



Transitioning to New Worlds

Evaluation Report

Maine's Adult Education to College Transition Project

“Last August I received my Bachelor’s Degree and I can’t begin to explain in words what I felt looking out at my teenage children while receiving my diploma. They know that when I say, “You can be and do anything you want” I mean it.” Rhonda Alley, former College Transition Student

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Executive Summary

Providing a college transition program for adult students is not a new concept, but one that has recently seen a higher level of interest on the state and national levels. As the pressures of global competition become more intense the need for more highly skilled workers has fueled a new discussion about keeping the United States ahead of the competition. Several recent research papers highlight the need for adults already in the workforce needing higher-level skills and credentials and college degrees.

Maine's history of adult education College Transition began in 1989 with the ITV system being housed in many adult education sites. Since 2000, the Nellie Mae Foundation, Betterment Fund, Lumina Foundation, and the MELMAC Education Foundation helped adult education and secondary education partners develop models for College Transition programs. In 2006 the Maine legislature funded a pilot project for College Transition programs, and in 2007 the College Transition program was expanded by the legislature to reach all areas of the state. In a fairly short time, College Transition in Maine has gone from a locally funded program to a state-funded, statewide program with defined models and successful outcomes.

There are many models of College Transition programs in Maine. The Nellie Mae models are intensive models designed to help adult basic education students receive the instruction and services they need to enter college. The MELMAC models identified students with a desire to attend college and provided them with opportunities to explore that. The state-funded pilot programs and the Betterment Fund rural program served students at a wide range of levels by providing them with courses, career guidance and counseling, college connections and other services. All models used the MEOC services for financial aid and college admissions help, and in some cases, MEOC administered assessments as well.

This report represents the qualitative portion of the evaluation. The state-funded projects will not have their year-end data until August 2007. A supplemental report evaluating the quantitative

data will be done after the data is complete. To complete this evaluation, project documents were reviewed, coded and analyzed. Programs and the Advisory Committee were interviewed, and interview data was coded and analyzed, and then compared to the document data. The

Evaluation Conclusions:

Program Sites

1. Grant Dollars Helped Organize Diverse Courses into a Transition Program
 - Created a program VS unconnected courses
 - Increased more intentional career counseling and transition services
 - Partnered with other organizations to provide career, financial and other transition services
 - Aligned courses offered with college developmental course content
 - Used the Accuplacer test to measure gains and college readiness VS course completion
 - Created a more positive articulation with higher education institutions (some more than others) including shared space, counselors and greater number of referrals to the program
2. Reached New Markets
 - Adults changing jobs, careers or seeing a way to fulfill career dreams
 - GED and High School Diploma students having a “next step” avenue
 - Students enrolled in higher ed but needing either prerequisite courses, more intensive services in specific subjects (usually math) to succeed in their educational career
 - Referrals by other institutions either as part of admissions criteria, preadmissions requirement, or career path
3. New Perspective on Adult Transition Population
 - Can need multiple supports
 - Motivated to succeed, but history, culture or lack of experience can hamper success
 - Connections to other agencies need to be either facilitated by the program or taught as part of college success
 - College transition is not just about academic courses
 - Multiple avenues and services are needed for students at differing levels of expertise, experience or confidence to attend college: one path and set program is not sufficient to meet diverse needs
 - Adults need practice in attending college: courses offered that mirror college schedules/life work to help acclimatize students for the next step

- Former program students are effective mentors for current students

Challenges

- Defining, Forming and Keeping Cohort Groups
- Different “levels of service” of transition students (from just needing a biology course to needing extensive remediation in basic skills) and defining their needs, how to report different groups, success measures of each group
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Formal connections with colleges and community colleges
- Assessment
- Young/teen Students
- Cooperative agreements with partner agencies, colleges and community colleges

Advisory Committee

- Committed, Diverse group of stakeholders
- Focused purpose and goals
- Information about other partners and services shared on a regular basis
- Discussions about creating transition systems, coordinating in new and different ways, and looking across agencies was beneficial to all members
- All saw a continued role for the Advisory Committee:
- Oversight of project
- Support, sounding board and partner for project coordinator
- Problem solved when needed
- Continued funding advocacy
- Discussed, strategized and advocated for seamless systems across agencies, organizations and educational venues

Accomplishments

- Diverse models of transition programs based on cultural, geographic and economic needs and make up of the community
- Transition Program “Best Practices” identified
- Content guidelines for transition courses identified based on developmental course content at the college level
- Students report transition programs are the bridge to college
- Transition services defined as a wide array of courses, supports, resources and agencies

- Obtained state funding for pilot projects, and obtained additional funding for developing and maintaining transition sites across the state
- Programs leverage, connect with and utilize other community resources to help give students all the services they need to succeed in college
- The state has established 14 pioneer programs, funded through Nellie Mae, state funding and/or local funds
- The state has a paid, part-time consultant to manage the transition project through grant, legislative and other funding
- Active, committed advisory committee comprised of representatives from all aspects of the college transition arena that crosses systems, disciplines and levels
- Transition program staff development, including conferences, were held on a regular basis

Recommendations

- 1. Develop a logic model for continued evaluation and data collection**
- 2. Define Levels of Service**
- 3. Work towards a seamless system for students for all areas of the state (like the Kennebec Valley Academy model)**
- 4. Develop a consistent data collection system across all programs including a universal intake, reporting and data gathering mechanism that includes clear definitions of data categories. Use the data on a regular basis for program and project continuous improvement.**
- 5. Develop linkages with partners in order to collect impact data on college transition graduates (college success rates, rate of developmental courses, degrees earned, jobs obtained, etc.)**
- 6. Obtain student feedback including satisfaction data, attitudinal changes, and perception of accomplishments**
- 7. Continue to collect best practices and diversity of models data**
- 8. Continue the Advisory Committee**

9. **Continue funding for the coordinator's position**

10. **Provide staff development for local program directors/coordinators as well as teachers on a regular basis that is specific to College Transition issues**

11. **Develop a state-wide marketing and publicity campaign for College Transitions**

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Section I: The Project Context

Introduction

The National Case for Adult College Transition Programs

Providing a college transition program for adult students is not a new concept, but one that has recently seen a higher level of interest on the state and national levels. As the pressures of global competition become more intense the need for more highly skilled workers has fueled a new discussion about keeping the United States ahead of the competition. In May 2007 the National Commission on Adult Literacy as part of the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy released a study done by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems entitled: *Mounting Pressures Facing the U.S. Workforce and the Increasing Need for Adult Education and Literacy*. This study states:

*“At a time when economic competitiveness is determined to a considerable extent by the education levels of a nation’s workforce, the United States is at serious risk of losing its edge in this realm. While the U.S. still has the best-educated workforce in the world, the advantage arises because the best educated are approaching the age of retirement. Those entering the workforce have not attained the same level of education as their counterparts in numerous other countries. As other countries show consistent decade-to-decade progress in enhancing the education levels of their adult populations, the U.S. has been stuck at essentially the same level for 30 years.”*¹

The study goes on to say that the nation’s schools and colleges are failing the new influx of minorities as well as too many white males. It goes on to state that too few of these groups:

- Complete high school
- Go onto college after obtaining a high school diploma or GED
- Get degrees if they do go onto college

To address engaging these new populations in furthering their education:

¹ Jones, Dennis and Kelly, Patrick: National Commission on Adult Literacy, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy; *Mounting Pressures Facing the U.S. Workforce and the Increasing Need for Adult Education and Literacy*, 2007. Page vi

“The US will have to pay attention to new strategies directed at enhancing the educational attainment levels of adults who did not succeed in the educational system along the way.

The mechanisms now in place to deal with the needs of undereducated adults are not getting the job done...The challenge is clear; the country must successfully reengage adults who have too little education (knowledge and skills) to hold living wage jobs. Failure puts the nation at competitive risk. Rising to the challenge will require developing new strategies and new tools.”²

In December 2004 the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) released the paper, *Forging New Partnerships: Adult and Developmental Education in Community Colleges* by Hunter Boylan. In this paper Hunter Boylan, a known expert in the field of Developmental Education and the director of the National Center for Developmental Education, documents that community colleges that address the educational needs of students through a combination of adult education, developmental studies and community college courses have increased retention and degree completion rates than those that have only developmental courses. For students that come in with skills too low to function in college or with skills low in more than one area, developmental courses do not work. Adding adult education services helps low-level students succeed, stay in school, and eventually graduate with a degree.

In February 2005 CAAL issued a “call to arms” to create a National Opportunity System that: *“Allows all adult Americans to obtain all the knowledge and skills they require.”³* This system would provide adults and youth, native born as well as immigrants, with “seamless paths” to postsecondary achievement. In this paper the importance of linkages was again stressed, as was strengthening links between adult education and community colleges.

The conversation about providing all adults with the services needed to attain postsecondary degrees and certificates, creating the National Opportunity System, has entered into reauthorization discussions for the Workforce Investment Act, Title II. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) makes a case for allowing college transition activities to be included in allowable adult education services and make college transition as an allowable student goal.

Citing the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Initiative (I-BEST) in Washington State that *“pairs adult education/ESL instructors with vocational instructors to integrate contextualized*

² Ibid, Page viii

³ Chisman, Forrest P.; *To Ensure America's Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults*; CAAL, 2005 Page v

*remediation and English language services with occupational training*⁴ and programs in Kentucky that has adult education partnering with the community colleges and local universities to jointly enroll students enabling them to work toward a GED and complete college coursework at the same time, CLASP is recommending changes to WIA Title II that support state and local innovations for transitions projects that have proven to increase persistence in adult education (72% retention in Kentucky), increase transitions to postsecondary programs, and help low-income adults attain marketable postsecondary credentials.

Maine's History with College Transition

A big part of hesitance in applying for college entrance is a person's lack of self-confidence in their abilities. This program not only enhanced my academic skills and improved my confidence level, but it was the needed stepping stone, if you will, to my current involvement and success as a student at University of Maine-Presque Isle.

Thea F. Day, Caribou, Maine

Maine's adult education programs have been working toward creating an "opportunity system" since 1989, when the University of Maine housed its distance learning ITV system in local high schools. Many of these sites were administered by the adult education program, and they began to offer some supplemental courses and counseling for students utilizing ITV. As a result of the ITV connection, a formal collaborative agreement with the University of Maine System was attempted in the 1990's but was never achieved. The first seeds of using adult education as the initial entry point into the college system for nontraditional students were planted.

In 2001 the Nellie Mae Foundation, through the New England Literacy Resource Center, funded an Adult Basic Education to College initiative. Maine was funded for 7 sites to help develop a model for wider dissemination over five years. Each program received about \$40,000 each year to fund a fully implemented model that included creating cohort groups, providing basic skills instruction, career and college counseling services as well as mechanisms to acclimate students to college life. These programs had to create linkages with higher education to provide students with the connections they needed to make an easier transition from college transition programs to college.

⁴ Strawn, Julie and Duke, Amy-Ellen; CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy) Updating WIA Title II to Help More Adult Education Students Gain Postsecondary Credentials and Move Up to Better Jobs: April 11, 2007. Page 1

Nellie Mae's investment was the beginning of leveraging several funding sources to move Maine's college transition forward and to create a movement to institutionalize the program statewide. The Betterment Fund, in 2002 and then again in 2004, provided funding for conferences to educate adult education and post-secondary partners in the college transition concept and practice. In 2005 the Lumina Foundation provided funding for leadership to create a state-wide program, identify best practices, create curriculum frameworks for programs to use based on developmental studies courses, coordinate with community colleges and develop an MOU template for adult education programs to use with community college partners on the local level, and develop an assessment of program readiness for instituting a transition program. A multi-system, multi-agency advisory committee was formed as a result of this grant in November 2005 and worked with the Lumina-supported College Transition coordinator to accomplish these tasks.

Nellie Mae, in addition to funding 7 College Transition programs, provided an additional grant of over \$50,000 to the Maine Department of Education to supplement the Lumina funds for a second year of coordination and outreach and help support a College Transition evaluation.

In 2003 the Maine Compact for Higher Education identified Adult Education College Transition as one of five key strategies to increase the number of adults with college degrees in Maine in order to help reach the goal of 40,000 new degrees in 10 years. The Compact's adoption of this strategy helped raise the visibility of adult education's role in degree attainment, and the Compact became a champion for adult education transition programming.

In 2005 the MELMAC Education Foundation added adult education to their grant program Connect Aspirations to a Plan. This program expects students to participate in a variety of college access activities designed to increase their college aspirations and to help them connect aspirations to a plan that will help them successfully enroll in college immediately following high school or GED completion. These grants emphasize data collection, including following students after they enter their first year of college. MELMAC provided 24 adult education programs with \$4,000 for transition activities, and provided 4 peer learning days a year where grantees came together to learn about specific topics related to transition from field experts and each other. Several Nellie Mae programs also received MELMAC grants.

In November 2005 the Compact for Higher Education, the Maine Adult Education Association and the Maine Department of Education drafted a position statement on why state funding was needed to create on-going, stable adult college transition programs. In 2006, the Maine

Department of Education changed its policy to reimburse school districts for adult education transition activities, a previously non-allowable activity.

The position paper, the activities of the advisory committee and MAEA, the success of the Nellie Mae and MELMAC grantees, and the support of the state Director of Adult Education all contributed to creating a groundswell of support for institutionalizing adult college transition programs.

In 2006 State Senator Libby Mitchell introduced a bill to fund 6 initial sites for a state-funded college transition project. The bill was approved and passed, with an initial funding appropriation of \$200,000. The Betterment Fund provided funding for a seventh, rural grantee and Nellie Mae provided additional funding for program leadership. Increased funding to eventually support 30 sites was to be built into future budgets.

In the 2007 budget, Governor Baldacci moved to accelerate the Maine College Transition Program to the full 30 site funding level after the initial 7 programs exceeded the projected number of students. State Senator Peggy Rotundo supported the resulting bill through the Appropriations Committee with the help of Representative Margaret Craven and it was included in the final budget in June 2007. The appropriation was reduced from the original request, but the amount will more than double the number of state-funded transition sites in Maine to 20 sites. The momentum of the Nellie Mae, Betterment Fund, MELMAC and state funding and the support of the Compact for Higher Education and the Maine Director of Adult Education in the Maine Department of Education catapulted the adult education college transition program from initial private funding to state institutional funding in only 5 years. Maine is clearly a leader in developing an Opportunity System and has used linkages and multiple funding streams to ensure that adult college transition programs are accessible to Maine citizens statewide.

Incorporating College Transitions into the state budget would not have occurred without the key support of Governor Baldacci, the Education and Appropriations Committees of the State Legislature, and Legislative champions like Libby Mitchell and Peggy Rotundo. Their support for and belief in the College Transitions project is the reason 20 programs around Maine will begin their work with Maine citizens this fall.

Evaluation Design and Methodology

Evaluation Design

The evaluation design follows the requirements of the funder, the Lumina Foundation, as a summative review of the grant activities.

The evaluation activities are:

- Evaluate the project to date
- Identify lessons learned and
- Provide recommendations for project expansion

This report represents the qualitative portion of the evaluation. The state-funded projects will not have their year-end data until August 2007. A supplemental report evaluating the quantitative data will be done after the data is complete.

The evaluator was not part of the data collection design or data collection process for program outcomes, and therefore cannot comment on the validity of the data collected or the validity of the results. Reviewed documents were assumed to be accurate pictures of the project's activities.

The program and advisory committee interviews conducted by the evaluator followed a specific methodology as outlined below, and were the only data that she designed and collected.

Methodology

The evaluation methodology was dictated by two factors: the data to be collected and the data artifacts already collected by the project.

Evaluation Activity	Methodology	Data
Evaluate the project to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project documents • Interview programs using interview protocol • Interview advisory committee members using interview protocol • Code all data for themes and sub-themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project reports • MAEA special bulletin editions on transition projects • Meeting agendas and minutes • Program materials such as brochures, syllabi • Interview protocol answers
Identify Lessons Learned	Analyze themes and sub-themes	Emergent themes and sub-themes from the data coding
Provide Recommendations	Review analysis of themes and sub-themes and identify needed improvements and/or additional actions	Analysis of themes and sub-themes

Section 2: Findings

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee members were unanimous in their opinion that the Committee was a valuable entity and should continue in the future. Members identified the diversity of the committee, the clear work direction and the resulting outcome of state funding as reasons why they felt being on the Committee was a valuable experience.

Advising the Transition coordinator and providing input on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the state-funded pilot programs, helping to select the pilot sites, vetting the curriculum frameworks, and discussing the elements of Transition programs were cited as worthwhile Advisory Committee activities.

The number of meetings, the length of the meetings and the agendas for each meeting fit the tasks at hand for most members. Those who had to drive a great distance to attend the meetings held in Augusta wished that alternative ways of meeting were accessible for those who lived so far away, such as ATM or Webex technology, or being able to participate by phone.

All members cited the Transition coordinator as the necessary factor in making the Advisory Council a viable group, setting the agenda for the work, and highlighting resources, research and other information that helped members in their work roles and not just in the Advisory Committee role.

Members also cited the conversations with those in other systems as very beneficial, helping them to see other perspectives and challenges that those in other systems faced. The benefits on a personal level made coming to the meetings a priority in everyone's busy schedules.

Now that the legislature has appropriated money to institutionalize College Transition, some members questioned what the focus and the structure of the group should be. All agreed it should continue, but most felt it should take on a different role now that the program funding was more secure. Looking at more complex questions about College Transition such as identifying the elements of the college transition process, looking at hours of effort and outcomes, developing program quality processes, and developing strategies for marketing College Transition to the community college and University of Maine systems, adult education and the community at large were suggestions for Advisory Committee or subcommittee work. Many Committee members suggested expanding the membership to include other stakeholders as a necessary step toward increasing the visibility of the program in other systems.

Although some members felt that the current structure of the Advisory Committee was fine for moving forward, others felt that the Committee should be formalized and the Transition coordinator staff to the Committee, not leading the Committee. Establishing a Committee chair and other official positions, having standing committees and creating subcommittees as needed were suggested as ways to make the Committee a more permanent and effective body to oversee the Transition grants, direct the work of the coordinator, carry out research, collect data and oversee the program evaluation.

The work of the Advisory Committee culminated in reaching the goal of state funding for College Transition grants. The work going forward was seen by several members as ensuring the quality of Transition programs so that state funding will become secure, students succeed in college, and partnerships are solidified to ensure student success.

Best Practices

In January 2006, the Nellie Mae grants met with the College Transition Coordinator to determine best practices for Maine College Transition programs. This meeting helped to identify the elements of what state-funded programs should put in place if legislative dollars became available to fund new programs.

All the Nellie Mae sites were in attendance, and came to consensus on the following program elements based on their experiences and on the research, especially the work of Hunter Boylan:

- **Program Identity:** Setting apart the College Transition program from other Adult Education offerings through a different location for classes, separate flyers and/or advertising and specific staff just for transition courses. Creating a program identity should be a conscious part of program planning. Advertising the five components of the program design; academics (math, reading, writing, computers), educational/career counseling, college survival, mentoring and tutoring also help set the program apart from others.
- **Accurate Identify of Student Needs:** identifying strengths and weaknesses of students, establishing career goal setting, meeting academic needs and building academic skills, fostering personal responsibility are all part of designing a program that meets and addresses student needs. Available counseling services are crucial to address student needs, and building strong cohort groups that create strong support networks are as well.
- **Alignment and Partnership with College Culture:** Acclimatizing first generation college students with college culture and life is crucial for student success. Working closely with local campuses is the key to making this happen. Ideally, classes that are collocated at a college that include services such as admissions procedures, financial aid and study skills need to be built into the program with partners, such as the Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC), providing specific information and help to students.
- **Defined processes:** A formal process for intake, orientation and graduation, a consistent process for assessment and instructional methodology, defined, accurate

and consistent data collection and regular staff development to improve staff performance.

The Nellie Mae programs gave the following advice for new program start-up:

- Spend time on planning
- Review existing research
- Visit existing projects
- View Transitions as part of a continuum
- Build linkages with colleges
- Establish a local identity
- Be flexible and patient
- Celebrate success

These elements were important because they were used as the underlying factors for new programs to consider when applying for state funding, and starting up new programs when funding was obtained.

Curriculum Frameworks

Funding from the Lumina Foundation enabled the statewide College Transition Advisory Committee and the College Transition coordinator to begin work on institutionalizing the College Transition programs in Maine. One of the strategies was to develop curriculum frameworks that could guide programs on what to teach in a Transition program and that paralleled developmental courses on the college and community college levels. Beginning in the summer 2005, subcommittees were convened to write the frameworks for numeracy, computer skills, and language skills including writing. All 3 frameworks were completed and submitted to the Advisory Committee by March 2006. The frameworks outlined the topics in each subject that needed to be taught, the hours of instruction, resources and materials including texts and key concepts that students needed to know for college. The framework subcommittees were comprised of adult education practitioners and program directors as well as community college representatives.

The College Transition curriculum frameworks were intended for use by any adult education program interested in either developing a transition program or making sure an existing program was in line with developmental courses. All programs interviewed that used the curriculum frameworks found them helpful outlines about what to teach, but they all customized them, chose materials and texts that best matched the curriculum and the instructional styles of teachers.

Some programs, especially the Nellie Mae programs, had curriculum that was based on the developmental courses at the local community college and did not need the frameworks to align their program with developmental studies courses. The state-funded programs found the frameworks very helpful, especially in starting up their programs.

Bridges to Practice Conferences

Two conferences, one in March 2006 and one in March 2007, have been held to publicize College Transitions, provide information on College Transition models and start-up considerations, and highlight successful partnerships, practice and curriculum of existing programs. Evaluations of both of the conferences indicate that those attending found them informative and well organized, with excellent presentations and sessions. The structure of the 2007 conference allowed for choice of roundtable discussions, a change from 2006. Those that attended both 2006 and 2007 appreciated the change in conference structure.

The March 2006 conference had 120 attendees from the community college and adult education systems, and attracted a large number of attendees. In March 2007, there were about 75 attendees from mostly the adult education system, with fewer community college attendees. Several comments on the conference evaluations noted the lack of attendance by the Community Colleges, and suggested looking at strategies to encourage and promote their attendance. Helping adult education and community college staff to meet each other and network was a high priority for these evaluation responders.

Community College Advisory Committee members stated that there were fewer attendees from the Community College system in 2007 because the conference was geared more toward adult education programs, and that there were not many sessions that were of interest to those outside of that system. They suggested that future conferences have sessions that are germane to Community College issues, or decide that the conferences are only for adult educators.

College Transition Models: Meeting the Needs of the Geographic Area

Nellie Mae Model

Although adult education programs had been providing courses that targeted necessary college entrance requirements, and in some cases career counseling, since the 1990s, it wasn't until the Nellie Mae Foundation funded seven adult education programs that a formal college transition model was established. This cohesive model was specifically designed to provide adults with a

concentrated program that led from Adult Basic Education (ABE) to college, community college or other degree or certificate program.

The Nellie Mae model is an intensive model that helps adults with skills in the adult basic education functioning levels acquire the academic, social and other skills necessary to succeed in higher educational settings. Basic skills education in math, reading and writing, providing career counseling, and creating a cohort group are the tenets of the model's design. Connections with higher education, such as college tours, financial aid and college application workshops, are part of the support afforded participants. Course curricula parallel developmental studies programs at the community colleges and in the University of Maine system.

Accuplacer testing used by the Maine community colleges and the university system to determine acceptance and placement is also used by the Nellie Mae college transition programs. Some programs administer the test in house, and some rely on the community college or satellite center of the University of Maine system to do so. Programs also use the TABE or CASAS assessment tests, used in the adult education system, in addition to the Accuplacer to be able to diagnose skill levels and help target instruction to needs. Most programs administer pre and post tests in one or all of the assessments to determine academic gains.

Even within the Nellie Mae model, programs modified the basic structures to meet the needs of their community culture and economic base. Programs concentrated on building skills that were necessary for entrance and success in higher education, but also would lead to a viable career that was geographically available. For example, programs in western Maine emphasized careers in the health fields, as there are three hospitals in the area. In eastern Maine, seasonal employment from mid-summer (blueberry picking) through the winter (Christmas wreath work) was taken into account when college transition semesters were scheduled.

Model designs varied according to transportation, employment and child care concerns for participants. Some programs had success with night programming, while others changed the design to a one-day a week model to accommodate those working or those with children who needed to arrange for childcare. The flexibility of programs and their desire to create schedules that met needs was apparent in how they changed and adapted their original models to encourage participation and retention in the program.

Cohorts were harder to form in some programs than in others. Programs that structured the transition program as a once a week, full day experience were more successful at building a cohort of participants than those with a more individualized or distributed class schedules. In

general, most Nellie Mae programs believed strongly in a cohort model, believing that it built peer support, provided an anchor for participants, and was a major factor in retention.

Career and college counseling were also cited as major factors in retaining students. Partnerships with the Maine Education Opportunity Center (MEOC) was cited as especially helpful for students, providing them with group and/or individual help with financial aid, college applications as well as incentives such as money for books and/or transportation after admission to higher education. Programs told of students who were the first in their families to try to go on in school, and these services were crucial supports that provided the necessary steps in the college application process that these students would not have gotten anywhere else.

Mentoring was mentioned as a crucial support for some participants. Programs invited graduates who were attending a higher education venue to mentor students in the program. These mentors were able to provide the “I’ve been where you are and I’ve succeeded” stories that inspired students and motivated them. The cohort groups and mentors allowed participants to feel part of a community even before they entered the higher education venue of their choice.

Study skills courses that included problem-solving skills necessary to succeed in higher education settings (such as back up child care and transportation plans) met with resistance in programs that offered the course outside of the core curriculum. Programs that either integrated the skills throughout the educational courses or required the study-skills course as part of graduation requirements had better student participation in study skills classes. When students did participate in study skills/problem solving lessons, programs reported that students often told them it was one of the most beneficial parts of the program. Several programs incorporated field trips to geographically accessible colleges and community colleges or satellite centers as part of the study skills course, helping to orient and familiarize students with the campus and services. Most programs arranged for field trips to nearby campuses if they did not offer a study skills course. Some programs used these field trips as a way to build a cohort group.

Coordination with the community colleges, university system and some of the private trade schools varied from program to program. Some programs reported difficulties with the MOU process with some community colleges around referrals and appropriate programming. In some areas, these difficulties were resolved through continued dialogue, while in others the absence of an MOU or other types of formal agreements remained a challenge for Transition Programs. Some programs reported cooperative agreements with a particular community college, while other programs reported competitive relations with the same community college.

Other programs had good working relationships with the community college and university system. Programs were able to collocate on campus or at a satellite center, share staff and created a seamless system for students. Programs that had good working relationships reported that students were able to transition well from one program to the other, and still be able to rely on the Transition program for support and help when needed.

The intense nature of the Nellie Mae programs helped students who needed a lot of individual help, both for educational skill building and coping skills, and provided a confidence-building environment for students. Teachers, guidance counselors, MEOC staff, community college staff and former students acting as mentors all contributed to supporting, encouraging and believing in students who came to believe in themselves and their ability to be a successful college student.

Descriptions of the Nellie Mae Program Models

Caribou Adult Education

Caribou's intensive model is structured just like a college semester with 2 levels of math, English, Science, and computers in a three days a week, 6 hours a day schedule. Classes are held during the day, from 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM or 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Classes are in the adult education learning center building, the former site for Husson College. There are 2 semesters a year, and 12 weeks in a semester. All courses are modeled on the developmental courses offered at the colleges in the area.

English class is every day, and math, science and computers each have classes 2 days a week. On the first day of the week, students have computer class, and other agencies such as Women, Work and Community and MEOC provide workshops. The Accuplacer test is administered on the first day of the semester, and in the middle and at the end of the semester as well. The average increase in scores has been 30 points.

Caribou has a strong cohort model, with all students taking all courses together. There are two colleges, University of Maine Presque Isle (UMPI) and Husson, as well as the community college in the area, and most students attend one of these schools upon graduation from the program although less go to Husson because of the high tuition. Teachers also teach at the local colleges, making transition from the program to higher education easier. Teachers give transition students information about college and have a high degree of credibility in doing so because they teach college courses.

The program has formal agreements (MOU) with UMPI and the community college, and enjoys good rapport with both (although better with UMPI because the program's counselor worked there). Program staff called the colleges to make them aware of the transition program and created links between staff.

Caribou uses former students as mentors. The mentors help incoming students through their first semester in college. Using former students worked very well, and the program would have lost a student if not for the mentor's persistence and encouragement. Students see their mentors once per week for acclimation and support. Also, MEOC helps students with their college applications and financial aid and Women Work and Community does time management and study skills. Representatives of UMPI and the community college from admissions and student services come in and talk to students. The program does campus visits as well.

Lessons Learned

- The program tried evening class, but most students were single moms who could not attend in the evenings. Most of these students were in the Department of Human Services ASPIRE program, and had to meet other ASPIRE requirements as well as attend the transition program.
- The program now limits the number of job corps students, but does allow a couple each semester. When the program first started, it allowed job corps students, but found that they stay together and if one of the group leaves, they all do. Their younger ages and attitudes did not contribute to their becoming part of the cohort group.
- Retention is always a problem. If students don't show up they are called, and often they will come back to class. Students may come back for a while, or come back in another semester. The program has fewer students because of the area's low population, so keeping them in the program is critical.
- Caribou continues the tutoring and counseling components through the summer (one day a week) as a retention tool for the fall college class. A four-month break is just too long for students to not have contact with the program. Tutoring is an inexpensive way to continue that contact.

- Counseling is ongoing and includes working with students to find the right discipline and classes for college. Calling students to get them back into the program has helped keep some of the students who enrolled but stopped attending.
- Referrals are through MEOC, Job Corps and, especially, public service announcements (PSA) with the local TV and Radio stations. Newspapers proved expensive and ineffective. The program uses an entry in the Adult Education mailings and an insert in the Adult Education catalog. In addition, the program has its own brochure that is distributed locally.
- As a result of having a college transition program, ABE students are coming in to make sure they can be in program. It has provided a visible next step after GED attainment. The program provides an orientation about the college transition program and college life. In order to help place the appropriate students into the transition program, a score of at least a 6th grade level is required on the TABE assessment. Students who test below that are referred to the ABE program.
- When the mentoring project first started, it didn't work very well because regular college students were chosen by the colleges and did not really have a connection with the student population in the transition program. When the program recruited former students as mentors, students responded better and mentors were more invested in taking their mentoring seriously. Former students viewed mentoring as a way to pay the program back. Mentors received a stipend helping them with a little extra money. Many asked for their stipend at holiday times.
- In the very beginning, all classes used the same books as the developmental courses in college, but they became too expensive for math. The program still uses the developmental course books for English.

This spring, 4 of the first cohort of students were the first in their families to graduate college. One student graduated in 3.5 years with a 3.98 average, and did an internship at DECA that led to a job there. One graduate is going on in school to study microbiology. The third student managed a double major, social work and education, and the fourth student got a 2-year degree in the medical lab tech program that required 80 credits. Of the 4 students, 3 were on the dean's list, and the remaining student would have been except she didn't pay her campus parking tickets. Next year, 10 students will graduate. As the program coordinator states: "They would not have gone to school without the program because they just didn't know how to do it."

- Science is part of the core curriculum because most students never had science in high school, and it is a real area of weakness as a result.
- Students distinguish between college instructors and adult education instructors. Having college instructors teach in the transition program give them credibility that just adult education teachers don't have. Students believe that these teachers talk from experience about the college classroom and model it in the program. They stress attendance in college because students won't succeed otherwise.

Sumner Adult Education (East Sullivan)

Sumner's program design is a two session per year on-campus model at the Eastern Maine Community College at the Hancock County Higher Education Center. Prior to the start of the instructional component, there is a three to four-week enrollment phase during which prospective students participate in intake and assessment sessions, and workshops focusing on career planning, college planning, and financial aid. On completion of this phase, admission is offered to students who showed a high level of engagement in the enrollment phase and will benefit from College Transitions participation.

The instructional phase starts with an Orientation Day, and concludes with a daylong session focused on post-assessments, evaluations, and the development of individual action plans. Orientation Day includes team-building activities to develop the cohort, self-awareness inventories and exercises, and presentations by former transition students.

The instructional phase runs 12 to 13 weeks in the fall and spring, with classes in math for college, reading and writing for college, study skills/college awareness, and computer skill

development. The computer skills development includes training on Blackboard and other university system help sites. When a 9-week summer semester has been offered, it has been very popular with high enrollment and completion rates as students can enter college in the fall right after completing it.

Students are matched with a mentor who is a former Transition student and is in college. An extra grant helps fund the mentoring program, which includes activities such as field trips, a newspaper and one-to-one help.

Due to the great distances many students must travel to attend the program, classes are offered one day a week (Tuesday) in an all-day format with four back-to-back classes with a break for lunch. The day of the week has not changed, helping with recruitment and with students who must drop out and then return. If employed, students arrange with their employers to have Tuesdays off and full attendance is required. Also, having to arrange for just one day of childcare helps parents remain in the program. Commuting once a week saves gas costs, and cuts down on hazardous winter driving. Sumner's one day a week model is now the design of other transition programs in Belfast, Rockland and Machias.

Although the program can enroll only 15 students/semester because there are only 15 computers at the Hancock County Higher Education Center, the program had 48 students in last year's cohorts. From 2003-2006 the program had a 71% completion rate. Retention and completion rates went up after adopting a one-day-a week model. In fact, the model was so successful that all programs (E.G.: High School Diploma, Office Skills) at Sumner Adult Education use this model, with a different program each day.

Supplemental tutoring is available on Wednesdays on site to assist students through enhanced instruction. In addition, pre-requisite science and math courses are available as well as a menu of workshops and intensive preparatory courses in the areas of writing and math.

Following the instructional phase, the program monitors each student's college enrollment and progress, and supportive tutoring continues to be available. After completing the transition program, students can access an array of college and degrees on site through the Higher Education Center or enroll at the University of Maine at Augusta or Machias.

The program has three staff members:

- A coordinator/teacher who does the official program intake and assessments and provides instruction in reading/writing.

- The program counselor who facilitates workshops, and instructs the study skills/college awareness course.
- A math and computer instructor.

Recruitment is through the MEOC program (the program counselor also works with the MEOC program), the Hancock County Higher Education Center, and word of mouth.

Lessons Learned

- Arriving at the one day a week model increased enrollment, retention and graduation rates. Due to the success of the model, all programs at Sumner Adult Education are now one day a week and retention and completion rates have gone up in these other programs as well.
- Formalizing the enrollment process and making it more intensive has made it a more successful way to identify those who will benefit from the program and start to create a cohort group before instruction begins. Students meet with the program staff, talk on the phone after they meet, take assessment tests, and meet with the career counselor before being enrolled and beginning classes. This process also helps identify students who need other services before they either enter the Transition classes or would benefit from other programs.
- Everyone takes all of the classes together-math, writing, college readiness and computer skills for college. This has helped to form a solid cohort group.
- Additional and optional instructional resources such as career exploration, 1:1 tutoring helped ensure student success.
- The intensive mentoring process helped create a network of students who knew each other even before they enrolled in college, and the former students who mentored followed their mentees through the first semester of college. As one student stated, "I learned so much from other students and know other students and feel so connected in college."
- Students are mostly women, so the program is developing a male transition model that is more technical in hopes of recruiting and retaining male students.

- The Transition Program is a great marketing piece for Sumner Adult Education as some students go onto college, some need other classes and some need more intensive help. It has also helped the program market all its programs together, presenting a complete learning environment from adult basic education to high school diploma or GED to College Transition, Certified Nursing Assistant (CAN) training, the Office Skills certificate or just general courses.
- Other adult education programs in the region are still not referring students to the transition program. Having a more regional approach with other adult education programs offering supplemental courses such as chemistry or biology that are part of the existing College Transition program could expand the program's reach.

SAD 5 Adult Education (Rockland)

Like Sumner, Rockland uses a one-day a week model for its College Transition program. Every Monday, from 8 AM – 4PM, 15 -20 students attend the program on the second floor of the SAD #5 administrative building at the full time community learning center. The program had tried holding classes three evenings a week, but had no success in attracting or keeping students. Since changing to a full day model 1.5 years ago, the program has never had to turn away anyone because of scheduling issues.

Classes are scheduled so that there is open tutoring either at the end or beginning of the English and math classes. The last hour of math classes are open so students who require 1:1 help can either get it from the math instructor or the literacy volunteers tutors who are always at the learning center. The English teacher comes in an hour early to help students before class begins. Study skills are integrated into each subject so students learn study skills that are specific to the subject they are studying. Students can access literacy volunteer tutors at the learning center at any time during the week. About 30% of the students access extra language arts help, and about 60% of them access extra math help.

Students with skills that are still too low for the Transition program can sit in Transition classes for motivation and to explore their next educational step. For Transition students that have higher skills and need additional courses such as chemistry or biology, the adult education program offers transition students these courses for free. Students that just need higher-level courses for their transition to college attend the orientation, take the higher-level courses they need, and remain part of the cohort through other means.

All teachers work toward one goal. For example, each student must hand in a research paper that uses graphs (math), on line research (computers) and follows a college format (language arts). This integrated approach to the curriculum helps students make connections between subjects, develop study skills, and exposes them to the many ways to present data in a research paper.

Teachers have staff meetings to talk about individual students, and plan together to help the students stay on track and be successful. The full time adult education director and a full time math teacher help everyone keep in contact with students and monitor their progress.

Accuplacer testing is done by the University of Maine Thomaston (UMT) before orientation, and the program also uses the CASAS to diagnose skill gaps and target instruction. To build the cohort group, all students take the program orientation together on the first day. A buddy system is set up during orientation, so students can connect with and motivate each other. The orientation curriculum includes time management and presentations from partner colleges such as University of Maine Thomaston and the University of Maine Augusta.

The Adult Education director is the Transition Program's counselor. She meets with all the students, and is there at the Learning Center when classes are held. Intake is a formal process, but students can meet informally with her at any time after that.

In general, the community is not supportive of "second chance" programs like the College Transition program. The prevailing attitude is that adults had their chance to finish high school, and if they didn't, it is their problem. The Nellie Mae grant money, staff development, support and data collection helped the program become established despite the prevailing cultural attitude. It has helped the program show the community the success of graduates.

Referrals come from a variety of sources. UMT refers students who have low Accuplacer scores. The fall College Transitions semester is only 12 weeks long (the spring semester is 15 weeks) to accommodate students being referred by UMT in the first few weeks of the college semester. The program sends out 11,000 brochures to every household in Rockland and advertises on local TV. Vocational Rehabilitation refers some students, and word of mouth is a great referral source.

Lessons Learned

- Instead of a MEOC workshop at orientation about applying to college and a subsequent workshop on financial aid, the program sends students to UMT for a 3-hour counseling session on applying to college. Students return to UMT for help with the financial aid forms (FACEA) and process. Students must get a signed form saying they have completed both sessions in order to graduate.
- Having the adult education director as the program counselor, having an open door policy and being on site for students on a full time basis helps keep students on track and helps the program connect with students.
- Having daytime space that is not at the high school has been important to emphasizing that the Transitions program is for adults.
- Creating the cohort has been a key to helping students remain in the program and graduate.
- Integrating study skills into each course curriculum and requiring projects that cross and integrate subjects, such as a research paper, helps students utilize their skills in more than one context.
- High turnover of the language arts position hindered the integration of subjects and coordination of cross-subject projects.

Belfast Adult Education

Belfast also uses the Sumner model of one day a week for their Transition program. Belfast has a 15-week fall and spring semester. The program meets each Monday from 8 AM – 4:45 PM. Math is the biggest challenge for most students, so the program allots 2.5 hours for this subject and it is the first course of the day. Language arts follows math for 1 hour, and then students get a 30-minute break for lunch. After lunch, more language arts are offered, then a computer class and the day ends with a college awareness class. Classes are held at the University of Maine Hutchinson Center, and the staff at the Hutchinson Center is very supportive of the program.

The program accepts most students into the program regardless of their academic level. A challenge with this approach is how to start classes from where the students are and to make accommodations for low-level students. They also face the challenge of how to keep

students who are not ready for college in the program without repeating it if they need more than one semester to become college ready. Students who have been through the transition course before work as a group in math and language arts classes while the other students are taking the regular class. The teachers develop additional lesson plans for these groups, and check in on them regularly during class time. In addition, students who score below the 9th grade level on the TABE assessment must have a tutor or go to the ABE program as well as attend the Transition program.

To avoid discouraging those who need to repeat the program before heading to college, the program holds a “completion” instead of a “graduation” ceremony at the end of each semester. In addition, instead of grades, this program awards points for class participation, homework completion and class tests to avoid grade anxiety and a concentration on grades instead of learning and achieving.

Both formal and informal assessments are an integral part of the program. All students are administered the Accuplacer test as well as the TABE test before classes begin. Informal assessments designed by each teacher happen at the 4th and 7th weeks of the program. Posttests of the formal assessments are given at the end of the semester. Informal assessments are used to help students overcome “test anxiety”. Teachers have noticed that students who can do the work often don’t test as if they can. Practice in taking tests to build student confidence for taking the Accuplacer test or college course tests is seen as part of building college skills.

The program stresses that students should aim to place out of the college developmental courses to maximize their financial aid and also to achieve success in college. Students take algebra and other courses through the adult education program to ensure they have high enough math skills to start college without developmental math courses.

Students are required to do a research paper, an informational interview and an oral presentation as well as a book report. The program assigns a lot of homework to make up for having classes only 1 day a week.

Students meet with the program’s counselor at least 3 times a semester. Exploring which colleges to apply to, helping with the applications, exploring career options, gathering information and hand holding are all offered at these meetings. Students often face economic, transportation and child care issues, and the counselor is there to help them

problem-solve these barriers. Students can access the counselor or teachers at any time in addition to the 3 mandatory sessions.

The program director makes a concerted effort to gather lots of feedback on the program from students. She talks with them on a regular basis about the program and if it is meeting needs. Staff reviews the resources, materials and curriculum on a regular basis to ensure the program meets students' needs.

Although it has been a challenge to track students once they leave the program, the first College Transitions completer to graduate college received her BA with high honors. She was also the guest speaker at the Transition program's completion ceremony.

Lessons Learned

- Some students have been out of school for so long that the immersion of 1 day a week helps them reenter school. Some don't really need the skills but need the confidence to go to college. They build confidence over the 15 weeks of the course.
- The Hutchinson Center is a great partner because they are supportive of the program and advocate for it. The staff and faculty treat the Transition students as if they are already in college.
- Both the Hutchinson Center and the University of Maine Augusta have wonderful presentations for students on field trips that make them feel welcome, comfortable and already part of the college community.
- One day a week works perfectly because it follows a college schedule of a full day. Since most students in the area colleges are commuters, this will be much like the schedule they will have when they start college.
- This program would like to see a college credit awarded those who complete the college transition program as a carrot to finish the program and as an incentive to attend college.

Marshwood Adult Education (South Berwick)

In contrast to the programs described above, Marshwood's College Transition program offers only evening classes on Tuesday and Thursday nights for 3 hours each night. On the border with New Hampshire, this program coordinates with community colleges in both Maine and New Hampshire. Students from both states attend the program as well.

Marshwood has a strong cohort model, with all students taking math, English, writing and college awareness courses as a group. Most students do not take a basic computer course, as they are fairly literate in using a computer. All curricula are based on the General 100, or developmental courses, at York Community College in Maine to ensure that students do not have to enroll in developmental courses in college.

Math is very individualized, with students using the computer-based PLATO math program at their own pace. A math teacher is present in the PLATO computer lab to explain concepts and helps augment the PLATO lessons. Students work in groups and individually.

The English class requires students to learn to do reflective writing, a research paper as well as critique what they read. The college awareness course covers study skills, note taking, vocabulary and setting schedules as well as other topics that will help students acclimatize to college life. College help such as Northstar and tutoring are covered as well. Students can also take courses from the general program, such as chemistry, biology or Microsoft Excel for free.

The program has an additional mentoring grant that allows for past students to partner and mentor a current student. Most mentors are attending York Community College in Maine and Strattum Community College in New Hampshire, and have been mentoring for a few years. They help with a tour of the college, meet their mentees, and communicate throughout the course with them by email.

The cohort approach combined with the mentoring piece of the program builds support for students that begins in the program and extends to college. Students maintain their contacts and support with their cohort and mentor throughout their Transition and college programs. These contacts help with student retention in the program and in college.

Marshwood is an ITV (interactive TV) site for the University of Maine system, and many students like the flexibility of ITV college courses. A college student who has taken mostly ITV courses is also a mentor to those who are exploring distance learning as an option for them.

Marshwood works with many colleges and apprenticeship programs at Portsmouth and the University College through the on site ITV site. The program's first Transition graduate is getting her BA through mostly ITV.

Students receive at least 6 hours of counseling on career exploration, college applications and financial aid information. Students can access individual counseling outside of these hours, and can come back to talk to the career counselor after they have graduated from the program. Students can also access career and college counseling from the community colleges.

Recruiting in this area is not easy as there is no cable TV and MEOC, a good referral source for other programs, is not as strong in this area as in other parts of Maine and does not produce a lot of referrals for the program. Marshwood uses radio ads, letters to regional adult education programs, and includes the Transition program at the regular adult education graduation. The exposure at graduation has had results with some audience members signing up for the program. The program also uses brochures, and flyers in area restaurant bathrooms. Word of mouth also results in referrals. Strattum Community College refers students to the program, while York Community College does not refer as often. Strattum has a huge biotechnology grant from the Department of Labor, and it provides Transition students with the opportunity to enter into the biotechnology field that offers a base salary of \$35,000. Strattum offers scholarships for the 2-year program for students. Strattum refers students to the Transition program based on their Accuplacer scores, and accepts students who have graduated from the Transition program.

Lessons Learned

- Marshwood does not have an MOU with York County Community College. As a result, students have a harder time convincing the college that the Transition program satisfies the General 100 courses. To help students convince YCCC, Marshwood is helping students compile a portfolio of their work that illustrates what they know so they will get credit for the General 100 courses as well as credits for life experience.
- A solid articulation agreement with Strattum Community College in New Hampshire has really benefited students. Students who are entering the biotechnology or nursing fields are eligible for scholarships and apprentice programs because the college knows the quality of the Transition program.

- Administering tests is time consuming and so is relationship building. The 2 breakfasts where regional adult education directors and college administrators talked about what programs were available, how to coordinate courses and how to have a regional approach were very helpful in knowing what is out there at the colleges.
- Having the Transition program is a great recruitment tool for Adult Basic Education (ABE) for those with a high school diploma and low skills. Providing the option to participate in the Transition program while enrolled in ABE and allowing these students to take 2 years to graduate instead of 1 year or 1 semester helps students stay in the program because they can focus on the goal of going to college while “beefing up” their skills.

Portland Adult Education

Portland’s College Transition Program is housed at the Portland Adult Education learning center in a former elementary school. Unlike most other programs in Maine, Portland and Lewiston have diverse populations, with many ESOL students speaking over 54 languages. Portland’s Transition program serves students with diverse needs from those needing a few courses to enter a vocational program to those learning English and wanting to go to college to succeed in their new home.

As a result of meeting these diverse needs, Portland has a “menu” option program rather than a program of set courses. For those going on to the health fields, biology, chemistry and other sciences are offered. For those needing English language, ESOL classes are offered.

Portland offers reading, writing and math courses for college-bound students. Students are assessed during the intake process, and classes are assigned based on assessment results. Assessments vary based on whether students are speakers of English or other languages. Students take an Accuplacer test at intake into the program, and again at the end of their individualized courses.

The Transition program is flexible, and students take only what they need to take. Times, classes and hours vary from student to student. Class schedules follow the regular adult education semester.

Portland Adult Education uses Computers on Wheels (COW), laptops on a cart that rolls into classes, for computer lessons, accessing information and exploring nearby college web sites and help sites.

About 75% of students entering college from Portland Adult Education attend Southern Maine Community College (SMCC). Transition courses are based on the developmental courses at SMCC. The program works closely and well with MEOC to help students fill out college applications and apply for financial aid.

In past years, approximately 75% of students going on to college attended the University of Southern Maine and 25% attended Southern Maine Community College. Now, the reverse is true with 75% of students attending SMCC and 25% attending USM.

One of the challenges of Portland's Transition program is to determine how long to provide English classes before students are ready to transition to college and succeed. Although limited English impedes college success, keeping students too long increases the chance that they will get discouraged and leave the program. SMCC offers ESOL classes as part of its developmental studies program, but those students opting to take ESOL classes at SMCC often use up their financial aid on these classes and cannot afford to continue to get a degree.

Portland's Transition Program tried to form cohorts through providing workshops on college transition skills and issues, activities and social gatherings. Attendance at these events was minimal, and did not work. Informal cohorts form during classes especially when several students have similar courses and schedules.

Lessons Learned

- The diversity of the population in Portland necessitates a menu approach to Transition courses.
- Part of the success of Transition programs is to help students access supportive services outside of the program.

- It is important to keep the Transition program an adult program and not have too many teen students in classes. It becomes a different program when there are a lot of teenagers in the class.
- The Transition Program has had a good number of referrals from Vocational Rehabilitation services. The number of these students has had the effect of discouraging others from entering the program. It is becoming a challenge to have a broader program identity.

Lewiston Adult Education

Lewiston Adult Education has been providing math and writing courses for college-bound students since the 1980's, and still provides these courses to those who do not want to enter a formal College Transition program. It has a long history of helping adults go on to college.

Like Portland, Lewiston has a significant English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) population and Lewiston Adult Education has designed its College Transition program to meet the needs of both the traditional and ESOL students who enroll.

Lewiston's Transition program began in 2000 as one of the 2 original Nellie Mae sites in Maine. After attending training provided by Nellie Mae in Boston, the program used the courses and hours of instruction suggested by the training, and contextualized the course delivery to Lewiston. The resulting model is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of student schedules, learning styles and English proficiency.

Lewiston is the only Nellie Mae model in Maine that offers 3 options for College Transition class times: morning, afternoon or one full day. Lewiston uses a cohort model with students choosing one option and then taking all classes in the program. Morning sessions are on Monday and Wednesday from 9 AM – 12 PM; afternoon sessions are also on Monday and Wednesday from 12 PM – 3 PM. The all day program is on Tuesday from 9 AM – 3 PM. There are 3 semesters: fall, spring and summer. Summer enrollment is the greatest, with the winter enrollment having the least number of students.

The program uses 1 teacher for both the language arts and math courses. The teacher uses appropriate materials and texts that mirror the developmental courses at Central Maine Community College (CMCC), or are at a higher level than those at CMCC. The curriculum is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it meets the needs of those enrolled in the program as

well as helps students succeed in college. The goal of the Transition program is to enable students to by pass the lower level developmental courses, which are often on a high school level. Some students will have to take higher-level developmental courses, but the program aims to have students take only 1 or no developmental courses upon enrollment to CMCC.

ESOL students can come to as many classes as they want if there is room in the class. Those needing intensive math help can also attend as many math classes as they can if there is room in the class. ESOL students can repeat classes if they need to, and take more than one semester to finish the program.

Allowing ESOL students to spend more time in the program and repeat classes has helped them be college-ready when they graduate from the College Transition program. After taking as much time as she needed in the Transition program, one graduate went on to Central Maine Community College, and not only graduated, but received an award for her college performance.

Most students are placed into the Transition program based on their Accuplacer or other assessment scores. In the reading course, students take the Companion test, which is a paper and pencil version of the Accuplacer. Reading texts and notebooks have been added to the curriculum to enhance reading for all students after Companion test scores consistently showed low reading skills in most students. The program has found that the extra emphasis on reading has made all the other courses easier for students to succeed in, and they now can spend less time on study skills and writing as a result. The program still uses the Companion test at various times during the semester, but all students take the Accuplacer test at the end of the program as well.

Math classes are taught in both an individualized way with group work that allows more advanced students to help lower level math students. Everyone progresses through the math course at his or her own rate.

A career counselor works with students on thinking about careers that resonate with them, and uses the Choices career exploration program to help them narrow their options. MEOC visits the program and provides help with financial aid, college choice and college applications. The teacher, career counselor and MEOC staff work together to keep students on track, problem solve childcare and transportation and time management issues. The teacher calls students if they don't come to class, and the small group cohorts support each other and these relationships help with student retention.

The program has returning students who come back to the program for support, just to visit, talk to the teacher or counselor and take some extra math courses if they are having trouble with math while they are at college. These students have a positive effect on current students, sharing with them the successes and challenges they will face in college, and reinforcing how the program will really help them succeed if they stick with it and work hard.

Recruitment for the program was hard at first, and the program used many strategies to publicize the program and connect with potential referral sources. The Career Center has been a good referral source. Sometimes the program takes the initiative to go to where potential students are, such as talking to factory workers who were being displaced. ASPIRE has become a referral source after the program connected with ASPIRE counselors.

The other programs at Lewiston Adult Education have used the Transition program as a next step program for High School Diploma and GED completers. These students are literally waked over to the program and are immediately interviewed and tested, and they can enter the next semester's cohort easily. The visibility and proximity of the Transition program has helped the Adult Basic Education program encourage adults to think about their next steps after obtaining a high school diploma or GED.

Lessons Learned

- Night classes did not work with this program, but having 3 choices for day classes for students has helped with recruitment and retention.
- Having a relaxed, fun atmosphere while working hard on skills has helped the program not only retain current students but be seen as former students as a resource to come back to for help.
- Coordination with MEOC has been very helpful to the program. MEOC connected with students once they enrolled in Central Maine Community College, making sure they were getting the help they needed through the online help bulletin board and/or available tutoring. This was crucial since the majority of Transition graduates attend CMCC. The MOU between the Transition program and CMCC has not helped the entities work together, and MEOC helps facilitate student transitions to the CMCC campus.

- Allowing ESOL students to have extra time to complete the Transition program by repeating courses and taking as many courses as they can or want has helped them mainstream into the cohort without being in a separate program.
- Having one teacher for the math and language arts helped students feel connected to the program and helped the teacher really get to know and keep track of students. This familiarity helped build the cohort as well.
- Creative outreach and partnership building has resulted in referrals from multiple sources.
- As most Transition students go on to CMCC, it would help students if the existing MOU between Lewiston Adult Education and CMCC led to a collaborative working relationship instead of a competitive relationship around developmental course enrollment, lack of referrals to the Transition program, and student recruitment issues.
- Accuplacer testing was a barrier for students and the program. Accuplacer testing done at CMCC was hard to schedule and CMCC limited the number of times a student may test. This caused delays in obtaining pre-tests for Transition participants because of scheduling difficulties, and also caused problems in post-testing because of the limitation on the number of times a student was allowed to test. Using the Companion test for reading helped the program overcome this in that subject, but did not solve the overall problem of obtaining pre and post tests to monitor and document student progress.

MELMAC College Transition Grants

In 2005 the MELMAC Foundation extended its grant program to include adult education activities that encouraged adults receiving a high school diploma or GED to go on to post secondary educational opportunities. The grant supported adult education programs to provide career and college counseling, Grant recipients are required to conduct exit interviews with students receiving a high school diploma or GED about their intention to either go on in school or not to go on, and if students are enrolling in a college or skills training entity to report where they are going.

MELMAC awarded grants to 11 adult education programs, and 14 other adult education programs were added to existing MELMAC K-12 college aspirations initiatives. The 11 direct grantees used the \$4,000 award to hire career counselors, add free pre-college courses to their

course offerings, connect with colleges and community colleges to provide workshops, field trips and other information for students, and worked to raise the awareness of a GED or high school diploma as a first step toward a career goal.

MELMAC provided peer learning staff development opportunities that afforded attendees with a chance to learn from each other as well as hear from experts on college transition issues such as integrated math curriculum, what colleges want from students, how to connect with colleges. MELMAC data collected by the grantees provided a look at how the MELMAC grant was increasing the numbers of adults attending post secondary educational opportunities.

Lessons Learned

- These small but highly effective MELMAC grants helped programs organize their “pre-college” courses into a more cohesive program that offered skill building, study skills, college entrance help and other services that partner agencies provided. MELMAC dollars helped change a variety of courses into a “program” and helped adult education programs view college transition in a new light.
- Peer learning opportunities were very valuable to grant recipients. Evaluations from the peer learning sessions indicate that sharing what programs were doing helped each program try new ideas and connect with the programs that were implementing them. The combination of peer learning and expert presentations were well received.
- Adult Education leveraged the MELMAC dollars effectively. The small amount of grant money given to adult education programs resulted in more college or post secondary enrollments per dollar than any other MELMAC funded program.
- The MELMAC seed money sparked programs to apply for increased funding through the state-funded grants that became available in 2006.
- Lewiston Adult Education, a Nellie Mae recipient, participated with Lewiston High School in the MELMAC grant and was able to enhance efforts to encourage those enrolled in Adult Education but not the College Transition program to consider going on in school.

State Funded Programs

As mentioned in the History section of this report, in 2006 the state legislature funded a pilot project that awarded 6 programs approximately \$30,000 each to manage college transition programs. A seventh program in Machias was funded through the Betterment Foundation and was dedicated to examining a rural model to support college aspirations and transitions.

Due to the lateness of the appropriation, the grant applications and bidders conference, grant selection was not completed until the early fall. This created a problem for adult education programs as they could not advertise their new Transition programs in the adult education course brochures, classes had already started for other programs, and starting up a program after receiving funds took time. In addition, staff development events for the new programs were conducted in the winter of 2006 and programs needed the staff development to get started. Program elements were based on the best practices identified by the Nellie Mae programs in January 2006 and the curriculum frameworks finalized in the spring 2006.

As a result of the late start up programs really began to provide College Transition services in January-February 2007. Connections with colleges and other agencies helped with recruitment, and programs were able to start the program with a critical mass of students. All programs identified the late grant award as a start-up issue for them.

Programs also stated that the College Transition coordinator was crucial to helping with start up, collaboration and data collection and definition issues. He was readily available, made program visits, clarified certain program elements, reiterated the goals of the program, and offered needed support when asked. Programs stated that without his help they could not have started their program at all.

As in the Nellie Mae and MELMAC programs, the Transition program had a ripple effect in relation to other programs within the local adult education program. It provided students in ABE, high school diploma and GED classes with a view as to what can come next, and exposed them to the real possibility that they, too, can go to college or on to a post secondary program. Programs changed their paradigm from having separate programs to having a continuum of learning that is a gateway to other learning opportunities. As in the Nellie Mae and MELMAC programs, the College Transition programs changed the way the adult education program “did business”.

The College Transition program also opened new markets to adult education programs. Adults needing brush up classes, some career counseling and/or help with college applications or financial aid came to adult education.

Some challenges that the first cohort of state-funded programs encountered had to do with coordination and collaboration with other partners, student expectations and belief systems, and confusion about definitions related to the data collection and what transition meant in terms of counting students.

As in the Nellie Mae and MELMAC grants, coordination with the community college and university systems varied by region and entity. Some programs have had difficulty obtaining an MOU with the college or community college near them or where most of their students want to go, while others have developed close ties and seamless systems with their higher educational partners.

Differing entrance requirements from college to college make coordination difficult and confusing, especially for programs that must coordinate with 3 or more colleges. Some community colleges accept students with Accuplacer test scores that are below what the programs consider acceptable for students in their Transition program to succeed in college. This puts the community college as a direct competitor for these students, and a barrier to recruitment for Transition programs. York County Community College acknowledges that up to 85% of incoming students need developmental courses, but doesn't see the need to refer students to adult education Transition programs. On the other hand, Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) does not believe in having students use their financial aid for developmental courses and has created a seamless system with adult education programs called Kennebec Academy that allows students to be co-enrolled, upgrade skills before being matriculated or take needed prerequisite courses. KVCC and the adult education programs that are partners in Kennebec Academy share staff, resources and information to keep students moving through requirements and prerequisites into degree programs and on to becoming a graduate of KVCC.

Student expectations and belief systems did not always mesh with the Transition program. Personal responsibility, time management, the importance of being on time and attending all classes and having alternate plans for transportation and child care were some of the issues students needed to work on, and the program needed to provide ways for them to do so. Actual study skills or college life skills were offered, but not often taken if not required. Expectations of what a college degree would help them do were not always realistic. Programs learned that Transition programs were not just about teaching academic skills.

With any new program, there can be confusion about what is meant by terms being used. Because some terms were not defined, programs collected data based on the definition they thought to be correct. Although the College Transition coordinator tried to clarify such questions as who could be counted as a college transition student, what was a college transition student, questions remained about collecting the right data and defining the data. Some data in the final data reports were not asked for originally, and programs had to scramble to find the information either from their records or from students.

The Nellie Mae programs had a set model to use and adapt while the state-funded College Transition programs had best practices and curriculum frameworks developed by subcommittees of the Advisory Panel, but could create their own model for their program. As a result, many models emerged with different target audiences. Many models are good for diversity and for contextualizing to different communities, but poses challenges for collecting data across programs due to the different levels, populations served and levels of services each program provided. This will need to be addressed as the program expands and matures.

State Funded College Transition Models

Capitol Area Consortium

The 5 programs that make up the Capital Area Consortium, Winthrop, Maranacook, Augusta, MSAD 11 and Gardiner work together but have separate components of the Transition program at each adult education site. Each program has hired a coach who follows up on referrals, does intake on new students, and then introduces students to the variety of courses and services available. Coaches can help students take an online career inventory, enroll in the next class module, get a referral to a college advisor, take the next step and form a vision and make a career or college plan. Coaches can administer the Accuplacer test to help students with needed College Transition courses and services. Coaches also follow up with students who are not attending classes and encourage them to make an appointment to see them or problem-solve solutions to attendance challenges.

Each student creates an individualized plan and takes courses that build skills and meets the requirements for the college program they plan to attend. Some adults just need one course such as chemistry or biology, and some need intensive help in math, language arts and/or computers. Classes such as biology or chemistry are offered at different programs on a rotating basis. This helps fill classes and geographically distribute class sites.

For math, language arts and computer courses, teachers use the curriculum frameworks developed in 2006. Teachers choose the texts and instructional methods. To emphasize reading skills, the Consortium teachers developed a curriculum framework for reading that all Consortium programs use.

Having coaches on site at each adult education program helps GED completers begin thinking about post secondary education immediately upon taking the test. Some coaches don't let GED test takers leave the building without talking to them! The Augusta and Winthrop programs create cohorts through the high school diploma program and career exploration course. Students support each other in class and form informal cohorts this way. The programs of the Consortium try to build cohorts through trips to college campuses for college tours and through having partner agencies provide workshops (such as MEOC on the college application process), but attendance is not always good and the same students do not go to each event. Also, since students have different schedules it is hard for all students to attend each event. Some events are held locally, and some are Consortium-wide. Students receive letters with information about college tours, activities and workshops.

College tours that are pre-arranged by programs are often wonderful trips with colleges pulling out all the stops. For some students, it is the first time they have set foot on a college campus. Some students prefer 1:1 tours and the program helps arrange them. MEOC provides college application and financial services workshops and individual or small group help.

Students appreciate the individualized help they receive. The University of Maine Augusta and Kennebec Valley Community College accepts the Consortium Transition courses as college developmental courses. A free, 3 credit Aspirations course is offered at the adult education sites, and is taught by teachers approved by the college. Students can be co-enrolled in UMA or KVCC and College Transition, taking a college composition course while taking a math Transition course, for example. The Consortium is a partner with KVCC in the Kennebec Academy model.

The program serves adults from 17 to those in their 40's and 50's. Older adults are recognizing the need to come back and get more skills to fulfill their dreams. Some are really interested in increasing their math skills. The Choices career exploration program shows them that there are occupations that match their interests that they had no idea about.

Administering student assessments are dependent on the individualized student plan. For example, students taking a course will do a pre and post Accuplacer test in that subject, but students seeing a coach and not taking a course will just take a pre Accuplacer test.

The 5 Consortium coaches meet monthly to share information, discuss what worked and what did not, and plan together. These meetings are wonderful for coordination and professional development for the group. They have also brought in other partners to learn about additional services. JobCorps, Vocational Rehabilitation, armed services and the Career Center are examples. The coaches have also toured Capillo's Beauty Academy to become familiar with the school's requirements.

Lessons Learned

- The individualized approach to meeting student needs targets instruction to student goals and skill level, helping some students only take courses they need. This approach requires in depth coaching and does not lend itself to a cohort model but helps students reach their goals as quickly as they can.
- Co-enrollment at UMA or KVCC and the Transition program allows students to take college courses while receiving developmental help in one or two subjects at the Transition program. Research validates this as a proven strategy to help retain students in college and leads to higher graduation and degree attainment rates.
- Setting up college tours and specific workshops on a program-by-program basis does not always work well. Attendance is an issue with either low or no attendance at some events. Offering these events Consortium-wide will be tried in the next year to test whether attendance increases.
- General career workshops have not always been successful or well attended. Next year, the Consortium will offer career workshops featuring adults in specific occupations talking about what they do. These workshops will be offered Consortium-wide.
- Because each coach collects their own data and sends the data to the Consortium's College Transition coordinator, the data is not always consistent or uniform. The Consortium plans to use an Access database to collect data that the local programs as well as the state can use. It is hoped that consistent definitions for required data will be developed.

MSAD #49 Adult Education (Fairfield)

Of all the programs interviewed for this report, the Transition program in Fairfield has the closest affiliation with their neighboring community college. Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) is literally across the street from the MSAD #49 Adult Education offices. Kennebec Academy was created out of a Carl Perkins work group to offer KVCC applicants a way to upgrade skills without outright rejection from KVCC. It also grew out of the belief that KVCC should be helping students graduate KVCC without using financial aid for non-credit courses.

Applicants who are not yet qualified to attend KVCC are sent a letter saying they are not yet accepted into KVCC but are accepted into the Kennebec Academy. It is not a rejection letter. The letter does not mention adult education, only Kennebec Academy and gives information on how to enroll. Students who are not ready for KVCC are not “cut loose” but have an avenue to upgrade their skills in order to enroll in KVCC at a later date.

MSAD #49 provides classes in the core areas of language arts (reading and writing), math and computers, but also in biology, chemistry and other prerequisite courses for degree programs within KVCC. Career and college counseling services are available at both KVCC and at the adult education learning center, a stand-alone building located on the high school campus.

KVCC and MSAD #49 share staff. The career counselor works in both programs, and can track students and offer help once they enroll in KVCC. The career counselor’s salary is a blend of KVCC and MSAD #49 College Transition funds. Student data and information is shared between the two institutions with a signed release from the student through a common networked computer system. Some classes are held on campus, some at the adult education learning center, and students go back and forth between the two locations.

Kennebec Academy uses a “cafeteria” approach for student placement and course selection. Accuplacer scores, career goals and KVCC degree requirements dictate what students will take. As in the Nellie Mae, MELMAC and other state-funded Transition programs, math is a major stumbling block for many students. In addition to math courses, the learning center is equipped with the PLATO math program. Students have the benefit of both a structured class and home and workbook components through PLATO. They can also progress at their own pace, using PLATO for extra help and supplemental instruction.

Some Kennebec Academy students just attended classes without completing an official intake or receiving any career counseling. To help ensure that all students participated in an intake and subsequent career counseling processes, students are offered free Kennebec Academy classes such as biology, algebra and chemistry when they finish the intake process and follow-up with the career counselor. This summer, the program will “bundle” the low level math, reading and writing classes with a study skills or technology skills class. The program is trying this approach out to see if more students will take study skills, which are essential skills for college success. It has been hard to convince students that it is a valuable course to take. If this approach works, the program will make it a requirement for those taking low-level classes.

The “cafeteria” approach to classes does not promote cohort groups. The Fairfield Transition program is trying different approaches to promote cohorts and student-student connections including workshops and the requirement to take a study skills or technology skills course.

The program is revisiting the curriculum frameworks to include additional materials that need to be taught, especially for low-level students. Teachers who have traditionally taught adult basic education had to change their view of progress and grading in the Transition program. For example, instead of awarding an A to students who had regular attendance, they had to learn to base grades on progress shown on increased Accuplacer scores. Also, the pace of instruction had to be increased so that students achieved what they needed and could enter KVCC as quickly as possible. Math especially, most students’ greatest challenge, had to be taught in new ways to help students attain higher skills than traditional adult basic education math classes.

Lessons Learned

- Many students enrolling in Kennebec Academy had already started at KVCC and either needed additional required courses (such as Biology) or because of long waiting times for health profession courses (up to 2 years for nursing), they decided to pursue a related degree while waiting and needed brush up on specific subjects to qualify.
- Teachers who have been in traditional adult basic education classes need staff development to help them make the switch to teaching in Transition classes where more targeted, accelerated teaching is required. It was hard to find staff development opportunities that helped teachers with this, especially in math.

- College Transition definitions were blurry, and the program had questions about who qualifies as a Transition student, what Accuplacer scores are adequate for college success, and what services constitute a College Transition program.
- Although the College Transition program had a wonderful, supportive partnership with KVCC, there were still some challenges and processes that needed to be worked out. For example, who has the conversation with students who just can't do college work even if they have graduated from high school? What is Kennebec Academy's policy on kids in high school who take the Accuplacer test and score poorly on it? Are they eligible for Kennebec Academy while they are still in high school or do they wait until they graduate? Is there an age requirement for the program (so it does not become a feeder program for high school students)?
- The shared counselor has been a wonderful way to keep track of students after they enroll in KVCC. It has also helped students know who to go to if they need help during their KVCC career. The counselor, because he is at KVCC, can keep Kennebec Academy students informed of KVCC workshops and events as well as remind them of college requirements, college applications and financial aid information and skills needed for success. Also, shared data has been a wonderful way of ensuring that students don't fall through the cracks.
- The Transition program has provided the entire adult education program with a new focus. GED and adult high school diploma students share the PLATO lab and attend some of the same classes together with Transition students, inspiring them to go on to college or think about going on. Having the Transition program on site has concretized the possibility of college, where as before the program talked about going on to college with GED and high school diploma students but it wasn't real to them. The impact of seeing and meeting people who were getting ready to go on was not the same as just being told to do it.

Oxford Hills Adult Education

Oxford Hills is situated in western Maine, and students, depending on where they live in the Oxford Hills area, can attend Southern Maine Community College, Central Maine Community College, University of Maine Lewiston/Auburn, University of Maine Augusta, University of Southern Maine or the local Western Maine University Center, a satellite center for the university

and community college system. The College Transitions program at Oxford Hills Adult Education has a lot of partners for collaborative efforts.

The area has a new (2 years old) site in South Paris that helps foster collaborative efforts. Located next to the high school and adult education office in an old exhibition hall, the building houses the Career Center, satellite community college and university centers, and MEOC offices. The Western Maine University College Center (WMUCC) helps those not able to travel to one of the area's educational choices stay in South Paris and attend college.

The Oxford Hills College Transition program, or Adult College Transition (ACT), has gone beyond the educational partners at WMUCC and has included the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, and the Norway and South Paris libraries as players in ACT. A regional model, these partnerships help build support for the program and helps with marketing the program and recruiting students.

ACT delivers direct service as well as gets students connected to services that will help them go to college. Based on Hunter Boylan's work, the Transition program tried to be sure to include community college connections, creating cohort groups and developing a unique identity as the basis for the program design.

ACT has a 3 pronged approach: instructors develop the cohorts in their classes, counselors identify students who have an interest in going to college, and collaborations provide connections to college entrance for students.

The Transition program has a weeklong information session in the fall and the spring to interest potential students in registering for ACT. MEOC, the University of Maine and Central Maine Community College all talk about college requirements and elements of success, and what college courses and programs can be done at the WMUCC center.

To begin recruitment, the full time adult education guidance counselor looked through current and past student records and data and offered the program to those who had indicated college as a goal or who had indicated a career preference. Staff at WMUCC, businesses and other partners helps recruit students and make referrals. ACT has done a lot of outreach to establish a unique identity in the community.

ACT has 2 people doing intake, checking in with students and helping them with career and college choices. They also follow up with students and make sure they are back in their classes each semester.

All College Transition students used to take a 3-week class that covers study skills, personal responsibility and had a heavy emphasis on helping students identify where they are going and how to get there. Now it is a voluntary course offered 3 times a year.

Another purpose of the study skills course was to build a cohort group, although it was not always successful. Several informal cohort groups usually form more organically in classes where students with similar needs or interests meet each other. Those interested in business administration or nursing tend to find and support each other. The decentralized model of having students take what they need or want is not conducive to forming cohorts. College visits and other activities are opportunities for students to meet each other and form groups.

Students who need more help take the basic courses, and those who just need brush up or prerequisite courses just take 1 or 2 courses and move on. Courses are 15 weeks long for 3 hours each week. Refresher courses in reading and writing have rolling admissions and use a learning lab set up where students work at their own pace. Basic courses include 4 levels of math classes, 2 writing class and 2 reading classes. Biology, Chemistry and Algebra are offered when needed.

Most students, 95%, go on to CMCC for careers that are in the health professions fields. The three hospitals in the area offer career opportunities. Those who want to major in business usually attend UMA.

A 52-year-old woman had been an LPN but left that field and became a newspaperwoman. She was laid off and decided to go back to nursing, but wanted to become an RN and attend a 2-year RN program. She enrolled in ACT, and the CMCC staff person at the WMUCC worked with her and ACT to get her on track and made sure she had all the pre-requisite courses she would need to enter into the RN program. She was able to take algebra, critical reading, writing college essays as well as Biology and Chemistry through the College Transition program. Working with CMCC and ACT together helped her achieve her goal.

The program has invested in the A+ Advancer assessment tool that is normed to the Accuplacer test. A+ Advancer also has prescriptive course work that students can do between semesters. Although it does have a unit fee, it does not require buying a license. The program has liked

using the A+ Advancer tool. Accuplacer testing is administered twice a week at the WMUCC, but using the A+ Advancer gives the program student skill information before Accuplacer is taken enabling the student to get started. Lower level students take the CASAS test for diagnostic purposes. Teachers give quizzes, tests and final exams. The program tries to administer pre and post assessment tests but it sometimes hard to get students back to see the counselors to administer the post-tests.

Lessons Learned

- Meeting the needs of students who have worked and are coming back to change or further their careers and those who are just coming out of high school or have obtained a GED and don't have a lot of experience is a challenge. Sometimes having goal-oriented, self-directed students with those who are less independent or focused helps the latter group, but not the more experienced ones.
- Having 2 intake staff was essential to this program. One staff member also was responsible for marketing, attending meetings and other administrative duties. Follow up with students and helping with career exploration and college choices was a crucial part of the job, and having 2 people made sure students were getting the attention they needed.
- The program tailored its courses to the region and population by offering health-related basic courses or pre-requisite courses. The area's 3 hospitals made career choices in the health field viable options.
- Having a Transition model that worked with individual needs and skill levels addressed the differing educational needs of students, but make it harder to create cohort groups.
- Having the WMUCC across the street enabled the program to work closely with the two staff and helped students have positive and personable interactions with college staff and helped them become familiar with the satellite college center. The program reports that starting college at WMUCC was a needed first step for some students before going to other campuses.

MSAD #61 Adult Education (Bridgton)

Although Bridgton provided pre-requisite courses, mostly in the sciences, for college or community college admissions, it wasn't until the Transition grant money that a cohesive program was created. The Bridgton learning center has a vital adult high school diploma and GED program and already had Southern Maine Community College courses on site, including some developmental courses. The Transition grant focused the adult education program on providing instruction in the core competencies of language arts, math and computers while still offering the pre-requisite science and higher math classes.

Courses in reading, writing, math and computers are offered each semester. Students are assessed using the Accuplacer and/or CASAS test and are placed in classes based on the assessment results. Students can take other science and math courses at the same time, depending on their skill level.

The learning center has a computer lab, and the program uses the PLATO program to enhance instruction, especially in math. The computer lab hours are flexible, so students can use the lab at most any time. A PLATO tutor is on site to help students with the PLATO materials and program.

Previously, the science courses cost students \$110 for 2 classes or \$60 for 1 class. The cost factor prevented some students from taking them. If students enrolled in the Transition program, the courses were free. This was a big incentive to students.

The program already had a counselor, but after receiving the grant, the counselor focused on career and college matters. Students with life crisis and other more social work oriented types of needs are referred to outside agencies. Now, the career counselor also works with the high school diploma and GED students and refers them to the Transition program to begin to fulfill their career plans. The Transition grant has helped the program make this change to a more career, future-oriented one for all enrolled students including those in general enrichment classes. Community members can also access the career counselor without taking any classes.

Adult Education director Zane Clement states, "Transitions is the "missing link" in adult education programming". Although the program built enrollments over time, there are now about 40 students in the Transition program. Already, 6 students have gone on to Southern Maine Community College and 1 student has enrolled at Unity College as a result of the Transition program. Having an early childhood enrichment program and Head Start on site helped eliminate child care barriers that kept students from attending.

Cohorts were harder to develop at the beginning of the program because of the late start-up time of the program. It was hard to have everyone start together as students were trickling in. Informal cohorts formed anyway, with students in similar courses connecting with each other in classes.

The program is planning to implement a formal orientation process that includes career exploration, assessment testing on the CASAS and Accuplacer and perhaps presentations by SMCC and other schools. Having a formal orientation process will hopefully add to building cohort groups.

All students are administered a pre and post assessment in tests such as the CASAS, Accuplacer or other diagnostic instruments. The career counselor or program teachers administer most assessment instruments.

The career counselor does extensive follow up with students and contacts them if they have not been attending the program.

The adult education program has seen cross pollenization between Transition students and the high school diploma students in the PLATO computer lab and in some courses both programs attend. Getting to know the Transition students has helped the adult diploma and GED students realize that people trying to go on to college are just like them. Next year, the Transition program plans to hire a graduate as the PLATO tutor.

Bridgton has a strong MOU with Southern Maine Community College, and the learning center is a satellite outpost of SMCC. The on site SMCC classes, availability of SMCC teachers to talk to Transition students and the visibility of SMCC in the learning center all help students feel comfortable taking the next step and applying to college. SMCC invites students to tour the main campus and sends presenters to the Transition program classes. MEOC also does a lot of college planning and applying seminars, filling out applications and information and help with filling out the financial aid forms, but the Transition program helps students write their essay in order to be able to critique it and use it as a writing project. Approximately 90% of students enroll at SMCC.

The connection with Central Maine Community College is not as strong and is more informal. The adult education director plans to pursue more formal agreements with CMCC and the

University of Southern Maine. Formalizing an agreement with SMCC was a higher priority as most students want to attend and will apply to this school.

As mentioned by most of the state-funded programs, the timing of the start of the program was problematic for recruitment and staff hiring. Although the program steadily built enrollments over the year, it did have recruitment challenges at first. Marketing was a challenge, and a promotional video that the program had done did not include the Transition program due to the lateness of the notice. After the initial timing challenge, the adult education brochure now has a description of the Transition program, and the promotional video includes the program as well. Advertising on cable TV, making presentations to service groups, including a Transition flyer in the Chamber of Commerce mailings, and sending Transition flyers in a general mailing all helped advertise the program. The adult education director attended local fairs to advertise the Transition program as well.

Next year, the adult education program will merge the adult education programs in Fryeburg and Brownsfield into the Bridgton program. This will create an opportunity for a regional Transition program and plans are to do so. Also, Fryeburg is an ITV site and will offer Transition students another avenue available to help them start their college career.

Lessons Learned

- Many avenues of advertising and marketing increased program enrollment in a relatively short period of time.
- Focusing on career and future goals has transformed the focus of the entire adult education program. This focus includes making the career counselor available to community members who are not taking classes, with the hope of making them adult education students. It also included co-mingling the adult diploma and GED students with Transition students to build connections, aspirations and possibilities in the minds of those about to receive a credential culturally sometimes thought of as the end point and not a beginning point.
- Forming cohorts is hard when educational plans are individualized. Requiring an orientation course that has group-building activities could help form a cohort and will be tried.

- Having highly qualified staff is essential to making the Transition program work. Teachers who can motivate students and model college teaching have made a difference in student attitude and achievement. The counselor has refocused the counseling office from a more social work service to one that is career and future oriented.
- Co-location and strong ties to SMCC has resulted in 90% of enrolled Transition students attending SMCC.

Sanford Adult Education

Sanford, like Bridgton, has a vibrant learning center with strong GED and adult high school diploma programs. Before the Transition grant, the program did offer courses that were either pre-requisite classes to degree programs and did some on again, off again classes that were based on some of the University College and York County Community College (YCCC) courses. Classes for those going on to college were not sequenced or connected to each other.

The Transition grant changed this. The ROAD program, the name of Sanford's Transition program, was created to not only bundle classes together to create scope and sequence for college admissions skills, but also to create a pathway for students that was acceptable to YCCC, since most students apply to YCCC from the Sanford area. YCCC and Sanford were competing for the same students, and YCCC was not referring students to Sanford for remediation but keeping them in their own developmental courses. The Transition program tried to work with YCCC to establish Accuplacer scores that delineated students ready for developmental classes and those needing adult education transition classes. Sanford worked to have YCCC accept the ROAD completion certificate to allow students to seamlessly enter YCCC without having to take developmental courses.

The math instructor teaches in both the ROAD program and at YCCC, and was able to ensure that the math classes at Sanford were of a high enough level for YCCC admissions. The teacher had a high credibility with students because of teaching in both places. Students leave class knowing what will be expected at YCCC.

Sharing a teacher helped with bridging the ROAD credibility issue with YCCC. Students now can receive a Gen 100 credit and a \$500 scholarship at YCCC if they receive at least an 80 or above in each course taken. Students then go into the credit-bearing courses at YCCC.

Classes meet for 3 hours at the learning center in the morning, afternoon or evening. Each class meets twice a week for 9 weeks, or 17 classes for each quarter. Students are allowed only 2 absences. The learning center offers childcare on site, essential for some students with children. Currently the childcare serves 62 children under the age of 5. A new site under construction will accommodate night care as well as day care with a place for cribs for infants. The childcare center will be available for those attending college, working one or several jobs or attending the learning center. The program during the day is larger than the night program, partially because childcare is more accessible during the day.

The ROAD Transition program offers up to 11 classes and has found, based on student assessments, that math is a high priority area. Up to 5 classes are available just in math from basic math up through Algebra 2. The program has high school diploma and GED students taking math classes with the Transition students to encourage them to continue on to college after they graduate, help them understand that they need higher math skills and to expose them to students who are determined to get to college. The 2 computer courses incorporate the online, ITV and compressed video options available to college students, as well as the help sites for tutoring and Blackboard. English courses cover writing papers and doing research.

Students are assigned classes based on their Accuplacer scores or CASAS assessment. The program does pre and post assessments on all students for all tests.

The career counselor offers a How to Get There from Here course that covers everything from planning to go, applying to college and receiving financial aid, career exploration, to making alternate transportation and childcare plans. The counselor follows up with those whose attendance has dropped off or have other issues in their lives.

As with other state-funded Transition programs, having the individualized, menu type of program makes it harder to form cohorts. Having students in different classes, having 3 time slots for classes make it difficult to find activity and meeting times that work for everyone. Informal connections form in class, with students looking out for each other and connecting there.

The Transition grant has allowed the adult education program to provide any adult high school diploma student who enrolls in ROAD to receive free child care, tuition, and have a transportation voucher for free transportation to the program. Students just need to cover book costs, or rent the books from the program for low cost.

Recruitment was a struggle at first due to the timing of the grant start, as it was in most Transition programs. The program produced a ROAD brochure, talked to DHHS case workers, workplaces, the high school diploma and GED students already enrolled in adult education, and advertised in the newspaper. The area does not have cable TV, so could not advertise using this media outlet.

The program is gathering input from students about the design of the program through exit interviews and informal conversations. Since the program has only been up and running for 8 months, it may be too soon to tell how effective it is.

Lessons Learned

- An orientation, kick off and informational meeting before enrollment was a missing element of the program design. Planned for the next year, the ROAD staff hopes that the orientation will generate excitement, help create a cohort group and answer questions about the program all at the same time.
- Although an agreement is in place with YCCC, building a better and more trusting partnership still needs work. The existing agreement took a lot of time to develop. The program found it could not spend the time necessary to pursue a formal MOU with more than one community college at a time, and will start building a relationship that leads to an MOU with Southern Maine Community College over the next year.
- When the program changed to a 9-week class schedule instead of 15 weeks, and offered 4 semesters instead of 2, enrollment and retention went up. Students seemed to feel 9 weeks was manageable for them, while 15 weeks was a long time. Also, since the program only allows 2 absences, the 9 weeks gave students more leeway to miss 2 classes. The choice of morning, afternoon or evening classes also helped with retention and enrollment.

Bangor Adult and Community Education

Bangor Adult and Community Education also has a learning center, but its partnership with Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) has resulted in the Transition program, College Accessible for Everyone (CAFÉ), having on site classes at EMCC. The coordination is ongoing, with the Transition coordinator and/or the adult education director communicating with the EMCC dean, assistant dean, developmental coordinator and the admission staff on a regular basis. EMCC carries the Transition program's books in the bookstore, and the report that students get

back after taking the Accuplacer test instructs those who need remediation to contact adult education.

At the inception of the Transition program, the 3 courses identified as core courses and had curriculum frameworks (language arts, math and computers) were offered. Now more courses are offered and some courses, especially math, have a sequence of courses. Math courses are supplemented with the PLATO program to support concepts learned in class. Students are encouraged to take Algebra in the CAFÉ program before enrolling in college.

Transition classes use a 7-week and a 14-week model to accommodate all the students who attend. Once students increase their basic skills at the learning center, they enter the CAFÉ program and participate in the 7 week or 14 week class models. The 7-week model meets twice a week, the 14 week courses meet once a week. These 2 models accommodate the students who are in the program.

EMCC helped the Transition program look at EMCC's developmental courses and familiarize them with the curriculum. The course books that college students take correlates well with developmental courses but are not as costly.

The Accuplacer test is given to all students who enter EMCC. EMCC admits students and then tests them. EMCC also uses the WritePlacer test to assess writing skills. The CAFÉ program is intending to do more writing classes to help students improve their WritePlacer scores. University College Bangor (UCB) also uses the Accuplacer. CAFÉ uses the same cut scores for successful completion of the program as EMCC and UCB.

In addition to the core classes, students can take a variety of science classes such as Biology, Chemistry and Anatomy and Physiology. Students in the CAFÉ program must meet with the career counselor twice a week for 3-4 hours per week. This includes intake, follow up and career exploration. MEOC and the Carey Center coordinate with workshops and one-to-one counseling on college applications, financial aid, study skills and reading help. The CAFÉ program does not have reading classes or study skills classes, but CAFÉ students can take these courses through the high school diploma program.

Now, once students are ready to take the GED test or receive their high school diploma, they talk to the career counselor first. Everyone now has contact with the counselor. 74 people have worked with the counselor to look at colleges.

The program gives individualized attention to every student. If students have low skills, they are sent to the learning center where they can work to upgrade their skills at their own pace. Students who qualify go right into Transition classes without any remediation.

This individualized attention is not conducive to creating a cohort of students. MEOC workshops, college tours and presentations and other activities help bring students together.

The Career Center provides opportunities for childcare, transportation, book fees and transportation costs for its enrollees and problem solving. Between the Career Center, adult education and the MEOC programs students get a lot of information, advice and help.

Lessons Learned

- Although the Transition project did provide classes based on the core curriculum provided by the Advisory Panel, students needed more than the language, math and computer skills originally offered to succeed.
- The Transition grant helped the adult education program build a College Transition program, not just offer pre-requisite courses.
- Inundating the market with CAFÉ information helped with recruitment. CAFÉ inserted a pamphlet about the program as an insert in the Bangor Daily News to reach the most people in the area.
- Accelerated math courses that met for 7 weeks twice a week resonated with some students who liked the more intense approach to studying math.
- As with other programs, the Transition program provided a next step for high school diploma and GED students. Increasing the counselor's focus on career exploration and college acceptance helped to focus students.

Machias Adult Education

Funded by the Betterment Foundation to support the development of a rural model, Machias Adult Education received \$5,000 less than the state-funded grants. Problems associated with rural poverty are challenges to participation in the College Transition Program, TRAILS. The low

skill levels of adults, seasonal work, high rates of domestic violence and substance abuse are all barriers that the program encountered with the students who enrolled.

As with all rural areas, distance is a great barrier. The nearest community college, Washington County Community College, is 60 miles away making collocation impossible. Students travel up to 25 miles each way to attend the two TRAILS sites, one in Machias and one in Calais. The price of gas and unreliable vehicles limit participation of even enthusiastic students.

The TRAILS program developed 2 mirror programs in Machias and Calais that coordinate with the University of Maine Machias in Machias and Washington County Community College in Calais. Calais is on the border with Canada, and the program has a cross border agreement with New Brunswick Community College. Of the 18 students enrolled at both sites this year, 3 were Canadian students.

The site in Machias had more success than the one in Calais. There were several reasons for this, but the most important one was that TRAILS and the University of Maine Machias (UMM) had a stronger partnership than Washington County Community College (WCCC) and TRAILS in Calais. In Machias, TRAILS is located in UMM, and the teacher works for both TRAILS and UMM. Machias Adult Education provides adult basic education services in Machias, while Calais does not have basic skills instruction available to students. Some students entered the program at very low skill levels, and needed adult basic education to help them increase skills to be able to participate in TRAIL classes.

The support services that were available through UMM enhanced the Machias TRAILS program and gave students the support they needed. A counselor at UMM, funded through MELMAC, followed students once they entered college and offered help, career counseling and referrals to other services when needed. MEOC assessed student skills, helped with college applications and financial aid forms, and held workshops on college expectations, careers and other topics. TRAILS students had access to both the UMM counselor and MEOC workshops and help.

At Machias, TRAILS offered 2 semesters, winter and spring but students entered the program at any time. At first, the program offered a one-day a week program, but working people could not come during the day. Once the program changed to a night program, enrollment and retention increased. TRAILS offers the core curriculum classes of language arts, math and computers, but add classes according to student needs. TRAILS builds personal responsibility in students, and uses the Equipped for the Future standard, Take Responsibility for Learning as the basis for having students assess what they have accomplished, and checking off what they have done.

Upon enrollment, the TRAILS counselor administered the TABE assessment, career exploration inventories and oriented new students to the program. This case management approach to the program gave students the individualized attention they often needed. It helped TRAILS staff work with students on creating learning plans, career goals and other plans that helped retain students and also gave them a road map for their future.

As the TRAILS counselor stated, TRAILS, MEOC, and staff at UMM are all the cheering committee for students. The needs of students, often influenced by rural poverty, have changed the design of the TRAILS program to focus on a case management approach with each student.

At Calais, the program lost a semester because of staff changes and they could not locate space to hold classes. Next year, classes in Calais will be held on Fridays on or near the WCCC campus, and staff hopes that the program will run more smoothly. This year, WCCC did define Accuplacer scores that placed students in 3 categories: below the developmental skills level, developmental level and ready to matriculate. New staff at WCCC realized that most students were in developmental courses. TRAILS is hoping to convince WCCC to refer the students below and at the developmental course levels to TRAILS instead of admitting them immediately to WCCC, but preliminary conversations have not led to any referrals or changes in current collaborative efforts.

The cohort model did not work in either Calais or Machias. The distance that students travel inhibits them from attending extra workshops or activities. The individual nature of case management and orientation does not lend itself to building cohorts. The program has worked with students who have other requirements to meet, such as attendance in drug court and/or drug treatment, abiding by the terms of protection from abuse and restraining orders, as well as ASPIRE and other programs. Informal groups form in classes and students do share transportation

TRAILS administered the TABE (and will be using CASAS now) because Accuplacer testing has been problematic. UMM and WCCC administered the Accuplacer tests, but only 1 person was available to do this. Some students waited weeks to take the Accuplacer. TRAILS assessed students to be able to know what their skill levels were to tailor instruction to help them. Pre and post testing was done on the TABE, but some students were not able to schedule Accuplacer posttests because of the long wait.

The TRAILS counselor (who teaches as well) has developed assessments for the College 101- Are You Ready? course that is done in a simulated college setting. Science assessments are both written tests and oral discussions. Not being able to rely on Accuplacer posttest scores has helped TRAILS teachers develop creative, yet reliable, informal assessments.

Lessons Learned

- Starting with 2 locations may have been too ambitious, especially when it was difficult to obtain space in Calais. Relationship building in Calais with WCCC before setting up classes may have led to better cooperation and cross referrals.
- The program set no minimum attendance requirement, and as a result, attendance was not consistent. Next year, an attendance policy will be set, and the counselor will follow up with students who do not have regular attendance.
- Convincing both UMM and especially WCCC to change their belief that all students, regardless of Accuplacer scores, be admitted to college remains an ongoing struggle. Showing both UMM and WCCC that the TRAILS College Transition program is a great way to prepare students for admission into their institutions has not been easy or successful. More headway has been made with UMM as a result of TRAILS being on campus, students using UMM services and then applying to the school.
- Distances students have to travel; social factors and cultural norms that do not value education are all factors that influence enrollment rates and recruitment efforts. The individualized, case management design of the Transition Program works well for this population and geographic area.
- The poor economic status of most students is a factor in whether they have money for gas, cars that work, and if they are parents, childcare help. The program realized that providing books and materials to students helped them afford to keep traveling to the program, and increased participation.
- Waiting weeks for Accuplacer testing to be scheduled was a real impediment to being able to begin work with students. TRAILS administered other assessments, both formal and informal, to get students started but will investigate the possibility of administering the Accuplacer test themselves instead of relying on UMM and WCCC.

Section 3: Conclusions

Program Sites

Grant Dollars Helped Organize Diverse Courses into a Transition Program

- Nellie Mae, MELMAC, state-funded and Betterment Foundation sites all stated that grant dollars helped them create a cohesive program with an educational and counseling components, as well as connections to MEOC, college or community college-sponsored workshops, visits and activities. Before grant dollars, adult education programs offered discreet pre-college courses.
- Programs added more intentional career counseling and transition services that focused on college and beyond. Although many adult education programs had career counselors or counselors, their services were more general. College Transition grants helped them focus the career counselor's services to provide a more comprehensive array of career exploration inventories, help with choosing a college, assigning courses that met career goals and college admission requirements, connections to college campuses, satellite and ITV sites and on-going connections and support to students.
- Programs partnered with other organizations to provide career, financial and other transition services. Most areas had very positive connections with MEOC, and utilized their workshops, assessment services, and 1:1 help for students. Students in programs that were collocated with colleges or community colleges had the extra benefit of using their services as well as those of the College Transition program.
- Courses offered were aligned with college developmental course content using the curriculum frameworks developed by the Advisory Committee subcommittees or by individual program staff. There was a consistent awareness across programs of the importance of this alignment and helping students go from College Transition programs to credit bearing college courses.
- The Accuplacer test was used to measure gains and college readiness VS course completion. Traditional adult education courses sometimes awarded credit for syllabus completion rather than actual skill gains. By concentrating on Accuplacer gains, teachers concentrated on making sure students could place out of developmental courses and into

credit-bearing courses. Measuring skill development through a test and not just student persistence was a challenge for some teachers who had only worked in adult basic education programs. It was less of a challenge for teachers who taught on both the college or community college and adult education levels.

- Students responded to teachers who taught in both the adult education program and the community college or college program more positively than those just teaching in adult education programs. Programs reported that students felt teachers who taught on the college or community college level had more credibility about what they needed to attend college and about college life in general.
- College Transition programs created a more positive articulation with higher education institutions (some more than others) including shared space, counselors and greater number of referrals to the program. This was especially true in areas where a strong MOU was in place and where the College Transition program was designed by both the adult education and community college or college together.

College Transition Programs Helped Adult Education Programs Reach New Markets

- Programs reached adults changing jobs, careers or seeing a way to fulfill career dreams. Often, these customers had not come into adult education before, even for general enrichment courses.
- GED and High School Diploma students began to see a “next step” avenue by being exposed to College Transition students, and in some programs, taking some of the same courses with them. Also, the changes in the job focus of the career counselors had a ripple effect with those getting a credential. Counselors talked about college, careers and how to get there with these students. In many cases, these conversations had not been a consistent part of GED and high school diploma students’ adult education experience before the Transition program was established. Meeting Transition students and hearing about their work experiences, why they were seeking college helped to motivate and open their eyes to how they, too, could go on in school.
- Some students were already enrolled in college or community college, but needed either prerequisite courses, more intensive services in specific subjects (usually math) to succeed in their educational career. The research (see the beginning section of this report) shows that students who can co-enroll in adult education and college or

community college do better and persist longer than those who just do developmental courses or do not try and remediate their skills. Having a Transition program and publicizing it attracted this group of students who would not have thought about going to adult education before. In programs where the community college referred students to adult education regularly, there was a large increase in this kind of student in the Transition program.

- There were increased referrals by other institutions either as part of admissions criteria, pre-admissions requirement, or career path in programs with strong partnerships with colleges or community colleges. In areas where there was a competitive relationship between adult education and the community college, referrals did not occur.

New Perspective on Adult Transition Population

- Students needed multiple supports – educational, career, admissions as well as help building personal responsibility and self-confidence. Students who were the first in their family to go to college needed these supports, as they don't get them outside of the program. The counseling component of the College Transition programs was a crucial element. In some programs, the counseling component was strengthened beyond the original program design to meet student needs. This was a surprise to some programs.
- Students were motivated to succeed, but history, culture or lack of experience sometimes hampered success. Because many students were first in their families to go to college, they didn't know what to expect or what college could do for them and what they must do for themselves. Unrealistic expectations, fear of leaving their personal support system behind and not being familiar with the college culture and atmosphere often derailed their college path. Programs reported counselors, teachers and/or the local program coordinator connected with students on a regular basis to overcome these challenges to student persistence and retention.
- Connections to other agencies needed to be either facilitated by the program or taught as part of college success courses because students were often not adept at seeking out community, social and/or other educational supports they needed. Programs reported having other agencies come into the program to do workshops, making referrals and helping students access other services because they did not know about services or did not know how to access them. Some programs, in changing their focus to career

counseling, relied more heavily on community resources for student needs that were outside of the career or college focus.

- College transition was not just about academic courses, but needed to include career counseling, college visits, college application and financial aid help, hand holding and cheering the student on. Programs reported helping students build personal responsibility was one of the hardest concepts to teach.
- Multiple avenues and services were needed for students at differing levels of expertise, experience or confidence to attend college: one path and set program is not sufficient to meet diverse needs. Adults with lower academic skills needed more intensive instruction, and those just taking a science course needed limited interaction with the Transition program. There was a wide range and intensity of services offered across programs, and different populations of adult students were served by different programs. Some programs offered a “menu” approach to College Transition, while others had set courses that all students took.
- Adults need practice in attending college: courses offered that mirror college schedules/life work to help acclimatize students for the next step. Modeling the College Transition course like a college semester allowed students to practice “attending college” before they actually enrolled.
- Former program students are highly effective mentors for current students. Programs that had a mentoring component reported that students felt more comfortable attending college or community college when they already knew someone attending. Many programs reported paying mentors to remain with their mentees through the first semester of college. Programs that created cohorts reported that students felt more comfortable attending college because they knew a group of students already going, and were used to studying with them. Programs that did not use a cohort model often relied on a mentor to create the college connection for a student. Former students who mentor emphasized how they had been through the Transition program, were in college and doing well, and mentees could do it too.

Challenges

- Defining, Forming and Keeping Cohort Groups were hard for the state-funded programs. Nellie Mae programs, except for Portland, all believed in the cohort model. These

programs had, in some cases, 5 years of experience with building cohorts, and believed this model was the only model to follow because it worked. State-funded programs had more of a menu model, where students only took courses they needed and were on different days, times and schedules. The best practices identified by Nellie Mae programs stress creating student connections to other students. Although all programs received the best practices information, building cohorts was the one element that was not always done.

- How to define different “levels of service” of transition students (from just needing a biology course to needing extensive remediation in basic skills) and their needs has not been done. What to report about each level and the success measures of each group have not been defined. Programs reported the differing levels, but did not know how to tease them out or how to report the different needs and accomplishments of each group.
- Recruitment was an issue for every program. Getting the word out, referrals from other agencies and higher education, and connecting with other educational agencies took time, effort and was viewed as on going. The timing of grant selection left many state-funded programs without recruitment efforts for one semester. Recruitment is on going and required attention before every semester. There was no statewide marketing strategy, logo or promotional materials for programs to use.
- Retention is also an issue for every program. Rural programs reported transportation was a major barrier, as was seasonal work, personal crises and other emergencies. Urban programs reported students having unrealistic expectations of the program and what was expected, finding employment or just not ready to make the commitment the program required. Some programs have instituted an enrollment period with college presentations, information about College Transitions, Accuplacer testing and other career activities such as career inventories. Programs did a lot of follow up with students to get them to class, keep them motivated and engaged. Students that are just coming back for a few courses or brush up on skills need much less effort to stay in the program, and usually stay and finish their courses without prompting from program staff.
- Formal connections with colleges and community colleges were institution dependent. Some connections were strong and worked well, and some did not work well at all. The colleges and community colleges that viewed Transition programs as competition for the same students had weak connections with adult education programs. College Transition programs in areas where there was a competitive relationship had a harder time creating

a seamless transition for students into college or community college. They could not develop strong, meaningful MOUs with these institutions.

- Some programs administer the Accuplacer test in house, and some have their college or community college partner administer this assessment. Some of those that have partners administer the test reported long waits for students to take the test, some colleges only allowing a set number of Accuplacer tests that can be taken, and difficulty receiving test results. Although programs used other assessments besides the Accuplacer, these difficulties made it hard for Transition programs to chart student progress based on the test that colleges use to decide admissions and whether students are placed in credit or developmental courses.
- Some programs reported a growing number of young adults applying for Transition programs. Some, just out of high school, know they need additional skills to attend college. Others have parents who have read about or heard about the program and want their child to attend. Once graduated from high school, programs wondered if they had to accept them into the College Transition program. Some programs report that these students disrupt the program and don't mesh with the older students. Adult education has been grappling with younger and younger students making up a larger proportion of the adult education population. Transition programs voiced that they needed guidance on how to handle this issue.
- Cooperative agreements with partner agencies, colleges and community colleges took programs a lot of time and effort. Programs with multiple college and community college partners could not develop MOUs with all of them, but had to concentrate on one school at a time. Once the MOUs were developed, programs had to spend additional time maintaining connections and relationships with the college or community college. Although crucial to the success for the Transition program, collaborations took a lot of time to develop and maintain, and it was too difficult for adult education programs to maintain MOUs while working to create new ones.
- Although staff development on the Transition best practices and start up were provided for new state programs, staff development for teachers that helped them teach in new ways for College Transition courses VS adult basic education courses was not available.

Advisory Committee

- A committed, diverse group of stakeholders in the College Transition system worked together to support the College Transition coordinator in developing the best practices and curriculum frameworks to help new College Transition programs know what to teach and what elements made up a quality program. The Advisory Committee was also instrumental in moving the initiative forward on the state level by giving input into the pilot site development, initial state funding legislative process and the College Transition appropriations for 2007. Committee members reported high satisfaction with the structure and work of the group. The Advisory Committee has been a voluntary, informal group. Future work will need a more permanent, standing Advisory Committee with a defined structure, identified roles and organizational make-up.
- All Advisory Committee members reported that the group had a focused purpose and goals, and that the College Transition coordinator helped clarify the work and issues that the Committee addressed. Now that the legislature has designated funding for a statewide College Transition program, Advisory Council oversight will be a bigger job, and will continue to grow as the number of programs grows. The current structure is not formal enough for such oversight, and several Committee members voiced the need to formalize and institutionalize the Committee.
- Committee members identified that the Information about other partners and services they provided and shared at meetings was a very valuable part of being a member. Some members wished that there were more of these discussions and that they went deeper so that “systems” could be envisioned and collaboration discussed on the Committee level, then on the local level.
- The meeting discussions about creating Transition systems, coordinating in new and different ways, and looking across agencies were beneficial to all members. Some members are interested in continuing these conversations to map out “ideal” systems that could be promoted to both adult education programs as well as secondary education entities. Having a model of collaboration would go a long way to building a statewide network instead of regional and local MOUs.
- All members see a continued role for the Advisory Committee:
 - Oversight of project
 - Support for and management of the project coordinator

- Problem solving when needed
- Continued funding advocacy
- Discuss, strategize and advocate for seamless systems across agencies, organizations and educational venues

Project Accomplishments

- Development of diverse models of transition programs based on cultural, geographic and economic needs and make up of the community.
- Transition Program “Best Practices” identified.
- Curriculum Frameworks for Transition courses for language arts, math and computers developed that were based on developmental course content at the college level.
- Programs reported transition programs are the bridge to college for students at varying levels, from those needing basic skills help to those just taking pre-requisite courses.
- Transition services were defined by individual programs as a wide array of courses, supports, resources provided by the programs and partner agencies.
- College Transition was institutionalized through state funding for pilot projects, and then for sites across the state.
- Programs leveraged, connected with and utilized other community resources to help give students all the services they needed to succeed in college.
- The state established 14 pioneer programs, funded through Nellie Mae, Betterment Fund and state funding and/or MELMAC and local funds.
- A paid, part-time consultant managed the transition project through funding through the Lumina Foundation, and led to legislative appropriation for College Transition.
- Active, committed Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from all aspects of the college transition arena that crosses systems, disciplines and levels convened for over 2 years and was instrumental in overseeing the institutionalization of the College Transition.
- Transition program staff development, including conferences, was held on a regular basis.

Section 4: Recommendations

1. Develop a logic model for continued evaluation and data collection

All College Transition programs will be moving to a more state-supported funding supplemented by foundation funding over the next few years. The parallel development of the Nellie Mae, MELMAC and state pilot models has had cross-pollination about model design, best practices and course content or curriculum, but it does not appear that evaluation designs were shared or considered by each type of funder or College Transition model. This will not work as all programs move forward toward building a coherent statewide system that incorporates all models.

Logic models are successful ways to map out the driving forces that impact the programs, the assumptions underlying the College Transition movement, and the activities and outcomes that programs will be held accountable for. Data collection is tied to evaluation, and evaluation is tied to not only continuous program improvement but also a way to systematically collect knowledge and learnings across all local programs in an organized, systematic and rigorous way.

Developing a logic model that all programs are a part of will help integrate programs that have been funded through different sources and had different data collection and reporting requirements. This integration will help to build a statewide evaluation and data collection system that will encompass all models.

A logic model is both an evaluation design and a map of program success and efficacy, helping all stakeholders of the College Transition model understand what College Transition is and what it is trying to do and be.

2. Define Levels of Service

Although the support of several funders has been crucial to the growth of Maine's adult education college transitions programs, it has led to specific models that programs adhered to because of funding requirements. The different models have led to some differences about what college transition means, who qualifies, and who gets counted as a transition student.

As state funding replaces private funding, it will be crucial to have a common understanding of definitions, program models and data collection. Both the literature (see the beginning section of this report) and Maine's programs indicate that a one-size-fits-all model for college transition program design is not in the best interest of serving students.

Nellie Mae funded programs had the most intensive design and were designed to help the ABE population move from basic skills to college. The MELMAC funded programs were designed to help adults develop aspirations to go to college and provide counseling and services to support them to do so. The state funded programs had the most diversity in that they provided some intensive services as well as one or two courses that helped almost college ready adults move on their way quickly or take some refresher courses while enrolled in college. The program designs suggest at least 3 levels of service on a transition continuum:

- Intensive with cohort groups, mentors, supports and extra tutoring and educational help. This group needs intensive help with educational, problem solving and career skills. This group needs career exploration, confidence building and support.
- Semi-independent with a menu of courses, some group activities such as guest speakers, field trips, and counseling once or twice and then on an as needed basis. This group has some idea of what they want to do and how to get there, but needs help figuring it out and some help on how to get there.
- Independent with a menu of courses, an intake process including an interview, counseling as needed. This category is directed, knows where they want to go and how to get there and need to brush up or supplement existing skills.

Maine needs all three levels of service models (and programs may define more levels) to serve the range of skills and abilities of those seeking to go onto college. Defining levels of program service is a crucial step in helping programs identify the services they can provide, how they will provide them, and whom they will recruit. Definitions of expected program outcomes and data collection should be tied to levels of service as well. In regional programs, different partners could provide differing levels of service to reach all adults who want help.

Levels of service, and collecting data specific to each level, will help tease out what the actual costs and outcomes are for programs. Having level descriptors and specific level outcomes will help the legislature understand the range of services and needs that the funding addresses. By having levels of service, programs serving the ABE to college transition students, who need the most service and are therefore more costly, won't be penalized for serving those most in need. Programs designed for the least intensive students will have lower costs, but may have to serve more people.

3. Work towards a seamless system for students for all areas of the state (like the KV Academy model)

There are community colleges in most counties and University of Maine system colleges throughout Maine. The geographic distribution of these systems is a real plus for the citizens of Maine, especially since distance education options and satellite centers are available in addition to these main physical locales. The challenge with this is that all colleges set their own admissions requirement, cut scores for students taking developmental courses and credit bearing courses, and in some cases, degree requirements. This makes it difficult to create a seamless system of College Transition because different schools have different entrance parameters. In some cases, College Transition programs require higher Accuplacer scores for Transition program completion than the entrance requirements at the nearest community college requires.

There is no consensus as to what assessment scores are real indicators of student success in college across the community college and University of Maine systems. This is really confusing to customers of both systems and those wanting to enroll in higher education. College Transition programs sometimes face an uphill battle in convincing students that they should work towards higher Accuplacer scores when they can enroll with the fairly low scores they already have.

CAAL's call for a National Opportunity System (see the Context section of this report) speaks to this. Unless we define what college-ready means, there will be no "system" but the fragmentary, individual entrance requirements that are confusing to customers, and may not set them up for success. Maine can, through the Advisory Committee, the Maine's Education Compact, MELMAC, MEOC, and other interested parties begin to look at building a Maine Opportunity System through defining what Accuplacer scores ensure student success, what services are necessary to support student retention and what collaborations are necessary so that all students are ready to not only enroll in college but graduate with a degree.

Maine has some models that are excellent examples of how, when partners work together, students are able to move in a seamless system that leads to college success. The Kennebec Valley Academy, Sumner's collocation at the Hancock County Higher Education Center, Caribou' and Bangor's close association with their counties' community colleges are just a few examples that are worth a close examination to begin the Opportunity System discussion. Although local autonomy is a positive aspect to contextualizing college to community needs, the admissions requirements do not lend themselves to a state-wide "system" that enables all partners to stress the skills students must have upon entrance to college to succeed.

4. Develop a consistent data collection system across all programs including a universal intake, reporting and data gathering mechanism that includes clear definitions of data categories. Use the data on a regular basis for program and project continuous improvement.

Programs funded through the Nellie Mae and MELMAC grants had set data collection protocols with set definitions and collection parameters. These data collection protocols were integral parts of an evaluation designed to answer specific questions. The state-funded pilot programs had a less defined, less systematic data collection process that was not really tied to a set program evaluation design. Also, the data collection was driven by the existing adult education data collection system, MEAMIS, which is a data collection system tied to the adult education National Reporting System, not to specific College Transition questions. Although MAEMIS is a way to collect valuable demographic data, it does not collect, nor was it designed to collect, impact data.

State-funded programs universally reported dissatisfaction with the data collection they engaged in. They reported a lack of definition of terms, inconsistent data collection requests, no place on MAEMIS to really report College Transition information (this is being addressed) and questions about where to report students in multiple programs. Although they wanted to collect data that gave them information about the efficacy of the program, they did not feel that the data they were collecting contributed to that.

Other questions the state-funded programs had were in regards to who is a Transition student, especially in light of the Nellie Mae model of intensive students. Although they were told to count everyone, even those just taking 1 course, some programs were not comfortable with reporting those students as College Transition.

As all programs move toward state funding as their primary funding source, the melding of the Nellie Mae model into the broad College Transition category will be a loss of a data collection opportunity that has a good data history. Developing levels of service and data collection protocols for each level allows for a continuation of data collection for the intensive programs as well as the non-intensive ones.

Data collection should not be limited to the constraints of the MAEMIS system, but should be based on an evaluation design. MAEMIS will continue to play a role in this, but should not be the dominant determinant of what is collected.

Reviewing data on a regular basis with programs for continuous improvement will strengthen all programs. An evaluation design will set the measures of success programs are looking to achieve, and data that examines these measures on a regular basis will help everyone. For example, looking at the age make-up of programs and breaking out Accuplacer gains by age may indicate a pattern of younger adults achieving greater gains than older adults. Adjusting the program so older adults get more help or are taught in new ways would be a result of examining the data and adjusting the program based on data results.

Currently, programs do use a universal form for data collection, but not for program intake. Having a template for both data collection and intake will ensure that consistent data is collected across programs making data analysis easier. This will be especially important as more Transition programs are funded. Programs would be free to add additional questions or intake information to the template to ensure local data could be collected as well.

5. Develop linkages with partners in order to collect impact data on college transition graduates (college success rates, rate of developmental courses, degrees earned, jobs obtained, etc.)

The real measure of success for College Transition programs is, ultimately, how students who have gone through the College Transition programs compare to their peers as they go through college. Do they need fewer developmental courses? If they are in developmental course how long do they stay in them? How do they do when they matriculate in degree courses? What is their attrition/retention rate? Graduation rate? Degree attainment?

Collecting this data will require cooperation with community colleges and colleges, as adult education programs cannot do this type of data collection alone. Additional mechanisms on the part of partners may need to be put in place, and additional monies to fund such a large, longitudinal study may have to be solicited.

6. Obtain student feedback including satisfaction data, attitudinal changes, perception of accomplishments

There was no mechanism built in to the state-funded program data collection requirements for customer feedback on program design, class quality and helpfulness of counseling services. Although Accuplacer scores measure skill improvement, there was no data collected on how

students viewed themselves in relation to going to college or community college. A quality continuous improvement system always includes customer feedback.

Collecting customer feedback and attitudinal data at intake and exit could be accomplished through an online survey for students through web-based survey sites such as SurveyMonkey. Having students sit at a computer and fill out the survey at intake can be part of the intake process. Similarly, having students fill out a survey at program completion could be part of program protocol. Having a web site also allows students to fill out the form from any computer, even from home, once they have the survey's URL. SurveyMonkey has data analysis features built into the site allowing for faster data analysis and graphic representation of certain types of data. Eventually, if a universal intake template is also on line, both the intake form and the student survey become the intake process.

7. Continue to collect best practices and diversity of models data

If the Nellie Mae, MELMAC and state-funded pilot programs are any indication of the diversity of College Transition program models, the more programs that are funded the more models there will be. Collecting information about each model and analyzing the similarities and differences will allow new best practices for Maine programs to emerge and then shared so all programs benefit from the collective knowledge.

8. Continue the Advisory Committee

The diverse partner agencies, program representation, foundation interest, state and professional organization memberships in the Advisory Committee was responsible for accomplishing all that it did including institutionalizing funding, overseeing the selection and development of the state funded pilot programs, supporting the coordinator, identifying best practices, and the development of the core curriculum frameworks. All members agreed that the Advisory Committee was beneficial to the College Transition project as well as to individual members.

The current status of the Advisory Committee is one of a temporary, unofficial body. As the number of College Transition programs grows, the funding stream narrows to one source, and the Nellie Mae, MELMAC and state models merge, the expertise and oversight of the Advisory Committee will become a crucial element for the project's success. The current structure of the Committee does not, however, lend itself to this more active role.

Shifting the responsibility of the project from the College Transition coordinator to the Advisory Council will require changing the nature of the Advisory Council to a more formal body with a Committee chair, designated agency memberships as well as ad hoc members. The College Transition coordinator becomes the staff for the committee and the person responsible for oversight of the Transition programs, while the Advisory Committee is responsible for the direction, scope and “big picture” issues of the project. This change in structure and focus of the Advisory Committee will go a long way toward developing a governance structure for the growing College Transition project.

9. Continue funding for the coordinator’s position

All of the state-funded programs identified the work that the College Transitions coordinator did with them as a major factor in the successful start up of their Transition programs. The addition of more College Transition programs necessitates having a designated person to see that program start up issues are addressed, help with creating partnerships is available, data collection questions answered, and support for the local program accessible.

10. Provide staff development for local program directors/coordinators as well as teachers on a regular basis that is specific to College Transition issues

Several programs mentioned the need for staff development for teachers on how to teach for College Transition classes, developing lessons for the curriculum frameworks and specifically for math instruction techniques. Although program coordinators received staff development opportunities, there were fewer opportunities for teachers. Some program coordinators suggested having specific topics for staff development that are identified by program coordinators. Many of those interviewed wanted a more cohesive staff development program specifically geared toward College Transition.

11. Develop a state-wide marketing and publicity campaign for College Transitions

Those interviewed wanted a common logo, posters, brochures, video and other media materials to give the College Transition programs state-wide recognition, identity and cohesiveness. They believed it would also help with student recruitment. Materials that could be customized for each local program would be appreciated. The Advisory Committee could oversee the development of a statewide College Transition publicity campaign.

Appendix

Interview Protocol: Advisory Committee

Interview Protocol: College Transition Programs

Protocol for Interviewing Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee Member:

1. What do you see as the goals of the Advisory Committee?
2. Did you achieve these goals? Why or why not?
3. What do you see as the role of the Advisory Committee in the College Transition project?
4. What was the role of the Advisory Committee in relation to the coordinator?
5. What do you see as the major accomplishments of the Advisory Committee, if any?
6. Were there any activities that you would have liked to see the Advisory Committee engage in that weren't done?
7. Do you think the Advisory Committee should continue to meet? Why?
8. (If the answer is yes) What do you think the role of the Advisory Committee should be as the project grows?

Protocol for Interviewing Programs

Name of Institution:

Persons or person interviewed:

1. What does your model of College Transition program look like?
2. How did you arrive at this model?
3. What changes did you make along the way? Why did you make them?
4. What assessments do you use and when do you use them?
5. Who are your partners? Do you have formal or informal agreements with them? How are these agreements working?
6. What else would you like to tell me about your College Transition program?