

2022 ICCB Underrepresented Populations Report – Illinois Valley Community College:

Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) strives, as most community colleges do, to ensure that its underrepresented populations of students have the resources and the services they need to be successful in their academic pursuits. IVCC offers a multitude of such services including continuing education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Tutoring and Writing Center support. For this year's report, IVCC will focus on two of its wide range of services (as Best Practices) which have both been successful in meeting the needs of our underrepresented student populations. These two include: (1) Services provided through the Adult Learner Initiative Program; and (2) Comprehensive wrap-around services provided through the Center for Accessibility and Neurodiversity (CAN).

Best Practice: Strategies in Recruiting and Retaining Underrepresented Groups on their Pathway to Completion – Adult Learner Initiative Program.

A. Purpose, Goal, or Objective:

IVCC believes each and every student deserves access to educational opportunities that enable their success. We intend to enhance our ability to serve the adult learner population by enhancing the services available to these students, especially in terms of opportunities for low-cost, minimal-time credit options, thereby, attracting more adult students. We plan to target and serve specific adult special population students as defined by Perkins, which may include the economically disadvantaged, those individuals preparing for non-traditional fields of study, single parents, English learners, and the homeless.

B. Date of Implementation:

The Adult Learner Initiative Program was funded as part of the CTE Leadership grant. It was originally implemented in November of 2020 and has since been transitioned to Perkins as part of Special Populations.

C. Description:

Recruitment of learners from this population will be increased by establishing and building upon existing partnerships with local community organizations, churches, and businesses as well through social media and radio ads. Retention will be focused on an expansion of curricular options and learning modalities, including expansion of prior learning assessment and online/blended learning opportunities as well as a dedicated advising process. Finally, success will be enhanced for these students by having properly trained and dedicated staff and faculty members who are both aware of the needs of the adult learner and the wealth of experience with which the adult learner comes to IVCC. The efforts of this support system will be augmented by online and web-based resources that allow the learner to access it at their convenience.

D. Evidence of Success:

Regrettably, since the program is still relatively new, we mostly have qualitative data to share based on anecdotal evidence. We have learned that many of our adult learners are unsure of where to go – e.g., where may they find financial resources in a pinch, where might they obtain a laptop and/ or a hotspot should they need one? In the last year (November, 2020 to December, 2021), weekly emails or texts have been sent to over 700 IVCC adult learners as well as new applicants and stop-outs. While we are still ascertaining how many students actually responded with resource and/ or service needs,

we are confident that this service must be funded by the college. Many adult learners are struggling, and they need our help to be successful in their academic endeavors. Whether it is 700 students or one, the need is real.

Best Practice: Strategies in Recruiting and Retaining Underrepresented Groups on their Pathway to Completion – Comprehensive Wrap-around Services for Students with Learning Differences.

A. Purpose, Goal, or Objective:

The purpose of offering comprehensive, wrap-around services for students with learning differences is to provide robust, individualized, and systematic support to assist them in their successful transition to college, their coursework, and, ultimately, their degree completion.

B. Date of Implementation:

Comprehensive, wrap-around services for students with learning differences are provided on an ongoing basis. Services begin when a student first has contact with the Center for Accessibility and Neurodiversity (CAN), and continue throughout the student's tenure, and sometimes beyond.

C. Description:

The Center for Accessibility and Neurodiversity offers a “comprehensive wrap-around service” to those underrepresented students who have learning differences and who also need more individualized support to help them be successful in the classroom. This support may include, for example, one-on-one orientation/ or small group orientation, individualized accommodations, regular check-in appointments, course progress monitoring, study skill/ time management intervention, among many others. Interestingly, students who qualify for these services may request them while they are still juniors or seniors in high school (e.g., dual credit students may invite the CAN coordinator to attend IEP meetings with their high school counselors) and they may still use them as they get ready to leave IVCC (e.g., students who may need help on how to transition and/ or transfer to another institution of higher learning).

D. Evidence of Success:

Since the summer of 2020, on average, 80 percent of the students with learning differences who use CAN services were successful (with a C or better) in their courses. Active CAN students also have a better chance to persist with and complete their courses and/ or programs of study, with an average of 72 percent doing so. These percentages clearly demonstrate that the “wrap-around services” provided by CAN are needed by our underrepresented student populations and that they are helping these students to be successful in their coursework at IVCC.

While there are of course any number of other “Best Practices” that IVCC can focus on for this year's ICCB report, we feel the two discussed above best represent a core constituent base of our underrepresented student population – specifically, the adult learner and the student with learning differences. We also feel the two programs that support these students – the Adult Learner Initiative and the Center for Accessibility and Neurodiversity -- have gone a long way in keeping these students engaged in the classroom and on their way to completion, whether that be with a degree, a certificate, a course, or a series of courses.

