

**Promising Practices:
Career Pathways**
Portland Community College

Integrated Education and Training (IET) Career Pathways are specifically designed to meet the needs of non-native English speakers, including immigrants, who may have a breadth of education and experience in their native country but need to develop their English communication skills, earn industry-relevant credentials, and/or apply their skills and knowledge within the context of the local workforce and community. IET Career Pathways are also designed to meet the needs of underprepared college students, GED students, and those seeking additional academic and career support.

Name of Community College: Portland Community College (<https://www.pcc.edu/>).

Title of Program: Career Pathways (<https://www.pcc.edu/career-pathways/>).

Type of Program: CHANGE: Integrated Education and Training (IET) Career Pathways.

Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved: Career Pathways, Adult Basic Skills (ABS)—ESOL and GED/ABE, CTE.

Key Partners: Community-based organizations, industry partners, human service agencies, Headstart, K-12, workforce partners, philanthropists.

Populations Served: Immigrants, their children, non-native English speakers.

Immigration status required: Unspecified.

1. Need for Program:

Portland Community College has over twenty years of history providing VESL (Vocational English Second Language) training in the Portland Metro area. Until 2009, these VESL Career Pathways were non-credit and prepared students for immediate entry into employment in high-demand occupations. This was done as an effort to increase immigrants' and non-native English speakers' opportunities to progress in their career pathways. With multiple options to enter and exit into college, the non-credit options were transformed into credit Integrated Education and Training Career Pathways (model detailed below). These credit Career Pathways increased the stackability for students, as they counted towards additional college certificates and a degree. They also increased student access, as credit Career Pathway certificates are eligible for financial aid when part of a student's longer career pathway and intent to complete a one-year certificate or an associate degree.

2. Brief Description of Program:

Since 1999, Portland Community College's Career Pathways Initiative has been a proven, innovative student success and workforce development strategy. PCC's Career Pathways offer individuals short-term, stackable certificates that prepare them for employment in high-growth, high-demand industry sectors while also providing a stepping stone to an associate degree,

bachelor's degree, and beyond. This evidence-based approach focuses on easing and facilitating student transitions from high school to community college, from pre-college courses to credit postsecondary programs, and from community colleges to universities and careers. Career Pathways support an individual's continued progression along with this education and career continuum, by connecting high-quality training programs and student support services. They also respond to industry needs and prepare students for middle-skill jobs. This approach of connecting high-quality training, college certificates, industry-recognized credentials, student support services, industry demand, and multiple entry- and exit- points into college sets students up for success, builds their technical and soft skills, and provides a springboard into the workforce with clear paths for career and education advancement over time.

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Based on Washington's highly effective I-BEST model, IET Career Pathways allow students to take credit Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses while simultaneously enrolling in a contextualized remediation course. It relieves students of the burden of having to complete courses in ESOL, ABE, or developmental education before beginning their Career Pathways program – a process that can be expensive and time-consuming, placing students at greater risk of dropping out. This model helps students simultaneously master employer-requested skills and contextualized academic content in a timely and efficient way, while also earning an industry-recognized stackable college certificate.

The model also integrates work-based learning, high-impact student support practices, and partnerships with community-based organizations and workforce partners. To gain industry exposure, students have opportunities to access employer presentations/panels, informational interviews, job shadows, tours, internships, and/or jobs. Career Coaches provide the critical wrap-around support, including intentional outreach, individualized assessment, assistance navigating college systems, educational planning, career advising, 21st-century skill development, advocacy with faculty and staff, job skill development, and individualized support finding a job, and accessing basic need resources and services. Community-based organizations (CBO) and workforce development partners are a key source of referrals, resources, and ongoing support for students accessing and completing the IET Career Pathways.

3. Specific Population Served:

Non-Native English Speakers, immigrants, and their first-generation children, under-prepared college students, GED students/completers, Developmental Education Students, opportunity youth, re-entry students, parenting students.

4. Goals and Objectives:

- Get students further, faster: offer accelerated models that increase students' college completion, skill development, and career options—Measured by credential completion, GPA during Career Pathway, quantitative student feedback, persistence in college, and job attainment;

- Increase equity, access, and diversity in college Career Pathway programs—Measured by student demographics and referral source;
- Increase economic mobility for students of color, low-income, under-prepared, and non-native English Speakers/immigrants and their children—Measured by employment rates, wage before Career Pathway Credential, and employment in careers that offers pathways for advancement into middle and high wage jobs;
- Employer/Industry Feedback—Measured by qualitative input, work-based learning engagement, and student employment; and,
- Increase transition of GED, ESOL, and Development Education Students into Credit CTE college courses—Measured by referral sources.

5. Outcomes:

PCC has historically been a state leader in developing and implementing IET Career Pathways. IET Career Pathways offer non-native English speakers, immigrants, GED, and developmental education students an accelerated path to build their academic, language, and job skills concurrently. Students take a contextualized remediation course in tandem with their college classes to earn a Career Pathway credential.

Scaled-up programming that offered comprehensive coaching, support courses, cohorts, and learning communities led to 94% credential completion, 75% employment rates, and 72% college persistence for all Career Pathways students. The student demographics included 50% students of color, 50% low-income students, and 40% students enrolled in some adult education.

The majority of students in these cohorts have either progressed from PCC's Adult Basic Skills programs (ESOL, GED) or Developmental Education courses or have been referrals from community-based organizations and have been students who would not have enrolled at the college had their not been the IET Career Pathway available. This has been especially true for many of the immigrants, their children, and non-native English speakers.

6. Collaboration:

CTE: Instructors are supportive and willing to adjust their pedagogies and approach, to meet the needs of the students, while maintaining academic rigor, expectations, and outcomes.

ABS: Faculty refer students and market the opportunities. ESOL instructors have led the development of the contextualized remediation support courses, by creating meaningful learning outcomes and developing relevant, contextualized curriculum. This has often included learning very technical subject matter, in the career and technical field. Instructors of the support courses have also needed to adjust their approach, to meet the diverse needs of the students in the class (academically underprepared students, to non-native English speakers with exceptional academic skills in their native country, to GED completers coming from alternative secondary settings.

Career Pathways: Provide outreach, recruitment, enrollment, career coaching, cohort coordination, outcome tracking, work-based learning, job placement, support persisting, collaboration with external partners (case managers from CBOs, WIOA Career Specialist, etc.)

CBOs: Student referral, support completing Career Pathway, connections with resources, holistic support for the family, support navigating and overcoming barriers

Workforce development partners: Student referral, WIOA services and resources to pay for training/tools/supplies/industry credentials, coordination of multiple CBOs and assistance with casting wide outreach net, employer and industry connections, sector strategies, and guidance on region's workforce needs

7. Success Factors:

The model, including career coaching, has a transformative effect on the students. Not only do the students build relevant academic, communication, and technical job skills, but the model also creates a learning community where students from very different backgrounds can learn from one another. The intercultural communication and learning that occurs benefits the college community and the workforce by preparing students to work on diverse teams.

8. Challenges:

Faculty, both ABS and CTE, have expressed the need to be flexible with the curriculum. While the syllabus provides an essential framework, sometimes specific subject matter or skill areas require more or less time for students to master the content. Faculty have remarked that while the learning outcome goals are the same for the ABS students, it takes an Instructor who is willing to take different routes and approaches to get there to ensure all students are succeeding. Scaffolding learning and alignment between the CTE and ABS faculty are key.

A large, ongoing challenge has been finding resources to sustain, expand, and improve the model and certificate offerings. The vast majority that have funding has come from state and federal grants, that have end dates. There are also perception issues to overcome, with many leaders seeing the model and approach as too expensive or a "boutique" approach that is not scalable. Some of Washington's research and those from Accelerating Opportunity have demonstrated the long-term cost savings and return on investment. However, in a time of decreased investment in higher education and declining enrollments, it is difficult to find the resources necessary.

9. Funding and Sustainability:

Grant Funding: federal, state, and local grants and philanthropic investments
College CTE and ABS Department have picked up a small share of the staffing costs.

10. Contact Information:

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