Power and Edge of Ability to Benefit at Community Colleges

Empowering Adult Education Students Through Access to Financial Aid

Dr. Frank Sobey
Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs

Michelle Lamons
Director Adult Education
- **ADULT EDUCATION INTEGRATION LEADERS**
  - 2015-CURRENT
- **LEAD 17 COMMUNITY COLLEGES: TEXAS PEER MENTOR NETWORK**
  - 2016-2020
- **TEXAS PATHWAYS PRESENTERS**
  - FALL 2021, SPRING 2022, FALL 2022
- **TEXAS SUCCESS CENTER KNOWLEDGE FELLOW & MENTOR**
  - 2021-CURRENT
- **WORLD EDUCATION AtB PARTNERSHIP**
  - 2022-CURRENT
AtB Research Methodologies

- Reviewed Journals
- Federal Guidance Letters
- Community College Surveys
  - Austin Community College
  - Houston Community College
  - Paris Junior College
  - Amarillo College
- Community College Interviews
  - Austin Community College
  - Paris Junior College
  - Houston Community College
  - Laredo College
  - Amarillo College
- Zoom Recordings Approved State-Defined AtB Alternative
  - Washington State
  - Mississippi
  - Wisconsin
Federal Aid Eligibility Criteria

- show you’re qualified to obtain a college or career school education by
  - having a high school diploma or a recognized equivalent such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate;
  - completing a high school education in a homeschool setting approved under state law (or—if state law does not require a homeschooled student to obtain a completion credential—completing a high school education in a homeschool setting that qualifies as an exemption from compulsory attendance requirements under state law); or
  - enrolling in an eligible career pathway program and meeting one of the “ability-to-benefit” alternatives described below.

https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements
Ability to Benefit (AtB)...What is it?

- Ability to Benefit is a federal provision enacted by the Higher Education Act (HEA) that allows students without a high school diploma or high school equivalency to gain access to federal financial aid to “obtain a college or career school education” by proving the ability-to-benefit from one of the AtB Alternatives
  - THREE AtB ALTERNATIVES
THREE AtB ALTERNATIVES

● State-Approved Test
● State-Defined Process
  ○ 3 States
● Earn 6-Semester Credit Hours (SCH)
Section II: Findings
AtB Timeline

1991
- First Launch

2012
- AtB Eliminated By Congress
  - To Reduce Cost

2015
- AtB Partially Restored
  - Reduced Federal Aid Award & added the Career Pathway Requirement

2016
- AtB Fully Restored
  - Aligned Career Pathway Definition to the WIOA Seven Components

2019
- Tri-Agency Alignment
  - Perkins V CTE Career Pathway Aligned to WIOA/AtB and DOE host national dialogue

2020
- State-Approved Alternative
  - Washington State
  - Wisconsin
  - Mississippi
UNDERUTILIZED?

Significant decline in the use of AtB from 2016-2022 for public & non-profit organizations

According to DOE public & non-profit institutions utilize the 6-SCH AtB Alternative = More Expensive Alternative Pathway

Significant decline in the use of AtB from 2016-2022 for public & non-profit organizations. According to DOE, public & non-profit institutions utilize the 6-SCH AtB Alternative. California and Florida have robust AtB models and could share knowledge and experiences.

Significant decline in the use of AtB from 2016-2022 for public & non-profit organizations.

According to DOE, public & non-profit institutions utilize the 6-SCH AtB Alternative.

Texas Aggregated AtB Award Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>AtB</th>
<th>Title Scholarship Funds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>$3,586,123</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>106</td>
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<td>MT</td>
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<td>NC</td>
<td>237</td>
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<td>NE</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>NH</td>
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<tr>
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<td>OK</td>
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<td>OR</td>
<td>89</td>
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<td>WV</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>$1,521,285</td>
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Significant decline in the use of AtB from 2016-2022 for public & non-profit organizations.

According to DOE, public & non-profit institutions utilize the 6-SCH AtB Alternative.

Diagnosed Reasons IHE are Not Utilizing AtB

1. Lack of Awareness of Ability to Benefit... What is AtB?

1. Resources to Fund AtB 6-SCH

1. Challenging...Difficult, Requires Continuous Dedicated Collaborative Efforts Of Adult Education Integration.
6-SCH Funding Options

- AEFLA Funds: WIOA Federally Funded Adult Education Programs
- Workforce Boards
- Reduce/No Cost: First 6-SCH
- Perkins
Key Takeaways:

1. Partnerships are required to create the federal career pathway component

1. Roles and functions are critical to operationalize an AtB accelerated learning model

1. Adult education student integration is integral to acclimate students to college systems prior to entering the AtB pathway
Adult Education Integration
Adult Education Integration

- AC Mission & Strategic Plan
- Educational Attainment
- Generational Poverty
- Equity = Inclusion + Fairness
Adult Education Integration

- Higher Education Bias
- College-Wide Communication
- Committee Involvement
- Institutional Research
Adult Education Integration

Strategic Plan 2025

This dashboard allows users to see the measures related to the 2025 strategic plan.

Career Ready You

This dashboard allows users to see measures related to students in the Career Ready You program such as course success, retention, and graduates based on an overall view or disaggregated by a predefined set of demographics.

Corequisite Dashboard

This dashboard allows users to see measures related to corequisite students such as course success, retention, graduate, and transfers.
Amarillo College AtB Success
Who’s Benefiting from AtB

**Student Benefits (Equity)**
- Access to FASFA
- Transition to College
- Access to Accelerated Career Pathways
- Access to Wrap Around Services
- Access to Career Navigators
- Access to Support Instructors

**College Benefits**
- Increased:
  - Student Successes
  - Enrollments
  - Persistence
  - Retention
  - Completions Rates
- Meaningful Partnership With Adult Ed, ISD, or CBO Programs

**Adult Education**
- Increased:
  - Student Successes
  - Enrollments
  - Persistence
  - Retention
  - Completions Rates
- Performance-based Funding
- Better Alignment w/Community College Systems
Jocilyn Carrasco, 20 year old ESL Student…

“It’s hard sometimes. College classes are challenging, especially when you’re trying to get comfortable communicating in English, but I definitely want to do this and move on to get a bachelor’s degree,” Carrasco said.

https://www.actx.edu/blog/id/413?fbclid=IwAR0GXPxslD-9Tgl9tf4Z2vdHuugW8UBuNnEoaYrMWhn4Ytd3NIL2HCTrM
Kaylee Brogden, 24 year old mother....

“I didn’t come here to take college classes, didn’t think I even could, but they talked me into it and it turns out I was underestimating myself. It was so eye-opening. I have a goal now that I believe I can reach – and it’s mostly been free.”
Career Ready You AtB Data

CRU AtB Historical Data

- Career Pathway Enrollments
- Awarded PELL

- 2018/2019: 70
- 2019/2020: 84
- 2020/2021: 104
- 2021/2022: 85
Career Ready You Training Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Annual Training Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018/2019</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019/2020</td>
<td>63000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020/2021</td>
<td>57000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021/2022</td>
<td>69000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Voices
What Questions Do You Have?
Thank You

Dr. Frank Sobey
Associate Vice President of
Academic Affairs, Amarillo College
fesobey@actx.edu

Michelle Lamons
Director of Adult Education,
Amarillo College
dmlamons@actx.edu
Dear Colleague Letters: GEN-15-09 & GEN-16-09

GEN-15-09: Summary: This letter clarifies changes made by the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 to the Title IV eligibility of students who are not high school graduates.

GEN-16-09: Summary: This letter clarifies changes made by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 to the definition of an eligible career pathway program and Federal Pell Grant award amounts for students enrolled in those programs.
Websites to Information:

Financial Aid Eligibility Criteria:  https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements


Carl Perkins Grant:

Department of Education AtB Data Analysis:

WIOA Title II Funding:
https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-wioa-title-ii-serve/#:~:text=The%20Title%20II%20funds%20can,%2Dincome%20individuals%2C%20and%20immigrants