

RESTRUCTURE DELIVERY
FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

Restructure delivery for today's students: *Develop new, shorter, and faster pathways to degrees and credentials of value.*

**COMPLETE
COLLEGE
AMERICA'S GOAL:**

**By 2020, six out of
10 young adults
in our country
will have a
college degree or
credential of value.**

U.S. students don't just need to go to college; they need to complete college. Access has improved — we are sending more students to higher education — but success has declined.

In just 10 years, six of 10 new jobs will require a college education, but fewer than half of students who enter college today finish with a degree or credential. Those who do complete college are taking longer, paying more, and graduating with more debt.

WHY RESTRUCTURE DELIVERY?

The public's longstanding image of the typical college student — living on campus, studying full-time, and completing a degree in four years — is no longer accurate. Today's students are more likely to work while they attend college, take classes part-time, and commute to campus.

College students have changed dramatically, but more often than not, degree and certificate programs are still delivered just as they have been for generations. And the results are not encouraging.

One of every two students who enters a four-year university does not finish. Graduation rates at community colleges across the country average only 25 percent to 30 percent for full-time students and are even lower for the growing numbers of student who attend part-time. It is evident that we need significantly different delivery structures that are designed for the students we have on our campuses today.

Restructuring degree programs matters because:

- If delivery models don't change and colleges and universities continue to simply offer more of the same, we can expect the same results: too many college dropouts.

WAYS TO RESTRUCTURE DELIVERY

- **Redesign course delivery.** There is evidence that block scheduling can significantly increase completion rates. Block scheduling is offering courses in regular back-to-back time sequences

(e.g., Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.). Block scheduling or stacked courses should be implemented for both full-time and part-time students. With this approach, students can take the courses they need for their degrees in an efficient, predictable time block — allowing them to better balance their education with work and family responsibilities.

- **Build and maximize the value of cohorts.** A structured course delivery model, like the one described above, creates cohorts within programs. Students who work in cohorts benefit by functioning as a unit, learning from and supporting one another and focusing on the same content.
- **Build support programs into structured course delivery models.** Structured models are more successful when students receive embedded remedial and counseling support. Rather than create separate remediation classes that don't count toward degrees, institutions should integrate remediation into the structured course delivery blocks.
- **Require low-performing campuses to restructure delivery.** Campuses that have consistently poor completion rates should be required to implement new models of delivery. Performance funding tied to campus-level completion can be a powerful incentive to focus attention on significantly restructuring delivery for today's students.

STATES IN ACTION

- **The City University of New York** offers an Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) to help select community college students earn associate degrees more quickly. ASAP provides student-friendly structures (e.g., block scheduling from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., Monday to Friday, and cohorts by major) along with financial incentives (free subway passes and textbooks) to speed participants' paths to a degree. One study found that ASAP students had three times the graduation rate of a comparison group who lacked the same supports.
- Technical and vocational training at **Tennessee's 27 Tech Centers** have an average 75 percent completion rate, with some centers graduating all of their students. Job placement rates also are high. Unlike traditional approaches, students enroll in whole academic programs, not individual courses, streamlining the path to completion by removing the burdens of individual course selection and availability. For those needing to brush up on basic academic skills, remediation is embedded in ordinary instruction so valuable time and student motivation are not lost.

Programs are offered Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and attendance is taken. Finally, the complete program costs and the time it will take to graduate are clearly presented up front, allowing students to plan ahead and know with certainty when they will graduate. Many of the Tech Centers' more successful program elements were included in a new state law that created a unified community college system.

- **Indiana Wesleyan University** offers evening programs for more than 8,000 adult students at multiple sites in three states. By making effective use of technology and competency exams, the university has shortened the time to complete degrees and achieved a 65 percent graduation rate.
- **Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana and Lumina Foundation for Education** have developed and launched a one-year accelerated associate degree program. The program has two key components that shorten time-to-degree: recruiting and working with students in high school so they are able to start college without the need for remediation and block scheduling associate degree courses from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Complete College America is a national nonprofit organization working with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with a college degree or credential of value and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations.

Five national foundations are providing multiyear support to Complete College America: the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education.

Additional information and data sources are available at www.completecollege.org.