## Technical Assistance for Minority Serving Community Colleges, Webinar 6

## Minority Serving Community College Communities of Practice: Exploring Problems of Practice and Feasible Solutions for Academic Year (AY) 2017–18

## July 13, 2017

Ford: Kim R. Ford, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education

Wisniewski: Robin Wisniewski, RTI International (webinar facilitator)

Ford: Awesome. Thank you so much Robin, for that kind introduction. We’re so grateful to have RTI for bringing this project to this point. We’ve had a wonderful series of six webinars and I’m excited about the coming year, and our next set of activities for minority-serving community colleges.

I definitely want to take a moment to acknowledge our team members. Dr. Carolyn Lee, who’s been very instrumental on our team in moving this work forward, and of course, Erin Berg, community college specialist on our team. I want to give her a shout out because it’s her birthday, and very happy that she’s here with us today. So thanks, Carolyn and Erin. And to all of the colleges on the phone, thank you for everything that you do.

I love community colleges. I love students. I truly miss being on campus. I used to be a dean at a community college. I’ve been to several commencements this season. The most recent one was actually for my former assistant, a mother of four, who came to me one day and said, “Hey Dean, I got to get it done. I have to finish.” And we set a date of June 2017. She walks across that stage in June of 2017 and she’s accelerated so that she will walk across the stage next year to get her bachelor’s. So that’s what you guys do every day, is helping [students] walk across that stage and achieve their dreams. So again, thank you so much for what you do. Our country is a better place because of your work.

I’m really excited to hear from you. I don’t know if we’re going to get through all the questions. Hopefully there will be lots of questions. But we definitely want to hear from you, and we hope that you’re going to be around for the whole webinar to share those problems of practice that Robin mentioned, what successes you’ve had in addressing them, what problems you could still benefit from collaborating with your peers to solve. That’s the information that we’re going to use to target the next activities for your specific needs.

So I always say I’m incredibly proud to represent the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. I’m proud because our office is responsible for four incredible areas that I know are near and dear to your hearts: adult education, career and technical education, correctional and reentry education, and of course, community colleges. Now you know it’s the government, so everybody has this little jumbled acronym. Ours is OCTAE. We always say we are the mighty OCTAE. We are mighty because our students are mighty. We believe in lifelong learning and ensuring that everyone has a path to success at any point in their lives, no matter what has happened throughout their lives. We also believe that there is no one path to success, and that all of the paths are valued, honorable, needed, and equal.

For far too long there has been this notion that there’s just one golden path: K through 12, and to and through a four-year degree. And then anything else that falls outside of this is somehow problematic, because it’s not the golden path. If you’re outside of the golden path, then typically you must fight your way in to be at the table, to prove your value. While we usually win that argument, we only seem to get an acknowledgement of “That’s okay too.” There are a number of problems with the “that’s okay too” mentality, and it plays out in a variety of ways. Not the least of which is the way that we talk about our paths and the people who choose to pursue them. Why I mention this is because I’m encouraged by this administration has started off with all of the paths to success. They have not started with a golden path and a “that’s okay too” mindset. We didn’t have to fight our way in. We were automatically at the table with significant focus.

You probably know that the Secretary’s first very public speech, just a week after she took office, was at this year’s Community College National Legislative Summit, hosted by the Association of Community College Trustees, and the American Association of Community Colleges. She said that, “Community colleges are a uniquely American national asset: nimble, inclusive, and entrepreneurial.” And she noted several key features of your missions and delivery modes. Since that first speech, I’ve had regular meetings with the Secretary, and even had the occasion to travel with her to Valencia College, one of our community of practice members. Here’s what I can tell you. This administration believes all students need access to a full menu of postsecondary options and credentials, whether they choose to pursue rigorous technical studies leading to a well-paid job in a high-demand field, and/or two-year or four-year college degree program. And we all believe in this fact, so it’s never an either/or, it’s an and.

I have to tell you that the Secretary values the work that OCTAE does, which is the work that you do every day. I’ve been in meetings with her and international leaders talking about the importance of career and technical education. She’s visited several community and technical colleges and several MSIs, and is always so inspired by those visits. For National Reentry Week she went to a correctional facility and was so impressed with the students. And in education people naturally lean towards “the kids, the kids,” but she’s brought adults into the conversation. So it’s again, incredibly encouraging to see that there is a core value of our work and a focus on the importance of our work. So I think it’s a moment in time to stay focused on our students and our communities, and use this unique moment to do something meaningful.

To our minority serving community and technical college partners, you offer better opportunities and brighter futures for students of all ages and backgrounds, especially those who are underrepresented or face the most challenges to entering and completing a postsecondary educational program. Many of you do it with far fewer resources than your four-year and non-MSI peers. This is a big focus of this administration. You unleash the new waves of talent our employers need to power US enterprise. This a big focus of this administration. You help fuel local and regional economies in ways that make our communities stronger. Again, big focus. So I think that this is a moment in time to stay focused on our students and our communities, and again, use this unique moment to do something meaningful.

People ask me all the time, “What’s going on these days in OCTAE?” Guess what? The same things that have always been going on. We’re focused on adult education, career and technical education, correctional and reentry education, and of course, community colleges. We’re staying focused on our mission, our students, teachers, faculty, schools, administrators, states and other stakeholders to try and assist where we can, help alleviate problems where we can, and scale best practices so that more people’s lives are changed. At our last minority serving community college convening here in Washington, we heard from several of our students in what was inarguably our most popular and moving panel. We always say put the students first. Like, perhaps, the majority of students at your institutions, the students on the panel had reached their goals through a long and winding path, culminating at a community college, where they finally received the attention and encouragement to seek out a pathway to a career. They all showed how mighty they are. A couple of stories in particular stood out to me from this panel.

Cerrissa Hugie, graduate of our community of practice member school, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, excelled academically in high school, earned a bachelor’s degree on scholarship, and completed a master’s degree in social work before facing a spell of unemployment, leaving the profession, and working for eight years in customer service. On the recommendation of a friend, she enrolled in the licensed LPN program at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College. Her program at OCTC allowed her to turn her caring nature into a career with higher demand and earning potential. She is now completing a master’s degree in nursing, and plans to continue into a doctoral program.

Another student, prior to entering Blackfeet Community College--another community of practice college—Ricky Hoyt. He had worked for 16 years in law enforcement, and decided to return to school when his children entered college. Community college has served as a catalyst for unlocking his leadership skills. And for any of you who were there, you may remember he ran against his own son to serve in the college’s student senate! But he was able to achieve his dream, much like Ms. Hugie, because, again, of community colleges and their specialized focus on them.

It’s no coincidence that some of the most innovative models of student support, developmental education, educational technology, and STEM education, are coming from your institutions. Here at OCTAE, we want to seize on those practices that show promises to help students reach their goals and complete a credential, certificate, or degree. We have invested in several projects that identify practices in several areas. We’ll talk about three in particular.

First is our Supporting Student Success project, which is an initiative designed to identify and document promising practices in the areas of developmental education reform, and developmental educational alignment with adult education programs at four community colleges. The four sites that were chosen, including three of our community of practice members, Amarillo College, LaGuardia Community College, and St. Louis Community College, each operating a distinct model for alignment. Excellent videos and a final toolkit will be available in the next few months.

Secondly, we’re also excited to see the results of our Mapping Upward initiative. This project is providing technical assistance to four college networks as they work to invent stackable, industry recognized credentials within technical associate degree programs. Selected college networks are receiving customized virtual and face-to-face TA from subject matter experts and a dedicated TA coach who will guide the network and individual colleges through needs assessments, goal setting, and action planning. This TA will advance efforts in stackable credential design including such components as employer engagement, industry certification alignment, faculty collaboration, awarding of credit, and credit transfer agreement. A toolkit is being tested by the four networks this fall and will be made publicly available on the Perkins Collaborative Research Network, PCRN, site next spring. That’s cte.ed.gov.

The third project that we want to make sure you know that OCTAE wholeheartedly supports is this initiative. The Minority Serving Community Colleges Community of Practice. Yes, it is a mouthful. We knew that if we were going to meet national goals of improving postsecondary access and degree completion for our nation’s low-income students and students of color, working with community colleges and MSIs was crucial. We saw that among MSIs, research and interest tends to focus on four-year colleges and universities. There’s that golden path again. Not that we don’t love the four-year colleges. So we saw that an opportunity existed to bring folks together to strengthen bonds amongst community and technical colleges—not only within each category of MSI, but also across them. And this project has never turned away a non-MSI college who seeks to share and learn ways to enhance equity and to serve their students of color in the best possible way. We value your input and participation, too. Again, for being folks who have had to fight sometimes to sit at the table, we would never be the ones to exclude anyone from the table when you’re trying to serve your students. To encourage collaboration, learning, and connections between these community colleges, OCTAE hosted the first convening of minority serving community colleges in November 2015. Over 200 attendees came to Washington and had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with their peers from other MSI community colleges. There, they formed communities and discussed problems of practice that they, as a group, wanted to work together to investigate or solve. Over the next year, many of the communities of practice met virtually and at conferences and regional events. When OCTAE heard overwhelmingly that additional organized support would be crucial to institutionalize the bond, we responded by providing resources via the needs assessment and coaching services of experts at RTI and Insight Policy Research, by hosting a second annual convening to provide additional in-person collaboration opportunities, and by organizing a series of six webinars on topics of mutual interest to community colleges across the MSI spectrum. Throughout the past year, we have added more members to the MSI Community College Communities of Practice, and will continue to grow the CoPs.

Coaches have been meeting regularly with member college staff and assisting them with obtaining technical assistance, information, and other resources. Today, we will have the opportunity to hear from four of those member colleges or groups, who will tell you about the problems of practice they experience, and what solutions they came up with. After that discussion, we want to hear from everyone. What problems of practice you experienced, and how did you address them? Or what problems are you currently experiencing, as there may be other college who can share what they did, and you may be able to adapt their model to your students or your institution.

What we hear from you today will help us know what to target in the next year, and plans for another convening and webinar series are being made. So this is your opportunity to inform the topics and resources presented there. So again, I want to thank you for joining the webinar today. I know what you do, I know how tough it is—but it’s so incredibly needed, valued, and rewarding. Thank you so much for supporting our students and seeking excellence in that. And now, I think we have some time for some questions.

Wisniewski: Well, we do have one here. We were wondering if you could answer, what would be the most important problem of practice for MSIs to solve now?

Ford: Well, I don’t know that we can say that there is a most important problem of practice, they’re all incredibly important. What I do think is the bucket category for me is completion. I think when you think about the other problems of practice, they all fit into completion. So, whether you’re talking about students who are facing unstable housing, how can we support them so that they can complete? Student support. How are we making sure that the supports align to students so that they can complete? Developmental education, that’s also about how can we ensure the students have the skills that they need so that they can get to the credit bearing work so that they can complete. So while there is no one that’s more important than another, I think that the bucket category there is completion. Because the reason, as you guys know, is that students are at your institutions because they have dreams, they have goals, and they know that they need a skill set and a credential to get on that path. And if they don’t get those skill sets or that credential, then they’re not best positioned to achieve their dream.

Wisniewski: We can go with another question. We were wondering also, question came up, what is the Secretary’s commitment to continuing to fund MSIs?

Ford: The Secretary is incredibly committed to community colleges. I mean, it is such an incredibly big focus of this administration. The Secretary has been in good conversations with the Secretary of Labor to talk about what are some things that are at labor that could potentially be leveraged in the education space? What are areas here that we could be rethinking how we’re funding things so that we can do more in the community college space? So the commitment is there. Right? And I want to make sure, when I’m speaking generally about community colleges, as a bucket in there I’m talking about MSIs. Just to make sure that I’m clear to you guys, the Secretary knows the value of minority serving institutions. She has visited several of them and is incredibly supportive.

Wisniewski: Wonderful, thank you so much, Kim. I just want to check if there are any other questions to ask.

Ford: Well, one of the questions it looks like has come in is our partnership with the Department of Labor, will there be new joint initiative? So I’m sure that folks have seen the executive order on apprenticeships that came out. I tell people that the shorthand there is that it’s about apprenticeships, but really, if you start reading it, it’s about job training and educational programs across the entire federal government. So I think that as that work begins, the Secretary of Education is a vice chair of that work, Secretary of Labor serving as the chair, and the Secretary of Commerce serving as a co-vice chair with Secretary DeVos, I think that there’s a real opportunity for us to strengthen programs between the various departments. When you see the executive order on reform and restructuring across the federal government, the specific callout is job training programs. And it’s not in a bad way; it’s in a we support this way, and we want to figure out what’s the most impactful way of using and leveraging our resources so that students can be successful.

Let me also say that there is an incredible value and focus placed on career and technical education. The secretary—I often tell this story—is that I was a dean and I had carpentry programs, and I had an hour and a half conversation with where she out-craftsmanned me. I mean, incredible value for career and technical education and the desire to support it. So you may say, back to that, then why is there a proposed cut in the budget? There are a number of proposed cuts in the budget. Every administration comes in and has some priority areas. This administration has signaled that defense and homeland protection is something that they want to fund, so you have to look at places to support your priorities. This is not different in any administration. But what I would always note is that no president’s proposed budget has been enacted as proposed. So strong support for career and technical education, strong support for adult education, community colleges, MSIs, and correctional and reentry education.

Wisniewski: Wow, Kim. Thank you so much. Thank you for your acknowledgment, your fabulous information, your encouragement, and energy for the MSIs. We are very thankful for your wholehearted support and this informative presentation. Do you have any last thoughts? I know you had a lot that everyone’s writing down furiously. And we will have this posted, because somebody did ask for a transcript. Any other closing remarks, Kim, for us?

Ford: No. We will respond to any other questions that have come in via the chat box, I believe. So we’ll definitely make sure if you had a question or if you have one that comes up throughout the webinar, certainly let us know, we’re happy to respond. But again, it’s just a thank you for all the work that you do. It’s so incredibly important, and just keep up the good work. Let us know how we can be supportive.

Results: Exploring current problems of practice and feasible solutions as a foundation for AY 2017-18 CoPs

Question 1: Which of the following are current problems of practice in your MSI?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Response option** | **Percentage** | **Number of Responses** |
| Addressing poor academic skills among students | 87% | 27 |
| Addressing student homelessness and food insecurity | 32% | 10 |
| Employer engagement | 25% | 8 |
| Career pathways | 51% | 16 |
| Work-based learning | 29% | 9 |
| Minority male success | 54% | 17 |
| Addressing poor academic skills among students | 10% | 3 |

Elaborations from chat pod:

* “High schools are not preparing students for college readiness”
* “Our outcomes for males of color are significantly lower than peers. CCSI results identify this group as less engaged and experiencing more life challenges, as well...”
* “I chose career pathways; Mission College is in the heart of Silicon Valley and we're exploring best ways to connect our CTE degrees with jobs for our students.”
* “The "poor academic skills among students" is a student deficit model approach. We need to serve our students where they are at when they come to us.”
* “Nursing majors have clinical course sequences that often exceed the max time frame for in-time graduation”
* “With high part-time enrollment, we are having difficulty connecting students with the services we offer for struggling students.”
* “I would support the career pathways concern. We have engaged in a cradle to career approach for Hispanic Latino community to engage families and students to attend and complete college. Very interested in other approaches.”
* “To address homelessness. Some of our students don't have adequate meals. We are starting a shepherd’s closet”

Question 2: What are some feasible solutions you have found or wish to implement?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Response option** | **Percentage** | **Number of Responses** |
| Non-cognitive/social emotional teaching strategies | 30% | 9 |
| Bridge programs | 57% | 17 |
| Equity audits or other strategies to use data for program improvement | 23% | 7 |
| Tutoring programs | 93% | 28 |
| Guided career pathways | 63% | 19 |
| Alignment of student services | 50% | 15 |
| Other | 3% | 1 |

Elaborations from chat pod:

* “Employer Engagement: we are also developing a network of industry neighbors to aid in the support of our students off campus, with internships, research and/or apprenticeship opportunities.”
* “Creating seamless transfer pathways to four year universities is a new area for us for which we're seeking innovative strategies.”
* “We can't be what we can't see. Multiple layers of issues here – let’s start with meeting students where they're at.”
* “Providing and supporting varied work-based learning, not just for-credit internships”
* “Incorporating preparation for employment into the student's experience from beginning to end”
* “We have been accepted into Pathways 2.0.”
* “Each department gets student success and retention data broken out by gender and ethnicity.”
* “Remove a deficit view of our students and meet them where they are. Provide faculty development with creating inclusive classrooms and engaging inclusive pedagogy”
* “Equity audits is helping us look at the data more closely to differentiate among students' needs”
* “We are working on case management for each individual student to integrate support services for needs of each.”
* “Peer Mentors guiding students toward necessary services such as tutoring and guided pathways. We have utilized funding from Title 111 and Title V grants to provide these Peer Mentors.”
* “Grant funded summer bridge program for incoming STEM students focused on success factors.”
* “Tutoring programs: we are implementing SI Lite in collaboration with the AANAPISI program, while Mission College is also expanding embedded tutoring in STEM courses and others. All this is in addition to an already robust campus Tutoring Center.
* Embedded peer tutoring”
* “In regards to guided career pathways we have hired career coaches that will solely concentrate on helping students enroll in CTE programs.”
* “We facilitate professional development on culturally responsive teaching for our faculty.”
* “We have also created Gateway co-requisite courses for Math, English, Philosophy, History”
* “Face-to-face and online tutoring live”
* “Peer-to-peer mentorship and Learning communities with focus on study hall and tutoring”
* “We have a strategic partnership with Career Compass. The goal is to increase retention of low income first generation college students”

Question 3: What would make your CoP strong and sustainable for AY 2017–18?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Response option** | **Percentage** | **Number of Responses** |
| A focus on one problem of practice to solve for each CoP | 25% | 5 |
| Cross-CoP collaboration on one or more problems of practice | 35% | 7 |
| Specified roles for CoP members, decided by members | 10% | 2 |
| Webinars for cross-CoP sharing | 35% | 7 |
| Webinars with guest speakers | 30% | 6 |
| Shared examination of data for program improvement | 60% | 12 |
| Collaboration with related organizations | 85% | 17 |
| Other | 5% | 1 |

Elaborations from chat pod:

* “What would make us stronger is being able to engage more of our adjunct instructors, help faculty and department chairs manage workload balance to try new interventions to achieve student success”
* “Share best practices among CoP more regularly.”
* “To get the faculty to buy into the support that is available, students have been surveyed and that is what they want”
* “I think we are overlooking is staff training and retention. I think that has a direct relation to delivery of services and support. It’s always "baptism by fire" in SA and our students are impacted. Its goes back to Astin's theory.”