

**Promising Practices:
I-BEST Career Pathways
Everett Community College**

The I-BEST program primarily serves students who are pursuing or who have recently received their GED or high school diploma, or who are immigrants and refugees learning English. The program provides students with literacy education and workforce skills at the same time. It challenges the traditional notion that students must first complete all levels of basic education before they can begin workforce training or college level classes.

Name of Community College: Everett Community College (EvCC)
(<https://www.everettcc.edu/>).

Title of Program: [Transitional Studies \(TS\)](#), [I-BEST career pathways](#).

Type of Program: English Language Acquisition (ELA), Transitional Studies (TS) for GED and High School+, Integrated Basic Educational Skills Training (I-BEST), BRIDGES Center for student support, partnerships with Workforce Development to serve Out of School Youth, Refugee and Immigration Services NW (RISNW) for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) programs, Sea Mar and the Monroe School District for Youth Re-Engagement Program (U3) (CEO Program similar to the Open Doors model), Connect Casino Road for holistic assistance to South Everett students.

Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved: Transitional Studies department and division.

Key Partners: RISNW, Sea Mar, the Monroe School District, and Workforce Snohomish. Additionally, Housing Hope, Volunteers of America, the 13 other school districts in the region, Sno Isle libraries, and other local CBOs.

Populations Served: Refugees and Immigrants

Immigration status required: Immigrants and refugees regardless of status

1. Need for Program:

I-BEST pairs Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English Language Acquisition (ELA) instructors with professional-technical instructors in the classroom to provide students with literacy education and workforce skills at the same time. I-BEST challenges the traditional notion that students must first complete all levels of basic education before they can begin workforce training or college level classes. Transitional Studies students have a historically low rate of progressing to college level. Community college students in general often end up taking a variety of credits that do not apply to their degree or career pathway.

In order to respond to the latter issue, the college implemented a Guided Pathways model. Transitional Studies set a goal to have an I-BEST program at the foundation of every Guided Pathway. In addition to traditional professional technical I-BEST

programs in Business, Manufacturing, Health Sciences, IT, and Early Childhood Education, the Transitional Studies department collaborated with the English and Math departments to expand programming to I-BEST. In the past year, the department has been creating a plan to leverage Ability to Benefit for students who wish to take Academic I-BEST programs but do not have access to FAFSA. The department also works closely with the Center for Diversity and Equity and their DACA student navigator.

2. Brief Description of Program:

As mentioned above, the I-BEST programs are at the foundation of all Guided Pathways at EvCC, whether they are academic/transfer or professional-technical.

During COVID-19, all I-BEST programs have moved into a remote model. While this was a significant undertaking at the beginning of the process, nearly all instructors have reported success with the online co-teaching curriculum. Having a co-instructor has been a key retention strategy in reaching out to students for both academic and non-academic resources. The innovation of both synchronous and asynchronous instruction has been impressive.

3. Specific Population Served:

The I-BEST program primarily serves students who are pursuing or who have recently received their GED or high school diploma, or who are immigrants and refugees learning English. We do not ask for citizenship status to IBEST program applicants. Eligible students may access FAFSA or WASFA for funding for IBEST programs. As COVID continues, the program anticipates seeing more students who are interested in re-careering after a layoff or decline in an industry.

4. Goals and Objectives:

The main objective of I-BEST is for Transitional Studies students to progress to college level, then to move to completion of a degree or certificate.

5. Outcomes:

Since the I-BEST expansion, the number of students served has increased significantly, from 36 FTE (full-time equivalent) students in 2016-17 to 91 FTE students in 2019-20, an increase of 184%. (These numbers have not been broken down by immigrant/refugee status).

6. Collaboration:

Within EvCC, partnering with other academic departments, Enrollment Services, Advising, Workforce Funding, Financial Aid, and Diversity and Equity has been key to I-BEST's success. Externally, partners such as Goodwill, Housing Hope, Workforce Snohomish, Worksource, and local school districts have been key external stakeholders.

7. Success Factors:

The most critical factors have been to have successful collaborations between departments at every level, and a clear shared understanding of I-BEST concepts.

8. Challenges Faced and Overcome:

The biggest challenge has been to find consistent funding for students, especially in academic programs and for students who are not able to apply for FAFSA or WASFA. Ability to Benefit will be a great help for access to academic programs. While financial aid for undocumented students remains a significant challenge, the EvCC Foundation does have a scholarship for undocumented students, and there are resources within TS for students who need items such as textbooks and bus passes.

During COVID, access to both time and technology presents a great divide. Although the college has checked out Chromebooks, many students have bandwidth issues, especially if there are many internet users in a household at one time. Even if a student does have a computer, digital literacy remains an issue. TS students are often working in face-to-face situations during COVID, such as grocery workers, and may work increased hours. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the majority of students are also parents and must balance their own educational goals with the new challenge of helping their children learn remotely. The college is partnering with local CBOs to seek out funding opportunities for drop-in childcare during this unprecedented time.

9. Funding and Sustainability:

Some I-BEST programs are funded through operational budgets, while others are funded by special allocations from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. These allocations are an excellent opportunity to pilot and incubate new programs.

10. Contact Information:

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