



# **ADULT ESL AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

By JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall and Ken Sheppard

Working Paper 7  
CAAL Community College Series  
December 2004



**Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy**  
1221 Avenue of the Americas – 46<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10020  
(212) 512-2362  
<http://www.caalusa.org>

© Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

Published by Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy  
[Ed. Gail Spangenberg]  
1221 Avenue of the Americas – 46<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10020  
<http://www.caalusa.org>

## CONTENTS

### FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION	1
1. ESL AND THE ESL STUDENT	2
2. IMMIGRATION TRENDS	7
3. ADULT ESL PROGRAM TYPES	10
4. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS	12
5. ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES	19
6. FURTHER RESEARCH	21
<b>Appendix A: Interview Protocol</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix B: Acknowledgments</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix C: References</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix D: Community College ESL Program Profiles</b>	<b>29</b>
1. New York City College of Technology (CUNY)	30
2. San Diego Community College	37
3. North Seattle Community College	42
4. Community College of Denver	47
5. Pima Community College (Arizona)	55

## FOREWORD

*Adult ESL and the Community College* is a little paper about a large topic. Unlike the other publications in CAAL's working paper series, it is not a research paper as such, but rather a kind of primer that looks at some of the key issues in community college ESL programming. The paper helps define issues relevant to CAAL's study of the role and potential of community colleges in adult education and literacy. It also opens the door to a more serious research effort on ESL that CAAL will soon begin with funding from the Hewlett Foundation.

ESL is one of the fastest growing areas of need in the community college – for two kinds of students, ESL adults with basic literacy deficiencies and adults who were well educated in their home countries but need help with their English skills. Most colleges, according to this working paper, offer several different types of ESL programs for both groups, but there is little solid understanding of variations and challenges in their management, faculty, curriculum, and assessment. The paper calls for research in several areas – with the end goal of improving program placement, expanding service, and easing transitions from ESL instruction to GED or college degree and job training programs.

JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall and Ken Sheppard co-authored this paper. Jodi Crandall is Professor of Education at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where she directs the Ph.D. Program in Language, Literacy, and Culture and teaches ESOL/Bilingual Education in the M.A. Program. She has been Vice President of the Center for Applied Linguistics, where much of her work involved adult ESL. She has an extensive background in adult ESL teaching and research, including teacher education, and has served on many advisory boards for adult ESL projects. Ken Sheppard supervises English language materials development and foreign language pre-testing at the National Foreign Language Center. He has directed a national study of content-ESL at the Center for Applied Linguistics. He has also managed research and trained teachers for English as a foreign language. For many years, he taught ESL at community colleges in the City University of New York system and elsewhere.

CAAL's community college study and publication of this paper are made possible by funding from the Ford Foundation, McGraw-Hill Companies, Verizon, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Nellie-Mae Foundation, and Household International.

CAAL's Web site ([www.caalusa.org](http://www.caalusa.org)) lists task force members and goals for the community college project. It also offers in PDF form all publications in this series as well as other CAAL publications.

Gail Spangenberg  
President

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report describes the role of community colleges in providing adult English as a second language (ESL) services. It defines ESL and explains how adult ESL differs from other adult education programs (adult basic education/ABE or adult secondary education/ASE) as well as developmental education programs offered at community colleges. It looks in a general way at the diversity of adult ESL students and their needs, the range of programs provided to serve these students, and some of their funding sources. The report also touches on issues of articulation and integration among ESL courses – those provided by community colleges and those offered by other service providers – and linkages between ESL programs and other programs within the institution. Finally, it discusses challenges community colleges face in expanding their services to meet the needs of this diverse population; solutions programs have crafted to meet these challenges; and the need for further research.

In terms of methodology, the paper is based on a review and analysis of existing data about adult ESL, interviews with an array of community college adult ESL educators around the country, and two small group meetings with adult ESL and community college ESL specialists. An interview protocol (see Appendix A, p. 22) was used as the basis for the live consultations. Appendix B (p. 24) acknowledges the principal individuals consulted. A list of references is provided in Appendix C (p. 26). Appendix D (beginning on p. 29) contains ESL profiles of five community colleges: New York City College of Technology (CUNY), San Diego Community College, North Seattle Community College, Community College of Denver, and Pima Community College in Arizona.

# **1. ESL AND THE ESL STUDENT**

## **1.1 BASIC TERMINOLOGY**

**English as a second language (ESL).** The term is most commonly used to denote the learning of English in an environment where English is the native language. It usually refers to the comprehensive learning of the language: listening and speaking as well as reading and writing, pronunciation as well as grammar. Depending on the program, the goal is to enable the adult to function in English in a variety of contexts, and thus content may be drawn from many fields. Courses range from basic ESL literacy and numeracy (for those not literate in their own language and/or who also have limited mathematical education) to very advanced academic ESL (which prepares adults for postsecondary education or professional programs). The National Reporting System for adult education (NRS) defines English language proficiency across six levels, from Beginning ESL Literacy to High Advanced ESL, on the basis of what students know and can do in three areas: speaking and listening, basic reading and writing, and functional and workplace skills.<sup>1</sup>

**Adult ESL students.** For purposes of this paper, adult ESL students are learners aged 18 or older who are enrolled in one of the many types of adult ESL programs offered by community colleges and a wide range of other service providers. The program may have a variety of instructional purposes, including survival, employment, citizenship, high school equivalency, and further education. The students may be refugees, immigrants, or permanent residents.

**Generation 1.5 students.** These adults are non-native English speakers enrolled in postsecondary programs who have had much of their education in the United States and graduated from U.S. high schools but still need additional English instruction, especially in writing. Their English language proficiency is very advanced, but they may still make

---

<sup>1</sup> NRS Online: [www.oeitech.com/nrs/reference/m\\_and\\_m/methods/functioning\\_levels](http://www.oeitech.com/nrs/reference/m_and_m/methods/functioning_levels); U.S. Department of Education, 1999-2003.

significant errors. Their errors are different from those made by native English-speaking students typically enrolled in developmental education or freshman composition.

**International (ESL) students.** These are students who enter the United States on a special visa to study intensive ESL at designated institutions, increasingly community colleges. Many study English prior to entering degree programs as full-time, fully matriculated students. In academic ESL programs at the community college, international and immigrant students may be in the same classes.

**World English-speaking students.** These students enter the U.S. speaking another variety of English. If they are educated, there may be only minor differences – in vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation – between the English they speak and Standard American English. Those who have limited prior education are likely to speak a variety of English that differs substantially from standard American English and to need more attention to reading and writing. Deciding on appropriate placement for these students is difficult. Some would be better served in adult ESL, even though they may feel that the placement is inappropriate because they speak English; others would be better placed in developmental education.

**ESL literacy student.** These ESL students have limited prior education and literacy in their mother tongue. Such students' oral English may be minimal or fluent. While ESL literacy students may be placed with literate students for part of their instruction, they will need additional instruction focused on learning to read and write. Ideally, initial literacy would be offered in the student's home language; however, ESL program providers are more likely to teach literacy in English if they have learners from a variety of language backgrounds.

**Teaching English as a second language (TESL) or teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).** These terms commonly denote the discipline or profession of English language teaching and the formal study of such aspects as second language acquisition, the methodology of teaching oral and written

English, the structure of English, intercultural communication, language assessment, and curriculum and materials design. While there is some variation in TESL/TESOL teacher preparation programs, all address at least these topics.

## **1.2 ESL STUDENTS: BACKGROUNDS, NEEDS, AND GOALS**

There is no typical adult ESL student. Adult English language learners differ in their languages and cultural backgrounds, their prior educational experiences and literacy, their employment history, their English language proficiency, and their reasons for participating in adult ESL and education. They include nurses from the Philippines and engineers from Russia studying English to pass job-related proficiency exams; refugees from Somalia or agricultural workers from Mexico seeking basic English and literacy; Central American or Eastern European immigrants desiring access to vocational training or better employment; permanent residents from around the world seeking U.S. citizenship; U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico seeking to develop their academic English to enter a postsecondary program; and Afghan or Vietnamese women and elders wanting to help school-aged children with their homework. Some are highly educated; others have had limited or interrupted schooling. Many are at a beginning level of English language and literacy development, but even highly educated students may have limited English proficiency. (Crandall, 1993; Wrigley, 1993; Florez, 1997)

This wide range of prior educational experiences and reasons for participating in adult ESL instruction requires an equally diverse range of programs. It is often difficult to design programs that are sufficiently broad or nuanced to accommodate the needs of this varied group of learners. As a result, adult ESL learners with very different learning profiles and needs may find themselves in the same program. For example, a beginning ESL class may include educated learners who have substantial reading (and writing) skills but limited oral English proficiency, as well as less-educated learners who have more advanced English listening and speaking skills (perhaps learned through employment) but limited proficiency in reading or writing. Both groups of learners are beginners in some sense, but their strengths and needs are quite different.

### **1.3 ESL, ABE/ASE, AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION**

ESL belongs to a different continuum from either ABE/ASE or developmental education. It has a different research base, different faculty qualifications and training, different curricula, and students with diverse needs. Adult basic education and developmental education address the educational needs of native English speakers (typically in reading, writing, and mathematics). Adult secondary education provides additional instruction in the secondary school curriculum for students seeking a high school diploma. These students have the advantage of knowing English but need some additional instruction. However, adult ESL students need instruction in English that includes oral as well as written English skills. The kinds of errors they make reveal the strengths and needs of these groups. Aspects of the language that seem transparent or obvious to a native speaker may be quite difficult for non-native speakers. For example, native speakers rarely have difficulty using the appropriate article (*a, an, the*) while the languages of many non-native speakers may not have the concept of an article. Thus, these students will need extended instruction to learn the article system. Attempts to “simplify” mathematics for native English speakers by using everyday language may only increase the difficulty for ESL students who do not know that vocabulary, though they may understand the mathematical formulas or operations.

It is also important to remember that adult ESL students may have advanced degrees. Placing them in a developmental education program, rather than ESL, is inappropriate and may heighten their frustration. The same thing may be true for former ESL students (non-native English speakers) in ABE/GED classes. Non-native and native English speakers have different needs and strengths, leading some adult education program to develop separate ABE/GED classes for them.

### **1.4 THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ROLE**

Today, about one in four students in community colleges is an immigrant, and the numbers are increasing. ESL programs are the largest and fastest-growing programs at

many colleges (Kuo 1999, 2002; Schuyler, 1999). For example, ESL is now the largest department at Miami-Dade Community College (McCabe, 2003) and the largest ESL program in the world is located at Santa Monica Community College. While the majority of adult ESL students in the community college are immigrants, international students seeking English instruction increasingly prefer community college programs because they are less expensive than those offered by either commercial English language schools or universities. Community colleges view these students as a source of additional revenue.

The role of the community college in providing instruction and other services to adult ESL learners varies. In some districts, the community college is the major provider of adult ESL services. In others, its focus is credit-bearing or more advanced academic ESL courses leading to admission to postsecondary education. In these districts, lower-level or less academic adult ESL is provided by local education agencies and a host of private or nonprofit organizations, sometimes under contract with the community college. In still others cases, the community college has become the leader in developing a range of programs to address the needs of increasing numbers of adult ESL students.

## **2: IMMIGRATION TRENDS**

### **2.1 A GROWING AND CHANGING POPULATION**

The adult ESL student represents the largest and fastest-growing segment of the adult education population. The 1990 Census found that half of all immigrants who had arrived within the previous three years did not speak English, compared to one quarter of all foreign-born residents. In the 2000 Census, of the over 37 million adults 18 or older who reported speaking a language other than English at home, more than 8 million did not speak English “well” or “at all,” and an additional 7 million did not speak English “very well” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, cited in Van Duzer et al., 2003). Thus, at least 15 million adults would benefit from ESL instruction, a number that far exceeds the capacity of current adult ESL programs. About 70 percent of these people live in six states that have traditionally been the home of immigrants,<sup>2</sup> but immigrants are becoming more widely dispersed: between the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, “non-immigrant” states saw their immigrant populations grow dramatically (Pugsley, 2001). Five states experienced an increase of 150 percent. Some counties also experienced dramatic increases: for example, the immigrant population in Montgomery County, Maryland, doubled during those ten years (Moss et al., 2003).

Not only is the immigrant population growing; its make-up is changing continually, depending upon economic or political factors in the country of origin or in the United States. Currently, the majority of new immigrants come from Latin American countries where English is not widely spoken (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), but recently, widely divergent groups (in terms of language and educational background) such as Russians, Bosnians, and Somali Bantu speakers have entered the country.

Moreover, after arrival in the United States, immigrants remain a mobile population, moving for better jobs or better education for their children. It is important for adult ESL

---

<sup>2</sup> California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey.

program providers to understand these patterns and to change themselves to meet the needs of the changing immigrant populations.

## **2.2 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS**

Nearly half the growth in the workforce during the 1990s was due to immigrants. During the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, immigrants are expected to account for most of the net growth among workers between the ages of 25 and 54 (Wrigley, Richer, Martinson, Kubo, and Strawn, 2003). Among the foreign-born adults in the United States who reported speaking a language other than English at home in the 2000 Census, a third have less than a high school education, twice the rate of adults born in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001, cited in van Duzer and others, 2003). Thus, a substantial number of adults need extensive ESL, literacy, and GED/academic instruction if they are to acquire more than minimum wage jobs and have hope for economic stability (Barton and Jenkins, 1995, cited in Marshall, 2000; Marshall, 2002; Wrigley et al., 2003).

## **2.3 ADULT IMMIGRANTS AND EDUCATION**

ESL enrollment for the past two decades has ranged from 40 to 50 percent of the total in federally funded adult education programs, but these students represent a small percentage of those who need ESL instruction (Fitzgerald, 1995; USDOE/OVAE 1995, 2003). The shortfall has several reasons: limited funding, limited access to information about available programs, scheduling difficulties, a lack of support services, and a shortage of programs. According to Fitzgerald (1995), only two-thirds of adult education programs offer ESL and, of these, ESL is prominent in only 21 percent of them. The shortage of programs has resulted in long waiting lists in many areas. A recent study by the Urban Institute (Fix, Passel, & Sucher, 2003) concluded that although 8 million immigrant adults are eligible to apply for citizenship in the United States, many do not, primarily because they lack English proficiency that could be ameliorated by readily available, quality ESL instruction. The shortage of classes has also resulted in the misplacement of adults into classes that do not meet their needs. For example, ESL

students with limited literacy may be in the same beginning ESL class as those who are already literate in their first language; similarly, highly educated immigrants or generation 1.5 students with ESL needs may be put into developmental education intended for native English speakers.

### **3. ADULT ESL PROGRAM TYPES**

#### **3.1 PURPOSE AND CONTENT**

Adult ESL program types vary by purpose or programmatic focus. Programs include basic life skills/survival ESL, citizenship ESL (EL/Civics), vocational ESL (VESL), GED ESL, family literacy, and academic ESL. These may be offered at a variety of proficiency levels, though life skills/survival ESL and basic and family ESL literacy are likely to be offered at lower levels, while GED/ESL and academic ESL are typically offered at higher levels. ESL courses also differ in terms of the credit they provide. In general, adult ESL courses do not carry credit; however, at higher levels of ESL, some institutions offer some form of credit (institutional or academic).

#### **3.2 SETTING AND PROVIDER**

In addition to community colleges, adult ESL programs are provided by community-based organizations (CBOs), local education agencies, businesses, unions, workplaces, faith-based organizations, voluntary organizations, private educational institutions, and correctional facilities, in addition to community colleges (Crandall, 1993; Guth 1993; Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993; Wrigley and Guth, 1992). There are substantial differences in the curriculum and the preparation of teachers in these programs and in the support services offered, depending upon the provider. Community colleges tend to have instructors with more extensive TESOL preparation and experience.

#### **3.3 FUNDING SOURCES**

Operational funding for adult ESL classes comes primarily from federal, state, or local tax revenue and from student tuition and fees. There is also some support from private sources such as foundations and voluntary organizations, but such funding is usually of limited duration. Most programs rely on several sources of funding, each of which carries its own accountability and reporting requirements.

Major federal sources of funding include the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA); Even Start (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, Part B); and Pell Grants. Other sources include Refugee and Entrant Assistance; Library Services and Technology Grants; and some Migrant and Indian Education grants. Most of these federal grants require some state matching funds. States with a commitment to immigrant education, such as California, far exceed the match and provide substantially more adult ESL funds than the federal government.

## **4. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS**

### **4.1 FUNDING PROBLEMS**

Perhaps the most important funding problem in adult ESL is that there simply is not enough public money available for programs to serve the burgeoning adult ESL population. Programs across the country report waiting lists, some of such long duration that potential students become discouraged.

Moreover, because of a shortage of funds, many programs are forced to make a difficult choice between offering more instructional hours for fewer students or fewer instructional hours for more students, or between more instructional hours or providing childcare or transportation. Alternatively, some programs provide free literacy, beginning ESL, and intermediate ESL courses, but charge tuition for advanced ESL. This anomaly has led some students to remain in intermediate courses far longer than necessary because they cannot afford to pay for the advanced courses. In short, the system is erratic and far from consistent.

Another problem related to funding concerns the use of Pell Grants for adult ESL classes. Adults who use their Pell Grants to pay for ESL may find that they have little financial support left over for other courses.

### **4.2 OUTREACH AND INTAKE**

Some communities have multiple service providers but lack an adequate system for informing adult ESL students about available programs or referring them to appropriate types of programs. Many students are uncertain about their educational goals, especially long-term goals, when they enter these programs. Many are even unaware of their options. Moreover, the goals of adult ESL students change over time. Some students enter a program to acquire enough English to get jobs; others set their sights on postsecondary education from the outset. According to many adult ESL program

directors, students who “opt out of” an ESL program frequently re-enroll later with different goals that require different kinds of instruction and support.

Furthermore, most ESL programs face intake challenges. Does it make more sense to enroll students in courses at the start of the term, as in managed enrollment, or on a continuous basis, as in rolling registration? With adult immigrants arriving on a continuous basis, there is a powerful argument for admitting them continuously. However, this can be disruptive to instruction and add to the administrative workload.

### **4.3 ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

Programs use a variety of tests to put these learners into classes, measure their progress, and decide when they are ready for transition. The most widely used adult ESL tests include BEST (the Basic English Skills Test) and a newer, expanded BEST Plus Test, CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System), NYSPLACE (New York State Placement Test for Adult ESL Students), and ESLOA (ESL Oral Assessment). Many are mandated by funding sources or by state or local agencies but may not be the best way of estimating a student’s gains in the language or a program’s overall effectiveness. For example, because it is much less expensive and less time-consuming, programs may use assessments to measure either receptive skills (listening, reading) or productive skills (speaking, writing), when programs are in fact likely to be teaching both. Furthermore, these tests are not always sufficiently sensitive to language learning gains, which can be quite slow and involve plateaus. A learner may well be making progress that the test does not capture.

Another problem with these tests is that they are being used for “high stakes” testing and program evaluations that determine funding – although they were not developed for these purposes. Moreover, there are not enough forms of the tests for repeated use: students can memorize the answers or know enough to write in the wrong answers if they want to remain in the course. Test security is also a problem.

Moreover, since these tests differ in what and how they test, their results are not easily interpreted for either comparative or student transitional purposes. Exit tests for ESL may differ significantly from entrance tests and requirements for GED or community college enrollment. For example, students may be required to take the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) or Accu-Placer, which may under-report the student's capabilities because they are intended for native English speakers.

The National Reporting System (NRS) was heralded as a means of providing a much better evaluation of the effectiveness of adult education programs. However, it has fallen far short of that goal for ESL. While the NRS requires programs to report student progress in terms of improved English proficiency (as well as education and employment outcomes), it does not adequately reflect students' language learning gains. A student who entered a program very close to the benchmark and then reaches that benchmark will be counted as a success, while another student who entered at a far lower level and just misses the benchmark is considered a failure. In addition, language learning gains may require much more time than is provided in a program between NRS assessments. Also, NRS does not take into consideration the nonlinear nature of second language acquisition: learners may make substantial progress, only to plateau and remain at that level for some time.

#### **4.4 CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

The majority of adult ESL programs are functional in nature. They focus on the use of English in real-life contexts, with attention to both language and cultural orientation. Academic ESL courses are more likely to be divided into language skills (listening and speaking, reading and vocabulary, or writing and grammar), with a focus on academic language and learning strategies. The transition from more functional courses to academic courses can be problematic. Moreover, some ESL curricula emphasize listening and speaking to the virtual exclusion of reading and writing. That emphasis can make it difficult for many students who desire to continue in academic ESL, where the emphasis is on reading and writing. In adult ESL, intermediate courses have always been

problematic. Beginning ESL courses focus on survival skills with some attention to employment. Advanced ESL courses focus on academic skills. Intermediate courses are therefore sometimes hard to define. Only recently have intermediate ESL curricula been designed to move students from survival skills to employment skills to academic skills.

In addition, while the need for ESL literacy courses remains high, few programs have appropriate curricula to enable these learners not only to acquire literacy and basic ESL, but also to make the transition to higher levels.

#### **4.5 INSTRUCTIONAL DURATION, INTENSITY, AND SCHEDULING**

Not only are there issues of level, complexity, and appropriateness, but intensity, duration, and scheduling are also problematic. The duration (length of program) and intensity (number of hours per week) necessary for adults to progress from one ESL level to another are hard to estimate because learners differ, their motivations and schedules vary, program design and emphases vary, and the learning process is intrinsically complex.

The Mainstream English Language Teaching (MELT) Project (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1985) concluded that it takes an adult with native language literacy and no prior English instruction between 500 and 1,000 hours of instruction to satisfy basic needs, function on the job, and interact on a limited basis through English. Acquiring enough English to enroll in a college program would take much longer (cited in Moss et al., 2003). For those without literacy, the number of hours required to develop enough English language proficiency for successful participation in a vocational or academic postsecondary program can be onerous. Some adult ESL programs with large numbers of ESL literacy students enrolled put them in separate classes for several cycles, because having to read and write prematurely when developing language proficiency can slow and even impede the wider language learning process.

While the MELT estimates are based on expert opinion rather than empirical research, these estimates are consistent with more empirically derived estimates of the time (four to seven years) it takes an elementary or secondary school student to be able to function at grade level in English speaking classrooms: an hour a day of ESL for 180 school days for four to seven years is equivalent to 720 to 1,260 hours (Thomas and Collier, 1997; Cummins, 1981).

An additional factor affecting English language learning is the intensity of instruction, the number of hours of instruction provided each week. Programs vary in the number of hours of ESL they offer, some giving as few as two to three hours per week and others as many as fifteen to twenty hours. In general, the more intensive the program, the shorter the time required to learn English. Though there may be an upper limit to effective instructional time (with some of the time better spent in informal use of the language outside of the classroom), there may also be a lower limit of effective intensity. Programs that provide relatively few hours of instruction per week may not result in measurable gains for adult ESL learners.

A third issue related to the timing of instruction concerns the scheduling of instruction. Adult ESL classes should be scheduled at times when students are able to attend. Courses should be offered in the morning, afternoon, and evening and on weekends, to accommodate different work schedules and family responsibilities. Even if some type of central intake center exists, programs may not be provided at the right time or place, or with appropriate support services such as childcare, to make it possible for adult ESL students to attend.

#### **4.6 INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF**

Adult ESL instructors have a wide range of experience and academic preparation. Those who teach in community colleges are likely to have advanced degrees in appropriate fields such as TESOL or applied linguistics, which give them the knowledge and skills ESL instructors need. Those teaching in programs sponsored by local education agencies

or by community or voluntary organizations may have only minimal preparation to teach adult ESL. Several states require that adult ESL teachers have certification to teach elementary or secondary education, which is of limited effectiveness for teaching adults. Some voluntary organizations require only 18 instructional hours of professional training. When adult ESL programs are integrated into the community college, those teachers with less professional preparation may have an opportunity to work with teachers who have a stronger academic preparation.

Like many adult educators, those who teach adult ESL often have only part-time positions, with short-term contracts and limited benefits (Crandall, 1993). In a community college setting, there is a greater likelihood for full-time positions that carry benefits and also faculty status.

#### **4.7 ARTICULATION, INTEGRATION, AND CENTRALIZATION**

Because there are so many types of ESL learners, adult ESL programs are sponsored by a variety of organizations. Typically, community colleges teach advanced ESL courses and other courses that carry either institutional or academic credit. They may also teach lower-level courses, vocational ESL courses, and family literacy, although these may be taught by other service providers. Even if community colleges offer a number of different ESL programs (credit and noncredit; vocational and academic; beginning through advanced), these may be administratively scattered and may not communicate or collaborate with each other. The programs may not articulate, and students may not fully understand their options.

Programs differ in the extent to which they communicate and link with each other, inside and outside the college. Some programs are relatively isolated. Others have extensive communication and articulation – between adult ESL and other adult education; between noncredit and credit ESL; among ESL, developmental education, and freshman composition; and between programs on campus and other programs and services provided by CBOs and other organizations. Some of the best adult ESL programs

maintain close working relationships with the community, referring students to social services and receiving students from such agencies. They also work closely with the English or developmental education departments on campus by encouraging team-teaching courses. Other ways of increasing articulation have included: pairing ESL and content courses; integrating academic content into ESL (content-based ESL); offering “sheltered” content courses (courses taught with strategies to accommodate the needs of ESL learners); or providing a separate, additional discussion (adjunct) classes for ESL learners who are enrolled in content classes with English-speaking students. VESL courses may also address the specific language that is needed to participate in vocational or workplace training at some colleges.

Communication and articulation result from a program’s integration within the administrative structure of the college. In some colleges, noncredit and credit ESL are housed in continuing education, where they may have limited influence on policies that directly affect adult ESL students in the college. In others, noncredit ESL may be housed in continuing education, while credit ESL is located in an academic department such as English, where ESL may also be marginalized.

The degree to which ESL programs are centralized or unified in a single administrative structure is also important. Centralization may make it possible for programs to articulate with each other as well as for students to take courses in more than one program and to transition from one program to another.

## **5. ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES**

### **5.1 THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LINK**

Not all adult ESL should or can be offered by community colleges. There is a role for CBOs, volunteer organizations, libraries, and local education agencies. However, community colleges have a leadership role to play in advocacy for adult students – many also have strong commitments to adult education and literacy service provision<sup>3</sup> – and they can offer adult ESL students access to resources such as computer labs, libraries, and career and academic counseling that might not be available otherwise. They can provide faculty with support for innovation in curriculum and program design and opportunities for staff development. Moreover, community colleges also have expertise in grant writing and budgeting, as well as in program administration and management, all of which are needed in an environment where funding is continually sought or requirements from funding sources change. With the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act, local educational agencies are increasingly focused on the act’s mandates, making this an opportune time for community colleges to assume more of the responsibility for adult education.

### **5.2 THE VALUE OF CENTRALIZATION**

A centralized administration and an administrative structure that groups similar or complementary programs (e.g., credit and noncredit; workplace and academic) and brings them into administrative alignment can make programs more visible, coherent, consistent, and efficient. It can also make it easier for adult ESL students to set goals, access appropriate services, and move from one level or type of program to another.

---

<sup>3</sup> Editor’s Note: Other recent research papers by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (see [www.caalusa.org](http://www.caalusa.org)) indicate that community colleges currently provide more than one-third of all adult education and literacy services offered in the United States; in some states they are the primary provider.

### **5.3 ARTICULATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COLLABORATION**

The ability to help students make the transition into regular college classes depends in part on good relations within the college, active information flow, curricular integration, and community outreach. Programs achieve the most if they work with allied programs and other service providers toward a common purpose.

### **5.4 CURRICULAR INNOVATION**

With limited funds, community colleges are experimenting with distance learning and other forms of course delivery, sometimes combining classroom instruction with self-instructional programs, using television or computer-based learning at a greatly reduced cost. The best programs are often the most willing to experiment with new instructional approaches, alternative scheduling, and enrollment or retention strategies. Examples include computer-assisted instruction, distance learning, learner-centered curricula, content integration, and managed enrollment.

## 6: FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper about adult ESL in community colleges is only a very preliminary look at the subject. Further research is needed for a number of reasons. One is to establish baseline information on extant programs and define the universe with reference to key descriptors. Another is to examine a handful of representative programs in depth with a view to identifying their promising practices. A third is to define the professional development process that is needed for more programs to adopt these practices.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Editor's Note: As a step in this direction, CAAL has begun a two-year project in which ESL service will be examined in a selected group of community colleges in terms of faculty development and instructional strategies and approaches. The project will be under the general direction of CAAL senior vice president, Forrest Chisman; its research director will be JoAnn Crandall.

## **Appendix A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

To complete this survey, contacts were made with a purposive sample of programs across the country. This was not a representative sample, inasmuch as it included a disproportionate number of institutions that have received attention in the field for their innovations, efforts to resolve administrative problems, size, or visibility. However, they represent a range of policies and practices.

Once contacted, the programs were asked to supply basic information about the issues the study would address. These included the following:

1. What do you see as the appropriate role of the community college in offering ESL? Does your college offer noncredit ESL courses? Are they for students at all levels, or only for advanced students?
2. How does your program articulate with other adult ESL programs, off campus and on? Who are the other service providers with whom you interact and how? Is there a task force or coalition or some other board that coordinates the various service providers?
3. How does the credit ESL program on your campus articulate with other courses at the community college (especially freshman composition and developmental education)?
4. What support services do you think are needed for an adult ESL student to be able to transition to academic work at a community college? What kinds of services do you or others in the community provide?
5. What problems do you face in meeting the needs of adult ESL students? (Funding streams? Coordination? Articulation? Assessment and accountability? Fragmentation of services? Finding appropriate staff? Providing staff development?)
6. What do you see as the special strengths of the community college in serving adult education (or former adult education) students?
7. What do you see as the major problems? (Location in the community college governance structure? Relation to other programs on campus? Lack of strategic plan?) Do you have recommendations about how these might be addressed?
8. Finally, do you have suggestions of other individuals at your campus or on other campuses that you think I should contact?

The information gathered was then checked and collated. Programs were often contacted more than once to secure additional information, amplification, or clarification.

The data were then compared to identify common policies and practices that characterize the field as a whole and uncommon policies or practices that define a program as exceptional or exemplary.

## **Appendix B: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This study was conducted primarily by interviews, e-mail communication, and follow-up telephone conversations with respected adult ESL professionals from a range of programs. The authors especially want to thank the following individuals for being so generous with their time and providing their experiences and expertise:

### Arizona

Linda Hellman, Pima Community College  
Cynthia Meier, Pima Community College

### California

Gretchen Bitterlin, San Diego Community College District  
Donna Price Machado, San Diego Community College District  
Johnny Johnson, Monterey Peninsula College

### Colorado

Ruth Brancard, Community College of Denver  
Sam Cassio, Community College of Denver  
Myrna Ann Adkins, Spring Institute for International Studies  
Barbara Sample, Spring Institute for International Studies

### Illinois

Suzanne Leibman, College of Lake County  
Richard Orem, Northern Illinois University

### Maryland

Sherrie Carroll, Montgomery College  
Donna Kinerney, Montgomery County  
Esther Robbins, Prince George's County Community College  
Peggy Seufert, Department of Adult Education  
David Truscello, Community College of Baltimore County

### New Jersey

Joanne Hala, Jointure for Adult Education, Somerset County

### New York

Hamid Khereif, York College (CUNY)  
Joan Manes, New York City College of Technology (CUNY)  
Leslee Oppenheim, City University of New York

Oregon

Reuel Kruzet, Portland Community College  
Sharlene Walker, Adult Basic Skills and Family Literacy

Washington

Kim Chapman, North Seattle Community College  
Alice Keller, North Seattle Community College  
Rita Smilkstein, North Seattle Community College

Virginia

Janet Gianotti, Northern Virginia Community College

District of Columbia

National Center for ESL Literacy

Miriam Burt  
Mary Ann Florez  
Dora Johnson  
Joy Kreeft Peyton  
Lynda Terrill  
Carol Van Duzer

While the authors received much guidance from many colleagues, they alone are responsible for the resulting report. The report also benefited from the advice and guidance of Forrest P. Chisman, Vice President of CAAL.

## Appendix C: REFERENCES

- Chisman, F. P., H. S. Wrigley, and D. Ewen, (1993) *ESL and the American Dream: A report on an investigation of English as a second language service for adults*. Washington, DC: Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.
- Crandall, J. A. (1993). "Professionalism and Professionalization of Adult ESL Literacy," *TESOL Quarterly*, 27 (3), 497-515.
- Cummins, J. (1981), "The Role of Primary Language Development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students." In California State Department of Education (ed.) *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*, Los Angeles, CA: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center.
- Fitzgerald, N. B. (1995), *ESL Instruction in Adult Education: Findings from a National Evaluation*. ERIC Digest.
- Fix, M. E., J. S. Passel, and K. Sucher, (2003), *Trends in Naturalization*. Brief No. 3 in Series: "Immigrant Families and Workers: Facts and Perspectives." Washington, DC: Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310847>.
- Florez, M. A. C. (1997), *The Adult ESL Teaching Profession Today*. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. EDO-LE-98-02.
- Guth, G. (1993), "Profiles of Adult ESL Programs," *TESOL Quarterly*, 27 (3), 533-537.
- Kuo, E. W. (1999), "English as a Second Language in the Community College Curriculum," *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 108, 69-80.
- Kuo, E. W. (2002), *English as a Second Language: Program Approaches at Community Colleges*, ERIC Digest, ED447859.
- Marshall, B. (2002), *Preparing for Success: A Guide for Teaching Adult English Language Learners*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Marshall, B. (2002, July), *Q & A: English That Works: Preparing Adult Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community*, Washington, DC: NCLE.
- McCabe, R. (2003), *Yes We Can! A Community College Guide for Developing America's Underprepared*, Phoenix, AZ: League for Innovation in the Community Colleges and American Association of Community Colleges.

- Moss et al. (2003), *Montgomery County ESOL Report*. Washington, DC: NCLE.
- National Reporting System for Adult Education (2001, March), *Measures and Methods for the National Reporting System for Adult Education: Implementation Guidelines*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy.
- Pugsley, R. (2001), "The Learner Population in Adult ESL Programs," in *Adult ESL Practice in the New Millennium*, Washington, DC: NCLE, <http://www.cal.org/ncle/millennium.htm#Population>.
- Schuyler, G. (ed.), (1999), "Trends in Community College Curriculum," *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 108, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Thomas, W. P. and V. Collier (1997), *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Student*, Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- U. S. Census Bureau (2001), *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States*, [www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-206](http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-206).
- U. S. Census Bureau (2001), "Age by Language Spoken at Home By Ability To Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over," Census 2001 supplementary survey summary tables, <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet>.
- U. S. Census Bureau (2002), "Coming to America: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign-Born (2000 update)," Washington, DC: author, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/cenbr01-1.pdf>.
- U. S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (2003), *Target and Actual Performance on Core Measures: National Totals 2001-2002*. Washington, DC: USDOE/OVAE.
- U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (1985), *The Mainstream English Language Teaching (MELT) Project*, Washington, DC: USDHHS.
- Van Duzer, C., D. Moss, M. Burt, J. K. Peyton, and L. Ross-Feldman (2003), *OECD Review of Adult ESL Education in the United States: Background Report*. Prepared for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: USDOE/OVAE.
- Wrigley, H. S. (1993), *Adult ESL Literacy: Findings from a National Study*. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. EDO-LE-93-05.
- Wrigley, H. and D. Ewen (1995), *A National Language Policy for ESL*. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education.

Wrigley, H., and G. Guth (1992), *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International, (EDRS No. ED 348 896).

Wrigley, H. S., E. Richer, K. Martinson, H. Kubo, and J. Strawn (2003), *The Language of Opportunity: Expanding Employment Prospects for Adults with Limited English Skills*, Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy and National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium.

**Appendix D:**  
**COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL PROGRAM PROFILES**

**1. New York City College of Technology (CUNY) – p. 30**

**2. San Diego Community College – p. 37**

**3. North Seattle Community College – p. 42**

**4. Community College of Denver – p. 47**

**5. Pima Community College (Arizona) – p. 55**

# 1: New York City College of Technology (CUNY)

## 1.1 The CUNY Context

The New York City College of Technology is a comprehensive college. It functions both as a community college (offering an associate of arts degree) and a four-year college (offering a bachelor's degree). City Tech, as it is known, is one college in the huge City University of New York system (CUNY). CUNY serves more than 210,000 adults in degree programs and another 240,000 in other programs each year. Each campus in the CUNY system is quasi-independent, and therefore ESL programs differ among them. However, in general, CUNY offers ESL instruction through five basic programs:

- Credit courses for matriculated students still in need of academic ESL.
- Low-cost, noncredit immersion classes for matriculated students who need intensive, higher-level, pre-academic ESL (CUNY Language Immersion Program, or CLIP).
- Fee-based continuing education classes open to the public.
- Publicly funded adult literacy programs providing free ESL and basic education/GED classes.
- Revenue-producing intensive classes for international students, many of whom do not matriculate at CUNY.

Through these programs, the university provides a continuum of services to English language learners depending upon their educational backgrounds and language learning goals. This profile focuses primarily on the adult literacy programs and the CLIP program because they illustrate the college-university connection as it relates to the transition from adult ESL education into the community/four year college of City Tech.

Each of these programs is loosely supervised by CUNY's central Office of Academic Affairs. Adult ESL and CLIP are horizontally and vertically integrated. At City Tech, the two programs are administered jointly by the same person, who, in turn, reports to the Office of Academic Affairs at CUNY.

CUNY's adult literacy program, in existence for more than a quarter of a century, is offered on 13 campuses (many of which have satellite programs, including City Tech). Funded by the federal government (Workforce Investment Act of 1998), New York State, and New York City, it serves about 10,000 non-degree seeking adult students a year, providing free instruction in ESL, basic education, and GED preparation.

The CLIP program, begun in 1995, was created to provide a voluntary option for matriculated students with significant English language needs. The program is offered at nine campuses (including City Tech) and serves about 3,000 students a year in an intensive 25-hour a week instructional format. The program, supported by the university and very modest student fees, offers students up to a year of academic ESL preparation, leaving their financial aid allocation available for subsequent credit-bearing coursework.

Following CLIP, students are eligible to enroll in credit-bearing classes, which may include further ESL study.

The central Office of Academic Affairs oversees the distribution of funding among the campuses for both programs. In addition, the office provides a framework for data management and support for curriculum and professional development. It has a cadre of staff developers who work closely with instructional staff to enhance teaching skills and develop instructional materials.

## **1.2 City Tech**

The Adult Learning Center (ALC) at City Tech is funded by the CUNY central office, which receives its funds from federal, state, and city sources. There are two broad funding streams: a five-level program, from basic education through preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) examination, and a comprehensive ESL instructional program. Roughly 55 percent of the students at the Center are enrolled in ESL. Some of these students already have a high school diploma and therefore are only enrolled in ESL.

At intake, students indicate the program in which they want to register. If they ask for a GED program but seem to lack needed English language skills, they are advised to go into ESL and are tested for placement in that program. This may happen when they first come in to inquire, during the registration and placement process, or during the first week or two of GED classes. Once their English language skills are sufficient, they may transfer into GED classes. Others request and go directly in to ESL classes. A third category possesses the necessary language skills to go directly into GED classes. Some few, though this is rare, may test out of ESL altogether. During ESL classes, students explore long-term goals. Some may want to go into a GED program when they have learned enough English. Some of these students will then go on into college, but others are in GED classes because they want to qualify for a job, a promotion, or a credential.

Those students who already have a high school diploma from their native country and still need ESL may take noncredit adult ESL. If they plan to matriculate at the college, they may also enroll in CLIP when they complete the adult ESL sequence.

## **1.3 Students at City Tech**

The Adult Learning Center at City Tech is open to all adults aged 19 or older who wish to attend. The great majority of the ESL students are Spanish speakers (70 percent of those at the ALC, probably a higher percentage at the off-site classes). Many come from Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Others speak such languages as Chinese, Arabic, Haitian Creole, and Russian.

The educational backgrounds of the ESL students vary from those who are illiterate or minimally literate in their native languages to those who have a college education. This variation exists among students at all levels of oral English skills, which serve as the

basis for placement. Separate classes are not provided for those with very low literacy skills. However, reading and writing skills are included in the curriculum at all levels, and ESL teachers provide individual support whenever possible. In some cases, students with basic literacy needs are referred to other programs (e.g., those provided by CBOs, libraries, and volunteer organizations). About 350 students attend classes in the ALC at any given time, and about 100 attend off-site locations in public schools.

Student goal-setting is typically discussed in upper-level classes, with counselors helping students to think through and move along a path to particular goals, such as going on to college, becoming a citizen, or obtaining or improving a job.

#### **1.4 Schedule and Levels**

There are three regular cycles of classes (fall, winter, and spring) and a short summer cycle with a few classes. Classes are held during the day, at night, and on Saturday. Four basic ESL class levels are offered. During the week, the lowest level is split into a true beginners class and a slightly more advanced class. On Saturdays, seven classes are provided; the lowest two levels are split into four sublevels.

#### **1.5 Intake and Placement**

People interested in taking classes come in to fill out a simple application form. Notification of scheduled testing and registration is sent to applicants. After registration, students are admitted to classes at the start of the next cycle, space permitting. Typically, they wait three to six months.

At registration, all applicants are tested with the NYSE Place Test (New York State placement test for ESL students) to determine their initial placement in the program. Because the NYSE Place is an oral test, student placement is based primarily on speaking proficiencies; those with low literacy skills are then reassigned to a lower-level class, where they can develop reading and writing skills. Their literacy levels are determined through in-class reading and writing during the first days of class. The incorporation of reading/writing skills assessment into the placement process is under discussion.

Note that none of these are hard-and-fast procedures – class size is taken into account, and students may be reassigned during the first two weeks based on teachers' assessments.

#### **1.6 Progress**

Students can enter or advance to a new class at the start of each cycle. With one exception, they are allowed to remain in a class as long as they wish, repeating it if necessary. Students at the top level may remain in the same class for no more than three cycles, to allow others to advance.

Teacher evaluations are the primary tool for deciding on advancement within the program. The instructor indicates which students should be moved up, sometimes based on discussions with the program manager and the student. The present assessment approach is informal, but the program is now developing benchmarks, a more formal set of guidelines, and a standard evaluation form, in consultations with students.

Instructional duration data does not presently exist, but program staff know that many students continue for more than a year, especially those who start at the lowest level. In addition, sequence of study can be broken because students sometimes take a leave of absence for health, personal, or family reasons and then return in a later cycle.

As required by the New York State Department of Education, students are post-tested on the NYSE Place. The BEST Plus Test is slated to replace the NYSE Place Test in 2004. All students will be retested with that instrument when it is available.

Some students move into an ABE/GED program if they do not have high school diplomas from their native countries. Others move on to college. If they are interested in City Tech, they are advised to consider the CLIP program at the college. Generally, a presentation on CLIP is offered to Level III and IV classes. Students with specific questions or goals can speak to counselors, who help provide the information they need, assist with filling out forms, and the like.

## **1.7 Curriculum**

Teachers create or select a content-based theme for each cycle with the help of curriculum developers from the Office of Academic Affairs. They use material (fiction, biography, history) that is appropriate for the students' level, and that is highly motivational and learner centered. In the lowest-level classes, themes such as "family and community" and "New York City" are often chosen because of their high interest to learners.

All curricula address the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Classes involve a variety of activities that take advantage of New York City resources.

## **1.8 Faculty**

The City Tech program has two full-time ESL instructors and fifteen part-time instructors. Many have ESL training (certificates or master's degrees); others have backgrounds in English, education, or liberal arts. The overwhelming majority have been at the ALC for two years or more. (Note that at CLIP, faculty have advanced degrees in relevant fields such as TESOL.)

Faculty have access to a variety of staff development opportunities, including curriculum-writing workshops.

## **1.9 Articulation with the Community**

At CUNY, program personnel meet on a regular basis for managerial and staff development activities. In addition, the New York City Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) organizes managers' meetings and staff development activities, and it maintains a computerized data/reporting system. LAC events are open to staff of all ABE/GED/ESL programs in the city, whether at CUNY, community-based organizations, or the NYC Department of Education.

College-based counselors refer students to social service agencies and programs as needed, and some agencies refer clients to City Tech for educational services. City Tech has an Immigration Clinic in its Legal Assistant Studies Department, and students are referred to it for information and support services. These units also occasionally provide workshops for the ESL classes.

Through its English language and civics program, City Tech offers off-site ESL classes. One is housed at an elementary school and is intended for the elementary school students' parents. Others are open to the broader community as well and attract parents and other adult relatives of students.

## **1.10 Articulation within the College and CUNY**

There are no formal articulation agreements between the college and the Adult Learning Center's adult ESL program that define what skills or credentials these students need to be admitted into the college. Instead, students are encouraged to apply if they are interested in college, and teachers and counselors give them information about City Tech and the CLIP program. They are not eligible for college services because they pay no student fees.

Credit ESL courses at the various CUNY campuses vary widely. Students receive different types of instruction at different campuses, depending on their level of preparation for higher education. Some colleges provide ESL writing almost exclusively. Others offer more comprehensive courses. Some have extensive instructional support programs, while some do not. Some offer specialized courses geared to CUNY's assessment of basic skills, integrated courses, bridge courses, and paired courses taught by instructors from more than one department; other colleges provide a more narrow range of courses.

## **1.11 Potential for Improvement**

Many benchmark and tracking projects are presently under way. For instance, more computer-assisted instruction is being implemented. Currently, daytime classes spend two hours per week in a computer laboratory and some evening classes also have access to computers.

Clearer benchmarks are being developed in both ESL and ABE/GED to help teachers plan classes at each level and assess student progress. For both ESL and ABE/GED, the idea is to describe the skills a teacher would expect students to have at any given class level. In ESL, this would include functional skills (e.g., asking appropriate questions in specific settings, narrative abilities, giving and understanding directions) and such skills as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and literacy. For ABE/GED classes, basic knowledge in content areas tested on the GED exam (history, science) will be assessed, as well as skills in reading and writing and in visual literacy.

Other improvements in the process include a system for tracking the students' work as they move from one class or instructor to another (a modified portfolio) and a teachers' lounge that has a library containing books, workbooks, reference material, and curricula and materials from various classes. Moreover, higher salaries are being sought, especially for part-time instructors, along with more paid staff development for teachers and counselors.

### **1.12 Value of Adult ESL-College Relationship**

Even though there are no formal connections with college departments and offices, adult ESL students have identification cards from City Tech and see themselves as members of the college community. Many take ESL or GED classes because they hope to enter the college eventually. These adults are the parents, relatives, and neighbors of future or current students at the college – and some are themselves future students at City Tech.

By providing ESL and GED services, the college strengthens its ties with the community from which it draws its student body. More generally, ESL and GED preparation often result in improved employment opportunities, so the college supports the economic development of the surrounding community as well. Moreover, there are many adults in the community where the college is located who are in need of ESL and GED services, and the college believes that serving these students serves the larger mission of a public college.

### **1.13 Special Features**

Faculty and administration cite the make-up of the curriculum as a special feature of the ESL program, including the following elements:

- The use of content-based thematic curricula for each class, with teachers selecting themes that are appropriate and interesting, often with student input.
- The use of real texts – books, stories, articles. Commercially published textbooks and workbooks serve only as supplemental material.
- The inclusion of all skills in the context of a class theme: students read material, discuss it, and write about it.

- A wide variety of activities, including visits to museums and other educational or cultural institutions, class presentations (sometimes just for the class, sometimes with students invited from other classes), debates, and the development of class Web sites.
- The special relationship between the City Tech and the CUNY central Office of Academic Affairs, and the ways this relationship helps students become aware of their options.

## **2: San Diego Community College**

### **2.1 Introduction**

San Diego's adult education program is part of the community college system. Like CUNY, the system contains more than one satellite campus. The San Diego Community College District (the District) includes three colleges that provide credit courses (City, Mesa, and Miramar Community Colleges) and six Centers for Education and Technology (formerly known as Centers for Continuing Education) which provide noncredit courses in nine subject areas, including ESL. Through a delineation agreement with the K-12 system, the District provides adult education services in the city of San Diego.

Most of the funding for the noncredit classes comes from the state of California, roughly \$12 million in fiscal 2004. The noncredit ABE/ESL/ASE program receives about \$1 million in federal funds through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) for supplemental expenses such as books, supplies, technology, instructional aides, and staff development. These funds are allocated according to performance on standardized CASAS tests. The program operates under continual threat of reduced funding from the general fund because of a budget crisis in California. In addition to ESL, the noncredit program offers classes in Citizenship, ABE, GED/high school diploma preparation, older adults, business information technology, consumer science, and vocational training. Former ESL students matriculate into many of these programs

### **2.2 Students**

In adult ESL courses, students are predominantly of Mexican and Asian origin. However, other ethnic groups are present in significant numbers. In the fall of 2003, 100 or more students were enrolled from 28 different countries. The newest group of ESL students is a group of Somali Bantu refugees with little or no English language proficiency or literacy.

A majority of the students are in beginning ESL. Literacy needs among these students vary widely across and within these classes. Immigrants often have low literacy levels and are likely to be enrolled in literacy classes.

### **2.3 Schedule and Levels**

Four levels of credit ESL courses are offered through the English Department at the three college campuses. Seven levels of noncredit ESL (adult education ESL) are offered at over 70 locations through the Centers for Education and Technology (CET). ESL classes make up 42 percent of the noncredit program. The noncredit ESL classes are free, while credit courses cost \$18 per credit hour. Students in credit courses are eligible for financial aid (Pell grants).

The noncredit program has seven levels. One federal NRS level has been divided by the college into two beginning levels:

- Level 1 – Beginning Literacy
- Level 2 – Beginning Low
- Level 3 – Beginning High
- Level 4 – Intermediate Low
- Level 5 – Intermediate High
- Level 6 – Advanced Low
- Level 7 – Advanced

At the upper levels, the focus may be on vocational or general ESL. There is some overlap between upper levels of the noncredit program and the credit program, facilitating transfers between the programs as students' needs and interests change.

In general, the noncredit programs are open entry, but the college has been experimenting with a managed enrollment system that allows students to enter during the first week of classes; and requires those who want to enter after the first week to wait until the next cycle. While this is beneficial for instruction, it makes it more difficult to meet attendance requirements for reimbursement.

#### **2.4 Intake and Placement**

At registration, students at San Diego CET take a placement test that consists of short oral and reading tests. If students test out at level 4 or above, they qualify for VESL, the vocational ESL program in which they study general English for the workplace for one half of the class and choose specific vocational modules to focus on for the second half of the class. This program serves as an effective transition between ESL and the regular vocational classes offered within the noncredit program. The most common vocational programs that students transfer into from this class are certified nursing assistant training, business information technology, and family home daycare.

#### **2.5 Progress**

In general, ESL students at San Diego opt in and out of classes as employment opportunities emerge or dissipate and their plans change. A student may get a job after completing level 3 or 4, drop out, come back if the job ends or looks like it is a dead-end, and drop out again if a new opportunity arises. It is not unusual for a student to complete levels 1 through 4 and return later for more English at levels 5 through 7 or the noncredit vocational ESL program which may lead to matriculation in the credit program. A recent video shown to the college board of trustees highlights an ESL student who attended an ESL class, then a citizenship class after which she got her citizenship. Then she attended the high school GED program and got her high school diploma – all in the noncredit program. After this, she went to the college credit side for two years, and then to San Diego State University where she received her BA degree and teaching credential in May 2003.

Additional testing – this time to satisfy funding guidelines – takes place after the students have been in class for three weeks. At that point, they are given the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test mandated by the state, and they are given it again every ten weeks thereafter.

In the view of many staff members, there is a mismatch between this test’s purpose and San Diego’s programmatic focus. While CASAS was designed for adult basic education and ESL programs, it stresses the receptive skills, reading and listening, not the productive skills, such as speaking and writing. Thus, teachers use other forms of assessment to measure gains in speaking and writing. Ironically, while CUNY’s test (previous profile) results in misplacements in literacy classes because it is a test of oral skills, the reverse is true here.

Adult education programs face issues about student readiness for formal assessment. Also, the relationship between what is taught and what is measured and score interpretation are critical issues. San Diego uses a variety of measures, because different student goals and programs require different assessments.

## **2.6 Curriculum**

Students attend the noncredit or credit program according to their goals. If they need English for everyday survival or vocational purposes, or short-term improvement in listening, speaking, reading, or writing skills, they will enroll in the noncredit program. If they are interested in degree or certain vocational certificate programs, they will enroll in the credit program. Counselors in the noncredit program make regular presentations to ESL classes informing students of available educational options.

## **2.7 Articulation with the Community**

The various Centers for Education and Technology also collaborate with community agencies to stretch dollars and serve those most in need. For example, they cosponsor classes with the city’s housing commission, for which the commission provides space while the college absorbs the instructor’s salary. The housing commission absorbs instructor costs if enrollment runs below the required average class size of 26 for the regular program. Similarly, CET works closely with K-12 schools to provide family literacy programs. In these cases, the public schools provide space, childcare, supplies, and a community assistant, while the colleges provide the instructors, coordination, and staff development services.

## **2.8 Articulation within the College**

When credit students do not fit well into credit classes or if they need additional instruction, they can attend noncredit classes – in such areas as writing, pronunciation, and conversation. Similarly, students in noncredit classes can move to credit classes according to their needs and goals. Proximity is important in the view of many staff

members. Articulation and collaboration between the noncredit and credit programs is easier when these programs are neighbors or on the same premises. Moving the noncredit ESL program onto the main campus at one of the centers has “been a wonderful thing,” according to one staff member, because it has brought the programs into a closer day-to-day relationship and resulted in greater availability of resources and enhanced professional development among the adult ESL staff.

## **2.9 Potential for Improvement**

One major challenge relates to California’s funding guidelines. Although the guidelines sometimes stimulate innovation, they can also have a straitjacket effect.

For example, the required class size can make it hard for the program to organize classes around specific learner needs and differences. Students with little or no prior literacy and those with more education may be assigned to the same classes in order to maintain the required average daily attendance rate of 26 students, and thereby satisfy the program’s basic attendance-reimbursement need.

Shifts in California’s political climate have also made program providers nervous. A rising antipathy to immigration and adult education has left the college’s ESL staff feeling uncertain about the program’s future. Even the president of the state’s faculty union had suggested that cutting adult education is one way to reduce education budget shortfalls, since the state reimburses adult education at a lower rate than other college programs. Statewide legislation is pending that would equalize funding for credit and noncredit community college programs. But the new chancellor supports the continuation of the noncredit program as a separate entity with its own administrative structure within the Community College District

Another big issue in the San Diego program is retention – how to keep students enrolled long enough to insure learning gains and goal attainment. A 2003 study of high retention rates discovered key elements or strategies that were similar in all the classes with good retention. By providing staff development to other instructors on these strategies, it is hoped that retention rates will improve and result in increased learning gains and goal attainment.

## **2.10 Special Features**

Students are not required to complete all ESL levels before enrolling in vocational or academic classes. If the vocational instructor agrees, they can take VESL concurrently with vocational classes, though doing so reduces the number of hours in vocational training. Rather than spending five hours a day in vocational classes, the learner may spend three and a half hours in vocational classes and one and a half in VESL. Because of this, it is advantageous to have both sets of classes located near each other. A counselor on campus helps coordinate learners’ ESL, employment, and academic goals. The ESL program has devised a “safety test” that English language learners can take to enter

vocational training. They can also take GED and general ESL together, if the teacher is willing.

Cooperation between noncredit and credit ESL is made even more possible by proximity. Noncredit programs used to be across the street from the main campus. Moving on campus has “been a wonderful thing” – it has provided opportunity for noncredit and credit students to work together. Credit ESL had some students in their classes who belonged in noncredit and also some students who wanted classes when they were not offered, so the noncredit program began offering a two-hour noncredit ESL writing class for these students. Crossover registration is also possible for students in credit courses who are having difficulty with pronunciation or conversation.

Collaboration has resulted in a number of noncredit faculty seeking advanced degrees, which is also occurring because of a concern that all ESL will eventually be offered for credit.

Retention efforts appear to be working. Fewer adults are opting in and out of the program (though this achievement has created long waiting lists: 300 at one center; 60 to 100 at the others). Waiting lists ironically also increase retention because learners know that it may be impossible to reenter the program whenever they choose. The 2003 study mentioned above examined classes that had the highest degree of retention and used this to inform all classes about factors that increase retention: high expectations of students, having a book (rather than photocopied materials), having students pay for a book or some part of their program and thereby making an investment in learning, providing professional development of teachers, and providing frequent progress reports to students.

The college collaborates with community agencies to stretch dollars. For example, they have collaborated with the housing commission. The college pays for teachers and makes up the difference if the program doesn't reach required enrollment. The commission provides space and other forms of support. The college also collaborates with the public schools in family literacy programs. In this case, the public schools provide childcare, classrooms, some supplies, and a community assistant; the college provides the instructor.

### **3: North Seattle Community College**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

North Seattle Community College (NSCC) has three programs:

(1) The North Seattle Institute of English (NSIE) is an intensive program for students who are not eligible for the free program described below – primarily people on student visas. This program was curtailed at the end of spring quarter 2004 because of a precipitous decline in enrollment owing in part to changes in federal requirements for foreign students since September 11, 2001. The program might be revived in the future if those policies change. Like the immigrant program, NSIE offers pre-college classes – no credits are given toward college degrees or certificates.

(2) There are two multi-level ESL classes in the Continuing Education program at North Seattle Community College – one in speaking/listening and the other in reading/writing. Anyone can take these classes, regardless of visa or immigrant status. Modest tuition fees are charged.

(3) The free ESL program for immigrants, refugees, and U.S. citizens is part of the college's Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. Each quarter, students sign up for a maximum of 18 hours of free classes per week. This program also offers a range of supplemental classes in speaking/listening, pronunciation, writing, computer literacy, and citizenship test preparation; there are approximately 50 such classes per quarter. Most are on campus (morning, afternoon, and evening offerings), but a few are off-campus in family and community centers. All classes in this program are pre-college – no credits are given toward degrees or certificates.

In Fall 2004, the program began to charge \$25 per student per quarter, regardless of the number of credits students enrolled in. The fee was imposed by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and applies to all community colleges in Washington.

The following material is primarily about the free programs and these students.

#### **3.2 Students**

In spring 2004, the “unduplicated” head count in the free ESL program at NSCC was approximately 750, or 192 full-time Equivalent (FTEs). Students in this program are “extremely” diverse in country of origin (they are from five different continents), age, and educational background (ranging from only a few years of education to doctorate degrees in their home country). In one class in fall 2003, there were 21 students from 19 countries and all parts of the globe.

Students' goals are also extremely diverse. Some students simply need enough English to facilitate their new lives in the United States; many of those are already retired and have joined adult children here. Others hope to get certificates from the college in a vocational area, such as in the health professions or computer technology, or an AA or AS degree. Others intend eventually to transfer to a university for a bachelor's degree.

### **3.3 Schedule and Levels**

All courses in the immigrant program are offered during the day, although not all are offered every quarter. Most courses are also offered in the evening. Daytime integrated-skills classes (reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar) meet ten hours per week. Evening integrated-skills classes meet six hours per week. Many supplemental classes are offered in the daytime, fewer in the evening, one on Saturdays.

The program has six levels divided into twelve sublevels, from zero English through advanced college-preparatory classes. The integrated-skills classes are sequenced from ESL 011 (zero English required) through ESL 062 (advanced academic prep). Students can take supplemental classes simultaneously, many of which are multi-level classes.

### **3.4 Intake and Placement**

Prospective students first take free placement tests (the state-mandated CASAS listening and reading tests, and a writing task devised by the ESL program itself). Once their placement has been decided by two ESL faculty members, they are invited to an orientation session and, at that point, enrolled in classes. Enrollments depend in part on availability: Continuing students are given priority in class assignments.

Placement testing is done every week throughout the year. Orientations are conducted just before and after the beginning of fall, winter, and spring quarters. New students are not accepted in the summer quarter.

### **3.5 Progress**

Students at the highest level in the program (ESL 061) take the COMPASS English placement test plus a reading/writing test devised by English faculty to advance to Developmental English or directly to ENG 101 (freshman composition).

Some students continue to the end of the program and go on to more advanced post-ESL classes. There are students who began classes with zero English and complete bachelor's degrees at the University of Washington. However, not all students complete all levels. Some drop out at the point where their English-language goals have been met or when their lives become too complicated. Some leave for employment or personal reasons and return for a later quarter.

Within the program, there are clear guidelines for advancement to the next level or for repeating a level. A state mandate prohibits students from taking any ABE (including ESL) class more than three times.

If all ESL students from ESL 011 through ESL 062 are included, about 10 percent make the transition into credit courses and degree programs. However, the great majority of students who begin at the lowest levels do not intend to enter degree or certificate programs. On the whole, the percentage is higher among students in levels 5 and 6, but no current data are available. In an ESL 062 class in winter quarter 2004, only one student out of 22 did *not* intend to go on to credit classes.

### **3.6 Curriculum**

The curriculum for each course is written by the teachers and then approved by the department, the division, and the ESL programs at the other two campuses in the community college district. Course outlines are subject to periodic revision by the faculty as needed. The process ensures coordination among courses in the program.

The teachers planning each course must “address” ABE/ESL core competencies mandated by the State of Washington. The teachers favor a strong grounding in grammar and its integration into receptive and productive language skills.

### **3.7 Faculty**

There are currently twenty-five part-time and six full-time faculty members in ESL. For full-time positions, the minimum requirement is a master’s degree in ESL or a related field and two years of experience in ESL teaching.

### **3.8 Articulation with the Community**

The ABE/ESL director represents the programs in a consortium of community colleges and community-based organizations in the Seattle area that provide ABE and ESL group classes or one-on-one tutoring (Literacy Source, St. James Cathedral). As needed, the NSCC program refers students to CBOs for individual tutoring. An Americorps volunteer also works with consortium member organizations. One of her principal responsibilities is to train ABE and ESL students in public speaking and arrange for them to address groups about their experiences as immigrants and students.

### **3.9 Articulation within the College**

Between ESL 062 (the highest college preparatory level) and ENG 101 (freshman composition), there are three levels of developmental English. These courses are for advanced ESL students and native speakers of English who are not yet ready for ENG 101. To advance into developmental English, a student must take an English placement test (COMPASS) and a reading/writing test, for a total of six hours of testing). The ESL

062 teachers and the coordinator of the English program discuss the results and together decide on the best placement for each student.

The ESL program is in the same division as all the other English classes, the Division of Arts, Humanities, and Adult Basic Education. The ESL program director reports to the divisional dean, as does the director of NSIE.

### **3.10 Potential for Improvement**

The program strives for improvement in policies, procedures, and especially in teaching and correlation among levels. To that end, two meetings of all ESL faculty are required each quarter. Additional meetings among smaller groups are scheduled as needed. Among the items discussed are changes in the mandates of state and federal government; information required about students (down to the precise number of hours of attendance of each student each quarter); and periodic standardized testing, even specifying the placement test that can be used. Increasingly, program money and teacher time are used to fulfill these mandates, which are seen as necessary for continued program funding.

Even at present funding levels, however, the program is underfunded. For example, the evening program should include a full complement of courses through ESL 062, but only in spring 2004 was the program able to add a long-needed course at the 052 level. There is an urgent need to provide 061 and 062 in the evening, but no funds are available for those courses.

There is a chronic need for better salaries for both part-time and full-time teachers. As part of this problem, there is a serious discrepancy in course load: the ESL program is based on a 20-credit-hour week for full-time teachers (whereas most other programs in the college (including, for example, developmental English and all foreign languages) are based on a 15-credit-hour week. The ESL programs at most other community colleges in the area have a 15-credit-hour week for full-time faculty members, but because of financial restrictions, no one consulted is optimistic about a reduction in the 20-credit-hour ESL workload.

### **3.11 Value of an Adult ESL-College Relationship**

The inclusion of ABE/ESL in the Division of Arts, Humanities, and Adult Basic Education greatly benefits the teachers and students of this ESL program. In some colleges where ABE and ESL are separate from college-credit programs, they suffer from a lack of status, even though they are usually no less demanding of teachers than other classes. Being in the same division also facilitates sequencing from ESL to developmental English in many ways.

### **3.12 Special Features**

The ESL faculty at NSCC is experienced in teaching ESL. There is little turnover – “a wonderful thing, especially considering that 25 of the approximately 30 faculty members

are part-time.” By and large, teachers make their academic expectations and the program’s requirements for advancement clear to students.

The program curriculum is logically sequenced for the various English skill areas. ESL course outlines are revised periodically by committees of the faculty teaching those courses.

Coordination and communication among faculty and between faculty and administrators at the department and division levels are generally good. Two meetings are required for the whole ESL faculty every quarter, plus an additional meeting per quarter for the full-time ESL faculty. There is a weekly meeting of the dean of the division, the director of ABE/ESL, and the ESL faculty coordinator. The current coordinator is also a long-time member of the faculty senate, which is the campus body of the Seattle Community College Federation of Teachers. The duties of the dean, the director, and the coordinator are differentiated. All three keep their doors open to faculty and students.

## **4: Community College of Denver**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The Community College of Denver (CCD) offers ESL classes on a number of different campuses and at other sites around the city. Four types of programs are distinguished by site and funding.

1. The main campus classes at Auraria are for students who want to complete degrees and certificates at U.S. colleges and universities or improve their English for jobs that require reading and writing as well as listening and speaking. These classes carry credit and serve immigrant students. At a time when enrollment growth at the college was flat, this program probably grew faster than any other: enrollment more than trebled in six years. At its peak in 2001-2002, it had over 500 students and generated approximately 190 FTEs. Enrollment decreased in 2003-2004 to about 350 students.
2. Classes at CCD West and CCD East are smaller. These classes are offered for variable credit, which means that students receive credit based on what they accomplish. Classes are open entry and open exit, i.e., students may start at anytime during the semester and finish whenever they complete course requirements. Classes are offered as open labs. Students come on days and at times that fit their schedules. Classes mix proficiency levels.
3. GED Institute and CCD North classes provide GED and Spanish GED instruction in addition to ESL classes. The latter serve approximately 500 ESL students at several sites. The classes are funded in part through grants. This site offers a mix of credit and noncredit classes.
4. Finally, work-related ESL classes have in the past been offered in workplaces by CCD's Corporate Training Center, for example, at area hospitals for entry-level maintenance and food service workers. Other classes were designed to improve English skills for job placement for people receiving state welfare assistance. For a time, they were grant-funded. Recently, the funding formula has changed and there are few ESL Corporate Training Center classes left.

At the Auraria, CCD West, and CCD East programs, classes are funded in the same way that all other classes at CCD are funded, from the college's general fund – which means the money comes from a combination of student tuition, fees, and state FTE reimbursement.

At the GED Institute and CCD North, classes are funded through a combination of tuition, the college's General Fund, and grants. Overall, in ABE/GED and ESL classes, about a third of the funding comes from CCD's general fund, and the other two-thirds from grants. The sources of grant funding vary from year to year. In 2003-2004, WIA

federal money distributed by the state of Colorado provided most of the funding. Other funding was from an English Language Civics Grant, an enhancement grant from Colorado State to supplement the WIA grant for this year only, and the Daniels Fund, which provides a small amount for materials for the Head Start program to strengthen family literacy.

Colorado provides no state funds for adult education. As a result, CCD often has waiting lists for adults seeking ESL services. CCD is not the only provider of adult ESL. CBOs (like Spring Institute), libraries, and other service providers offer ESL as well, especially to meet the needs of those with limited prior education and literacy. Many of these programs use refugee funds to provide services.

## **4.2 Students**

The program's population reflects immigration trends in the Denver metro area. In the programs funded primarily by tuition, most students have lived in Colorado for one year or longer, a requirement for qualifying for in-state tuition rates.

The largest group of credit students is Spanish-speaking, and most of them are from Mexico. A study done in 1998 showed that approximately 45 percent of the students were Spanish-speaking. The percentage is probably higher today. However, there are significant numbers of students from other countries, so that the classes are ethnically and linguistically diverse. The second largest group is Asian, with the largest number coming from Vietnam. There are also significant numbers from East Africa – Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and the Sudan. There are also students from Russia, Iraq, Morocco, and Iran.

At Auraria, all classes are for credit. The educational backgrounds of students vary widely; a few students have advanced degrees from their home countries. Generally, students who receive federal financial aid have completed high school, most in their home countries and a small number in the United States. There are also some students with low levels of literacy and limited years of schooling in their native languages. These students, a minority, often struggle in this program.

At the GED Institute and CCD North campus, both credit and noncredit classes are offered. Students who qualify for in-state tuition and register for classes are eligible for credit. Those who do not qualify for in-state tuition take the courses on a noncredit basis. Those who are registered and qualify for in-state tuition have the first twelve hours of instruction covered by one credit hour tuition plus state funding for that credit hour. Any time spent beyond the twelve hours is figured as "imputed FTE," which allows for state funding at a higher ratio of contact hours to dollars than regular credit. Imputed FTE is a formula for funding developed with the state to help fund CCD's developmental tutoring labs in ESL, reading, math, and writing. It has also been applied to the ESL classes at the GED Institute and the North campus.

Workplace ESL classes are noncredit. Classes are geared to the language skills required by the workplace.

In 2002, CCD surveyed 100 students enrolled in basic, intermediate, and advanced conversation classes at Auraria. Seventy-two percent of all the students surveyed and eighty-three percent of the advanced level students said that they were taking English classes so that they could study in the United States. Sixty-two percent of the students said they were taking English classes in order to get a better job.

The goal of most students is to improve their English so that they are more employable. Some have the goal of being able to communicate with their children's teachers as well.

### **4.3 Schedule and Levels**

The Auraria program offers day, evening, and Saturday classes. CCD West, CCD East, and CCD North offer daytime and evening classes as well. The GED Institute has mostly evening classes, but offers some daytime programs.

At Auraria, three instructional levels are offered: basic, intermediate, and advanced. These are all semester-long, three-credit courses in grammar, conversation, reading, composition, and pronunciation. Nine-credit integrated skills courses are also offered at the basic and intermediate levels; students may choose these instead of the three-credit-hour classes.

Most of the courses at CCD West and CCD East are given on the main campus. They tend to enroll mostly basic- and intermediate-level students. Most CCD North courses are at the basic and intermediate levels. The GED Institute tests students into seven MELT levels based on the BEST. The number of levels offered at each site depends on the demand at that site. Higher levels are usually combined, so that there are two levels in one classroom. In recent years there has been a shift in the proficiency levels of students coming into the program. The majority are at levels 0 and 1. Most of the seven sites have classes at levels 1 through 3.

It was reported that because of waiting lists, adults can stay in publicly funded, noncredit courses for only 160 hours (usually over a period of six months to a year), though volunteers have stepped in to ease this restriction somewhat. Generally, programs offer four hours of instruction a week

### **4.4 Intake and Placement**

In Colorado, noncredit programs that receive federal funding must use BEST or CASAS. The BEST is aligned with a competency-based curriculum, and with MELT student performance levels, which are also aligned with the federal NRS Levels.

At Auraria, levels of English proficiency (LOEP) reading and LOEP listening tests are used. (These are subtests of the College Board's ACCU-Placer Testing program.) A grammar test developed in-house and a holistically graded writing sample are also used for placement into the courses. Cut-off scores are used to place students into basic,

intermediate, and advanced levels of grammar, reading, conversation, and composition. All of the tests, except the writing sample, are computerized. The LOEP tests are computer adaptive. The writing sample is given to students who score above a cut-off score on the grammar test.

CCD West and CCD East programs have traditionally used the BEST test, but are presently shifting to the tests used on the Auraria campus. CCD North uses a combination of the BEST test and the tests used in the Auraria campus program. The GED Institute uses BEST. The BEST is one of two tests authorized by the Colorado Department of Education's Center for At-Risk Education. All students are tested with the BEST Oral Test. Those ready for literacy instruction take the literacy component of BEST.

#### **4.5 Progress**

At Auraria, many variables affect how long it takes students to complete the program. The most obvious ones are whether the students are full-time or part-time and the level at which they begin. Theoretically, students who start the program can finish ESL classes in three to four semesters. (During the third and fourth semesters, they would probably take some classes with native speakers.) Many students are enrolled part-time, which lengthens the amount of time they need to spend in the program. At the same time, a majority start the program at the intermediate or advanced levels, which shortens the amount of time required.

At this time, there are no data on percentages of students who enroll in certificate or degree-granting programs. Judging from the students' educational goals and the numbers of students that move on into other college programs, the percentage is relatively high, but the program could benefit from more accurate data and tracking over time. The GED program does not have resources to document and track students when they leave the program. A small number of students move on to the Auraria campus ESL program, and a small number move into the GED program.

At the GED Institute, to "complete the program" means different things to different students. Over the period of a year, students who attend regularly complete 80 to 90 hours of instruction, and most of them advance one level on the Certificates of Accomplishment ladder. Most students have a goal of improving their English language skills to get a job, advance in employment, or move to a position supervising other non-native speakers.

The GED Institute classes use the BEST oral, the literacy portion BEST Test for middle level students, and the TABE level E for the few students who complete levels 6 and 7 and go on to the ABE program.

Sometimes the placement test and the exit tests are different. For example, the CASAS reading and writing test may be used for placement, while another test is used for exit purposes.

#### **4.6 Curriculum**

Auraria has course content guides, which describe what students are expected to be able to do at completion of each course. These guides are reviewed and revised at least every five years. The curriculum is driven by the guides, not by textbook content. Teachers are given the content guides, sample syllabi, and textbooks for each course. Textbook selection is based on the recommendations of the teachers themselves. All faculty may be involved in the revision process and in new course development. In some cases, teachers may use a different textbook than the one recommended for a course section.

At CCD West and CCD East, teachers choose textbooks and materials. They are also expected to use the Auraria course content guides. The GED Institute uses the Colorado Certificate of Accomplishment curriculum, as defined in 1993-1994 by the Colorado Department of Education (formerly the Office of Adult Education). The Certificate of Accomplishment levels are based in part on MELT competencies, especially for levels 1 through 4. Levels 5 through 7 require higher levels of language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. CCD North uses a combination of the Colorado Department of Education and the CCD curricula. Spring Institute has also helped the college programs accommodate the needs of refugee populations, taking care that grammar-based materials and approaches are avoided.

#### **4.7 Faculty**

At Auraria, faculty have master's degrees or are more than halfway through a master's degree program. Most have an MA with emphasis in ESL. Many have international teaching experience. Most speak a language other than English. Many have years of experience in the field.

At CCD West, CCD East, and CCD North, some but not all faculty have master's degrees. Most speak Spanish. Most have many years of experience teaching in community ESL programs. At the GED Institute, almost all have a master's degree in TESOL.

#### **4.8 Articulation with the Community**

The GED Institute ESL program partners with a community agency for each of its sites. These partnerships include churches, the Denver Housing Authority, Denver Head Start, Catholic Charities, and Metropolitan State College's family literacy program. CCD East, West, and North have contacts in the neighborhoods they serve. The Auraria program maintains contacts with organizations serving the immigrant community and with the English language acquisition programs in several area high schools.

#### **4.9 Articulation within the College**

All ESL programs, except workplace ESL, are part of the Center for Educational Advancement. The program chair of the ESL program is responsible for curricular, staffing, scheduling, advising, and day-to-day operation of the Auraria campus program. She has the responsibility of advising the other programs on curricula. These responsibilities at the branch campus programs are in the hands of the branch campus directors and the director of the GED Institute. Workplace ESL classes are administered by the Corporate Training Center.

#### **4.10 Potential for Improvement**

Persons consulted indicate that the following changes in the credit program would help the Auraria and branch campuses better meet their students' needs:

- Closer articulation between credit and noncredit programs, so that students can find the program best suited to their goals.
- Closer ties to the immigrant community through an advisory board.
- Funding for more full-time faculty and a full-time adviser for ESL students.
- Better communication between Auraria and branch campus programs.
- Funding to expand programs that link with area high schools and their immigrant students.
- Funding for software and computer equipment.
- Better data collection regarding student demographics, student goals, and student progress after exiting the programs.

A number of problems also need attention in the noncredit program:

Constant shifts in reporting requirements have made program improvement difficult. At first, programs could use portfolios, competencies, and the like. Then Colorado implemented its "certificate of accomplishment" based on MELT competencies. However, since the advent of the National Reporting Standards, NRS levels must now be applied to the required tests, making curriculum alignment difficult.

Another problem is that it takes a great deal of time and effort to renegotiate funding and report to funding agencies each year. Stable funding sources and goals would allow more time and energy to go to activities that would benefit learners more directly.

Variation among service provider programs makes articulation difficult. There used to be a council for all Denver programs that provided adult education, but now there is only a single council related to employment. There is also an informal network for community based education.

Teachers on the noncredit side are almost all part-time, partly because of the hours at which classes are given. If a program offers only night classes, for example, the teachers cannot work full time. This makes it necessary for teachers to work at more than one site, thus leaving limited time for training or curriculum development. It also results in a high turnover of staff: if instructors can get a full-time position elsewhere, they leave. If they can't, they sometimes leave the field altogether.

A more significant reason for the use of part-time teachers is that the programs do not receive enough funds to hire full-time faculty. Even the majority of credit classes (about 85 percent) are taught by part-time faculty. This is a challenge for all of the programs, not just ESL.

#### **4.11 Value of College Ties**

One of the strengths of all the CCD programs is that they enjoy close ties to the college. All of the students have access to information about college programs. There are people in all of the programs who can help students make the transition to degree and certificate programs. The Auraria program is probably most successful at moving students into degree and certificate programs. Because of its location on the main campus, it can easily coordinate financial aid, developmental programs, and advising functions at the college. The curriculum is designed for this transition, with clear paths to developmental and college-level classes. The curriculum is also designed to prepare students with the language skills they need for college-level work. CCD North is implementing new strategies to transition ESL students to the vocational programs they offer.

#### **4.12 Special Features**

Each of the CCD programs has many special features/outcomes.

At Auraria, the following were cited:

- High success rates for students whose goal is to go on to degree and certificate programs.
- High levels of student success in ESL courses, documented through post-test scores and course completion rates.
- High levels of student satisfaction with individual classes, as demonstrated by student evaluations completed in all classes each semester.

- High semester-to-semester retention rates. (In 1998, the most recent data, retention was 70 to 80 percent.)
- Strategies aimed at transitioning advanced students to degree and certificate programs.
- Programs in two Denver public high schools that encourage and facilitate immigrant students' transition from high school to college.
- A collaborative team of full-time and part-time ESL faculty who have advanced training in teaching ESL.
- A tutoring lab that supports students enrolled in these classes.

At CCD East and CCD West:

- Outreach to students in local neighborhoods who might be intimidated by the Auraria campus.
- Flexible scheduling, open start and finish dates.
- Individualized instruction.

At GED Institute and CCD North:

- Provision of quality instruction to large numbers of learners who are not being reached by other programs.
- Classes at convenient sites in multiple neighborhoods.
- Strategies to transition students to degree and certificate programs. (CCD North)

At the Spring Institute, service providers have decided among themselves which levels they will address. For example, Spring offers classes at lower levels through level 4 and partners with CBOs and libraries to offer basic literacy instruction. There is a 60-hour Work Styles ESL and Pre-Employment Program in which students learn about various careers and educational opportunities and for which they can earn a certificate.

Spring gave the Work Styles Program to CCD to use for ESL and learning disabled students. The course was to help these students negotiate the job search process as they neared the end of their degree or certificate programs. It was offered on a for-credit, pass/fail basis. The course was also adapted for temporary use in a noncredit, grant-funded program.

## **5. Pima Community College (Tucson, Arizona)**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Pima Community College (PCC) is the eighth largest multicampus community college in the United States. It began offering classes more than 30 years ago and expanded by adding campuses and learning centers, including a distance education Community Campus to supplement traditional on-campus education. PCC has grown to include six campuses and more than seventy off-campus sites located throughout Tucson, Green Valley, Marana, Nogales, and Sells, Arizona. Today it serves over 85,000 students per year in credit and noncredit classes.

There are two main types of ESL at Pima: adult education classes, which are referred to as ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages), and credit classes, which are referred to as ESL (English as a Second Language) class. (While ESOL and ESL are often used interchangeably by teachers of immigrant and refugee students, with ESOL more widely used in PreK-12 programs, the choice of ESOL for adult education was made to underscore the knowledge of other languages that students bring to the college: many of these students know three or four languages and for them “English as a second language” is a misnomer.) Adult ESOL is by far the larger of the two programs and includes workplace instruction (off-site, contracted by companies) and family literacy (off-site, targeting Head Start parents), as well as a large, free-standing ESOL program. All ESOL is offered either at learning centers or through CBOs while ESL is offered on campus. Classes for ESOL students are funded through a combination of state and federal funds. Workplace classes are funded through the employer.

### **5.2 Students**

About 7,000 students are served each year through adult ESOL in the noncredit program and to about 400 to 500 students through the credit ESL program. About 75 percent of the students in both programs are Spanish-speaking Latinos, many from Mexico. The rest come from all over the world, speaking a wide range of languages including Farsi, Chinese, Polish, Russian, and Arabic. There are also refugees from such places such as Vietnam, Somalia, and Kosovo. While PCC does not gather and document specific information about student educational backgrounds, it is clear that the college serves a wide range of students, from those with advanced degrees in their native countries to those with little or no formal education.

Students enroll in ESOL for a variety of reasons: to get a job, get a better job, help their children with school, interact with the English-speaking community, and/or go to college.

### **5.2 Schedule and Levels**

ESOL classes are held principally at three learning centers in the Tucson area. Two of the learning centers hold ESOL classes in four eleven-week or twelve-week sessions a year. A third learning center runs nine-week sessions, except in the summer, when the sessions

are five weeks each. ESOL classes are held during the morning, through midday, and again in the evenings on Monday through Thursday. Additional ESOL classes are offered at some centers in the afternoons or Fridays, with a special focus on areas such as writing, pronunciation, or conversation. Community classes (not in learning centers) usually follow the eleven- or twelve-week model. Workplace classes run for ten weeks, twice a week for two hours each.

Most sites have four levels of ESOL instruction; some have three; and some community sites have multi-level classes.

### **5.3 Intake and Placement**

PCC uses a system of “managed open enrollment” that makes it possible to add a few students after the start of term if there is room.

Students are tested with the BEST, which is mandated by the Arizona Department of Education. Cutoff scores are determined to place students in appropriate levels of instruction.

### **5.4 Progress**

Students may take anywhere from six months to six years to “complete” the ESOL program. If a student started in level 1, came regularly, and was a good language learner, he/she could complete the program in a year.

Approximately, 33 ESOL students went into the credit ESL program in the fall 2003 semester and 12 went into credit content classes. Extrapolating from this, it would seem that, typically, about 100 ESOL students transition into credit ESL in a year and about 36 into content classes.

The BEST is used as an exit test.

### **5.5 Curriculum**

PCC follows the Arizona State Standards for ESOL Instruction. Teachers use a combination of materials they develop themselves, books, and materials from a Pima College adult education curriculum.

The ESOL classes (for nonmatriculated students) are generally lower level courses with more emphasis on speaking and listening, and less emphasis on reading and writing. Special classes on writing, pronunciation, or conversation are also occasionally offered.

## **5.6 Faculty**

All teachers have bachelor's degrees; many have master's degrees in Teaching English as a Second Language. In addition, the college offers staff development opportunities for ESOL instructors.

Teachers who work 30 hours per week (20 hours teaching and 10 in preparation) receive benefits on a prorated basis. In 2003-2004 the base salary was \$34,000 for 37.5 hours per week.

## **5.7 Articulation with the Community**

The ESOL program at PCC has partnerships with several school districts and social service agencies to provide complementary services, including space for classes. They also work with CBOs and the schools to provide family literacy and workplace ESOL classes.

## **5.8 Articulation within the College**

The adult education program at PCC designates certain instructors as "bridging advisors" or "bridging instructors" who provide students with information about matriculation to the college. In 2003-2004, there were three bridging instructors whose work was supported by an extensive student service component at the college.

Adult ESOL instructors enjoy a number of informal contacts and participate in committees, conferences, and training with credit ESL faculty and other college faculty. ESOL program managers were part of the team that restructured the credit-ESL program.

Developmental math classes have been added at two of the learning centers, through a computer program called Academic Systems.

## **5.9 Potential for Improvement**

Staff and faculty have identified the following as areas for improvement:

- Additional classes, because PCC continually maintains extensive waiting lists.
- More time for instructors to develop curriculum.
- Higher pay for instructors.
- Use of assessment instruments in addition to the BEST (which is dictated by the Arizona Department of Education).

### **5.10 Value of Adult ESOL-College Tie-in**

In earlier years, adult basic education was housed in community centers funded by the county. Staff saw the value of joining the college, partly because the program could then qualify for funding on a state FTE formula. Moreover, having separate learning centers within the college has permitted the adult ESOL and ABE staff to assume ownership of the learning environment to a degree that they feel would not be possible if classes were held in multiuse facilities such as schools, social service agencies, and the like.

Staff cite three positive consequences of the relationship between the Adult Basic Education (and Adult ESOL Program) and the college. The college provides administrative support such as human resources and legal services. It promotes an atmosphere of collegiality in which ESOL and ESL faculty and the larger college faculty interact professionally. The relationship also gives students enhanced access to higher education. They note that the college benefits, as well, through the larger funding base provided by the adult ESOL students through FTE reimbursement formulas created by the Arizona legislature.

### **5.11 Special Features**

PCC has twice received the U.S. Department of Education's Secretary of Education Award (in 1992 and 1999) for this program. Program staff cite three major reasons for the success of the adult ESOL program.

- The program is broad-based and offers students many options, including programs geared to family, workplace, and refugee concerns.
- Many of the instructional staff receive benefits, allowing them to have genuine careers in adult education. As a result, the College has relatively little turnover.
- They have been aggressive in pursuing funds and program differentiation. They started out as a county-funded program but saw the advantage in joining the college and qualifying for state money on an FTE formula.

Other special features include the following:

- There is tie-in through their "bridge instructors" with the college, which facilitates articulation and transition.
- There is a civics program that promotes active citizenship for students in all classes. Activities include student councils where students learn leadership skills and are active in the community and trips to the legislature to lobby for enhanced funding.

- There is a workplace program that provides ESOL along with other classes.
- There is a family literacy program that offers ESOL classes in conjunction with Head Start and school districts.

## FORD FOUNDATION

Strength character, values, justice, privacy and justice.  
promote international cooperation and advice to our advisors.



*The McGraw-Hill Companies*

