Scaling Non-Credit to Credit Programs

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What is Non-credit?

- ***Non-credit education*** - courses or activities carrying no academic credit applicable toward a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal academic award at the institution or within the postsecondary educational system; may include workforce instruction, contract training, customized training, developmental education, recreational courses, ABE, and ESL.

- ***Noncredit workforce education*** - courses or activities that provide technical skills for the workplace but carry no institutional credit applicable toward a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award; may result in industry-recognized certificates, but do not include ABE, ESL, developmental education or recreational courses.

Evolution of Non-credit

- 1970-Original mission of noncredit was personal enrichment

- 1980-Noncredit education is linked to customized training and state economic development programs

- 1990-Focus upon information technology certifications

- Linkage between ESL and basic education with credit occupational programs

Why Non-credit?

- Can meet industry standards and credentials

- Flexible and easily updated

- Content emphasizes abilities which are important to job performance

- Can be delivered with appropriate instructors

- Developed and delivered outside the traditional rules governing education

- BUT, does not count towards college credentials

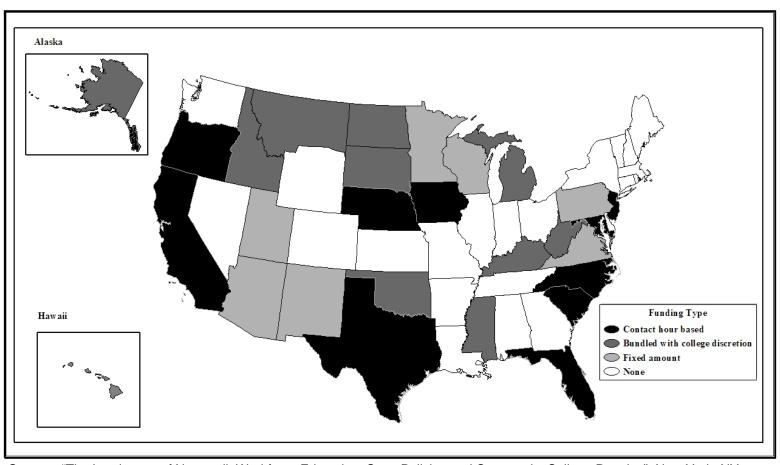# CCRC Study on Non-credit Workforce Education

Goals:

- To identify state policy and institutional factors that influence noncredit programs
- To identify the benefits and drawbacks of different organizational approaches

Design:

- Review of state policies to identify funding sources, reporting requirements, and academic guidelines
- Case studies of 20 community colleges in 10 states to determine the role of state policy and institutional level factors in the organization of noncredit workforce education

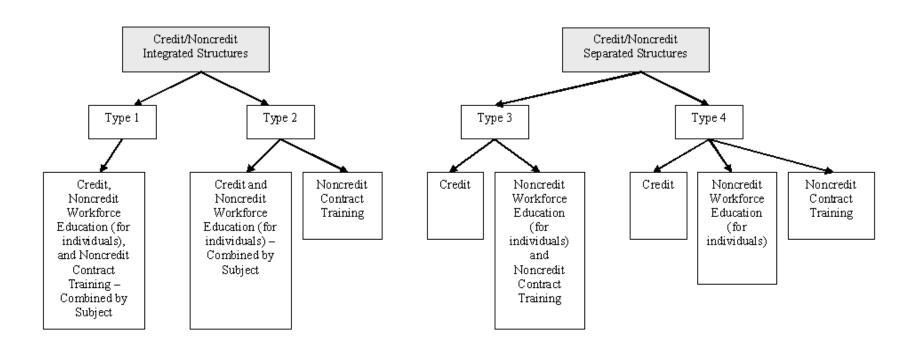# State Funding for Non-credit Workforce Education Varies

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Implications of Varying State Funding Policies

- Affordability for students

- College decision about how to offer program

Organizational Structure of Non-credit Programs Varies

Note: There are many possible names used by colleges to refer to noncredit workforce education, including continuing education and business and industry.

Implications of Varying Organizational Structures

- Coordination of employer outreach

- Program coordination within the college

- Faculty engagement

The Decision to Offer a Course in Credit or Non-credit

Factors	Examples
State Policy	State funding availability and regulations
Labor Market Demand	Employer demand for noncredit or credit/degrees Individual level demands for noncredit or credit/degrees
Institutional Practice	Flexibility/timing of course, approval process, faculty requirements, "time to market" Whether the course fits within a degree or certificate program Pilot testing a new course Potential for revenue generation
Instructional Approach	Intensity and rigor of instruction – noncredit may be more fluid and may not require assessment

Source: "The Landscape of Noncredit Workforce Education: State Policies and Community College Practice", New York, NY: Community College Research Center, January 2008.

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Needs and Outcomes Vary by Student Population

Potential Needs	Most Interested Student Populations	Recorded Outcome
Skills for immediate use with no recorded outcome	Incumbent workers with college degrees	None
Skills with portability in the labor market	Job seekers and/or those with no college degree, including both job seekers and incumbent workers	Industry certification
Professional development	Incumbent workers in specified professions	Continuing Education Units
Skills for immediate use, as well as a degree	Individuals with no college degree, including both job seekers and incumbent workers	Articulation or credit for prior learning

Source: "The Landscape of Noncredit Workforce Education: State Policies and Community College Practice", New York, NY: Community College Research Center, January 2008.

Linking Non-credit Programs to Career Pathways

- Noncredit students in the case study colleges tend to be older, interested in gaining skills and have a wide range of educational backgrounds with an unknown number interested in eventually earning a degree.

- Non-credit programs link students to credit programs through a variety of program features.
  - Kentucky's efforts to build competency based modules
  - New Jersey's articulation of non-credit courses in career ladder programs for specific employers

- Concerns exist about basic skill levels among non-credit students.

Recent Focus on Competency Based Education

- A departure from the credit model - not based on seat time but rather on acquisition of skills and knowledge

- Can be offered in credit or non-credit, but non-credit allows for more flexibility in timing and structure

- Strong assessment is essential to demonstrate value

- Does this approach offer a new model for non-credit workforce education programs?

Issues for Discussion

- Organizational context and resources

- Reasons for offering program in non-credit versus credit

- Linkages to a career pathway

- Implementation concerns

Organizational Context and Resources

- What is state funding for non-credit?

- How does non-credit fit in the organizational structure?

- How is workforce viewed in the college? Is the college workforce or transfer oriented?

- Who are allies in the college who support non-credit, and non-credit to credit connections?

Reasons for Offering Program in Non-credit Versus Credit

- Test out program, and transition to credit later

- Best fit for the program based on student and labor market needs

- Solution to getting program up and running in a timely manner, because of institutional barriers in credit

Linkages to a Career Pathway

- How does the program fit into a career pathway?

- How can credit be attained for the program?
  - Use of prior learning assessments
  - Articulation programs at college
  - Role of industry certifications

- To what extent is basic skills an issue among students in the career pathways? How can it be addressed?

Implementation Concerns

- Curriculum

- Assessment

- Marketing

- Data systems

- Cost - financial aid, fees

- OTHERS

For More Information

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