



## SPARKING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Systemic Innovation resulting from the MoWINS program

December 2016



## OVERVIEW

Beginning in 2011, Missouri's community and technical colleges banded together to apply for three rounds of the Department of Labor's TAACCCT grant program. Since the consortium was formed, thousands of unemployed or underemployed Missourians have benefited from more than 100 programs created or transformed as a result of the consortium efforts. The impact of these grants, however, goes much further than the students served. The innovations born out of the TAACCCT grant programs are bringing transformative change to each of the consortium institutions.

## STATEWIDE INNOVATION

Thanks to the TAACCCT grant programs, Missouri's community colleges have learned to collaborate on a whole new scale. Community colleges in Missouri are not structured as a system under one statewide government entity; instead, they are independently governed institutions. In the past, the colleges had collaborated on advocacy and professional development programs, but the TAACCCT grants fundamentally strengthened these existing partnerships, so that Missouri's community colleges maintain the flexibility and local focus of independent institutions, while reaping the benefits of statewide collaboration that a system experiences. As a result, the state as a whole has seen very tangible progress in two areas: credit for prior learning and non-credit data collection.

### Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for prior learning initiatives have been supported in all three rounds of TAACCCT grants received by the state, which resulted in a statewide Credit for Prior Learning Model Policy. This meant that every college in Missouri was able to establish a policy on Credit for Prior Learning, and now through Round IV of the grants, the state is working on a credit for prior learning course matrix crosswalk to national standards.

The new crosswalk will be used to chart college-level learning or training that takes place outside the traditional classroom and identify approved course equivalents. Like other crosswalks, this one will use industry and national standards to determine if credit should be awarded. Similar credit for prior learning initiatives have proven to increase retention and completion and accelerate time to completion.

These initiatives represent a significant departure from how Missouri's colleges have historically awarded credit, but because of the TAACCCT grants, the colleges now embrace and benefit from credit for prior learning. At Moberly Area Community College, The TAACCCT grants have led the college to be more open-minded as an institution—faculty included—in how it looks at credit for prior learning. The college revised its CPL institutional policy to be more comprehensive and coherent and has updated its AP, CLEP, and DSST credit equivalencies which now align with ACE recommendations and include additional tests.

Similarly, Three Rivers College has made significant changes to Credit for Prior Learning policies and procedures, including the development and implementation of a new Regulation




and Handbook, approved by the college's Board of Trustees. Additionally, formalized efforts have been made to establish incentives for students to make application for Credit for Prior Learning. Through this process, Three Rivers identified a much broader scope of Prior Learning than originally anticipated. In order to allow for current and future expansion of the sources of learning that would be considered for college credit, the college chose to rename the "program" as Alternative College Credit, a name that would encompass all forms of awarding credit for Prior Learning.

## Career Pathways

Through TAACCCT funding, the Missouri Economic research and Information Center has been able to produce several publications to support in-demand occupations. Each document is updated every six months with timely and fresh information, making it a valuable resource to a wide range of users including staff from community colleges in the consortium as they recruit potential students and assist students nearing program completion in their job search. In addition, the publications have been highlighted with Missouri's WIOA partners as another tool to assist customers in finding potential training and career pathways. And, as a bonus, subscribers to GovDelivery receive all updates to these publications via email. Recently, MERIC has also had opportunities to share the publications with secondary- and post-secondary school counselors.

The Career Pathway Summary provides in-depth information in three industry groups – Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics; Information Technology; and Health Care and Life Sciences. The focus of the Career Pathway Summary is to assist the user in their search for education and training programs, plus provides information on how a person can advance in their field through additional work experience, education and training. The



report begins with an overview of career pathways, as well as mapping occupations, targeting those funded by the TAACCCT grants, in categories according to the levels of education and training typically required. Specialized skills, certifications and software often required of the occupations are listed within each occupational pathway. An in-demand occupation is highlighted in each report detailing the work performed, tools used and special skill requirements of someone working in the occupation. Wage data for the occupation, as well as a chart showing the number of job ads placed by employers over time is also included for the occupation. The Career Pathway Summaries have proven valuable as they are used not only by consortium schools, but also by WIOA partners as they counsel customers on occupational opportunities.

The Real-Time Pathway Summary is prepared for the state and for each Workforce Development Region. This brief focuses on real-time information found in job ads placed by employers for the occupations targeted by the grant. Information includes number of online job ads during the previous six months, as well as the basic skills, specialized skills and certifications most requested by the employer. In addition, wages at three different levels, entry-level, average and experienced, are included for each occupation. Since the information is produced regionally, this report is a valuable resource for those researching career and training options since they are able to access information on the skill sets and knowledge needed by companies in their area.

## Statewide Data Collection

The Scorecard has had a lasting effect on communication within the consortium schools. As we began this project, non-credit data had never been systematically collected and reported by schools in Missouri. And, it was discovered that the consortium colleges were using different systems to collect student information for the credit and non-credit programs. The overarching nature of this project has opened the communication lines between the different departments within the schools. The success of Scorecard is dependent on the cooperation between these departments, such as Institutional Research, Workforce Placement, Information Technology, and those responsible for applying for and maintaining the program list approved for WIOA funding on the Eligible Training Provider list.

The Data Advisory Task Force, comprised of representatives from each consortium community college and representing different interests within the college, attend regular meetings and provide valuable input for the Scorecard Project. Through these meetings, several milestones have already been accomplished. The schools identified information that they would like to have for administrative reporting and decision-making purposes on noncredit programs that had not been previously collected or available. The data points, along with WIOA reporting requirements, were taken into consideration when determining the student information fields to include with the data file that would be transmitted from the school to the Department of Higher Education through the secure system already in place for credit programs. Each school has modified the student intake process to collect the data elements, built the data file for noncredit student information and started submitting the quarterly file in October 2016.

During the meetings, we heard the schools comment on how the institutions worked in “silos” and that communication between the different departments was very limited. The Scorecard project presented a real need to communicate between the different departments and has permanently opened the lines of communication.

In addition, through the Data Advisory Task Force meetings, the staff from consortium schools has also been able to build a network of peers that do similar work. During the Scorecard project, we have allowed time during the meetings to share best practices and how schools have overcome challenges to implementing this project. This network allows staff to reach out to each other outside of the meetings and continue to solve issues both for the Scorecard project and others.

Ultimately the Scorecard project will help colleges understand and promote the workforce value of both credit and non-credit programs. Non-credit programs represent a substantial part of what consortium community colleges offer and many have terrific work outcomes. This project helped schools break down some of the communication barriers within their institution but will also help them better evaluate and share important program outcomes with their students, industries, and community leaders. The systematic changes at the college that improves student data collection, and at the state agencies where that information is matched to work outcomes, will create lasting capabilities for better decision making.

## INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

Given the independent nature of Missouri’s colleges, policies and procedures at every institution are a little bit different. This meant that the strategies shared by the consortium were implemented in slightly different ways at each college. This was a significant asset to the consortium, as the colleges could test different solutions and learn from each other’s successes and failures. This was the case in particular with the many different advising approaches that the colleges explored, as well as their varied approaches to developmental education.

### Intrusive Advising

Throughout the grants, colleges continuously explored a wide variety of advising and coaching activities. They found that advising was essential to help students navigate not only their coursework, but many of life’s challenges that pose a threat to persistence and completion. In many cases, colleges worked with students to identify and address potential barriers to success prior to even enrolling the student.

In fact, State Fair Community College found this approach to have such a significant impact on retention that the college scaled its Navigator program college-wide following Round 1. This meant that the college went from having one navigator funded by the grants to having a total of 13 navigators, the majority of whom are funded by the college. Each navigator works one-on-one with students on everything from what courses to take to financial aid.



Recently the college reported that their four MoSTEMWINS navigators reached 74 percent, 76 percent, 89 percent and 100 percent fall-to-fall retention. Since implementation college-wide in 2014, State Fair has seen fall-to-fall retention of first-time, full-time students increase from 59 percent to 74 percent. The number of students completing increased from 767 in 2014-2015 to 806 in 2015-2016. The navigators also played a role in reducing the amount of students loans by more than \$100,000 from the previous year, which means more students will have less debt at the end of their educational journey. M

To aid in this cause, the college also purchased retention technology software, which in combination with the new advisors is having amazing results on retention. One instructor wrote, "I can't give enough praise for the role the navigators play in student retention. As we approach the middle of the semester, I have been worrying about the fate of nearly a dozen of my students who have stopped attending or haven't been turning in work. I raised flags (in Starfish) yesterday requesting the navigators' help, and in a little over 24 hours, I have been in contact with seven of those students wanting to work with me to catch up. One student just contacted me a few minutes ago and he hasn't been in class for two weeks. This truly is an improvement over the retention strategies I have been involved in over the years. Thanks."

## Developmental Education

Colleges also took varied approaches to preparing students for college level courses and programs. Examples included workshops on college success and math and establishing a minimum math level, coupled with in-class tutors. For one college, having math tutors physically in the classroom was so successful that the approach is being scaled and sustained without grant funding.

At North Central, students that test into lower level math courses by only one or two points have the opportunity to take a one week brush up course and then re-test for course placement purposes. This option allows some students to save one or possibly two semesters. Simultaneously, the college also developed co-requisite math courses for students that may not benefit from Brush-Up but still need an accelerated math option. By offering the degree required math course concurrently with the dev ed math course, the college is potentially saving the student one semester of time and eliminating some of the stigma associated with dev ed courses. The MoSTEM Brush-Up model for math courses is now being implemented/scaled for dev ed writing/English courses at the college.

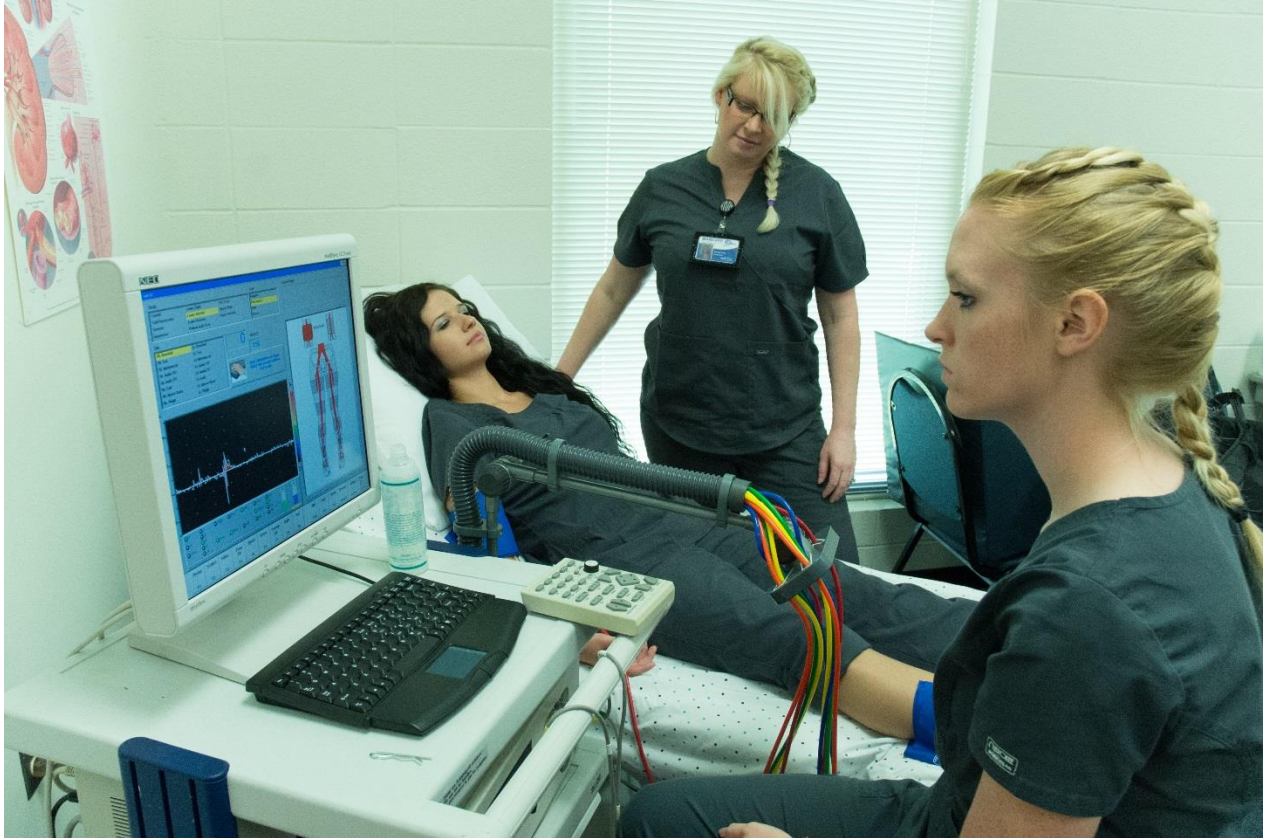
Across the state, St. Louis Community College developed an Adult Learning Academy that helps students develop foundational reading, writing and math skills to improve their ability to transfer skills from one context to another. Then, through a series of competency-based and portfolio-assessed learning experiences, students develop confidence in themselves as lifelong learners who can adapt to the changing demands of the workplace.

In August 2016, the success of the program was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as part of its Supporting Student Success project which will feature the program nationwide as a best practice in contextualization and developmental education.

Through a corporate donation, the MoSTEMWINs Adult Learning Academy was scaled to the Florissant Valley campus, a second location within the St. Louis Community College system to offer the ALA as an alternative to traditional developmental education. A full-time academic advisor has been designated to serve as the career pathway coach for students who attend the Florissant Valley ALA. The advisor will conduct blueprint sessions with each student and will follow the same intrusive student support model practiced by the MoSTEMWINs career pathway coach. This is a significant step forward in implementation of the STLCC scaling plan originally developed during the first round of TAACCCT grants.

## Connecting Credit and Non-Credit

Across the consortium, colleges have reported better relationships between the for-credit and non-credit sides of their institutions. At St. Charles Community College, the workforce development/noncredit programs department has been able to collaborate and partner with the traditional academic credit side of the institution in ways that have not been done in the history of the college. This allowed the college to pilot and test new in-demand programs using a variety of methods such as flexible scheduling, acceleration of course completion, multiple instructional platforms, and quick start up of new programs. By developing and testing these programs using a noncredit platform, the transition to develop appropriate credit options has become much easier. For instance, the welding program which started as a non-credit grant program has now been approved for college credit.



## STRENGTHENING EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Another hallmark of MoWINs has been the level at which employers, workforce and community partners have been able to engage in curriculum development. Every consortium college was required to work with its local job center to recruit students, and in several cases, the colleges placed staff members in the job center to assist with recruitment and enrollment efforts. To engage employers, colleges involved businesses in the design of programs, and as a result, employer partners have taken new interest in many of the programs, leading to incredibly stronger partnerships.

For example, Metropolitan Community College quadrupled the size of its employer advisory board by bringing 48 area employers together to address the need for skilled machinists. As part of their partnership with the college, these companies helped with curriculum development and are offering paid internships for students who are enrolled in the 18-week, 23 credit hour CIMM certificate program. The partnership even developed a 501c3 that will bring further support to the college from the private sector.

At Algoa Correctional Center, State Technical College continues to develop a strong partnership that will sustain and scale as new grants are launched supporting the reduction of recidivism. The initiative creates an accelerated entry into grant funded programs by allowing offenders to commit to education and achieving a credential that is stackable while incarcerated. When released, credit for prior learning allows participants to enter the grant funded class, which fills their education plan. The career pathway map is a very encouraging



tool for inmates, as they can see what can be accomplished upon release. This partnership has involved a number of different entities aside from the college and the correctional center, including the Department of Workforce Development, the Missouri Department of Corrections, and the Jefferson City Chamber of Commerce.

## TANGIBLE RESULTS

So far, the MoWINs consortium has exceeded grant expectations on many of the goals that it set for itself—from number enrolled, to completers, to the number of participants who found employment following the grant. Completers of Round II of the grants—MoManufacturingWINs—were found to have an average annual salary of \$56,000. That's amazing considering that the majority of these individuals had to be underemployed or unemployed in order to enroll in the grant programs.

Beyond grant funded programs, the tangible successes of these initiatives can be seen in the number of paradigms that were shifted and the programs that will be scaled as a result. The success of the navigator program at State Fair is being shared across the state, and a handful of other colleges are working to implement similar programs.

In several cases, the grants uncovered weaknesses in processes at the institutional level that have since been changed as a result. At Jefferson College, staff have developed an integrated planning process used to align grant/project objectives and deliverables, with the college strategic plan, and provide transparency and accountability by delineating tasks and responsible parties to a specific timeline. This process has been adopted by the Area Technical School, CTE Division, and the broader Instructional Division. The integrated planning process has increased stakeholder buy-in and allowed us to strategically achieve grant/project objectives.

At Mineral College, Advanced Manufacturing classes offered every 8 weeks necessitated a number of changes in the Business Office. The college had to navigate invoicing students, organizing and providing supportive services, working with employers who are paying non-grant covered fees. With 8 week sessions, processes were also changed to accommodate this schedule in our Admissions Office, Financial Services, bookstore, and instructor's schedules.

All of these changes and more are the result of many lessons learned that would not have been possible without the TAACCCT grants. At a time when budgets are extremely tight across the state, the grants provided the consortium institutions the opportunity to innovate. Many of the programs that will be sustained and scaled are only in their infancy, meaning that the full positive effect of the grants will be seen long into the future.

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