



**SPRING 2011**

This edition of **Transmissions** provides information on state accomplishments and best practices, up-to-date news, and policy insights for policymakers, researchers, advocates, program administrators, and others outside the Shifting Gears network.

In this issue, you will find:

- Updates from Shifting Gears states: Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin;
- Updates from Congress and Federal opportunities;
- Local examples of adult education programs that help students access financial aid by guiding them through the FAFSA application process;
- New research and reports from experts in adult education, postsecondary education, developmental education and workforce development.

To learn more about specific strategies or find resources that can help your state increase postsecondary and career success for lower-skilled adults, visit the Shifting Gears web site at [www.shifting-gears.org](http://www.shifting-gears.org).

**CLASP**

*Shifting Gears Partner and Technical Assistance Provider*

## PROGRESS IN MOTION

In this section, we bring you the latest news from the five Shifting Gears states as well as national news related to strengthening state education and training systems to ensure that more low-skilled adults earn postsecondary credentials that help them obtain family-sustaining employment.



### In the States

**Illinois** is building on the broad policy change agenda implemented in the first phase of Shifting Gears and has changed the program approval and program application processes in both career and technical education and adult education. The ICCB is sponsoring bridge demonstration programs in six developmental education and 21 adult education sites. The number of sites will be expanded in the next fiscal year, and the developmental education demonstrations will engage local WIA offices early in the process. Technical assistance is being provided to demonstration sites, and evaluations are being conducted of both initiatives. Illinois' efforts also include the development of a support services model for students in Adult Education, Developmental

Education, and CTE at Illinois community colleges. Illinois is developing materials and professional development to support bridge implementation including a Support Services Self-Assessment Tool, designed for colleges to determine the level of support available to bridge students; a Health Care Bridge Curriculum, for use in training and workforce development; a comprehensive bridge handbook, written for training, education and workforce development leaders and practitioners; and a professional development program piloted to adult education bridge providers, with plans for expansion next year. Also, Illinois released the results of the initial survey of bridge programs that was designed to assess the number of bridges that meet the Illinois bridge definition, and a second survey is being designed to determine growth and more detailed information regarding implementation. [View the bridge inventory.](#)

The **Michigan** Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth (DELEG) is changing a number of policies that will ensure support for new Regional Partnerships that are emerging across the state. Regional partners from adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce development will align with one another to create a systemic approach to lifelong learning activities within each region that ensures strong pathways to and attainment of meaningful postsecondary credentials for learners with low-basic skills. DELEG is currently revising Michigan's WIA Title II State Plan to emphasize the state's development of Regional Partnerships and articulate Michigan's approach to adult learning transformation. DELEG also is finalizing a new funding formula for allocating the entirety of adult education funding in the state among Regional Partnerships in the 17 regions that align with the state's vision for adult learning transformation. These funds will be distributed to Regional Partnerships in 2011 through a new competition for WIA Title II funds and changes to the allocation of state funds for adult learning via the state legislature.

**Minnesota** FastTRAC has raised its visibility in the state. The Minnesota Governors Workforce Development Council (GWDC) has published their 2011 Policy Advisory report, [All Hands on Deck](#). A Minnesota FastTRAC participant is profiled in the "Strengthening the Skills of Our Current Workforce" front section of the report. The GWDC makes four recommendations here: 1) Expanding the Minnesota FastTRAC Initiative, 2) Setting goals and developing plans for increasing adult credential attainment, 3) Integrating state data systems to better understand and serve working learners, 4) Reducing cost barriers to credential attainment. Work is now underway to bring the stakeholders across systems together to create a united message to the legislature on how to accomplish these important recommendations.

**Ohio** is continuing work to align its Adult Basic Literacy and Education, Adult Workforce Education and Community and Technical Colleges to improve student success and shorten pathways to credentials. Teams of providers are working together to establish cross-system transitions processes that will ensure students have a supported progression towards credential attainment across the spectrum of University System of Ohio providers. Their work will form the basis for new policy on the development of formalized collaborations of partners to ensure students benefit from a well integrated, contiguous system. Ohio has also completed extensive research related to developmental education placement in community colleges and will be targeting the establishment of policy that will ensure the placement of underprepared students in ABE programs rather than college developmental education courses when appropriate.

**Wisconsin** is fully engaged in expanding the adoption of RISE career pathways across the state. The approval process for new career pathways programs is active and so far, colleges have submitted nearly two dozen pathways for recognition by the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). RISE partners WTCS and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) are collaborating on three full days of regional staff development March for college and local workforce partner front line staff. *"Building on Success - Successful Career Pathways and Bridges In Wisconsin"* will provide updates, promising practices, and examples of WIA Title I/Title II collaboration. To further support the growth of RISE, Wisconsin is holding a series of webinars on Career Pathways for Wisconsin Works (W-2) and Transitional Jobs

staff across the state with the idea of fostering collaboration with these service providers to support Career Pathway development and implementation.

## **On the National Front**

The **Department of Labor** has released a solicitation for grant applications to the national Career Pathways Innovation Fund Grant Program. DOL will award \$122 million to eligible grantees that will go toward career pathway programs "that help individuals of varying skill levels enter and pursue rewarding careers in emerging industries and in-demand occupations". The grants will have a particular focus on community college-based career pathway programs that develop partnerships with employers, local workforce investment boards, and community and faith-based organizations. The deadline to apply is March 31, 2011. [View the solicitation for grant applications.](#) **Note:** *The Senate Appropriations Committee's recent budget proposal and the short-term House continuing resolution (see below) both include a rescission of the funds available under this grant program. If this cut is included in the final continuing resolution passed by Congress, these funds will no longer be available.*

### **FY 2011 Budget Still Undecided; House Proposal Includes Deep Cuts to Workforce and Education Funding**

This week, Congress is expected to vote on a second short-term continuing resolution that would keep the government running for three weeks (until April 8<sup>th</sup>). A *continuing resolution* is a type of appropriations legislation used by Congress to fund the government if they have not passed a budget for the Congressional fiscal year. The House version of this three-week CR eliminates current-year funding for the Department of Labor's \$125 million Career Pathways Innovation Fund, a fund focused on building career pathways programs at community colleges that help students and workers at all skill levels access the education and training they need to advance in the labor market. The House and Senate are still working on developing and passing a longer-term CR that will extend until the beginning of FY 2012. Two options have emerged and the House and Senate must come to an agreement by April 8<sup>th</sup> and pass either another short-term CR or compromise on a longer-term CR that will dictate funding for the next seven months of FY 2011.

The long-term CR passed by the House (H.R. 1) includes deep cuts to the Workforce Investment Act. Under the legislation, the Workforce Investment System would receive no new funding beginning on July 1, 2011 and would not be eligible for new funding until July 1, 2012. The National Skills Coalition has estimated that this represents a \$2.97 billion cut to the system in WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. See a [summary](#) from the National Skills Coalition on these proposed workforce cuts in H.R. 1.

The Senate also proposed a long-term CR which did not include the workforce cuts found in H.R. 1 but did eliminate current-year funding for the Career Pathways Innovation Fund. Last week, this [proposal](#) (dubbed the "Inouye Alternative"), was voted down in the Senate along with H.R. 1.

## **TALKING SHOP**

**Q:** *What are effective practices for helping students in adult education and ESL programs complete required financial aid forms, such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?*

**A:** Students in adult education are very often low-income and eligible for a wider variety of supports than higher-income students. But in order to access these resources, they must first navigate a complex system of state and federal rules and paperwork requirements. One important step to accessing this student aid is completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which can be completed online but requires a student to submit detailed tax information on themselves and possibly their parents or guardians.

Low-income students, including those in adult education programs, may have difficulty completing the FAFSA and fulfilling other requirements on their own and may not have relatives or a friend who can help them through the process. A high proportion of low income adult students do not apply for aid, especially those who do not have dependents. A 2008 study from the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance found that nearly 1 in 3 of the poorest independent students without kids did not apply for aid. About 1 in 6 of the poorest student parents did not apply. Local practices that offer support to students going through the complex financial aid process can go a long way in making sure that students are receiving the resources available to them.



Promising local examples of these efforts include:

- **Canton City Schools ABLE (OH)** has a staff member -the "Transitions Facilitator"-who helps students understand the financial aid process and prepare their paperwork in advance. The Transitions Facilitator distributes fact sheets on filling out the FAFSA and holds office hours during which students drop in and get one-on-one assistance filling out their forms. They also push students to complete these forms around tax time so that the student has prepared them well in advance of most institutional deadlines.
- **Community Action (TX):** At this program, Career Counselors partner with a local community college to assist students with postsecondary goals fill out their FAFSA application. The counselor holds monthly "FAFSA workshops" in a computer lab where each student can complete their FAFSA in real time. The attendees at these workshops are typically referred to this program by adult education programs or family advocates at local Head Start Centers. Students are instructed to come prepared and bring their income tax information for themselves and/or parents. A representative from the local community college is also in attendance and can field questions about the college enrollment process.

We want to hear from you! [Submit your Talking Shop question for a chance to be featured in the next quarterly issue.](#)

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The latest research and reports from experts in adult education, postsecondary education, developmental education, and workforce development.

### **Beyond Basic Skills: State Strategies to Connect Low-Skilled Students to an Employer-Valued Postsecondary Education.** CLASP (March 2011)

As the need for a more educated workforce grows, it's imperative that states widen their focus on postsecondary achievement to the oft-overlooked students in basic skills programs across the country. This includes acknowledging the need for a diversity of certificates and degrees, including occupational certificates and Associate's degrees. This new report describes six state strategies to better connect basic skills education to postsecondary education and careers, including developing bridge programs, fostering contextualization, supporting dual enrollment, and supporting proactive advising and assessment policies. [View the report.](#)



### **New Path to Federal Student Aid for Those With No High School Diploma or GED.** CLASP (March 2011)

In October 2010, the Department of Education issues final rules on the new option under the "Ability to Benefit" test, allowing students who successfully complete six credits toward a certificate or degree to qualify for federal financial aid. This brief describes how basic skills bridge programs and other basic skills programs can be used to help a student earn these initial six credits toward a degree or certificate. [View the brief.](#)

### **Assessment of Evidence: A Working Paper Series.** Community College Research Center (February 2011)

In this Working Paper series, CCRC has synthesized a large body of research evidence on strategies to improve outcomes and the likelihood of success of community college students. Papers in this series "use the research literature to draw conclusions and provide concrete evidence-based recommendations to practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in eight major topic areas", including developmental assessment and placement, developmental acceleration, developmental mathematics pedagogy, contextualization of basic skills instruction, online learning, non-academic support, and organizational improvement. [View the series.](#)

### **Doing Business Together: Adult Education and Business Partnering to Build a Qualified Workforce.** Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (February 2011)

This recent publication focuses on effective models and strategies for businesses to become involved in providing adult education and workforce skills to workers. This research, based on the findings of two surveys and an invitational roundtable held in July 2010, seeks to identify which states already have collaborative efforts in place between adult education and business that are proving successful. This paper specifically outlines exceptional models in 16 states and provides future recommendations for leaders in adult education and business. [View the report.](#)

**Certificates Count: An Analysis of Sub-Baccalaureate Certificates.** Complete College America and FutureWorks. (December 2010)

This new report calls for greater emphasis and investment in sub- baccalaureate certificate programs as a means for the United States to improve its postsecondary education performance and stimulate economic and job growth. Evidence in the report emphasizes that "sub-baccalaureate certificates are practical and often underutilized credentials that can provide graduates with an appealing combination of rapid postsecondary achievement and portable skills and knowledge." This report conveys that certificates offer a viable solution for students attempting to pursue postsecondary education while also balancing jobs and domestic responsibilities. State-by state data on the number and qualities of certificates currently awarded in each state are also included in this report. [View the report.](#)

**New "Communications" Section of the Shifting-Gears.org Web Site** Together with Douglas Gould & Company, CLASP has developed content for a new, innovative section of the Shifting Gears web site. This new section of the Resource Center, Making the Case for Change, includes resources to help states effectively communicate the value of educating the adult population to key stakeholders and influencers in attempts to produce system-wide policy changes. Links to communication materials developed by individual states provide the resources needed for well-defined, targeted advocacy efforts. [View this new section.](#)

**ACTE Issue Brief: CTE's Role in Worker Retraining.** Association for Career and Technical Education (December 2010) This brief describes the critical role of career and technical education (CTE) programs in providing adults with the training and skills needed to succeed in the workforce or progress along career pathways. CTE worker retraining programs have been found to be extremely effective because they take into consideration both the needs of employers and the adult population. Short-term, flexible training approaches provide unemployed adults with the skills needed to be competitive in the current economic environment. This brief describes the strategies of several model CTE worker retraining programs that might be used to help develop similar programs nationwide. [View the brief.](#)

**CLASP Spotlight on Poverty Webcast: Career Pathways Lead Low-Income People Out of Poverty**

This new [Spotlight on Poverty](#) webcast released January 26 discusses how career pathways can help low-skilled, low-income adults earn postsecondary credentials that lead to good jobs with family-sustaining wages. Senior CLASP policy analyst [Vickie Choitz](#) describes how career pathways, which create links between education and training services, help students achieve postsecondary education, support their families and contribute to their state's competitiveness. [View the video.](#)



Career Pathways Lead Low-Income  
People Out of Poverty