

# Power and Edge of Ability to Benefit at Community Colleges

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Empowering Adult Education Students Through Access to Financial Aid



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- 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



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## Amarillo College Efforts

# 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. ”

# 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)

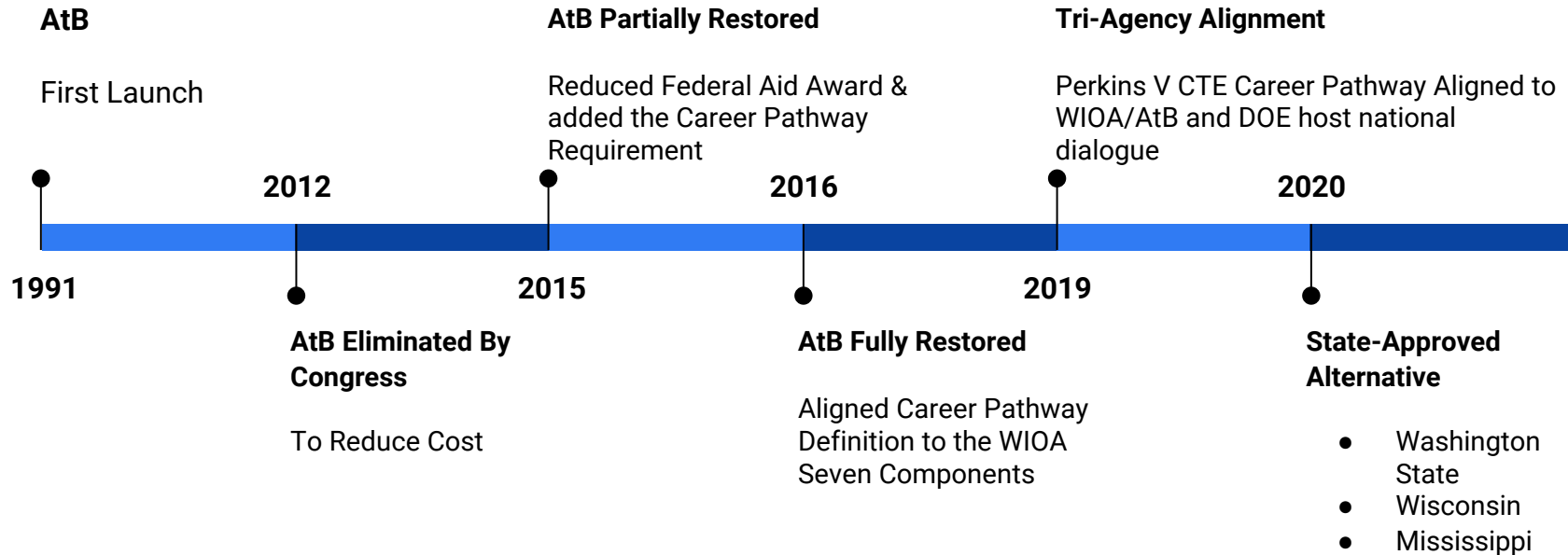




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## **Section II:** Findings

# AtB Timeline





The data in Table 3 break out the pathways by which students become eligible for aid through ability to benefit: either by earning at least 6 college credits, or by passing an approved exam. (The state process is not included here because the Department does not yet track eligibility through the state process.) Overall, more students have become ATB students by first earning college credits (three-quarters of ATB students in AY 2021). However, the balance has shifted in recent years; in 2016, 90 percent of ATB students used the credits-earned pathway, compared with 10 percent using the exam; in AY 2021, one in four used the exam.

## UNDERUTILIZED?

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

Award Year	ATB Student by Earning At Least 6 Credits		ATB Student by Test	
	Enrollment	\$ Disbursed	Enrollment	Disbursed
2016	112,341	\$ 920,737,600	11,916	\$ 79,866,560
2017	75,558	\$ 614,110,976	13,169	\$ 90,135,304
2018	62,174	\$ 515,644,384	13,928	\$ 105,865,112
2019	55,742	\$ 456,198,368	13,232	\$ 100,290,072
2020	50,203	\$ 403,399,936	14,206	\$ 121,574,160
2021	43,933	\$ 327,537,312	14,755	\$ 119,492,280

Figure 2: ATB Enrollment Pathway, By Control, for AY 2021

There are also variations by sector in how students become eligible for Title IV aid as ATB students. While most students in the nonprofit and public sectors have become eligible via the credit-hours requirement, the vast majority in the for-profit sector instead utilize the test.



Table 4: AY 2021 Ability to Benefit Enrollment and Disbursements, by State

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

This table describes the state-level enrollment and disbursement of aid to ATB students, as well as the number of institutions who have ATB students, by state for AY 2021.

State	TOTAL		
	Enrollment	\$ Disbursed	# of Institutions with ATB Students
AK	Suppressed	Suppressed	1
AL	85	\$ 714,370	9
AR	464	\$ 3,388,172	11
AZ	65	\$ 359,146	21
CA	30,462	\$ 218,371,696	174
CO	2,295	\$ 19,196,722	16
CT	62	\$ 629,176	7
DC	52	\$ 499,150	1
DE	13	\$ 171,739	1
FL	12,102	\$ 87,749,224	40
GA	174	\$ 1,687,316	11
HI	Suppressed	Suppressed	2
IA	86	\$ 802,324	11
ID	17	\$ 104,613	7
IL	590	\$ 4,294,620	31
IN	71	\$ 565,956	15
KS	238	\$ 1,243,471	8
KY	436	\$ 4,329,077	10
LA	880	\$ 8,224,835	16
MA	96	\$ 861,581	19
MD	539	\$ 4,590,664	21
ME	473	\$ 3,749,209	7
MI	447	\$ 2,872,059	36
MN	232	\$ 2,315,288	15

California and Florida Have Robust AtB Models and Could Share Knowledge and Experiences



MO	408	\$ 3,596,123	24
MS	106	\$ 766,593	7
MT	18	\$ 143,668	4
NC	237	\$ 2,600,966	15
ND	14	\$ 100,849	6
NE	15	\$ 146,776	5
NH	Suppressed	Suppressed	0
NJ	266	\$ 2,327,507	17
NM	67	\$ 456,669	5
NV	23	\$ 240,997	4
NY	3,118	\$ 30,916,654	49
OH	468	\$ 3,712,218	24
OK	56	\$ 576,251	11
OR	88	\$ 661,927	16
PA	203	\$ 2,421,037	28
PR	115	\$ 854,560	4
RI	53	\$ 670,400	3
SC	1,114	\$ 10,408,923	16
SD	Suppressed	Suppressed	3
TN	150	\$ 1,367,049	9
TX	1,386	\$ 10,883,314	79
UT	71	\$ 485,080	8
VA	189	\$ 1,915,003	14
VT	37	\$ 348,296	6
WA	257	\$ 1,886,878	31
WI	82	\$ 584,790	16
WV	178	\$ 1,521,285	6
WY	Suppressed	Suppressed	0

Texas Aggregated AtB Award  
Data



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.



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# 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

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# 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



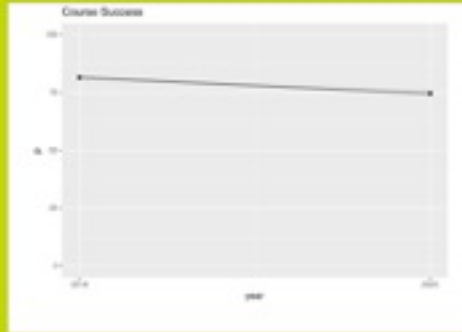
# Adult Education Integration

## Strategic Plan 2025



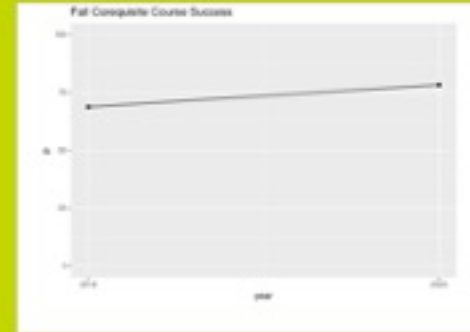
This dashboard allows users to see the measures related to the 2025 strategic plan.

## 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

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# 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



Jocyln Carrasco, 20 year old ESL Student...

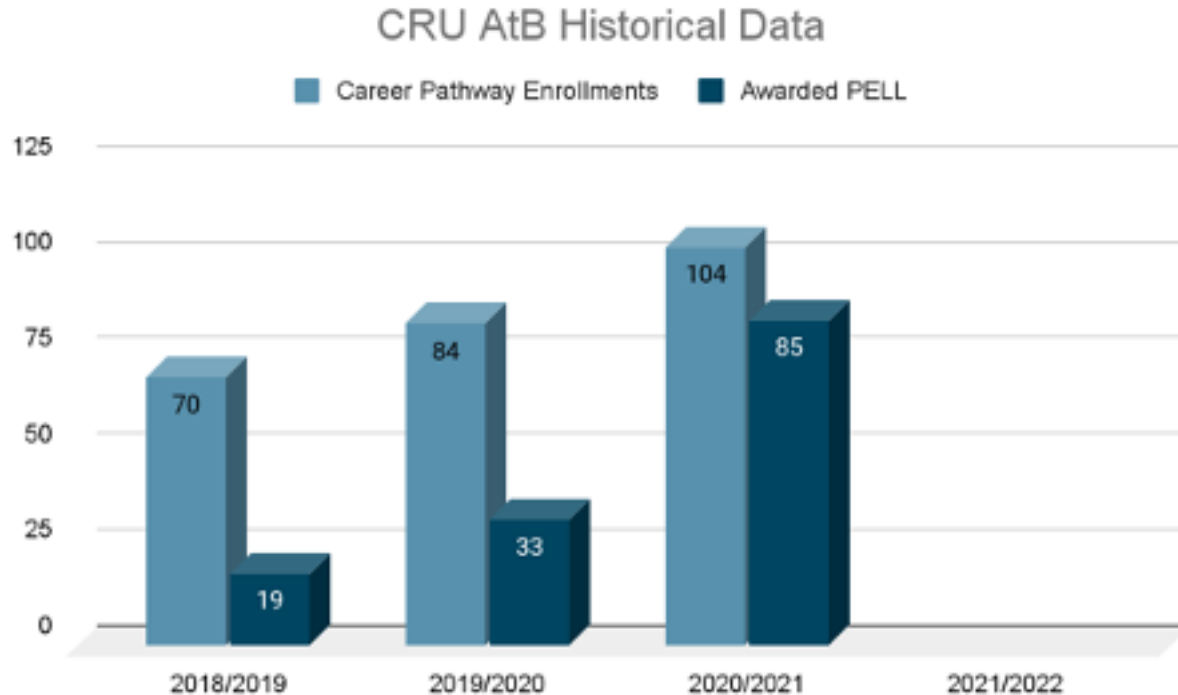
“It’s hard sometimes. College classes are challenging, especially when you’re trying to get comfortable communicating in English, but I definitely want to do this and move on to get a bachelor’s degree,” Carrasco said.



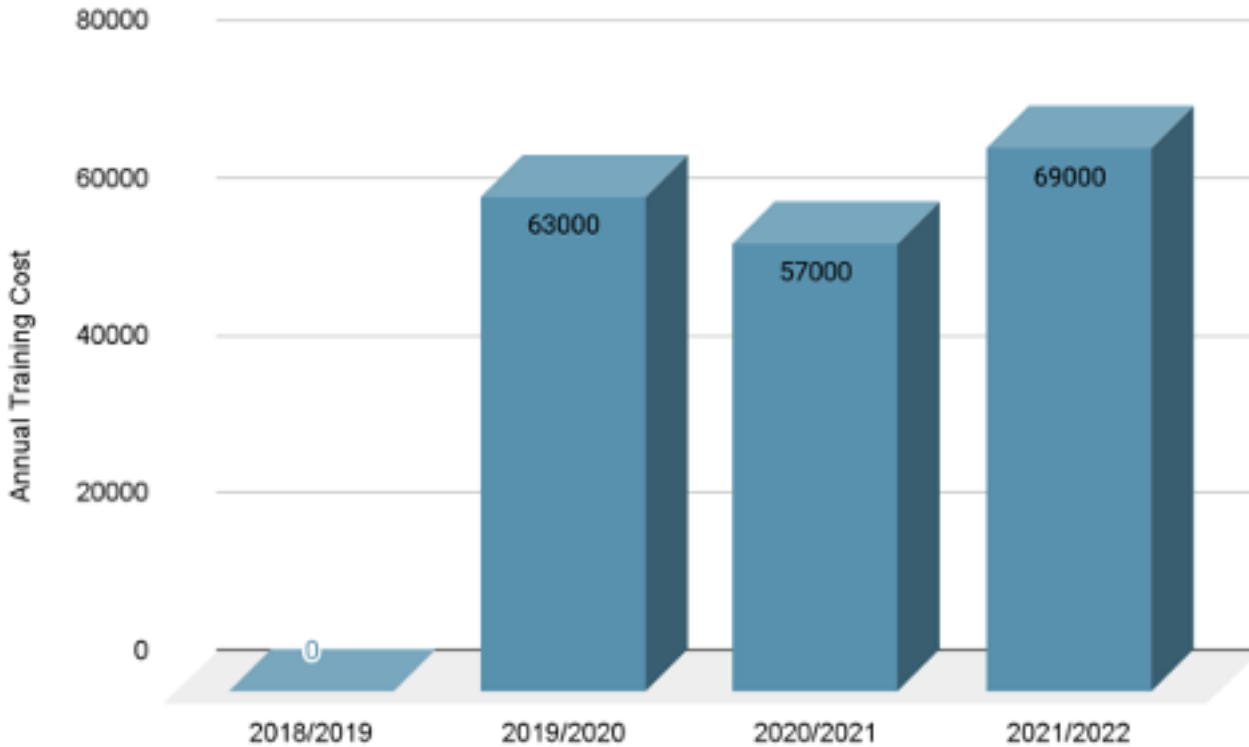
Kaylee Brogden, 24 year old mother....

“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



# Career Ready You Training Cost





# Student Voices



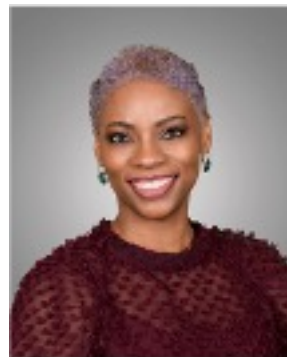
# What Questions Do You Have?



# Thank You



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# 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>

**AtB State Approved Test:** <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/11/09/2020-24795/list-of-approved-ability-to-benefit-atb-tests-and-passing-scores>

**Carl Perkins Grant:**

<https://cte.ed.gov/legislation/about-perkins-iv>

**Department of Education AtB Data Analysis:**

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2021/analysisofatbusage.pdf>

**WIOA Title II Funding:**

<https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-wioa-title-ii-serve/#:~:text=The%20Title%20II%20funds%20can,%20Income%20individuals%2C%20and%20immi grants>