

BPI / CURL Knowledge Exchange

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Reinventing Chicago's City Colleges

Cheryl Hyman, the Chancellor of the City Colleges of Chicago, discussed how the City Colleges are being reorganized in an effort to improve student outcomes. In 2010, the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) had a 7% completion rate, compared to the national average of 22.1%,¹ and compared to top performing community colleges with completion rates exceeding 50%.² This reorganization process, referred to as Reinvention, has 4 core goals:

- 1) Students should receive credentials that have economic value—classes must be transferable to a four year institution or result in employment.
- 2) Improve the transfer process from Community Colleges to other institutions
- 3) Improve remediation—90% of students require remedial classes in at least one subject. 50% of students require remediation in math, reading and English.
- 4) Improve the outcomes of the 30% of students who do not have a GED or diploma, and/or have limited English proficiency.

To achieve these goals, the faculty, staff and students engaged in an assessment and planning process that uncovered what wasn't working, explored the best practices of City Colleges throughout the nation, and developed metrics to measure the core goals of Reinvention.

After researching areas of economic growth, the seven City Colleges have been reorganized to focus on employment sectors that are both growing *and* paying living wages. Malcolm X College provides courses targeted towards careers in

In 2010, City Colleges of Chicago launched Reinvention, a comprehensive reform effort designed to create a student-centered culture of success driven by data, accountability and transparency.

In 2013, City Colleges unveiled its first Five-Year Plan, which outlined increasing numerical goals through FY2018 for key academic and operational areas critical to fulfilling the promise of the Reinvention initiative and placing City Colleges in the elite among large, urban community colleges.

City Colleges selected 24 key metrics to assess academic and institutional health. In Fiscal Year 2013, City Colleges met or exceeded 20 of these 24 key metrics and the official federal graduation rate has nearly doubled since Reinvention began.

-Excerpts from the City Colleges of Chicago FY 2013 5 Year Plan Scorecard

http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Documents/5_year_plan_scorecard_FY_2013.pdf

¹ American Association of Community Colleges

http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Advocacy/Documents/AACC_CompletionMatters_Statement_12_final.pdf

² The Chronicle of Higher Education

<http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/college-stats/>

healthcare; Olive-Harvey College is focused on transportation, distribution and logistics; Harold Washington College offers courses in business, entrepreneurship, and professional services; Richard J. Daley College is focused on advanced manufacturing; Wilbur Wright College offers information technology courses; and Kennedy-King College offers culinary arts and hospitality classes.

In addition to realigning the focus of each community college, several new policies have been implemented. For example, in 2010, the ratio of academic counselors to students was 1300:1. Since Reinvention, that ratio has been cut in half. Currently, more than 95% of students are receiving academic counseling. As students enroll, they are encouraged to pick a career path that is offered at one of the seven City Colleges. Next, students are asked to pick a block of time (such as 9am to noon), and all required courses are then scheduled during that block. This makes it easier for students to make room in their work schedules and arrange for child care.

The course offerings have been streamlined and coordinated so that all credentials are stackable. For example, a student can become certified as an EMT, but those credits will also transfer to a nursing degree. In addition, CCC has implemented a bridge program so that students can simultaneously work on a GED and a career certification. Wellness Centers have been established in each City College to provide emotional and social support, including links to community based organizations.

There have been some impressive improvements since the Reinvention plan was established three years ago. The completion rate has doubled from 7% to 14%, and there is a 55% increase in the number of students who are completing GEDs. While there is still much to do, these are very promising initial outcomes. In the coming years, the Chancellor is focused on creating a more seamless transition between the City Colleges and CPS. The City of Chicago recently launched the STAR Scholarship, which will provide tuition, fees and book reimbursement for any CPS student that has a 3.0 GPA and has college ready test scores. In addition, the City Colleges are working on strengthening and expanding dual enrollment and dual credit programs with CPS.

Implications for BPI

Improvements to Chicago's Community College system could have a significant impact on Chicago's poverty rate, as more Chicago residents gain access to well-paying jobs. BPI will continue this conversation to see how current BPI programs could be linked to CCC resources. For example, the Altgeld Early Learning program could take a stronger two generational approach by linking parents to Olive Harvey Community College.

Further Reading and Additional Resources

City Colleges of Chicago 5 Year Plan:

http://www.ccc.edu/Documents/city%20colleges%20of%20chicago_5-year%20plan_2013-2018.pdf

City Colleges of Chicago FY 2013 5 Year Plan Scorecard:

http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Documents/5_year_plan_scorecard_FY2013.pdf