in the Average Number of Plus 50 Volunteers, Organizations Listing Volunteer Opportunities, and Plus 50 Volunteers Matched
(Mentor and Demonstration Colleges)

In response to the college's internal needs, one community college is investing in the development of an electronic volunteer database comprised of plus 50 students interested in volunteering in different capacities on campus. The database includes contact information, educational background, professional and employment background, areas of mentoring interests, and availability. An administrative assistant then facilitates connecting faculty in need of volunteers with interested volunteers. During the pilot phase, 22 plus 50 volunteers were matched to younger students in a communications course where volunteers served as practice interviewees and volunteers also mentored younger students who were participating in service learning projects.

> [The most valuable aspect of volunteering was] being useful to others and staying connected to enthusiastic younger people.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Another community college developed a similar volunteer program in which plus 50 volunteers are matched with fellow students from foreign countries learning English as their second language (ESL). Plus 50 volunteers meet weekly and serve as "conversation partners" to help ESL students practice English and become more familiar with American culture.

Volunteering for Plus 50 Program

In addition to listing and matching students to volunteer opportunities, nearly all Plus 50 grantees have plus 50 adults serving in a variety of capacities for their programs. Across 11 colleges, 215 plus 50 adults contributed to the Plus 50 program, including serving on the college's Plus 50 Advisory Committee, during year one. On average, the grantees had 20 plus 50 individuals volunteering for their program. These volunteers included plus 50 members of the community, representatives of community organizations, and representatives from college departments and divisions. Some examples of how plus 50 adults played a role in Plus 50 programs include: teaching courses and workshops; developing a Plus 50 volunteer database; serving as the volunteer coordinator; and plus 50 faculty, staff, and community members serving on the Plus 50 Advisory Committees.

Volunteer Resource Packet

One college enhanced its volunteering program by developing a volunteer handbook to facilitate successful and meaningful volunteer experiences. This volunteer resource packet includes guidelines, tips, and tools that both organizations developing volunteer assignments and volunteers seeking opportunities can look to for creating

> Creating a professional structure for your volunteer program is important at the outset.
>
> *Mentor College*

positive volunteer experiences. Some of these resources include: guidelines for developing volunteer job descriptions; tips for identifying volunteer opportunities for the plus 50 population; ideas for recognizing volunteers; and a tool for assessing your volunteer program from the student perspective.

Student Satisfaction with Volunteering Programs

Through Plus 50 volunteering programs, students have found avenues to use their skills and knowledge to benefit their communities. Over 90% of respondents agree that volunteering helps them to feel more connected to the community, to know that their skills and experiences are valued, and to feel enthusiastic about pursuing volunteer opportunities in the future (see Exhibit 63 below).

> [The most valuable aspect of volunteering was] knowing I was performing a valuable much-needed service to the community.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Survey results also show that these volunteer jobs tended to be significant engagements: volunteers were not simply stopping by for an afternoon. There were 22 participants who reported on their surveys the number of hours they had spent in volunteer work, and the results showed that volunteers averaged 174 hours of community service during the first year of the Plus 50 Initiative.

Open-ended responses about volunteering experiences were overwhelmingly positive, and respondents indicated few areas for improvement. In open-ended questions about what was most valuable to them about the volunteering experience, students most often reported that they:
- Gained personal fulfillment from helping others and giving back to the community;
- Enjoyed meeting and connecting with other people;
- Learned new things and felt they were keeping their minds active; and
- Applied their skills, talents, and knowledge.

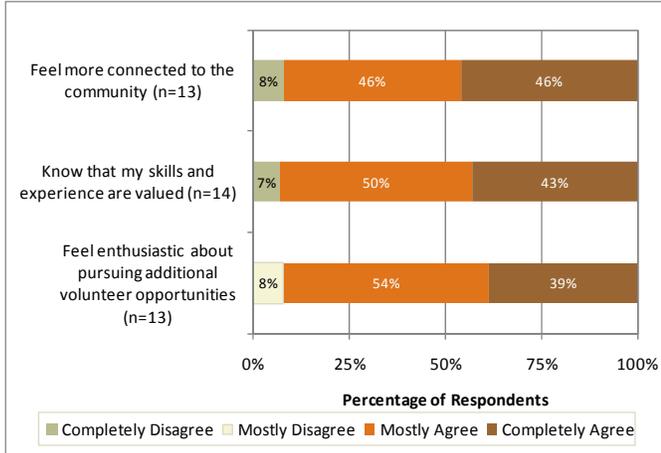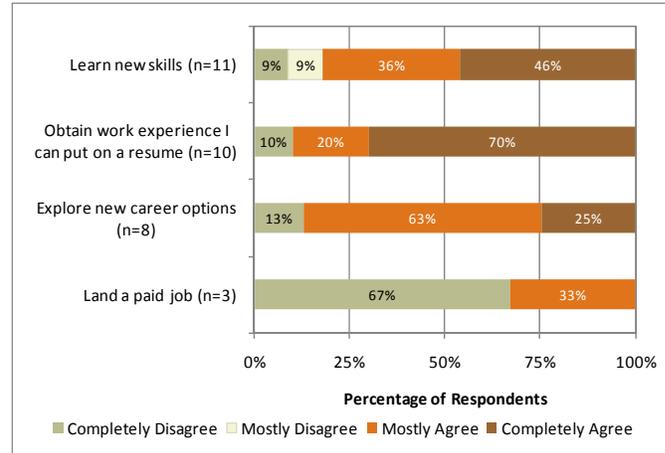## Plus 50 Volunteer Services Helped Me To...

Exhibit 63

Category	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Feel more connected to the community (n=13)	8%		46%	46%
Know that my skills and experience are valued (n=14)	7%		50%	43%
Feel enthusiastic about pursuing additional volunteer opportunities (n=13)	8%		54%	39%

Percentage of Respondents

Completely Disagree ☐ Mostly Disagree ☐ Mostly Agree ☐ Completely Agree

Exhibit 64

Category	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
Learn new skills (n=11)	9%	9%	36%	46%
Obtain work experience I can put on a resume (n=10)	10%		20%	70%
Explore new career options (n=8)	13%		63%	25%
Land a paid job (n=3)	67%		33%	

Percentage of Respondents

Completely Disagree ☐ Mostly Disagree ☐ Mostly Agree ☐ Completely Agree

In addition to the personal rewards gained from performing community service, survey respondents also cited career benefits to volunteering. A strong majority of respondents mostly or completely agree that they learned new skills from volunteer jobs (82%), the volunteer jobs helped them to explore new career options (88%), and the volunteer job provided work experience that they can add to their resume to (90%). See Exhibit 64.
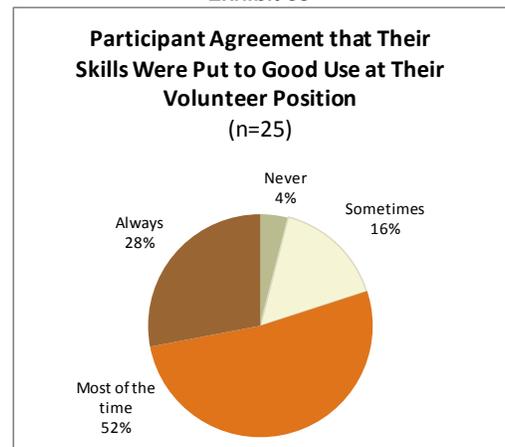
People 50 and over have accumulated a great deal of work and life experience. Organizations that benefit from plus 50 volunteers need to use them wisely. The colleges with Plus 50 volunteering programs are making an effort to ensure that this happens. First, they enlist organizations that design volunteer jobs to have a real impact. Second, they focus on creating a good match between a volunteer's skills and the organization's needs.

From the student survey results, it appears that the program staff have been doing a good job placing volunteers in positions where they can truly make an impact. Participants who were connected with volunteer opportunities through Plus 50 volunteering programs indicated high satisfaction with their volunteering experiences. A strong majority (80%) felt that their skills were put to good use most or all of the time (see Exhibit 65). Over one quarter of the participants gave this item the highest rating, saying that their skills were *always* put to good use. This indicates high program quality. The colleges are clearly enlisting organizations that are providing excellent volunteer opportunities, and program staff are effectively creating matches between organizations and volunteers.

> Adding my volunteer information to my resume will help my chances of finding a job.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

> [The volunteer opportunity] allowed me to use my skills, talents, and knowledge in a setting that was beneficial to the organization.
>
> *Plus 50 Participant*

Exhibit 65

Participant Agreement that Their Skills Were Put to Good Use at Their Volunteer Position
(n=25)

- Never 4%
- Sometimes 16%
- Most of the time 52%
- Always 28%

During the first year of the initiative, grantee colleges made significant developments in and enhancements to their volunteering programs. By the end of the first year, the number of grantee colleges offering volunteer listing services grew from one to two colleges, and the number of colleges offering volunteer matching services grew from one to four colleges. These volunteering programs served a combined total of nearly 400 students in year one[29]. Results from participant surveys filled out by plus 50 volunteers showed high satisfaction with their volunteer experiences. They were able to connect with others, give back to the community, and feel that their skills and talents were being put to good use.

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[29] There is likely an overlap in the count of participants served since volunteers may have utilized more than one service provided.

VII.Sustainability

It is a goal of the Plus 50 initiative that by the time the initiative concludes, colleges will be able to sustain the programs. This chapter addresses the questions: How are colleges working toward sustainability? What are the challenges that they must overcome in order for their programs to outlive AACC funding?

Avenues to Sustainability

Community colleges are actively working toward making their programs sustainable. They are using a variety of strategies to this end, and they usually use multiple strategies. These approaches include:
- Course revenues;
- Additional grants to pay for staff time and program activities;
- Building an internal constituency at the college that supports the Plus 50 program;
- Institutionalizing program components as part of a college's standard operations;
- Writing the program into the college budget; and
- Leveraging the work of partnerships.

Using Courses to Bring in Revenue and Sustain Plus 50 Program Goals

For 12 of the 13 grantee colleges, courses are central to Plus 50 programming. An important part of sustainability, then, is the ability to develop courses that generate sufficient revenue. Colleges charge tuition for their courses, and tuition fees (plus the state funding that supports credit courses) generally cover the cost of offering a course. Thus, as long as a course is targeted in some way to the needs of plus 50 students, the sustainability model is already built in to the way that community colleges do business. If the courses meet the need of their target market, they will continue to attract customers who will bring in revenue – and the colleges will, in turn, continue to offer the courses.

> We hope to have about 20 new [training] programs. And then they have to bring in their own revenue and become self-sufficient.
>
> *Mentor College*

In many ways, leveraging courses on behalf of Plus 50 program goals is the clearest path to sustainability. Since they tend to self-perpetuate once they are up and running, "embedding" program goals in their design is a way to ensure that colleges will continue to meet the needs of plus 50 students. Courses designed with Plus 50 program goals in mind can bring new curriculum into the classroom, and introduce instructional delivery that is "plus 50-friendly" (such as short-term courses with a flexible schedule and location). For several colleges, making professional development available to faculty that teach plus 50 students is also part of embedding plus 50 goals into courses.

Raising Additional Funding

Although it is hard work to develop new courses and to create shifts in instructional delivery, in many ways embedding Plus 50 program goals in courses is "the easy part," because it is the core competence of community colleges. A program director from one college noted, "We can continue running the classes and sustain that – that's not a problem." She went on to note that for the additional components of a Plus 50 program (which can include additional staff, funds for professional development, a dedicated space, resources for additional program development, etc), the college would need to apply for additional grant funding.

> We're going to have to seek out other funding sources to get the program going as we want it to go – to have a center and more volunteer services. There's no way the college could sustain it on its own.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Community colleges routinely seek grants from public and private funders to support their programs, and colleges commonly included this strategy for sustainability in their progress reports to AACC. Fortunately, the participation of the grantee colleges in the Plus 50 Initiative has positioned them well to apply for additional funding. First, initiative participation in itself has built their capacity to provide programming to students in this age group. Second, through its learning community activities, AACC has provided resources to support grantee colleges in their grant writing. For example, at their second annual conference, AACC brought in a grants manager from Montgomery College in Maryland to present *Grant Writing 101*, and three people from Johns Hopkins Medical Center (the Director of Development, the Associate Director responsible for annual giving, and the interim director in the Department of Donor Relations and Development Events) to present *Principles of Fundraising*.

Sources of funding that colleges have applied for include the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the stimulus funds). Several colleges that have a workforce training and career development track to their programs also applied to Civic Ventures for an Encore Careers grant. Colleges often are supported by grantmaking from their own colleges' foundations as well.

Building an Internal Constituency at the College

Clearly, course revenues and external funding are critical aspects of sustainability. However, a necessary condition for sustainability is the development of internal constituency that values Plus 50 program goals. And this is something that is more about partnership and vision than it is about money. The grantee colleges have done this in several ways, including working with the college president to promote the program, inviting relevant stakeholders to participate in the college's Plus 50 Advisory Committee, "selling" the program internally, and partnering with other departments to deliver specific Plus 50 program components.

> Endorsement by the president that emphasizes the importance and relevance of Plus 50 initiatives throughout the college … can be leveraged to develop relationships with department supervisors and influential faculty and staff throughout the campus to percolate opportunities for collaboration.[30]

Plus 50 staff at the grantee colleges are very clear on the fact that the support of the college's president is vital. The president has a "bully pulpit" from which s/he can promote the program – giving the program the status and visibility it needs to become a priority for departments and divisions across campus. As one Plus 50 staff member noted: "It's always helpful when the message comes from the top, and [our president] never misses the opportunity." Other Plus 50 college staff called out the fact that the president is an important ally in fundraising efforts. One program director said that the president is "our chief fundraiser through our foundation," and staff from another college reported that the president and other college chief executives "are very helpful when we need a letter of support for funding."

> Our absolute best [internal] partner is someone who isn't in any of those divisions – it's the president. If the president backs it, he talks to each one of the VPs and says, "What are you doing to promote this program?"
>
> *Demonstration College*

Recognizing the importance of an internal constituency, AACC builds this directly into the design of the program by requiring all grantees to develop an advisory committee to include stakeholders from different divisions within the college. By bringing in these individuals as partners, the Plus 50 program provides different departments with a voice in program development as well as an interest in its sustainability.

> We have people in a number of departments in our college that sit on our Advisory Committee, so we have good support for what we do across the organization.
>
> *Mentor College*

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[30] Dillon, R, Marini, S, and Miller, S. (2009). *A Blueprint for Successful Integration of Plus 50.* Community College Journal.

Plus 50 community colleges have worked on marketing the program to their internal stakeholders, including leadership in other divisions and departments, as well as faculty and their presidents. Staff often attend classes, workshops, and events in other departments to promote Plus 50 courses, workshops, and services by giving brief presentations at the beginning of both credit and non-credit courses across the college. Some Plus 50 colleges capitalized on professional development days to raise awareness about the Plus 50 Initiative to their faculty and staff.

Results of the president's support, broad membership in the Plus 50 Advisory Committee, and marketing the program internally have all paid off at the grantee colleges. Plus 50 program staff have developed relationships with other programs and departments within the college to brainstorm strategies for program development. One college reported that collaborative efforts had taken place among the college foundation, Career Services, Counseling, the Computer Science Department, Student Activities, the Multi-Cultural Center, and the Service Center. This particular college had worked with the Computer Science Department to develop a section of an introductory computer course that was customized for students over 50 (a course section that proved to be highly popular among students). Other departments typically collaborate with Plus 50 program staff without receiving funding, and this is an indicator that the program is gaining stakeholders outside the department in which it is housed. One experienced staff member said, "I've seen a lot of grants fail when one division has to do everything."

> We now have a good corps of internal … partners committed to the program. […] The Workforce Development Division is the headquarters for the Plus 50 program. There's the Academic Division through which we have a few programs. And we have our Student Services Division where [our advisor] is housed. And there's College Relations that handles the media, the outreach, and the marketing.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Program Components become Institutionalized

As a result of the cultivation of internal stakeholders, the Plus 50 program at each of the colleges is not understood as a standalone or temporary endeavor. Indeed, a hallmark of the Plus 50 program is that it is understood by program staff and by other constituencies within the colleges as integral to department or to college-wide goals. Over the course of the first year, divisions often expanded their ownership of the Plus 50 program, going beyond the initial funding that the college had contributed to complement the AACC grant. The consequence is that funding that is not formally dedicated to the Plus 50 program is leveraged for program goals. For example, at one of the colleges, a Workforce Development Division leverages funding that it already receives through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This leveraging of existing funding for Plus 50 program goals contributes to sustainability, because this funding is not tied to the AACC grants, and will be part of the division's budget even after the conclusion of the Plus 50 initiative.

> No matter what, we have [federal] funding [for a specific training program]. […] We … will continue to have outreach [to plus 50 students] from there. One of our college focal points is plus 50 issues.
>
> *Demonstration College*

It is also the case that program components are becoming institutionalized as part of a college's standard operations beyond the department in which the program is housed. This is the case as the Plus 50 program builds relationships across divisions. For example, one college that houses the program in the Workforce Development Division has formed a partnership with Student Services, where an advisor has become the Plus 50 advisor. When students who are 50 or older come to Student Services for advising, they are routed to this specific advisor who can provide specialized advising service. So far, the Plus 50 advising

> We have adopted single point of contact services into our [Student Services Division], which will ensure that plus 50 students will always have an advisor even after AACC grant funding comes to an end.
>
> *Demonstration College*

has not become part of this advisor's formal job description. Instead – in the words of the program associate – this advisor has "taken it under her wing." But the Plus 50 program staff understand that for true institutionalization it *needs* to become part of her job description, and they plan for that to happen soon.

Other colleges have similar stories to tell. A second college has focused on the advising function as well. This college explicitly developed an advising position as part of their program, and they fund eight hours a week of advisor time. This has been so successful that the director of Advising and Counseling Services has pledged to match this funding for an additional eight hours a week. Also due to the position's success, Advising and Counseling Services has recognized its importance, and the program director believes that the funding for this position will continue after the AACC grant is completed. Another department in which the Plus 50 goals are becoming institutionalized is the Marketing Department. At several colleges, the Marketing Department creates collateral materials, includes the Plus 50 program as part of Website updates, and/or does outreach on behalf of the Plus 50 program.

> Some of the key players already working with the grant aren't receiving grant funding, for example our College Relations Department oversees marketing, and they developed marketing [materials for the program]. […] There are people in key places in the college that can be instrumental … as we move forward.
>
> *Demonstration College*

The Plus 50 Program as a Line Item in the College Budget

Programs funded by grants can easily be discontinued when the grant is over. By making program components or the program as a whole part of the annual college budget process, colleges will ensure that there is a steady funding source for plus 50 activities. Existing as a line item does not protect its funding from being cut, but if the program is a part of the annual budget, program staff do not have to find grant funding each year to support the program.

> [Our college] has built the majority of program expenses ([for example:] schedule publication) into the regular school budget.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Leveraging the Work of Community Partnerships for Sustainability

Partnerships contribute to sustainability in several ways. The ways they do this with the grantee colleges include: referring customers to the Plus 50 program (which means that these programs have the customers they need); providing in-kind services; and jointly funding programs. Referring customers and providing in-kind services have been discussed in the "Fundamentals of Plus 50 Programming" chapter, but the importance of providing in-kind services is worth repeating here. For several colleges, community partners donate the time of instructional staff.

> [When there is] a real solid partnership, [when] one of the partners runs out of funding, the other partner takes up that slack and keeps the partnership going. […] They should be sustainable as long as one or two is doing well.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Colleges and their partners have found several creative ways that partners can contribute funding to programs. At one college, a community partner subsidizes the tuition for plus 50 students to participate in workforce training courses. Another college shares the revenue that comes from co-hosting a course with a partner – revenue that is reinvested back into the program. For a third college, program staff worry about sustainability due to the fact that the program has not yet been written into the college budget. However, even for this college, the issue is not that the program will disappear entirely – program staff is certain that it would be maintained by a community partner who would provide funding. The partner would not, though, be able to replace the entire amount of grant dollars that AACC provides, so staff envision that the

program would be more limited in the future. It is a testament to the program model and the work already done to prove the value of the program that it would continue to be supported by a partner if the college is not able to write it into its annual budget.

What are the Challenges to Creating a Sustainable Program?

The Plus 50 grantees have achieved many successes in their efforts to work toward sustainability, but there are some challenges as well. First, there is the by-now familiar challenge of a difficult economic environment, with the deepest recession since the 1930s beginning in December 2007. This recession means that private funders are reducing their grant amounts and even retreating from some program areas altogether. With tax receipts down for state government, there are usually cuts in FTE allocations as well. With community colleges tightening their belts everywhere and reductions in grant funding, Plus 50 programs face budget cuts as well. For a new program that has not had time to become embedded in the fabric of the college, such cuts can be devastating. For most colleges in the Plus 50 initiative, program staff are continuing to make progress. However, deep cuts in the state budget resulted in the need for one of the original grantees to withdraw from the initiative.

> Last year the college had about $9,000-$10,000 in our operation. This year – ending this month – there will not be any college money in our operation.
>
> *Mentor College*

Another challenge to sustainability has to do with the issue of generating revenue through tuition. In developing courses, Plus 50 programs tend to concentrate in non-credit, due to the fact that it is easier to create these courses than credit courses: non-credit courses do not need to undergo a review process by the Academic Division. However, only credit courses come with an FTE allocation from the state. If non-credit courses can attract enough students, this should not cause a problem for sustainability, since non-credit courses have a course fee designed to cover the cost of the course itself. However, this assumes that the course attracts a sufficient number of students, and this is not always assured. As one college pointed out, "there's a mindset with the plus 50 folks that they should get senior discounts or that the workforce center should pay for them. That's not across the board, but [mostly for those] at entry level or shifting gears completely, or having to start in a whole new field – they're not confident that going down this path will give them the return [on investment] they want."

> Because of the budget crunch, you want FTEs in the seats. [The hours in the courses for one of our programs don't] count toward FTE.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Many states by law also have free or reduced tuition for students over a certain age (this age varies by state). This means that students over age 55, 60, 62, or 65 pay less for their courses but the state does not make up the difference. Under these circumstances, greater enrollment of people in this age group can potentially mean that the college is teaching a given course for less than it costs them to host the course.

How Sustainable are the Programs Likely to be after the AACC Grant is over?

According to the Plus 50 college program staff interviewed, the programs are highly likely to be sustained after the conclusion of the AACC grant. This is, first of all, because colleges are developing new courses and course programs as part of their Plus 50 programs. The courses that attract participants will bring in enough revenue to make the course "pencil out," and thus they will remain because they are self-supporting.

> [The program] will be sustained [because] we can continue to offer the courses we've created….
>
> *Demonstration College*

Because courses are so central to sustainability, it is important that colleges use creative approaches to course development. Plus 50 staff reported that they are working with faculty and staff in other

departments to tailor courses to their population, and were finding success here. One college innovated in terms of combining credit and non-credit courses. At this college, the Plus 50 director worked with leadership of the Academic Division to make this happen. One class, with one teacher, is held in one room, but the students can enroll on either a credit or non-credit basis. This expands the portfolio of classes that can be marketed to plus 50 students, while capitalizing on the course offerings that already exist.

This is also a particularly opportune moment to be seeking outside funds for programs that serve plus 50 students in community colleges. In July 2009, President Obama announced the American Graduation Initiative, which will provide $12 billion in federal funding over the next ten years to community colleges. The fact sheet on the initiative called out the fact that community colleges are particularly vital resources for "students who are older." This high profile and funding will leverage additional investment. It also comes at a time when – as the baby boom generation enters its third stage of life – there is increasing funder interest in how to meet the societal needs that will emerge with the aging of this cohort.

The Plus 50 grantees find themselves at the intersection of growing funder interest in two areas: community colleges and support of the baby boom generation. Given their experience with implementing their own Plus 50 programs, as well as grantwriting and fundraising capacity-building assistance from AACC, the grantee colleges are ahead of the curve in applying for additional funding.

It is also apparent that programs can be sustained because their activities have been institutionalized into the functions of the divisions where they are housed, as well as other divisions and departments across the community college. This has been the result of strong efforts on the part of program staff to build partnerships with their college presidents and with others divisions and departments across the college. The plus 50 demographic is increasingly recognized at grantee colleges as a target market.

> [When the AACC grant runs out, the program] will go away because 40% of salary goes away, unless we have hard dollars by that time. But we'd find a way to continue it, because there's a need….
>
> *Demonstration College*

VIII. Effectiveness at the Initiative Level

Effectiveness of the Plus 50 Initiative is measured not only in terms of how program implementation for individual grantee colleges is progressing; it is also measured at the level of the initiative itself. Initiative-level process and outcome goals include:

- Effective AACC support provided to Plus 50 grantee colleges (including marketing and public relations support, as well as the development of a learning community);
- Facilitating the relationships between mentor and demonstration colleges;
- The production, aggregation, and dissemination of knowledge to the field;
- Advocacy designed to place the issues of plus 50 students at community colleges on the policy agenda; and
- Expansion of Plus 50 programming to colleges beyond the initial pilot group.

This chapter examines the success that the Plus 50 Initiative has been having in each of these areas.

Support to Grantees from AACC

AACC has provided a wide range of support for grantee colleges. AACC staff are in frequent phone and email contact with grantees to act as thought partners, provide support with marketing and public relations, collect and distribute a large amount of valuable information and tools, and facilitate a learning community that allows grantees to learn from one another. They received extremely positive reviews for their responsiveness to grantees, and for the large store of ideas and resources they had to share.

> I've been 100% pleased with the support we have received from AACC. [They have] been very helpful with advice, counsel, and encouragement.
>
> *Demonstration College*

AACC Responsiveness

Plus 50 program staff expressed a deep appreciation for the general support they have received from AACC staff. They described communication as quick, easy, informative, and encouraging. Many colleges described AACC as "another mentor" and feel that AACC staff are interested in and supportive of what the colleges are doing. Plus 50 program staff reported that they felt they could pick up the phone to call AACC staff with questions and receive help at any time: the program director and senior program associate were described by one college as "a phone call away." Staff at another college said about AACC staff that "I feel like [they are] on our team in some ways."

AACC's work as a "high engagement funder" supports the colleges as AACC staff consult with college staff. Grantee colleges benefit from the knowledge and resources that AACC can supply in terms of program design and development, where to go for additional resources, and additional tools available.

> AACC has been marvelous. [...] They're very responsive on the phone and email. The best thing about them is how accessible they are.
>
> *Mentor College*

> [The program director] has been very supportive from the beginning. [...] [The senior program associate] has been able to provide us with great resources ... and is available any time we have questions or concerns.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Marketing and Public Relations Support

AACC staff share marketing strategies, materials, and public relations tools to help spread the word about the Plus 50 program. The Reingold partnership allows all Plus 50 grantees to benefit from the work of one firm, creating valuable economies of scale. Reingold makes the process of marketing the Plus 50 program simpler and more cost-effective for all the participating grantee colleges. All materials include the Plus 50 branding while allowing each college to customize the materials and brand their institution and its individual programs. The strong Plus 50 brand and the work of Reingold increase grantees' marketing efficiency while offering flexibility for colleges to accomplish their individual goals.

> The whole slogan with "rehired, re-inspired, rewired" was genuine. […] It really says what program is about. Simple, effective, and it was very beneficial for us.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Steppingstone, the public relations firm, works to increase public awareness and maximize media exposure for the Plus 50 Initiative. Steppingstone's work includes providing to the colleges talking points, speech templates, and press release templates. This capacity building has facilitated the ability of grantees to gain exposure with the local media. AACC has also partnered with Steppingstone to put reporters in contact with grantee program staff so that individual college programs have a chance to appear in national stories (such as those that appeared in the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal).

> The materials from AACC were instrumental in getting our marketing moving. We have a very small staff…. Plus 50 would not have happened as easily without the materials.
>
> *Mentor College*

Learning Community

In order to maximize information-sharing and collegiality, AACC has established a Plus 50 learning community that includes all grantee colleges and AACC staff. Participation in the Learning Community involves active participation in the Plus 50 listserv, attending the annual Plus 50 Initiative Conference, hosting site visits, visiting other Plus 50 colleges, and sharing ideas for project implementation strategies and resources. The colleges find participation in this learning community to be very helpful; they learn from the other colleges on their team, and they learn from all of the colleges in the pilot cohort.

> We've gotten a lot out of the others in the initiative. Just having access to what their projects are [and] how they're doing things. "Oh we could do that; that's easier; maybe we could incorporate that." It's helpful to have that coalition of people, so we do not have to think of everything on our own.
>
> *Demonstration College*

As part of the learning community, Plus 50 grantee colleges participate in an annual convening. AACC hosted a grantee convening at the project launch and at the end of year one, and will host another in each year. The annual conference is a time for each stakeholder to share information and experiences, and develop new ideas. At this convening, colleges learn from one another, and AACC hosts sessions and working groups that bring additional resources to the colleges. The marketing and public relations firms present the latest tools and templates to the grantees. The National Advisory Committee members also attend this convening.

AACC distributes satisfaction surveys to the attendees as a way to elicit feedback and improve future conferences. Results from the 2008 and 2009 conferences are presented in Exhibits 66-71, and they show that participants were very satisfied. Participants found the breakout sessions and the opportunities to network with other grantees to be particularly useful.

Participant Satisfaction with 2008 AACC Grantee Conference[31]

Exhibit 66

Participant Satisfaction with Breakout Sessions
(n=29)

Poor, 0%
Fair, 5%
Good, 34%
Exceptional, 60%

Exhibit 67

Participant Satisfaction with Opportunities to Develop New Ideas
(n=30)

Poor, 0%
Fair, 13%
Exceptional, 40%
Good, 47%

Exhibit 68

Participant Satisfaction with Networking Opportunities
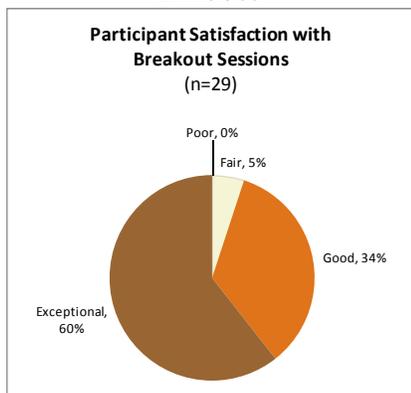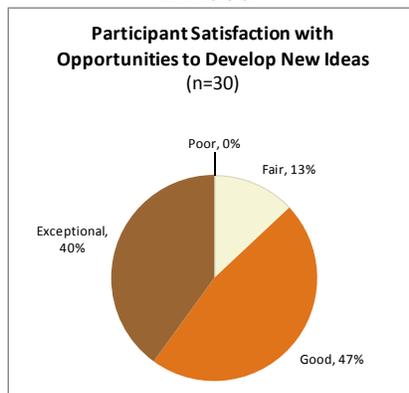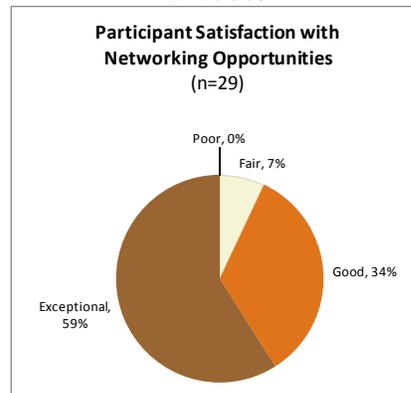(n=29)

Poor, 0%
Fair, 7%
Good, 34%
Exceptional, 59%

Participant Satisfaction with 2009 AACC Grantee Conference

Exhibit 69

Participant Satisfaction with Opportunities to Learn about Other Colleges' Activities
(n=33)

Very Little, 1%
Some, 13%
A great deal, 45%
Quite a bit, 41%

Exhibit 70

Participant Satisfaction with Opportunities to Develop New Ideas
(n=35)

Poor, 3%
Fair, 0%
Good, 31%
Exceptional, 66%

Exhibit 71

Participant Agreement that Content was Appropriate and Informative
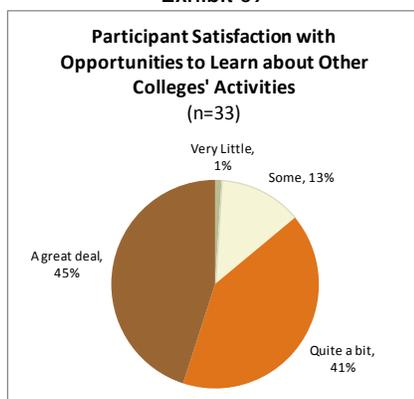(n=32)
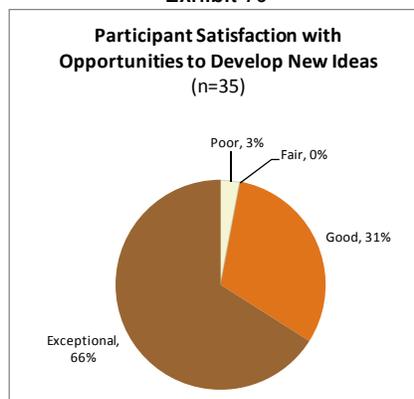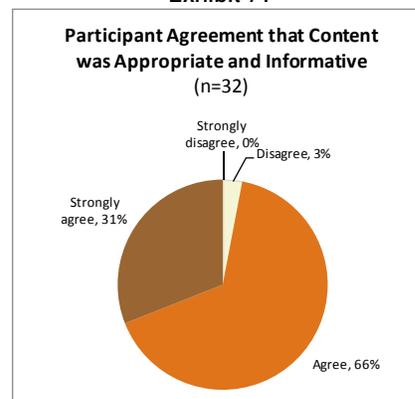
Strongly disagree, 0%
Disagree, 3%
Strongly agree, 31%
Agree, 66%

Mentor/Demonstration Relationships

At the start of the grant, five grantee colleges were selected to act as mentors to the demonstration colleges. AACC placed the colleges in teams, each consisting of one mentor college and two demonstration colleges. Mentor colleges were selected based on experience and achievements in offering courses and services to older adults and each mentor college is responsible for providing support to their demonstration colleges.

Mentor and demonstration colleges are expected to maintain regular communications and provide each other with thought partnership, ideas for program development and implementation, and other supports. All demonstration colleges visited their mentor colleges and a majority of the mentor colleges visited each of their demonstration colleges.

> The relationship with [our mentor college] has been very beneficial. The expertise and experience that they offer is invaluable. The guidance and monthly conference calls [have] been an excellent resource for us.
>
> *Demonstration College*

> They've been really helpful in programming ideas. […] They've been helpful as [an example of] "this is where you could be in ten years."
>
> *Demonstration College*

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[31] These data were collected by AACC staff through surveys at the conclusion of each convening. The LFA team used AACC data to display the results in pie-chart form.

Strengths of the Mentor/Demonstration Relationship

In their interviews with evaluators, Plus 50 program staff highlighted the benefits of the mentor/demonstration college relationships. Demonstration colleges describe their mentors as incredibly supportive, responsive, and knowledgeable. Many Plus 50 staff reported that just having that mentor/demonstration support system in place helps them keep moving toward success because they feel supported and can easily ask for help.

In addition to providing general support and advice, mentor colleges provided demonstration colleges with a wealth of experience with programming targeting plus 50 learners. Demonstration colleges benefitted from mentor colleges' experience working with older adult learners. College teams brainstormed ideas for program development, implementation, and troubleshooting challenges. Demonstration colleges report that it has been incredibly helpful to look to mentor colleges as examples of established Plus 50 programs. Many colleges have exchanged and adopted programming course curricula from other colleges on their teams.

> There's been this exchange of information. […] Ideas, brainstorming, coming up with new ways of developing projects appropriate for plus 50 populations.
>
> *Mentor College*

Not only have demonstration colleges been able to learn from the experience of mentor colleges, but mentor colleges are also learning a great deal from demonstration colleges. All colleges benefit from sharing programming ideas and strategies for implementation and outreach. The collaborative aspect of the college teams provides an invaluable structure for soliciting and providing feedback and support. For example, one college reported turning to their college team for support when the reality of the economic downturn began to constrain their program funding. The colleges were able to brainstorm ideas for program sustainability and generating more revenue.

> I think of them as one great group. The mentorship is a component but it is a two-way street and mentors are also benefitting from demonstration colleges. It's the relationship of working together college to college. It's the support.
>
> *AACC Staff*

Mentor and demonstration college site visits provided another opportunity for colleges to learn from each other. Site visits included campus tours; program observation; meetings with senior college administrators, faculty, staff, partners, community leaders, and Plus 50 program participants; hands-on training; and other technical assistance. Several demonstration colleges reported that the hands-on experience and face-to-face interactions they had while visiting their mentor colleges were critical to grounding their sense of what a successful Plus 50 program could be.

> I think demonstration colleges very early on need to have the opportunity to see successful programs and operations. They may need a period of several days to really get a feel for what makes these programs tick.
>
> *Mentor College*

Areas for Improvement

Two areas for improvement identified by grantee colleges are improved mentor/demonstration matching, and better communication between mentor and demonstration colleges.

A few grantees expressed a desire to be matched with mentor colleges more similar to themselves so that they could get advice specific to their programs. The colleges in mentor/demonstration teams intentionally represent a variety of different institutional structures, content expertise, program design, and delivery. This is to allow colleges to gain exposure to a wide variety of strategies and ideas for program development and implementation. However, a few grantees had hoped to be matched with more similar mentors so that they could capitalize on a mentor's experience with issues specific to their own programs. For example, one grantee college expressed frustration with the lack of advice their mentor college was able to provide because the mentor college did not have any experience negotiating the same institutional barriers that the demonstration college was experiencing.

> It would be great for some mentor colleges to be mentoring similar colleges where they have expertise… Our mentor college can't really give us excellent advice because they don't have a similar structure of program and another college might be better able to provide mentorship.
>
> *Demonstration College*

Second, although most demonstration colleges were very pleased with the support they received from their mentor colleges, a few demonstration colleges wanted more communication with their mentor college. In turn, at least one mentor college expressed a similar desire for more contact with their demonstration colleges and identified structuring team communication as an area for development. A few grantees pointed out that the content of the communication is valuable but that frequency has decreased since the beginning of the initiative. Having pre-scheduled, regular phone calls or check-ins could provide a more structured format for college team communications. For example, one mentor college brainstormed in their leadership team on how to be a better mentor and came up with the idea of scheduling monthly conference calls with their demonstration colleges.

> [The mentoring is] one of the things that I wish we could have done better – the frequency, the depth of the communication – we're very aware they're there, we love seeing how they're doing, but in terms of communication, we haven't had the systematic weekly connection that I was envisioning.
>
> *Mentor College*

Knowledge Dissemination

The ultimate goal of the Plus 50 Initiative extends beyond that of supporting individual colleges to implement programming for plus 50 students; its ultimate goal is systemic change. As part of the Plus 50 vision, high-quality programming tailored to the needs of plus 50 students will eventually be institutionalized in community colleges nationwide. A critical ingredient for systemic change is the dissemination of knowledge to practitioners in the field, and AACC is actively working to produce, aggregate, and disseminate knowledge to the stakeholders who will be agents of change.

Media Exposure

As described above, a public relations firm (Steppingstone) and AACC provide support to individual colleges to succeed in getting covered in their local media outlets. They have also been successful in reaching national media outlets. During year one, the Plus 50 Initiative or at least one of its grantee programs appeared in 160 media spots reaching over 74 million readers, viewers, and listeners.[32] Plus 50 programs have been featured in major news outlets such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and National Public Radio.

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[32] Media coverage data provided by Steppingstone LLC

Conference Presentations

As another way to disseminate knowledge to the field, AACC has also put considerable effort into ensuring that it presents at regional and national conferences on the lessons learned and promising practices for Plus 50 program implementation. AACC always invites grantees to co-present. During year one, AACC and eleven grantees presented at nine conferences. Presentations given during the first year of the initiative by AACC and its co-presenters are listed in Exhibit 72 below.

Exhibit 72

Organization Hosting Conference	Conference Title	Conference Location and Date	Name of Presentation	Presenters
AARP	AARP's 50th Anniversary National Event and Expo life@50+Job Fair	Washington DC September 2008	Community College Resources	AACC
Grantmakers in Aging	Annual Conference	Princeton, NJ October 2008	Ageless Learning: Creative Programming for 50+ Learners	AACC
National Council for Marketing and Public Relations	District 1 Conference	Saratoga Springs, NY October 2008	Is Your Campus Ready for the Plus 50 Learner?	AACC
American Association of Community Colleges	Workforce Development Institute	Newport Beach, CA January 2009	What Are You Doing to Attract Baby Boomers to Your Campus?	AACC Joliet St. Louis
Maturity Works (in conjunction with the National Council on Aging)	Alliance Workforce Summit	Las Vegas, NV March 2009	Recruiting and Retaining a 50+ Workforce: Strategies and Returns	AACC
League for Innovation in the Community College	Innovations 2009	Reno-Tahoe, NV March 2009	Are You Ready for Plus 50 Learners?	AACC
			Serving Plus 50s through Public and Private Partnerships	Central Florida
			Plus 50 Program Readiness Quiz	Century
American Association of Community Colleges	89th Annual AACC Convention	Phoenix, AZ April 2009	Baby Boomers on Campus: What Works	AACC Richland Spokane
			Plus 50 Volunteerism in Community Colleges	Western Dakota Clark Chaffey
National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development	International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence	Austin, TX May 2009	Is Your Campus Ready for the Plus 50 Learner?	AACC Cape Cod Luzerne
AARP	Diversity and Aging Conference: The Power of Inclusion	Chicago. IL June 2009	Community Colleges: Educating Plus 50 Learners	AACC Joliet

The Ageless Learning Newsletter

In addition, AACC sends out a bi-weekly newsletter: *Ageless Learning*. The newsletter always includes updates on what the grantee colleges are doing, as well as links to and descriptions of resources that are useful in implementing programs in each of the three tracks. It systematically aggregates information that colleges implementing Plus 50 programming will find useful. Currently, the newsletter is being sent to approximately 370 recipients.

> I open up those links [in the newsletter] and those have been really beneficial. […] It's always helpful to have information on a national level – I can have statistics at my fingertips.
>
> *Mentor College*

Knowledge Creation

AACC not only aggregates existing knowledge in the field, but also generates it. In year one, AACC commissioned a study of the programming that community colleges nationwide offer to plus 50 students. It also commissioned a publication that lays out the business case to community colleges for how they can tap into the growing market of plus 50 learners.

Webinars

To promote the concept of Plus 50 programming, and to support colleges in their work of implementing their own Plus 50 programs, AACC is developing and hosting a series of six interactive Webinars. The development of these Webinars began during the first year of the initiative and the rollout occurs during the second year. Webinar titles and descriptions are listed in Exhibit 73 below.

Exhibit 73

| Plus 50 Webinar Topics	
Webinar Title	**Webinar Description**
The Plus 50 Initiative: What's In It for You?	This webinar is designed to provide an overview of the Plus 50 Initiative and share findings from the Plus 50 National Survey of community colleges.
Tools to Assess the Needs of Your Plus 50 Population	Results of the AACC-sponsored Plus 50 National Survey showed that needs assessments are an important factor in a college's ability to provide programming tailored to the needs and interests of students 50 and over. This webinar will discuss the tools and information that community colleges need to successfully conduct a needs assessment of their local population.
The Importance of Stakeholders	This webinar will discuss the importance of building and nurturing collaborations with organizations and other key members of the community to help advocate, support, and improve programming delivery for the adult learner.
If You Build It: Promoting Your Program for Adult Learners	The traditional approach toward student recruitment does not apply to today's adult learner. This session will provide insight into how your community college can effectively market its Plus 50 program in a way that resonates with the broadest possible audience.
Understanding the Particular Needs of the Adult Learner	In order for community colleges to effectively tailor offerings for adult learners, we must first understand their specific needs. This webinar will help you identify the demands of adult learners and provide methods of shaping your Plus 50 program appropriately.
Creating and Sustaining Your Program for Adult Learners	Many adult learners may wish to return to the classroom, but fear that it is out of reach for financial reasons. This webinar will discuss methods your community college may follow to create a Plus 50 program that is both profitable and broadly accessible.

The Plus 50 Website

The Plus 50 Website is a vital repository of information and resources related to Plus 50 programming. Accessible on this Website are the original Plus 50 publications; links to the Webinars; practical tips for serving plus 50 students; descriptions of promising practices at the grantee colleges; links to media stories; an archive of all past *Ageless Learning* Newsletters; and conference presentations. AACC uses this Website to aggregate and disseminate a great deal of information that practitioners can use to build support for and implement their own colleges' Plus 50 programs. Over the course of the first year of the initiative, the average number of visits per month to the AACC Plus 50 Website increased dramatically (as shown in Exhibit 74). The increase is likely due to the ever-expanding content – AACC staff work to ensure that the information is always fresh while keeping older materials accessible as well. As the content and resources grow, the number of visits to the website also increases.

> The Website they've created for the initiative gives us access to what's going on at other places ... to understand what's going on across the country. And that's been invaluable to us.
>
> *Mentor College*

In addition to the publicly available material, there is a section dedicated to Plus 50 grantees. Plus 50 community colleges login to access marketing materials, resources, reporting requirements, and promising practices shared from other colleges.

Exhibit 74

Average Number of Visits to the AACC Plus 50 Website (Year One)
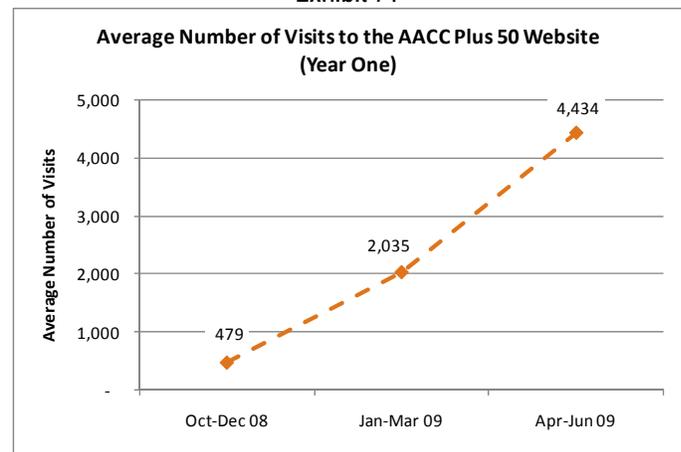
Advocacy

All of the knowledge production, aggregation, and dissemination constitute advocacy activities; they are all designed to put the issue of plus 50 students on the public agenda. AACC has additional accomplishments in this area. AACC commissioned a national study to investigate the state of programs provided for students 50 and over. This study surveyed the population of community colleges, and included in its survey items that asked colleges about the external challenges they faced in implementing programs for plus 50 students. Several external challenges were identified, including the limited availability of tuition waivers for plus 50 students, and state funding policies that negatively impact revenues for those colleges that increase enrollments of students over 50. AACC has promulgated these findings in a published report of the national survey, as well as in its journal, the *Community College Times.* By putting this information in the public domain, AACC is highlighting some of the policy obstacles that limit the implementation of plus 50 programs, and providing important information to champions that are promoting the interests of plus 50 students at community colleges.

As part of another advocacy action, AACC has partnered with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) to create a Joint Legislative Agenda for 111th Congress. Included in this legislative agenda is the statement that AACC and ACCT support the following legislative priority: "Improve new opportunities for education and training for a maturing workforce by tailoring federal programs to meet its unique needs and preferences; help colleges provide comprehensive life-long learning opportunities for the older student."

AACC has also created two templates for op-ed pieces that members of the National Advisory Committee and college presidents can use to write op-eds for local and national media outlets. These templates were

created at the end of year one; in year two it is expected that these national and local spokespeople will have published op-eds in multiple media outlets.

Initiative Expansion to New Colleges

As a result of the success of the initiative, AACC has expanded the Plus 50 program beyond these 13 colleges and added expansion colleges. The expansion links new community colleges to the success of current Plus 50 colleges. The expansion plans include:

- Century College will be a learning partner for nine Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area community colleges. Century will host a regional meeting for the local expansion colleges to work on Plus 50 Initiative program implementation in the workforce training and retraining area.
- Western Dakota Technical Institute will host a conference for community colleges that are located near National Parks to form partnerships and disseminate lessons learned from their innovative pilot program working with the National Park Service to train plus 50 adults to serve as seasonal rangers and interpretive guides.
- Three Plus 50 Initiative community colleges in Washington - Clark College, Clover Park Technical College, and the Community Colleges of Spokane - will host a regional conference in Vancouver, Wash., focused on how to start a Plus 50 Initiative program, involving as many as 30 community colleges from Washington and Oregon.
- St. Louis Community College (STLCC) will be a Learning Partner for Metropolitan Community College, Longview. STLCC and this Kansas City area community college share regional concerns and have similar economic and educational demographics that make them ideal partners.
- Central Florida Community College will serve as a learning partner for Rose State College. Both of these colleges are expanding training and retraining opportunities for plus 50 students seeking to stay in the workforce.
- Joliet Junior College will serve as a learning partner for neighboring Moraine Valley Community College, which will expand its efforts to help unemployed plus 50 workers who want to return to the job.

Conclusion

AACC has succeeded in creating a robust infrastructure for knowledge dissemination, and has disseminated a great deal of information, resources, and tools to the field as part of its effort to create systemic change. This infrastructure is putting in place the conditions to facilitate the expansion of Plus 50 programming to community colleges nationwide.

Preliminary Findings on Standards of Excellence

It is a goal of the Plus 50 Initiative that at the conclusion of the grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies, formal standards of excellence will be announced. The search for standards of excellence is embedded in AACC's ongoing efforts as it works with the colleges and experts in the field to understand the success factors that facilitate program implementation, as well as what works best for plus 50 students.

AACC is also leveraging the work with its evaluator (the LFA team) and the National Advisory Committee to uncover standards of excellence. The LFA team used qualitative data collected through interviews with grantee colleges to develop an initial list of standards of excellence, and presented this list at the second annual convening to the National Advisory Committee. This list was used as the basis for a facilitated discussion of the Advisory Committee members. Using the notes from that discussion, the qualitative data from grantee colleges, and the survey data collected from plus 50 students, the LFA team can offer preliminary insights on what the standards of excellence may be. The word preliminary should be stressed here: this is meant only as an initial foray into the standards of excellence. The preliminary findings can be used as a foundation on which to build during the coming years of the initiative.

- **Plus 50 offerings should be tailored to the needs, interests, and objectives of the plus 50 population.** Colleges should conduct needs assessments so that they can base program design and development on the needs of their target market. There are also some clear messages about the *ways* in which offerings should be tailored, aside from the particular interests of the local plus 50 population. First, short-term programming is in high demand for the workforce training courses. Second, the learning environment for all courses should be comfortable for this age group. This can mean physical accessibility (e.g. large print on handouts), but it also means taking into account the learning styles of the plus 50 student. Instructors who were able to do this got high marks from the plus 50 students in their survey responses.
- **Related to the issue of tailoring: faculty and staff should receive professional development that provides them with the skills they need to teach courses and provide services that effectively meet the needs of plus 50 students.** Professional development for instructors will enable them to take into account the learning styles of plus 50 students as they are conducting their courses. Professional development is also important for staff providing services, such as career counseling. In the open-ended responses on surveys, students made very clear when they felt that staff understood their situations, and also when they did *not* feel that this was the case. When staff had a good understanding of plus 50 assets, constraints, and challenges, their customers were very happy with the services they received. When customers felt that they were *not* understood by the staff serving them, they did not feel that the services were useful. It is important that colleges recognize that plus 50 students are not the same as students in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, and thus that it is important to provide professional development to faculty and staff in order to build their capacity to work effectively with this population.
- **Plus 50 offerings should be marketed in such a way that does not appeal to a student's identity as a "senior."** Plus 50 marketing must walk a fine line between (1) letting the customer know that the offerings are tailored to their needs, and (2) not making people feel like "senior citizens." It is clear that tailoring the offerings is important. In addition, to attract plus 50 customers, colleges need to let them know that they understand the needs and interests of this market. However, there are those (especially in the 50-64 age bracket) that don't necessarily want to see themselves as grouped into one plus 50 age group. The National Advisory Committee suggested that colleges implementing Plus 50 programming should segment the market in ways that appeal to life-stage rather than to age (e.g. "retired and

interested in lifelong learning;" "retired but want to work to stay active;" and "can't afford to retire;" "unemployed and need to work;" and "employed but interested in career-switching").

- **To attract plus 50 students to campus, colleges should publicize student stories.** There is nothing like a story to draw people in. When people hear from someone that they can identify with about their experience at community colleges, this is very likely to entice them to try out college offerings. Student successes will set other students up to believe in themselves, and to know that they can find success as well.

- **Colleges should set up a Plus 50 Advisory Committee to help develop programming and to support sustainability efforts, and should ensure that it includes community partners, as well as people who have expertise with this age group.** The colleges have found that local expertise has provided invaluable support in program development. They have also found that Advisory Committees are most successful when members have experience with this age group: this type of experience is just as important as functional expertise. In other words, when the Committee includes someone with experience in workforce development, it is especially helpful if that person understands the issues involved with workforce development specifically for those 50 and older.

- **To help ensure sustainability, program staff should seek to build an internal constituency for Plus 50 programming at their college.** Many grantee colleges emphasized the critical nature of an internal college constituency that values Plus 50 program goals. The most important constituent is, of course, the college president. The president has a bully pulpit from which to promote the program, and can give the program the status and visibility it needs to become a priority for divisions and departments across campus. Grantee colleges also noted the importance of other departments and divisions beyond those that house the Plus 50 program "owning" the program goals. As Plus 50 program staff partner with those outside their departments to develop additional program components, these goals become embedded in the way that other departments do business. This type of embedding is especially clear for the colleges that have worked with other departments to institutionalize Plus 50 goals as part of advising. In these colleges, advisors have adopted the new role of consciously tailoring their advising *specifically* to this age group, rather than treating plus 50 advisees as they would any other. As divisions such as Student Services take on the practices that promote the interests of plus 50 learners, they become increasingly committed to programming tailored to this group of students. This type of commitment will ensure that offerings and services tailored to plus 50 learners will outlive the availability of any particular funding stream.

The Factors Contributing to the Successes of the Plus 50 Initiative in Year One

The Plus 50 Initiative has been extraordinarily successful in a very short period of time. Its 13 grantees have greatly expanded their offerings to plus 50 students. Furthermore, program quality is high: the survey results from students show that the programs have done an excellent job in bringing about positive outcomes at the level of the individual customer. AACC has also generated and aggregated a great deal of knowledge, information, and tools, which it effectively disseminates through its *Ageless Learning* newsletter and its Website. It also has expanded beyond its pilot cohort, bringing in new community colleges to attend regional convenings, or to be learning partners with pilot grantees. It has launched a Webinar series that provides additional information and tools to community colleges nationwide that they can use in designing and launching their own plus 50 programs. The grantee programs and the initiative as a whole have attained a high level of media exposure, with over 160 media spots reaching 74 million readers, listeners, and viewers.

The LFA team has experience evaluating other multi-grantee initiatives that seek to bring about systemic change. From the perspective of the evaluator, the progress of the Plus 50 Initiative in one year represents an unusually high level of accomplishment. These types of initiatives usually take longer to build momentum, and typically have a lower public profile. What are the factors that contribute to Plus 50's success? In the opinion of the members of the LFA evaluation team, these factors include:

- **A very high level of engagement between AACC and the grantee colleges.** Grantee colleges report that AACC staff have been highly supportive and responsive. Staff conduct site visits, work actively with colleges to problem-solve and improve their programs, are always "just a phone call away," and have set up an active learning community from which grantee colleges benefit.
- **Active engagement of a National Advisory Committee.** While LFA has seen other initiatives include advisory committees, they are sometimes convened only at the beginning of the initiative and then fade away. AACC is making a strong effort to leverage the expertise and influence of those on its advisory committee. They returned to the second annual convening and dove enthusiastically into their assignment of identifying Plus 50 programming standards of excellence.
- **The choice to hire marketing and public relations firms to build grantees' marketing capacity as well as their ability to generate media coverage.** In offering the support to grantees that its marketing and public relations contractors provide, AACC is efficiently building grantees' capacity to market its programs, conduct outreach, and maximize media exposure. The attention to how a funder with multiple grantees can make use of these scale economies to build awareness is unusual.

> I would say that out of all the initiatives that I've been a part of, I've never received this great [an amount of] support for marketing.
>
> *Demonstration College*

- **A deep commitment to building the capacity of community colleges nationwide.** AACC has not stopped at its focus on its pilot grantees, but has actively worked to leverage their pilot colleges' success into a variety of efforts to build capacity for colleges nationwide. Capacity building efforts include all of the information disseminated through the Website, and especially the Webinar series for which design began during year one.

The enthusiasm of AACC staff, and their commitment to their grantees and the field as whole, position the Plus 50 Initiative to continue to build on its year one accomplishments during years two and three. The initiative is well on its way to leaving a strong legacy, enabling community colleges nationwide to develop and sustain high-quality programming for plus 50 students.

X. Appendix A: Description of Evaluation Methods

LFA Group is responsible for the Plus 50 Initiative's national evaluation. LFA developed a mixed-method evaluation designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the initiative and support continuous improvements over the course of the three-year initiative. The evaluation is focused at three levels: the initiative as a whole; the grantee colleges; and students participating in colleges' Plus 50 programs.

To facilitate data collection from grantee colleges, the evaluators set up a system in which each college was assigned an Evaluation Liaison: a specific member of the evaluation team to be a primary contact. Evaluation Liaisons also share individual college data with the grantees; each college received a report that aggregated the student survey results for that individual college's programs.

Data Collection Methods

To measure the many components of the initiative, key informant interviews, data collection worksheets, and surveys, were developed for stakeholders of the initiative. Here, we describe the evaluation instruments and data collection procedures by stakeholder group.

Plus 50 Community Colleges

- **Key Informant Interviews**: Key informant interview protocols were designed to understand the initiative from the grantees' perspectives and gain in-depth information from key informants about the challenges and successes of program implementation. LFA conducted interviews with Plus 50 program directors and/or associates at all 13 grantee colleges.
- **Data Collection Worksheets**: Data collection forms were designed to track the progress of grantees' implementation to understand how course offerings, plus 50 student participation, and support services change over time. The evaluation team made a strong effort to develop implementation measures that could be aggregated across the grantee cohort. Evaluation liaisons also worked with colleges to tailor the worksheets to college programming. Early in year one, LFA collected information on what was in place before the initiative began (the 2007-2008 academic year), in order to have a baseline comparison. In July 2009, LFA collected year one data from all 13 grantee colleges.
- **Document Review**: As part of their initiative participation, Plus 50 colleges submit progress reports to AACC. These semi-annual progress forms are rich sources of data that include documentation of objectives and activities, overall progress, measurable outcomes, and partnerships. Additionally, LFA uses grantees' original proposals to track how grantees implement their programs and adapt as compared to their original plans. LFA uses these documents to provide additional context and program implementation data.

Plus 50 Participants

- **Participant Surveys:** Surveys were designed to assess the initiative from the users' perspective. A sample of plus 50 participants at all grantee colleges received anonymous surveys in the spring of 2009. The focus of the survey was students' satisfaction with their Plus 50 experiences including coursework and services. The surveys were administered electronically and by hard copy depending on the Plus 50 colleges' preference and capacity. Across the 13 Plus 50 colleges, 849 plus 50 participants responded to the survey.

AACC

- **Key Informant Interviews**: Interviews were designed to understand the initiative from AACC's perspective and gain in-depth information about the challenges and successes of program implementation. LFA conducted a joint interview with three AACC staff who lead and support the initiative.

Additional Data Used in the Report

The LFA team made use of additional data sources that were collected by AACC, Steppingstone, and Reingold. These data are:

- Media tracking: aggregated information on media exposure for the Plus 50 Initiative and individual grantee colleges (Steppingstone);
- *Ageless Learning* e-newsletter circulation figures (AACC);
- Plus 50 Website statistics (Reingold); and
- Participant satisfaction data collected from grantee colleges at the annual Plus 50 convenings (AACC).

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

There are many important strengths of this evaluation. The mixed methods approach offers in-depth information, and represents a large number of stakeholders. Assessing program implementation and satisfaction at multiple levels and across diverse stakeholders (e.g., plus 50 participants, grantees, and initiative implementers) captures the perspectives of a variety of constituents and allows for a thorough investigation of the Plus 50 Initiative.

LFA's evaluation liaisons work with mentor/demonstration college teams. This means that the liaisons have an intimate and in-depth understanding of the team's functioning as well as each college's programmatic focus and implementation. Plus 50 colleges use their liaisons as a resource during all phases of data collection and these liaisons conduct the key informant interviews with their colleges to ensure data quality and accuracy.

Limitations

Plus 50 grantees have been very supportive of data collection needs. LFA relies on grantees' self-reported data to assess program implementation such as course counts, enrollment numbers, and specific services offered. However, not all colleges have the same level of access to course and enrollment data. For those grantees whose colleges have databases that do not track course and enrollment data in the same format in which the data worksheet asks for it, some data points include estimations. While in some cases it is potentially possible to obtain exact information rather than estimates, LFA is working to balance the needs of the evaluation, with the goal of minimizing the burden of data collection on grantees. Estimations are made for some colleges where unduplicated enrollment counts are not possible, and a "duplication factor" is applied to "deflate" the duplicated number and estimate an unduplicated count.

XI. Appendix B: Evaluation Instruments

Data Collection Form

Participant Survey

Grantee College Key Informant Interview Protocol

AACC Plus 50 Staff Key Informant Interview Protocol

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD:	

College Name:	
Name of Individual Completing this Form:	
Email of Individual Completing this Form:	
Date Completed:	

Term Definitions and Explanations

**Throughout the form, please indicate if an item is not applicable by writing "NA" in the comments section. That way if you put a zero we can discern if the zero is because a program has not yet started/didn't occur or because it is not applicable to your Plus 50 programming.

Course Types
1. **Career Services (Academic and Enrichment courses).** These include credit and non-credit courses that are offered for personal interest or enrichment: "learning for learning's sake." People of course may apply what they have learned in these courses in their careers (for example, math and writing courses are very useful), but they are not geared *specifically* toward building workforce skills.
2. **Workforce Development (Training and Re-Training courses).** These include credit and non-credit courses that allow students to hone or learn new skills that help them to return to, or stay in the workforce. These can include: (1) courses that lead to a certificate (including industry-recognized certificates of completion), license, or professional credential; (2) standalone courses that students can take to acquire or upgrade a specific work-related skill; and (3) customized training.

Courses to Include Here
While those fifty and older may enroll in any class offered to the standard adult learner, please include here the courses that are **explicitly** included as part of your Plus 50 program. These can be of three types:

1. **Courses newly developed from the ground up for the plus 50 learner.** Entirely new courses developed specifically for this population, designed to meet the needs and interests of the 50+ learner, and/or to accommodate the 50+ learning styles
2. **Existing courses that are redesigned to align with the needs, goals, and interests of the plus 50 learner.** Courses already offered for the standard adult population, but altered in some way to meet the needs and interests of the 50+ learner, and/or to accommodate the 50+ learning styles.
3. **Existing courses designed for the general adult learner, but marketed specifically to the plus 50 learner.** This includes two types of existing courses: either a course for the standard adult learner, *or* a course already targeted to the mature learner (50+, 55+, 65+ etc). Either type of existing course may identified as a course that would appeal to the 50+ learner, and be marketed under the Plus 50 banner.

How to Count Courses
1. **Unique number.** Even if this course is offered more than once during the academic year, it should be counted only once.
2. **Total number offered.** This course should be counted the number of time it is offered during the academic year (to gauge the volume of courses available to this population at your college).
3. **Estimates.** Estimates may be necessary, depending on your data systems. If estimates are used, please note this in the "comments" column.

How to Count People
1. **Unduplicated.** This is the total number of students enrolled regardless of the number of courses they took or times they participated in the program. For example, if a student took three courses throughout the data collection period, they would only get counted ONCE.
2. **Estimate unduplicated.** If you cannot provide an unduplicated count, please estimate the unduplicated number of students enrolled. To estimate, divide the duplicated count by the average number of courses each student typically takes.

3. **Duplicated.** If you cannot provide an unduplicated count, add up the total number of students/participants enrolled in each course. For example, if your program offered three courses and there were ten students enrolled in each, your duplicated count would be 30. Even if a student took three courses throughout the data collection period, they would get counted three times.

Count of Academic and Enrichment Courses

Program Elements	Indicators	Number	Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
UNIQUE number* of <u>newly-developed courses</u> for 50+ students *Even if this course is offered more than once, it should be counted only once.	Number of **credit** courses		
	Number of **non-credit** courses		
TOTAL number* of <u>newly-developed courses</u> offered during the year to 50+ students *This course should be counted the number of time it is offered during the year.	Total number of **credit** courses offered		
	Total number of **non-credit** courses offered		
UNIQUE number of <u>redesigned courses</u> for 50+ students	Number of **credit** courses		
	Number of **non-credit** courses		
TOTAL number of <u>redesigned courses</u> offered during the year to 50+ students	Total number of **credit** courses offered		
	Total number of **non-credit** courses offered		
UNIQUE number of <u>existing courses marketed</u> to 50+ students	Number of **credit** courses		
	Number of **non-credit** courses		
TOTAL number of <u>marketed courses</u> offered during the year to 50+ students	Total number of **credit** courses offered		
	Total number of **non-credit** courses offered		

Count of Training and Re-Training Courses

Program Elements	Indicators	Number	Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
UNIQUE number* of <u>newly-developed courses</u> for 50+ students *Even if this course is offered more than once, it should be counted only once.	Number of **credit** courses		
	Number of **non-credit** courses		
TOTAL number* of <u>newly-developed courses</u> offered during the year to 50+ students *This course should be counted the number of time it is offered during the year.	Total number of **credit** courses offered		
	Total number of **non-credit** courses offered		
UNIQUE number of <u>redesigned courses</u> for 50+ students	Number of **credit** courses		
	Number of **non-credit** courses		
TOTAL number of <u>redesigned courses</u> offered during the year to 50+ students	Total number of **credit** courses offered		
	Total number of **non-credit** courses offered		
UNIQUE number of <u>existing courses marketed</u> to 50+ students	Number of **credit** courses		
	Number of **non-credit** courses		
TOTAL number of <u>marketed courses</u> offered during the year to 50+ students	Total number of **credit** courses offered		
	Total number of **non-credit** courses offered		

Plus 50 Student Enrollment in Courses Offered as Part of the Plus 50 Program
(Include in the count only those who are 50 and older)

Courses	Credit v. Non-Credit	Unduplicated Number of Students Enrolled	Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
For **all training and re-training** courses offered for the 50+ population as part of the Plus 50 Initiative This includes **all** newly developed, redesigned, and marketed courses	Number of 50+ students enrolled in <u>credit</u> courses		
	Number of 50+ students enrolled in <u>non-credit</u> courses		
For **all academic and enrichment** courses offered for the 50+ population as part of the Plus 50 Initiative This includes **all** newly developed, redesigned, and marketed courses	Number of 50+ students enrolled in <u>credit</u> courses		
	Number of 50+ students enrolled in <u>non-credit</u> courses		

Student Enrollment in <u>All</u> Courses
(Include in the count only those who are 50 and older)

Courses	Credit v. Non-Credit	Unduplicated Number of Students Enrolled	Comments
All courses (**NOTE:** No need to differentiate between those classes included and not included as part of plus 50 programming)	Number of 50+ students enrolled in <u>credit</u> courses		
	Number of 50+ students enrolled in <u>non-credit</u> courses		

Training and Re-Training Services and Supports

Service / Support	Definition		Unduplicated Number Using/ Participating	If you cannot provide an unduplicated count:		Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
				Duplicated Count	*Estimated* Unduplicated Count	
Career Counseling	One-on-one career advising/counseling services that are tailored specifically to the needs and interests of the mature workforce.					
Career Workshops	Group workshops for career development and/or job readiness that are tailored specifically to the needs and interests of the mature workforce. Topics of workshops may include, for example: career assessment and planning, job search, resume-writing, interviewing skills, networking, etc. **Please do not duplicate courses that you've already identified in the previous count of training and re-training courses.**					
Job Listing / Database	This is a listing of jobs that is made available to 50+ students to help them in their job search. Usually it includes jobs from employers who are "plus 50-friendly" or specifically trying to recruit from the mature workforces. The listing can be on paper, in a database, or on the web.	Students				
		Employers				
Job Matching / Job Placement Service	This goes beyond a listing, and includes some type of service that actually aids in specifically matching employee to employer. The matching may be done by a person or through technology.	Students				
		Employers				
Job Fair	Job fairs that can be either explicitly for 50+ participants, or job fairs open to the public, but which encourage employers to recruit from the 50+ workforce. For example, employers can advertise at their tables that they are "Plus 50-Friendly."	Employers				

Training and Re-Training Services and Supports, Cont'd.

Service / Support	Definition		Unduplicated Number Using/ Participating	If you cannot provide an unduplicated count:		Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
				Duplicated Count	**Estimated Unduplicated Count**	
Services to entrepreneurs	These are any services for 50+ participants interested in entrepreneurial activity such as launching a small business. It includes advice/counseling, workshops, access to resources that provide information about how to start and run a small business, or referrals to any of those things.	Students Referred				
Outreach to and/or working with employers	This includes actions designed to (1) educate employers about the value of recruiting and retaining older workers, (2) provide services/supports (e.g. workshops, trainings, resources) to employers who want to recruit, retain, or train/re-train older workers.	Employers reached out to				
		Employers receiving services				

Services and Supports for Volunteering and Service

Service / Support	Definition		Unduplicated Number Using/ Participating	If you cannot provide an unduplicated count:		Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
				Duplicated Count	Estimated Unduplicated Count	
Volunteer job listing/database	This is a listing of volunteer jobs that is made available to 50+ students to help them in their job search. The listing can be on paper, in a database, or on the web.	Number of 50+ volunteers using volunteer matching services				
		Number of organizations listing volunteer opportunities				
		Number of 50+ volunteers placed in volunteer positions				
Volunteer job matching service	This goes beyond a listing, and includes some type of service that actually aids in specifically matching volunteer to organization, or placing someone in a volunteer activity. The matching may be done by a person or through technology.	Number of 50+ volunteers using volunteer matching services				
		Number of organizations listing volunteer opportunities				
		Number of 50+ volunteers placed in volunteer positions				
Using plus 50 volunteers for the Plus 50 program	Some colleges are specifically recruiting those from the 50+ population to provide volunteer staffing for the program, or to serve on the Plus 50 Advisory Committee.	Number of 50+ volunteers working for the Plus 50 program				

Services and Supports that Increase Access of Plus 50 Students to the College

Service / Support	Definition	Did your college have this service or support during 08-09?		Description/Comments
		Yes	**No**	
Advising services for plus 50 learners	Colleges make advising and counseling available to all adult learners, but these services are tailored specifically to the needs and interests of plus 50 learners and advisors have the knowledge and resources they need to provide advice to those in this age group.			
Concierge-type services	A location with a person who can direct plus 50 learners to services, supports, and events that can meet their needs. For example, someone sitting at a desk in the student center – this desk dedicated solely to providing concierge services to the plus 50 learner.			
New student orientation	An orientation designed specifically for plus 50 students, rather than plus 50 students participating in the standard adult learner orientation.			
Ensuring physical comfort and accessibility (on campus and/or in class)	This includes strategies such as ensuring that there is comfortable seating, providing handouts with large type, or making sure that classes are offered in a location that does not require walking up and down a lot of stairs. This might also include assistive technology for hearing and vision considerations.			
System for easy registration	This is a streamlined or special registration system for the 50+ student (e.g. shortened form, or "senior registration day").			

| Courses available at convenient off-campus venues. | Colleges may have off-campus learning opportunities for all learners – this "counts" if these opportunities are explicitly put in place for 50+ learners or marketed to 50+ learners as a method for increasing their access to the college. For example, holding classes at retirement communities or community centers with senior programs. | | | |

Services and Supports that Increase Access of Plus 50 Students to the College, Cont'd

Service / Support	Definition	Did your college have this service or support during 08-09?		Description/Comments
		Yes	No	
Making courses available through distance learning formats (e.g. iTV and online)	Colleges may have distance learning opportunities for all learners – this "counts" if these opportunities are explicitly put in place for 50+ learners or marketed to 50+ learners as a method for increasing their access to the college.			
Facilitating transportation for plus 50 learners	Examples of this would be a shuttle bus, or valet parking.			
Catalog dedicated to plus 50 learning	A separate course catalog that includes the offerings tailored or marketed to plus 50 learners.			
College web page(s) dedicated to plus 50 learners	A specific link on the college web site that people can click on to find out about courses, program offerings, and/or services tailored to plus 50 learners.			
Financial assistance (e.g. vouchers, special grants for plus 50 learners)	This is financial assistance offered by the program – not state-mandated tuition waivers or discounts for those over a certain age (which varies by state).			
Financial assistance referrals given to plus 50 learners	Referrals to various sources of financial assistance.			
Financial assistance workshops	Providing workshops that give plus 50 students access to information about financial assistance.			

| Professional development workshops for college employees | These are workshops or other professional development opportunities designed to provide to faculty information about the appropriate pedagogical strategies to address the needs, interests, and learning styles of 50+ learners. They may also be designed for college staff on how colleges can best meet the needs of this population. | Faculty | | | |
| | | Staff | | | |

Financial Assistance

Assistance Type	Definition	Unduplicated Number Using/ Receiving	If you cannot provide an unduplicated count:		Description/Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
			Duplicated Count	Estimated Unduplicated Count	
Financial assistance (e.g. vouchers, special grants for plus 50 learners)	This is financial assistance offered by the program – not state-mandated tuition waivers or discounts for those over a certain age (which varies by state).				
Referrals given to plus 50 learners	Referrals to various sources of financial assistance.				
Workshops	Providing workshops that give plus 50 students access to information about financial assistance.				

Professional Development for College Faculty or Staff

Definition		Unduplicated Number Participating	If you cannot provide an unduplicated count:		Description/Comments [Please note if this not applicable by writing NA in this comment box]
			Duplicated Count	Estimated Unduplicated Count	
These are workshops or other professional development opportunities designed to provide to faculty information about the appropriate pedagogical strategies to address the needs, interests, and learning styles of 50+ learners. They may also be designed for college staff on how colleges can best meet the needs of this population.	Faculty				
	Staff				

Thank you for filling out this survey! This will help [College Name] understand how to improve their programs and services so that they can better meet the needs of students 50 and older.

1. What is today's date? _____

2. How old are you?
   - ☐ 49 and under → End of survey. We are looking for participants 50 years or older.
   - ☐ 50-64   ☐ 65-74   ☐ 75 and over

ENRICHMENT / PERSONAL INTEREST / GENERAL STUDIES / ACADEMIC

3. Have you taken any enrichment / personal interest / general studies / academic classes at this college?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No → If you answered 'No,' please skip to question 15

4. How long have you been taking enrichment classes at this college? *(Please check all that apply.)*
   - ☐ I took classes this past year (2008-2009)
   - ☐ I took classes before this year (2007-2008 or earlier)

The enrichment and/or academic class(es) that I have taken have helped me to:	DOES NOT APPLY! (Because this was not my goal for taking these classes)	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
5. Enjoy returning to school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Find out about additional topics I would like to study more.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Feel more connected to the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Learn new skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Increase my knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Move toward earning a degree.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Keep my mind active.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Pursue workforce training or career development at this college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. What was most valuable to you about these classes? In what ways did they meet your needs?

14. How could the classes better meet your needs, interests, and objectives? (For example: more relevant curriculum; pedagogy that better fits my learning style; more convenient schedule, etc)

WORKFORCE TRAINING / CAREER DEVELOPMENT

15. Have you taken any workforce training classes at this college?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No → If you answered 'No,' skip ahead to question 28

16. How long have you been taking workforce training classes at this college? *(Please check all that apply.)*
    ☐ I took classes this past year (2008-2009)
    ☐ I took classes before this year (2007-2008 or earlier)

The workforce training class(es) that I have taken have helped me to:	DOES NOT APPLY! (Because this was not my goal for taking these classes)	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
17. Improve my technology skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Work toward obtaining a license or certificate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Improve my job skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Acquire new job skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Prepare for my job search.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Land a job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Advance in my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Get a promotion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Get a raise.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. What was most valuable to you about these classes? In what ways did they meet your needs?

....

....

27. How could the classes better meet your needs, interests, and objectives? (For example: professors with a better understanding of the learning styles of students over 50; credit given for life experience; classes more accelerated; schedule more convenient.)

....

....

28. Have you used ANY *[Plus 50 program name]* career development services **tailored to students 50 and older** this past year? (This can include career counseling, career workshops, job fairs, etc.)
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No → If you answered 'No,' skip ahead to 40

The career development services that I have used have helped me to:	DOES NOT APPLY! (Because I did not use a service to achieve this goal)	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
29. Advance my career or embarking on a new career.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Define my career objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. Explore new career options.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. Learn new job search skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. Prepare for my job search.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. Locate jobs I might apply for.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. Land a job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. Explore starting my own business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. Start my own business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

38. What was most valuable to you about these career development services?

....

....

39. How could the career development services better meet your needs, interests, and objectives? (For example: staff with a better understanding of how the job search for those over 50 is very different for those in their 20s, 30s, and 40s; services geared toward those who are less computer-savvy; staff with a knowledge of employers who value the experience of mature employees; etc.)

....

....

VOLUNTEERING AND SERVICE

40. Have you used the *[Plus 50 program name]* volunteering services **tailored to participants 50 and older** to get connected to a volunteer opportunity (**either** at this college **or** in the community)?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No → If you answered 'No,' skip ahead to 54

41. Did you get connected with a volunteering or service job through this program?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No → If you answered 'No,' skip ahead to 54

42. When did you get connected with this volunteer opportunity? *(Please check all that apply.)*
   ☐ I worked as a volunteer this past year (2008-2009)
   ☐ I worked as a volunteer before this year (2007-2008 or earlier)

43. About how many hours did you spend volunteering over the past year?
   _____ hours

44. To what extent were your skills put to good use at your volunteer position?
   ☐ Never   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Most of the time   ☐ Always

The volunteering opportunity I participated in helped me to:	DOES NOT APPLY! (Because this was not the goal of volunteering)	Completely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
45. Feel enthusiastic about pursuing additional volunteer opportunities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. Know that my skills and experience are valued.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. Feel more connected to the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. Learn new skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
49. Obtain work experience I can put on a resume.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50. Explore new career options.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51. Land a paid job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

52. What was most valuable to you about the volunteering experience?

_____

_____

53. How could the volunteering experience better meet your needs, interests, and objectives? (For example: my skills could have been better used; I could have had a volunteer job which gave me more work experience to put on a resume; etc.)

_____

_____

Now we would like to hear about your experience with general support services that your college may have, tailored to students over 50. Please fill out the short table below.

Did this service successfully meet your needs, objectives, and interests? *[This question will be tailored to what colleges offer]*	DOES NOT APPLY! (Because I did not use this service)	Not at All	Somewhat	Very Much
54. Services that provide supports in finding sources of financial aid, especially those specifically for older learners (e.g. tuition waivers for those over 60, 65, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
55. A "one-stop shop" for student services, catering to older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
56. Advising/counseling tailored specifically to older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
57. Orientation for new students tailored specifically to older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
58. "Concierge" service tailored specifically to older learners (e.g. a peer seated at a desk in the student center with information for older students)	☐	☐	☐	☐
59. Streamlined registration process especially for older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐

Did this service successfully meet your needs, objectives, and interests? *[This question will be tailored to what colleges offer]*	DOES NOT APPLY! (Because I did not use this service)	Not at All	Somewhat	Very Much
60. Facilitating transportation for older learners (e.g. shuttle bus, valet parking)	☐	☐	☐	☐
61. College web pages tailored to the needs/interests of older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
62. Basic computer trainings (to increase comfort with computers) tailored specifically to older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐
63. Ensuring physical comfort and accessibility (e.g. large print for handouts, adult-friendly seating, classes located close to campus parking)	☐	☐	☐	☐
64. Separate course catalogue specifically tailored to older learners	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you so much for your time in filling out this survey!

Thanks for taking the time to speak with me today! As you know, we have been collecting a lot of data about the implementation of your Plus 50 program. So far, this has been quantitative data. But now we want to hear the story of implementation from you, to hear you describe in your own words how it has been going -- the successes and challenges and the lessons you have learned.

What you say in this interview will be held completely confidential. While we will include quotations in the evaluation report, we will not include your name and will not include any information that would allow a reader to identify the source of the quotation.

Program Implementation

1. From your perspective, how has the implementation progressed in general? How is your college doing in terms of reaching its implementation goals? (I will ask you about the specific tracks of your program – learning, training, and volunteering – but for now, I want to hear about how things have gone in general.)
   - What has been easier than you expected?
   - What has been more challenging than you expected?
   - What has been a major success?
   - What has been a major lesson learned?
   - How has the AACC staff assisted you in implementing your program?

2. Now I would like to hear about each of the tracks of your program. *[Ask the questions appropriate to this college, depending on which two or three tracks they have implemented – ask this set of questions for each track.]*
   - Are you as far along in implementation as you expected to be? *[If not,]* What has been challenging about implementation?
   - What has worked well?
   - What lessons have your learned?
   - What might you have done differently?
   - Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about successes or challenges for this track?
   - What are the ways in which you have been able to tailor your program offerings specifically to the needs, interests, and objectives of the plus 50 student population?

3. From working with you on baseline data collection, I know that your program has included the following support services: *[list from the implementation data collection form.]* Is there anything you would like to include on this list that has been added during the first year of the program?
   - What have been the successes of these services in terms of increasing accessibility to the college?
   - What are the goals you still want to achieve in terms of increasing accessibility or general support for the plus 50 student?
   - What lessons have you learned?
   - What might you have done differently?

Outreach, Marketing, and Local Advocacy

4. What kinds of marketing and outreach efforts to the plus 50 population has your college made?
   - What has worked well in bringing more plus 50 students to your college?
   - What lessons have you learned?

- What might you have done differently?

5. What are some other actions that have been taken to raise awareness about the issues of plus 50 students, and to publicize the Plus 50 program model? *[Ask about what program staff has done, as well as members of the Advisory Board.]*
   - What have been the major successes of these actions?
   - What advice do you have for how to do this type of advocacy well?

Internal and External Support/Partnerships

6. Can you describe the involvement of your college's President in the Plus 50 Initiative?
   - Speeches, news media, "talking it up," providing input into the development of the Initiative, etc.
   - *[If the President doesn't seem to have been too supportive:]* In what other ways would you have liked your president to have supported the program?
   - *[If the President seems to have been supportive:]* In what ways has the president's support been helpful to the Plus 50 program?

7. With what other divisions or departments have you partnered to implement the Plus 50 program? *[Continuing Education, Workforce Development, Academic Division, Student Services, - these probes will depend on where the program is "housed" and what other divisions you already know that the team has worked with.]*
   - In what ways have these partnerships been helpful during implementation?
   - What else had you hoped to get from these partnerships that you did not get during the first year?
   - Is there a way that closer coordination or collaboration could have made implementation easier?

8. *[The asking of this question should be informed by what you already know about the community partnerships of that college.]* In what ways did your work with community partners enhance program implementation?
   - Are there lessons you can share about what can make community partnerships successful?
   - Are there lessons you can share about what makes these partnerships challenging?

Sustainability

9. Now we would like to ask you some questions about sustainability. How do you currently fund your Plus 50 program?

10. Is your current funding strategy sustainable or do you plan to pursue sustainability in other ways?
    - What are the major challenges to sustainability?
    - What is in place that would allow this program to survive a state/college budget cut?
    - *[If the college has not already addressed this:]* What role do community partnerships play in your sustainability strategy?
    - What role do other college divisions or departments play in your sustainability strategy?
    - Do you expect this program to persist after Plus 50 funding expires?
      o Why? Why not?

11. If you were making a recommendation to other colleges who want to implement a Plus 50 program, what would that advice be?

Mentor/Demonstration Relationships

12. *[If talking to a Mentor college:]* What have been your main mentoring activities in year one?
    - What mentoring practices would you recommend to other mentor colleges?
    - What worked best?
    - What do you think could have gone better in your work with the demonstration colleges?

13. *[If talking to a Demonstration college:]* What have been the main ways that your mentor college worked with you during the first year?
    - What was the most helpful to you as you implemented your program?
    - What additional mentoring would you have liked to receive?

Initiative Support of Plus 50 Programs

14. Is there anything that the AACC staff could have done to provide additional or more effective support to you or your college?
    - What was the most helpful to you as you implemented your program?
    - What additional support would you have liked to receive?

15. How did the marketing materials (publications, image bank, templates, etc. and the Website developed by Reingold help you to market your program?

16. How did the public relations materials and support (press releases and stories, e-Newsletter, PowerPoints, etc.) from Steppingstone help you to raise awareness of your program and about plus 50 issues in general?

Evaluation

17. We are always looking for ways to improve! Please let me know if there is anything we can do to make data collection easier for you next year.

18. Is there anything in particular you would like to see discussed in the first annual report?

Closing

19. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

As you know, the Year 1 Data Collection Form is due July 15. Would you like to schedule a call to discuss questions or concerns you may have about filling out this form?

Thank you so much for your time!

Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today! We would like for you to help us get a bird's-eye view of the Plus 50 Initiative. Given your perspective, you can also help us to understand themes and trends in implementation at the grantee colleges and help us identify major lessons learned. With your permission, we will cite quotations from you as "AACC Staff" to distinguish from grantee colleges. We will not use individual names.

We may be asking questions about some things that we already have a great deal of information about. However, this is our time to get your best thinking and some pithy quotes about the initiative, so bear with us if you think we're asking something we should already know!

Program Implementation

1. Our first set of questions has to do with how implementation is going. First, we want to ask you about the Mentor colleges. Then, we will ask you about Demonstration colleges.

   [For Mentor Colleges:]
   - How are the Mentor Colleges doing in terms of reaching their implementation goals?
   - What has been easier than you expected?
   - What has been more challenging than you expected?
   - What have been some major successes?
   - What have been some major lessons learned?
   - What do you think are the factors that make a college successful when they are *expanding* an existing program?

   [For Demonstration Colleges:]
   - How are the Demonstration Colleges doing in terms of reaching their implementation goals?
   - What has been easier than you expected?
   - What has been more challenging than you expected?
   - What have been some major successes?
   - What have been some major lessons learned?
   - What do you think the factors are that make a college successful when they are *in the early stages* of a plus 50 program?

2. From working with the colleges, what have been some particularly promising program models or approaches that you have seen?
   - For learning?
   - For training?
   - For volunteering?
   - For support services?
   - For the efforts colleges have made to tailor their offerings to the needs, interests, and objectives of their plus 50 student population?
   - What have been some particularly promising program models or approaches that you've seen at other community colleges outside of this Initiative?

3. From working with the colleges, have you learned about what approaches do *not* work well?
   - For learning?
   - For training?
   - For volunteering?

- For support services?
- For the efforts colleges have made to tailor their offerings to the needs, interests, and objectives of their plus 50 student population?
- Have you seen any program models or approaches that you believe have *not* been working well in community colleges outside of the Initiative?

Visibility of the Plus 50 Programs

4. In general, how have the colleges done in terms of creating visibility for their own programs and the program model in general?
   - What have been some major successes?
   - What have been some major lessons learned about how to do this well?

Internal and External Support/Partnerships

5. How have the colleges done in terms of working across divisions and departments to implement their Plus 50 programs?
   - What have been some major successes?
   - What have been some major lessons learned about how to do this well?

6. How have the colleges done in terms of working with community partners to implement and/or generate support for their programs?
   - What have been some major successes?
   - What have been some major lessons learned about how to do this well?

7. What have been some ways in which you have seen the colleges use their Advisory Committees especially effectively?

Sustainability

8. Have colleges made progress in planning for sustainability of Plus 50 programming?
   - What are the major challenges to sustainability?
   - What are the lessons learned about how to make the Plus 50 program sustainable?
   - What do you believe are the most successful models for sustaining the programs after the AACC grant is over?

Mentor/Demonstration Relationships

9. How have Mentor-Demonstration college relationships enriched the Initiative?

10. What practices have characterized the most successful Mentor-Demonstration college relationships?
    - If there have been less-than-successful Mentor-Demonstration college relationships, what could have been improved about them?

Awareness Building and Advocacy

11. We have been collecting data on awareness building and advocacy through talking with Ami, using Ami's media tracking tool, using the information on the contractors' conference call agendas, and looking at the information on the Plus 50 Website.

- What lessons have you learned about how to best build awareness of the Plus 50 Iinitiative, and the issues of plus50 students?
- What lessons have you learned about how to best advocate for plus50 issues?

12. On the Plus 50 Initiative logic model, there are intended outcomes related to buy-in and endorsement from the Advisory Group, as well as Commissions, Councils, and State Community College Directors. Can you provide more information about buy-in and endorsement from these groups?

Major Lessons of the Initiative

13. What have been the major successes of the Initiative?

14. What have been some of the major lessons learned?

15. The Initiative has met with great success in terms of visibility and of dissemination of the model.
- In your opinion, what are the factors that account for this success? Are there replicable lessons here?

Closing

16. What do you want to make sure we include in the evaluation report?

17. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your time!