



MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program Report: Fall 2016

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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding up to \$180 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending accredited institutions in Minnesota. The agency oversees tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

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Executive Summary

The MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program provides last dollar grant funding and mentoring to students enrolled in qualifying occupational programs at a Minnesota State two-year college. The program's intent is to provide select students the opportunity to complete a qualifying 1-2 year occupational program leading to employment in a high-demand occupation. The Minnesota Legislature created the pilot program for one cohort of students entering in the 2016-2017 academic years (2015 Minnesota Sessions Laws, Chapter 69 Article 3, Sec. 20).

The grant is a last dollar program covering any remaining tuition and general fee charges after the student's Federal Pell Grant and Minnesota State Grant have been applied. To qualify for the grant, the student must be admitted and begin enrollment in a qualifying program at a Minnesota State College during fall semester 2016 immediately following high school, adult basic education, GED or Americorps program. Students must be Minnesota residents with a family adjusted gross income of \$90,000 or less and have tuition and fee charges not fully covered by Pell and State Grants during fall 2016. To receive funding, recipients must agree to participate in mentoring.

As of December 2016, 1,414 students had completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and met initial eligibility requirements for the program. Of the 1,414 students, 990 students completed the student participation agreement. Colleges then reviewed that the student had enrolled in classes and was still eligible for funding before awarding funds to students.

- Of the 990 students, 176 students were not eligible for funding upon review as they had not enrolled in classes, had changed programs, or based on final enrollment had 100% of tuition and fees covered by Pell and State Grants.
- Of the 990 students, Minnesota State Colleges awarded funds to 814 students (82%).
- Women represented one-third (33%) and students of color represented 13% of recipients.
- Two-thirds of applicants and recipients were enrolled at institutions in Greater Minnesota.

In addition to the 990 students, 424 students placed on a waitlist as the participating colleges had exhausted available funding.

Fall 2016 awards totaled \$1,535,500.

- The average award for Fall term only was \$1,886.
- Fall term awards ranged from \$1 to \$4,207.
- The average parental adjusted gross income of Occupational Grant recipients was \$62,900.
- Recipient incomes were concentrated at incomes between \$40,000 and \$90,000. Only 11 percent of recipients had incomes below \$40,000.

During the initial year of the program, college and OHE program staff noted five areas that would benefit from further attention. These areas include administrative issues (administrative requirements, student eligibility, and program eligibility) and policy issues (programs chosen, targeting of financial aid). Administrative issues includes areas where college and program staff had difficulty implementing the program as intended by the Legislature. Policy issues includes areas where stakeholders questioned the intent of the program and its effectiveness in meeting state goals.

The first three areas or administrative issues were identified by college and program staff as areas where implementation of the program as intended by the legislature was difficult.

- First, colleges noted it was difficult to identify eligible students due to the complexity of requirements, eligibility changing by enrollment level and differing enrollment processes by colleges. This resulted in confusion among students and a large administrative burden on staff.
- Secondly, it was difficult to ensure students complied with intended program requirements. The program requires that students complete 30 program credits in order to have their grants renewed in the second year. While the requirement is clear, staff were faced with several situations in which a student's enrollment selection means the student would not be able to meet the 30 program credit requirement at the end of the year based on their enrollment choices in fall or if the student failed or withdrew from all fall term classes. It was also unclear if students were allowed to transfer between programs and colleges.
- The third area of concern was the ability of college and program staff to ensure adequate funding for eligible students. As a new program, needed funding per college was estimated based on historical enrollments in qualifying programs. While OHE utilized existing reallocation of funding methods to move funding around as needed, it remains uncertain the allocated funds will be enough to cover in summer terms, especially for students enrolling in more classes in order to meet the 30 credit requirement.

The remaining two areas were policy issues and involved stakeholders questioning the intent of the program and its effectiveness in meeting state goals.

- The first of these areas covered the criteria used to determine eligible programs. Feedback received included concerns regarding ineligibility of programs using a 12-credit per term basis, why some programs were excluded, and a concern that too many programs are eligible.
- Secondly, stakeholders held differing opinions about the state's goals in adopting the program, and the effectiveness of the program's approach to meeting those goals. Several stakeholders noted that having 271 eligible programs but not all programs provided mixed messages about whether this was a free college program for all or a targeted occupational grant. This program largely targets 89% of financial benefits to families with incomes above \$40,000. This groups also receives academic and social support via the mentors. Providing additional financial, academic and social supports to middle income students without providing comparable supports for the state's lowest income, and often underrepresented, students led some stakeholders to question the need for the program and if this is the best use of the state's limited financial resources.

In conclusion, the first year of the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Program provides a substantial amount of data, information and feedback about how to structure and fund new programs be they aimed at providing free tuition to students or incentivizing students to enroll in occupational programs leading to high demand jobs. The administrative issues highlighted can be resolved through legislative clarification and implementation of rules or guidance by the Office of Higher Education (e.g. student eligibility, first year enrollment and academic standards). However, the remaining policy areas related to program choice and targeting of financial assistance require legislative action. Should this program be a broad-based free tuition program available to all students or should this program be a targeted occupational grant focused on encouraging students to enroll in occupational programs leading to high demand jobs? Furthermore, the inherent policy dilemma created by providing middle income students additional financial grants and mentoring without ensuring similar supports for the state's lowest income students covered solely by Pell Grants and State Grants has larger implications for Minnesota's overall funding policies and should be resolved.

Introduction

This report is divided into three sections: an overview of the *MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot* program, a summary of Fall 2016 program participants, and a discussion of implementation issues encountered.

Program Overview

The MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program provides last dollar grant funding and mentoring to students enrolled in qualifying occupational programs at a Minnesota State two-year college. The program's intent is to provide participating students the opportunity to complete a qualifying occupational program within two years or less and find employment in a high-demand occupation. The Minnesota Legislature created the pilot program for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years (2015 Minnesota Sessions Laws, Chapter 69 Article 3, Sec. 20). The text of the legislation can be found in Appendix A.

The Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$5,000,000 for the program for the 2017 fiscal year, and included an additional \$3,481,000 for the 2018 fiscal year in the tails. Fiscal Year 2017 funds are split between grants (\$3,993,000), mentoring and outreach (\$782,000), and information technology and administrative costs associated with implementation of the grant program (\$225,000). The final contract for mentoring with InsideTrack was for the amount of \$775,000. InsideTrack will receive three payments: 40% at the end of fall (\$310,000), 40% at the end of Spring (\$310,000), and 20% for summer (\$155,000).

Student Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for the grant, the student must:

- Be admitted and begin enrollment (at least one program credit) in a qualifying certificate, diploma, AS or AAS program at a Minnesota State College during fall semester 2016 immediately following:
 - Graduation from a Minnesota secondary school during the 2015-2016 academic year; or
 - For those without a high school diploma, completion of an Adult Basic Education program or passing a GED test as a Minnesota resident during the 2015-2016 academic year; or
 - Completing a 12 or 24-month Americorps program during the 2015-2016 academic year that started immediately after high school graduation during an earlier academic year
- Meet the definition of Minnesota Resident Student used for state financial aid programs
- Have an adjusted gross income (or wages for non-filers) of \$90,000 or less for the 2015 tax year
 - For a student applying as a dependent student, parental income is used
 - For a student applying as an independent student, student (and spouse's, if married) income is used
- Participate in free mentoring services throughout the student's academic program, and
- Have tuition and fee charges not fully covered by Pell and State Grants during fall 2016.

Amount of Grant

The grant is a last dollar program covering any remaining tuition and general fee charges after the student's Federal Pell Grant and Minnesota State Grant have been applied. Program-specific fees and equipment are not covered. The grant is available for up to 72 semester credits, including any required developmental education courses.

Applying for the Grant

To apply for the grant for the 2016-2017 academic year, students completed the 2016-2017 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)¹. Applicants were ranked by FAFSA application date and were funded on a first come first served basis. Students must have agreed to participate in the mentoring in order to receive funds. The program expires on June 30, 2018. Only applicants enrolling in college and receiving grant funds in Fall 2016 were eligible to participate during the two year period.

First Year Grant

A student must have received the grant during the fall term of 2016 in order to take part in the pilot program. The grant is available for each term of the 2016-2017 academic year, including summer term 2017, provided the student has tuition and fee charges not covered by federal and state grants. The amount of an individual student's grant changes depending on the student's enrollment level, tuition and fees and the amount of the student's federal and state grants.

Second Year Grant – Conditions for Renewal

The grant can be renewed for the 2017-2018 academic year if the student meets the following conditions:

- Submits a 2017-2018 FAFSA¹ and any other required documents in a timely manner,
- Successfully completes 30 or more program credits during the first year,
- Participates in required free mentoring services during the first year,
- Maintains Satisfactory Academic Progress and a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher at the end of the first year and for each term of the second year, and
- The college certifies the student is on track to complete the program during the second year.

Students enrolled in shorter programs (30 credits or less) must complete their programs during the 2016-2017 academic year and are not eligible for renewal.

Qualifying Occupational Programs

Qualifying programs² include programs covered by the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act leading to an occupation designated as high demand by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and meeting legislative requirements for inclusion. DEED identified programs as "high demand" if they led to occupations falling in the upper two quintiles

¹ 2017-2018 MN Dream Act application for undocumented students

² A list of qualifying programs can be found on the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) website (<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=2163>).

of DEED’s Occupations in Demand rating tool. Table 1 shows the Classification of Instructional Program codes for qualifying programs. Approximately 92% of programs of study under the Perkins Act met the high demand definition. Programs excluded as not meeting the “high demand” requirement include programs in: natural resources and conservation, architecture, communications and journalism, communications technologies, American sign language, legal support services, library science, parks, recreation, leisure and fitness studies, science technologies, and visual and performing arts.

In addition to meeting the “high demand” criteria, qualifying programs must also be 72 credits or less in length, be completed by the student in 2 years or less, and not include pre-requisites which prevent students from being admitted to the program in Fall 2016 and completing the program in 2 academic years. Students were encouraged to check with the college to make sure a program met the requirements for participating in this pilot program prior to applying for admission.

Table 1. Program Identified as High Demand

| Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code | Program of Study |
|--|--|
| 01 | Agriculture, agriculture operations, and related sciences |
| 11 | Computer and information sciences and support services |
| 12 | Personal and culinary services |
| 13 | Education |
| 14 | Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields |
| 15 | Engineering |
| 19 | Family and consumer sciences/human sciences |
| 27 | Mathematics and statistics |
| 43 | Homeland security, law enforcement, firefighting and related protective services |
| 44 | Public administration and social service professions |
| 46 | Construction trades |
| 47 | Mechanic and repair technologies/technicians |
| 48 | Precision production |
| 49 | Transportation and materials moving |
| 51 | Health professions and related programs |
| 52 | Business, management, marketing, and related support services |

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Required Mentoring Services

The pilot program requires recipients to participate in free mentoring services. To support students during their academic programs, the services include communicating with the mentor on a regular basis, and developing a personalized student success plan which includes:

- Concrete steps towards program completion and job placement
- Identification of and contingency plans for potential obstacles to completion
- Making connections to on-campus resources and personal development opportunities, and
- Financial planning.

As this is the only financial aid program operated by OHE requiring mentoring, evaluation of the impact of mentoring in combination with financial assistance provided will provide valuable information for structuring future financial aid investments.

Summary of Fall 2016 Participants

Fall 2016 program data is summarized below. The data is preliminary information provided by each college financial aid office to OHE as of December 9, 2016 and is subject to change.

Recipients

As of December 2016, 1,414 students had completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and met initial eligibility requirements for the program.

Of the 1,414 students, 990 students also completed the student participation agreement before the college exhausted its funding. An estimated 424 students were on the waitlist after each college exhausted available funding for funding as shown in Table 4.

Colleges then reviewed the 990 student applications to ensure that the student was still eligible for funding before awarding funds to students. Of the 990 students, 176 students were not eligible for funding upon review as they had not enrolled in classes, had changed programs, or based on final enrollment had 100% of tuition and fees covered by Pell and State Grants. Minnesota State Colleges awarded funds to 814 of the 990 students in Fall 2016 or 82% of applicants with completed participation agreements.

Applicants initially eligible but did not receive an award later determined to have federal and state grants covering 100% of tuition and fees, and students initially offered funding but who were later determined by the college to be not eligible (e.g. changed programs) or applicants who did not enroll in college. As shown in Table 2, women represented one-third of recipients (33%) and students of color represented 13% of recipients. Table 3 shows Fall 2016 applicants and recipients by institution. Two-thirds of applicants and recipients were enrolled at institutions located in Greater Minnesota.

Fall 2016 awards totaled \$1,535,500. The average award for Fall term only was \$1,886. Fall term awards ranged from \$1 to \$4,207. The average parental adjusted gross income of Occupational Grant recipients was \$62,900. As shown in Figure 1, recipient incomes were concentrated at incomes between \$40,000 and \$90,000. Only 11 percent of recipients had incomes below \$40,000.

Mentoring for Recipients

Upon completion of a Request-for-Proposal for mentoring services, OHE contracted with InsideTrack to provide one-on-one mentoring to recipients of the MnSCU Occupational Grant pilot program. The InsideTrack mentoring program supports students in persisting and completing their program of study. Participation in mentoring is a requirement to renew the grant for a second year. As of March 2017, almost all students were on track to complete mentoring requirements.

Mentoring activities support the student's educational and career-based goals and aims to empower each student to take ownership of their academic experience, utilize campus resources, and target growth in specific academic skillsets needed to continue and graduate. Mentoring works to identify risk and areas of potential obstacles and then overcome these obstacles by acknowledging and developing a student's unique strengths. Mentors direct and facilitate this process with each individual student through a methodology that tailors contact to the individual student's areas and levels of risk, strengths, and communication styles. A complete report on mentoring activity can be found in Appendix B.

**Figure 1
Number and Cumulative Percentage
of MnSCU Occupational Grant Recipients, Fall 2016**

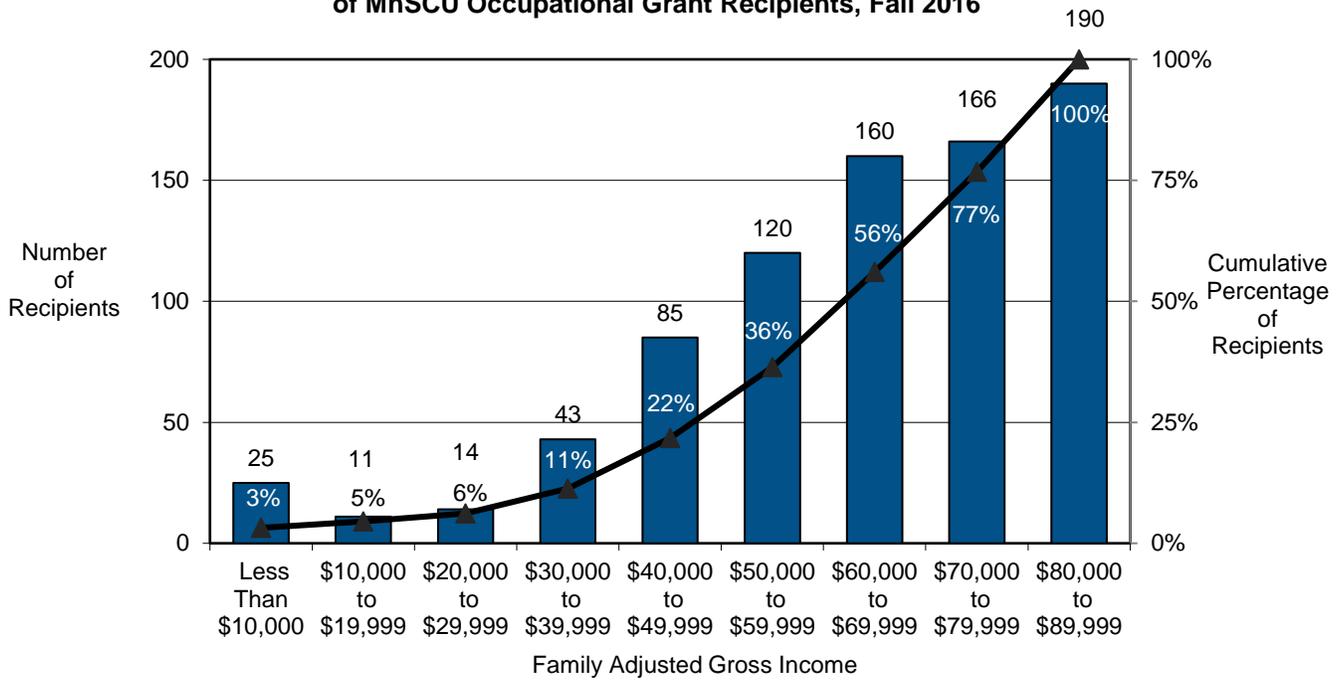


Table 2: Distribution of Recipients by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2016

| Gender | Number of Recipients | Percent of Total |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Female | 273 | 33% |
| Male | 541 | 67% |
| Total | 814 | 100% |
| Race/Ethnicity | Number of Recipients | Percent of Total |
| African-American | 21 | 3% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | Fewer than 20 | |
| Asian | Fewer than 20 | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 40 | 5% |
| Two or More Races | 22 | 3% |
| <i>Subtotal Students of Color</i> | <i>107</i> | <i>13%</i> |
| White | 660 | 81% |
| Not Reported | 47 | 6% |
| Total | 814 | 100% |

Source: InsideTrack (2016). *Occupational Grant Mentoring Report*.

Table 3. Number of Applicants, Recipients and Total Fall Term Award Amounts by Institution

| Institution | Number of Applicants with Completed Participation Agreements | Number of Recipients | Fall Term Awards | Average Award |
|---|--|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Alexandria Technical & Community College | 78 | 69 | \$133,800 | \$1,938 |
| Anoka Technical College | 37 | 22 | \$39,300 | \$1,784 |
| Anoka-Ramsey Community College | 33 | 25 | \$50,000 | \$2,002 |
| Central Lakes College | 38 | 33 | \$64,900 | \$1,968 |
| Century College | 70 | 56 | \$90,000 | \$1,608 |
| Dakota County Technical College | 33 | 30 | \$56,200 | \$1,872 |
| Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College | 1 | 1 | * | * |
| Hennepin Technical College | 12 | 10 | \$16,500 | \$1,655 |
| Hibbing Community College | 22 | 14 | \$26,200 | \$1,868 |
| Inver Hills Community College | 5 | 5 | * | * |
| Itasca Community College | 32 | 27 | \$50,200 | \$1,860 |
| Lake Superior College | 27 | 18 | \$42,300 | \$2,351 |
| Mesabi Range College | 5 | 4 | * | * |
| Minneapolis Community & Technical College | 31 | 24 | \$31,300 | \$1,304 |
| Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical | 21 | 17 | \$46,000 | \$2,707 |
| Minnesota State Community and Technical College | 101 | 64 | \$121,300 | \$1,895 |
| Minnesota West Community & Technical College | 43 | 40 | \$63,400 | \$1,585 |
| Normandale Community College | 58 | 55 | \$115,600 | \$2,102 |
| North Hennepin Community College | 28 | 23 | \$39,400 | \$1,713 |
| Northland Community & Technical College | 37 | 35 | \$61,700 | \$1,763 |
| Northwest Technical College | 15 | 15 | \$27,000 | \$1,798 |
| Pine Technical & Community College | 10 | 9 | * | * |
| Ridgewater College | 74 | 62 | \$131,000 | \$2,112 |
| Riverland Community College | 17 | 15 | \$37,200 | \$2,479 |
| Rochester Community and Technical College | 44 | 42 | \$82,600 | \$1,967 |
| Saint Paul College | 24 | 22 | \$36,700 | \$1,668 |
| South Central College | 25 | 21 | \$46,000 | \$2,192 |
| St. Cloud Technical & Community College | 64 | 52 | \$91,000 | \$1,750 |
| Vermilion Community College | 5 | 4 | * | * |
| Total | 990 | 814 | \$1,535,500 | \$1,886 |
| | | | | |
| Institutions located in the 7 County Metro Area | 331 (33%) | 272 | \$482,200 | \$1,943 |
| Institutions located in Greater Minnesota | 659 (67%) | 542 | \$1,053,300 | \$1,773 |
| Total | 990 | 814 | \$1,535,500 | \$1,886 |

*Award amounts for institutions with fewer than 10 recipients are not reported. Totals include amounts for all institutions.

Table 4. Number of Waitlist Applicants by Institution as of End of Fall Term 2016

| Institution | Number of Waitlisted Applicants |
|---|--|
| Alexandria Technical & Community College | 10 |
| Anoka Technical College | 0 |
| Anoka-Ramsey Community College | 0 |
| Central Lakes College | 19 |
| Century College | 0 |
| Dakota County Technical College | 0 |
| Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College | 0 |
| Hennepin Technical College | 0 |
| Hibbing Community College | 12 |
| Inver Hills Community College | 0 |
| Itasca Community College | 0 |
| Lake Superior College | 2 |
| Mesabi Range College | 0 |
| Minneapolis Community & Technical College | 0 |
| Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical | 0 |
| Minnesota State Community and Technical College | 9 |
| Minnesota West Community & Technical College | 9 |
| Normandale Community College | 35 |
| North Hennepin Community College | 0 |
| Northland Community & Technical College | 10 |
| Northwest Technical College | 27 |
| Pine Technical & Community College | 0 |
| Rainy River | 0 |
| Ridgewater College | 45 |
| Riverland Community College | 59 |
| Rochester Community and Technical College | 53 |
| Saint Paul College | 0 |
| South Central College | 24 |
| St. Cloud Technical & Community College | 110 |
| Vermilion Community College | 0 |
| Total | 424 |

Discussion of First Year Implementation

During the initial year of the program, college and OHE program staff noted five areas benefiting from further attention. These areas include administrative issues (administrative requirements, student eligibility, and program eligibility) and policy issues (programs chosen, targeting of financial aid). Administrative issues includes areas where college and program staff had difficulty implementing the program as intended by the legislature. Policy issues includes areas where stakeholders questioned the intent of the program and its effectiveness in meeting state goals.

Administrative Issues

The first three areas identified by college and program staff where implementation of the program as intended by the legislature was difficult included:

1. Identifying eligible students,
2. Ensuring students complied with program requirements, and
3. Ensuring adequate funding.

Area 1: Difficulty Identifying Eligible Students

This program is confusing for students (and their parents who are trying to guide them)... -- Financial Aid Administrator

Colleges noted the difficulty in identifying eligible students for three reasons (the multiple requirements for eligibility involved, assumptions about enrollment processes, and eligibility changing as enrollment changes).

Requirements for eligibility

The program administration operates using academic, financial and application requirements:

- Academic requirements: Did the student enroll in a qualifying program?
- Financial requirements: Did the student complete the FAFSA? Was the student's income below \$90,000? Did the student's Pell and State Grant add to less than tuition and general fees?
- Application requirements: Did the student complete the mentoring participation agreement?

The combination of eligibility requirements made it difficult to identify a pool of potential recipients for the program, which slowed award notification and information distribution. Many students were not aware of the program until receiving the award notification.

Assumptions about enrollment process

Secondly, the statute, as written, assumes a standard enrollment process across colleges. A student applies, is admitted, enrolls, and receives financial aid. In reality, the process is not this simple. Not all programs have delineated admissions processes allowing for clear identification of these steps. Some programs enroll students but do not formally admit them into a designated program until a job-related placement is available (e.g. nursing, carpentry).

Changing eligibility

Finally, as the student adds or drops classes, his or her Pell Grant and State Grant may vary. Due to this being a last dollar program, as the Pell Grant and State Grant vary, the student may move from being eligible to not being eligible for the program. College staff must continuously check the student's

record to monitor changes. This also means that the student may begin mentoring then stop mentoring or not start mentoring until later in the semester.

...it is a very manual process. I have set up a spreadsheet to track the students that I have awarded. Since there are no good [standard IT] reports for this program, each student has to be manually reviewed at the time of award and at the time of disbursement to ensure that these students remain eligible. -- Financial Aid Administrator

...the administrative burden to financial aid offices is immense. The work involved to administer the program is all manual work and takes up valuable time when our efforts are being pulled in many directions to manage all the financial aid programs we administer. -- Financial Aid Administrator

The time intensive manual review required for financial aid and program administration was a concern across colleges.

Options

If staff had difficulty identifying who was eligible, it is almost certain that students could not. Students may also not fully understand the benefit they are receiving nor the requirements for renewal.

... Students were awarded occupational grant funds without “doing anything”, therefore, I think the attitude for some is the same...they don’t have to “do anything” to keep the funding. This is really simplifying it and I must say that not all students are in this category. However, with no “skin in the game”, I don’t believe all students understand what they might lose by not complying with the requirements. -- Financial Aid Administrator

If this program is renewed, one option to consider is to require students to complete an initial program application. This would reduce the burden on college staff by limiting eligible students to those completing the application. This would reduce staff time and serve to clearly communicate grant requirements to students but the additional paperwork may deter some students from applying. A second option would be to award all students meeting program and income requirements a minimum grant award. This would increase the costs of grants and mentoring but ease the identification process.

Area 2: Ensuring Student Compliance with Program Intent

Implementation of the program highlighted a number of issues for staff attempting to ensure students complied with the program’s requirements (enrollment level, transferability, and loss of grant eligibility).

Enrollment level

The program requires that students complete 30 program credits in order to have their grants renewed in the second year. While the requirement is clear, staff were faced with several situations in which a student’s enrollment selection means the student will not meet the 30 program credit requirement. This group of students would include:

- Students who are admitted to a qualifying program but only enroll in developmental education credits and no program credits in fall semester

- Students who are admitted to a qualifying program but only enroll in elective credits and no program credits in fall semester
- Students who are admitted to a qualifying program but only enroll in 3-6 credits in fall semester

Should these students be funded? Should these students be funded over students who enroll full-time in program credits when limited funds exist? If the intent of the program is to incentivize full-time enrollment and shorten time to completion then providing college and OHE staff with a firmer set of enrollment criteria is necessary.

Transferability

In addition, some students receiving grant funds requested to change their programs of enrollment or transfer colleges. The legislation provides no guidance about program changes or transfers. This group of students would include:

- Students who are admitted to a qualifying program but transfer to another qualifying program at the same college
- Students who are admitted to a qualifying program but transfer to another qualifying program at a different college
- Students who complete a certificate program but enroll in a qualifying associate degree program (or additional certificate program)

Understanding how much flexibility in changing programs should be allowed to facilitate student success would allow OHE and Minnesota State Colleges to ensure best use of funds.

Loss of eligibility

The final area of student eligibility benefiting from additional clarity covers the circumstances under which a student should lose eligibility during the first year. Given the limited funding available, college staff were concerned that the program continues to fund students during spring semester after the student fails or withdraws from all classes during fall semester. Reconsideration of the academic standards for first year enrollment would allow OHE and Minnesota State Colleges to ensure best use of funds.

Options

Should this program be renewed, a policy option for the Legislature is to consider clarifying term-based enrollment requirements in addition to or in place of the 30 program credit requirement; adding language addressing transfer and completion of short programs, and adding language addressing first term academic requirements.

Area 3: Ensuring Adequate Funding for Students

In order to facilitate payment of Occupational Grants to students, the Office developed an institutional allocation formula. The formula developed in collaboration with Minnesota State, was based on a count of 2015 high school graduates enrolling at Minnesota State institutions in the qualifying programs. While this initial allocation to institutions provided a basis for initial distribution of funds, some colleges had more eligible students than expected while others had fewer. The Office utilized existing protocols to reallocate funds returned by colleges to colleges requesting additional funds. Colleges also reserved funds for estimated spring and summer term payments. As this is the initial year of the program, it is uncertain if those reserve amounts will be too low to meet demand or too high

resulting in unspent funds. As of March 2017, OHE anticipates having adequate funding for summer term awards.

Summer reserves

My main concern at this time is summer funding and what consequences will occur if we are either over expended or under expended on this grant. -- Financial Aid Administrator

Colleges noted that some recipients are not on track to complete the required 30 program credits as discussed in Area 2. In order to qualify for grant renewal, students may opt to take more credits during summer, which would increase the funds required. The Office will continue to monitor funds utilization but lacks language in session laws to transfer surplus funds from other state financial aid programs in order to provide funds for summer term awards, if needed. Upon completion of the program's first year, OHE will have historical funding patterns to be able to better allocate future funds, if the program is renewed.

Options

If the program is renewed, a policy option for the Legislature to consider is to add this program to the Office's existing transfer authority within session laws.

Policy Issues

The remaining two areas involve stakeholders questioning the intent of the program and its effectiveness in meeting state goals. These areas are:

4. Concerns about criteria used to determine eligible programs, and
5. Concerns about the program's approach.

Area 4: Concerns about Criteria Used to Determine Eligible Programs

During first year planning and administration, OHE staff received feedback from students, parents, college staff and members of the public about the criteria used to determine eligible programs. Feedback was grouped into concerns regarding allowable program structures, objections to excluded programs, and concern that too many programs are eligible.

Allowable Program Structures

OHE was notified by participating colleges that several programs are not designed to allow students to complete the 30 program credits in the first academic year as required for grant renewal. The programs are designed around sequential course requirements during which the student completes less than 30 program credits in the first year. An example would be the Anoka Technical College Surgical Technology Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree. This program's full-time sequence allows students to complete only 24 credits in the first academic year. Many of the courses in the program are sequential requiring students to take courses in a fixed order. Students in this 60-credit program do complete the program within two academic years, but the credit load is 36 credits in the second year of the program but only 24 credits in the first year.

Objections to Excluded Programs

OHE received several questions over why certain programs were excluded. These programs included legal assistants/paralegals, natural resources, architecture, American sign language, and communications. While the criteria for determining high demand programs is logical, it was applied

broadly as there is no current system for linking programs or majors to specific occupations within the data available to DEED at time of program implementation.

Too Many Programs

Stakeholders were concerned that having 271 programs be eligible diminished the ability of the grants to encourage students to participate in the programs most successfully leading to high demand occupations.

Options

A policy option for the Legislature to consider is to revisit the program eligibility criteria. For example, language could be added waiving the 30 program credit requirement for renewal when the program is scheduled for fewer than 30 program credits in the first year but does meet the two year completion requirement. Another option would be to cover the first two academic years regardless of program length. In addition, the Legislature could consider expanding the programs eligible or further restricting program eligibility.

Area 5: Concerns about the Program's Approach

The largest unanswered question for this pilot program is *What will the impact of this program be?* Stakeholders held differing opinions about the state's goals in adopting the program, and the effectiveness of the program's approach to meeting those goals. Several stakeholders noted that having 271 eligible programs but not all programs provided mixed messages about whether this was a free tuition program for all areas or a targeted occupational grant.

This program combines two approaches to financial aid. The first approach is the promise to cover 100% of tuition and fees which eliminates perceptions about financial barriers to college for lower income and underrepresented students. The financial investment must also include academic and social supports (e.g. mentors, tutoring) needed to ensure completion. This combination of financial investment and academic and social supports is a best practice for any financial aid program.

The second approach provides a financial incentive to students enrolling in selected educational programs. The programs should be selected to meet occupational goals for the state as well as providing sustainable wages for students upon completion. The programs chosen can support a variety of goals, including areas to increase the state's economic competitiveness (e.g. CHOOSE OHIO FIRST), state-level high demand/low supply areas (e.g. GEORGIA STRATEGIC INDUSTRIES), and regional or local occupational needs (e.g. IOWA SKILLED WORKFORCE SHORTAGE GRANTS).

This program largely targets 89% of financial benefits to families with incomes above \$40,000. This groups also receives academic and social support via the mentors. **Providing additional financial, academic and social supports to middle income students without providing comparable supports for the state's lowest income, and often underrepresented, students led some stakeholders to question the need for the program and if this is the best use of the state's limited financial resources.**

Options

A policy option for the Legislature to consider is to revise the program focus on one of the two goals established (eliminating financial barriers or encouraging enrollments in selected occupational programs leading to high demand jobs), thus potentially increasing the program's effectiveness and reducing the complexity of the pilot program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the first year of the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Program provides a substantial amount of data, information and feedback about how to structure and fund new programs. The administrative issues highlighted can be resolved through legislative clarification and implementation of rules or guidance by the Office of Higher Education (e.g. student eligibility, first year enrollment and academic standards).

However, the remaining policy areas related to program choice and targeting of financial assistance require legislative input. Specifically, is the intent of this program to provide free tuition to all students or should it be a targeted grant focused on encouraging students to enroll in occupational programs leading to high demand jobs? If it is determined this program is a targeted, last-dollar grant, a deeper policy dilemma must be addressed. In this form, the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant program provides additional financial grants and mentoring for middle income students, without ensuring similar supports for the state's lowest income students covered solely by Pell Grants and State Grants. This disparity has larger implications for Minnesota's overall funding policies and should be resolved.

Appendix A. Enacted Legislation

Minnesota Session Laws 2015, Chapter 69, Article 1, Sec. 3

Subd. 18. MNSCU Two-Year Public College Program

- (a) \$3,993,000 in fiscal year 2017 is for two-year public college program grants under article 3, section 20.
- (b) \$782,000 in fiscal year 2017 is to provide mentoring and outreach as specified under article 3, section 20.
- (c) \$225,000 in fiscal year 2017 is for information technology and administrative costs associated with implementation of the grant program.
- (d) The base for fiscal year 2018 is \$3,481,000 and the base for fiscal year 2019 is \$0.

Minnesota Session Laws 2015, Chapter 69, Article 3

Sec. 20. MNSCU COLLEGE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PILOT PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. Pilot program administration.

The commissioner of the Office of Higher Education shall administer a pilot program pursuant to this section for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years including summer session.

Subd. 2. Definitions.

(a) For the purpose of this section the terms defined in this subdivision have the meanings given them.

(b) "College" means a two-year college in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

(c) "Eligible individual" means an individual who:

(1) is a resident;

(2) has graduated from a Minnesota secondary school, has as a Minnesota resident completed an adult basic education (ABE) program, or as a Minnesota resident, has passed general education development (GED) testing;

(3) first applies for a grant for the fall term immediately following secondary school graduation, passing GED tests, or completing an ABE program; and

(4) has completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

(d) "Grant" means a scholarship granted under this section.

(e) "Program" means a certificate, diploma, or associate of science or associate of applied science in a program area covered by the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and in an occupational field designated as high demand by the Department of Employment and Economic Development. "Program area" includes only the areas of:

(1) agriculture, food, and natural resources;

(2) business management and administration;

(3) human services;

(4) engineering, manufacturing and technology;

(5) arts, communications, and information systems; and

(6) health science technology.

(f) To the extent not inconsistent with this section, the definitions in section 136A.101 apply to this section.

Subd. 3. AmeriCorps worker; exceptions.

(a) Notwithstanding any contrary provision of this section, an eligible individual who completes a 12-month or 24-month approved AmeriCorps program commencing immediately after secondary school graduation, may apply for a grant for the fall term immediately following completion of the AmeriCorps program. These individuals have a two consecutive academic year grant eligibility period commencing the start of that fall term.

(b) For the purpose of this subdivision, an "approved AmeriCorps program" means a program overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) including:

- (1) AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA);
- (2) AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC); or
- (3) AmeriCorps State and National.

Subd. 4. Grants.

The commissioner shall, to the extent of available funds and subject to this section, make grants to eligible individuals to attend a program at a college.

Subd. 5. Application.

Application for a grant shall be made by a FAFSA and on any additional form required by the commissioner and on a schedule set by the commissioner.

Subd. 6. Income limits for grant recipients.

Dependent students reporting a parental federal adjusted gross income on a FAFSA of \$90,000 or less are eligible for a grant. Independent students reporting a family adjusted gross income on a FAFSA of \$90,000 or less are eligible for a grant.

Subd. 7. Grant amount.

The amount of a grant is equal to program tuition and fees minus any federal Pell grant received or state grant for which the individual is eligible. For the purpose of this subdivision, "fees" has the meaning given it in Minnesota Statutes, section 136A.121, subdivision 6.

Subd. 8. Eligibility period.

A grant may be made only for academic terms that are during the two academic years commencing the fall term immediately after secondary school graduation, completing an adult basic education program, or passing all GED tests. A grant is available for up to 72 semester credits.

Subd. 9. Satisfactory academic progress.

An individual is eligible for a grant if the individual is making satisfactory academic progress as defined under Minnesota Statutes, section 136A.101, subdivision 10, and has a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale at the end of the first academic year and at the end of each academic term after the first academic year.

Subd. 10. Credit load.

A grantee must have accumulated at least 30 program credits by the end of the first academic year including summer term. A college must certify that a grantee is carrying sufficient credits in the second grant year to complete the program at the end of the second year, including summer school. The commissioner shall set the terms and provide the form for certification.

Subd. 11. Grant renewal.

A grant may be renewed for a second academic year. Application for renewal must be on a form provided by the commissioner and on a schedule set by the commissioner.

Subd. 12. Mentoring.

A grantee must be provided mentoring. Mentoring must include, but is not limited to:

- (1) communicating frequently and consistently throughout program participation;
- (2) developing a personalized student success plan. The plan must include concrete steps towards program completion and job placement and identify and make contingency plans for potential obstacles to program completion;
- (3) connect grantees to on-campus resources and personal development opportunities; and
- (4) financial planning.

The commissioner shall issue request for proposals to provide mentoring activities. The commissioner shall select the proposal that in the commissioner's judgment demonstrates the best potential within available funding for achieving success in assisting students to complete programs. The commissioner may accept and select proposals made by colleges.

Subd. 13. Outreach.

The commissioner may through the office and by contract engage in recruitment for and promotion of the grants.

Subd. 14. Insufficient appropriation.

Grant awards shall be made based on the date of receipt of application from the earliest to the latest date. If there are not sufficient funds, grants shall not be prorated and eligible individuals shall be placed on a waiting list. Preference shall be given to timely received renewal grant applications prior to the award of new grants.

Subd. 15. Reporting.

(a) A college must report to the commissioner the following information:

- (1) the number of grantees and their race, gender, and ethnicity;
- (2) grantee persistence and completion;
- (3) employment outcomes; and
- (4) other information requested by the commissioner.

(b) The commissioner shall report annually by January 15, to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over higher education finance by college and in aggregate on the information submitted to the commissioner under paragraph (a). The commissioner may include in the report recommendations for changes in the grant program.

EFFECTIVE DATE.

This section is effective July 1, 2016.

Appendix B. Report from Inside Track

The following is the formal report submitted by Inside Track to the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Occupational Grant Mentoring Report

December 2016

Introduction and implementation

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE) has contracted with InsideTrack to provide one-on-one mentoring to the recipients of the MnSCU Occupational Grant pilot program. The InsideTrack mentoring program supports students in persisting and completing their program of study and serves as the contracted student success plan, as outlined in the legislation for the Occupational Grant pilot program. Participation in free mentoring was included as one of the requirements to renew the grant for a second year. The following serves as the preliminary report about the mentoring program and covers information and data from August 30, 2016 through December 9, 2016.

Implementation of mentoring

Mentoring officially began on August 30, 2016, with the delivery of the first batch of students to the InsideTrack roster. We were anticipating that by the end of September 2016 all students would have been awarded and funds disbursed. However, the distribution of students has been a much longer process, taking place over the course of the entire fall 2016 semester. There have been 44 different batches of students, ranging from the addition of one student up to 278 students in one batch. The distribution process has been contingent on the speed to which the Financial Aid departments determine eligible Occupational Grant award recipients, the subsequent completion of the Student Agreement Form by an eligible award student, and the acceptance of the funds by the student. Additionally, because the program is a last dollar program, students can gain or lose eligibility throughout the semester based on the enrollment level. As of December 9, 2016, InsideTrack received 814 students for mentoring. Table 1 below shows the ebb and flow of distribution of students over time for the fall semester.

Table 1: Student distribution to InsideTrack roster

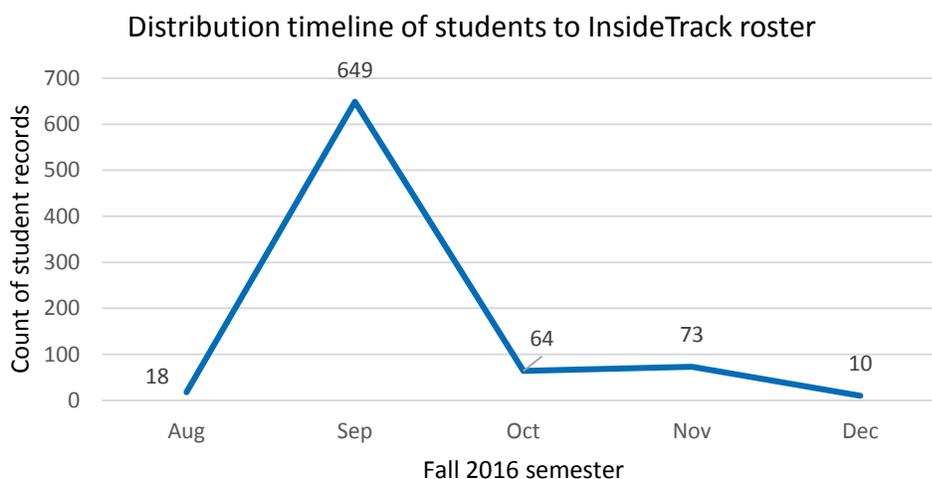


Table 2 below shows the distribution of gender and ethnicity for the 814 grant recipients receiving mentoring, as of December 9, 2016.

Table 2: Distribution of gender and ethnicity

| Gender | # of students | % of total |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Female | 273 | 33% |
| Male | 541 | 67% |
| Total | 814 | 100% |
| Ethnicity | # of students | % of total |
| African-American | 21 | 3% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | Fewer than 20 | |
| Asian | Fewer than 20 | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 40 | 5% |
| Two or More Races | 22 | 3% |
| White | 660 | 81% |
| Not Reported | 47 | 6% |
| Total | 814 | 100% |

As of December 9, 2016, InsideTrack has received 814 grant awarded students for mentoring. While the number is lower than 1,300 expected, the average grant amount has been higher than anticipated (\$1,886 compared to the \$1,359 estimated).

Mentoring overview

Mentoring methodology and approach

Mentoring prioritizes supporting students’ educational and career-based goals and aims to empower students to take ownership of their academic experience, utilize campus resources, and target growth in specific academic skillsets needed to continue and graduate. Mentoring drives improved student performance through a combination of assessing and prioritizing student risk within eight focus areas, engaging each student through a tailored outreach and communication plan and documenting student risk to ensure student accountability. Students must execute the actions and steps that their mentor facilitates within the process for full impact to be reached. Mentors direct and facilitate this process with each individual student through a methodology that tailors mentoring to the individual student’s areas and levels of risk, strengths, and communication styles. The eight focus areas mentors focus on are: *Academics – Finances – Career – Health – Graduation – Effectiveness – School Community*.

Mentoring works to identify risk and areas of potential obstacles and then overcome these obstacles by acknowledging and developing a student’s unique strengths. Mentoring is strength-based and highlights the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that a student currently has or can develop to persist and graduate. Mentoring drives student ownership over their own progress and ability to create and execute on their plans. Accountability, ownership, self-advocacy, and critical decision making are key elements in the mentoring process. For mentoring to lead to impact, the student must own their part in their own development by collaborating with their mentor and taking the actions discussed in mentoring.

Micro-assessments and advancements in one or several of these focus areas happen in each interaction between a mentor and a student. Doing a micro-assessment in each interaction with a student allows mentoring to also impact those additional areas of risk. Figure 1 below outlines the model that mentors use to do this assessment and advancement.

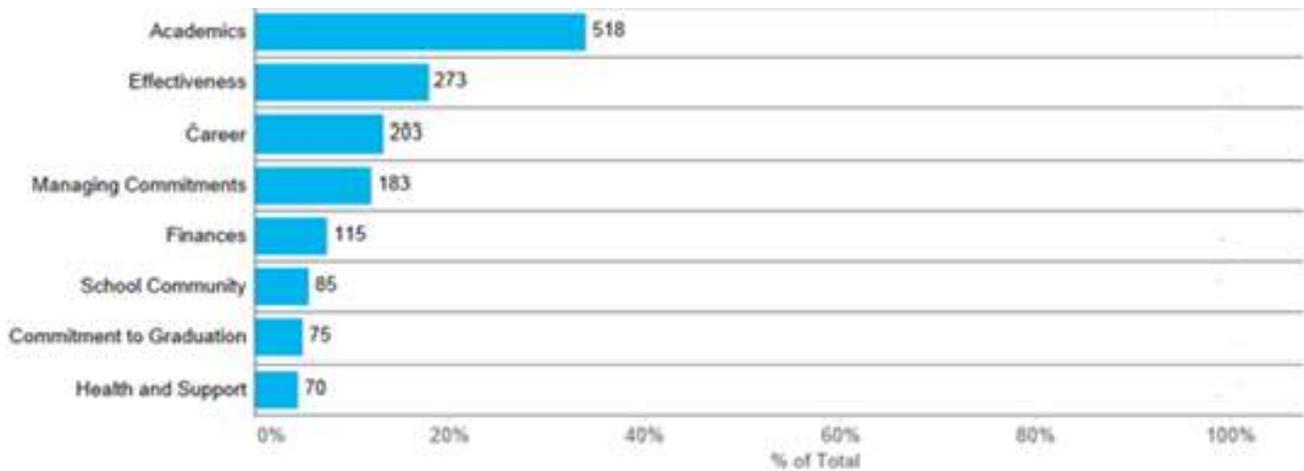
Figure 1: Mentoring framework



Common mentoring topics by focus areas

After a meeting, mentors select the primary focus area that was discussed with the student. It is highly possible that more than one focus area was assessed for and covered in a mentoring meeting, however selecting the primary topic allows us to see understand what is most frequently coming up in mentoring meetings. Table 3 below shows the primary meeting topics that have been recorded over time for the fall 2016 semester.

Table 3: Count of primary meeting topics over time



Below outlines common meeting topics by focus areas:

Academics

Grades, test taking skills, reading strategies, navigating course syllabi or assignments, interpreting feedback, generating questions, self-advocacy and asking for help, gathering feedback about academic performance, attitude and belief around academics, time management plan for academics

Effectiveness

Creating systems and plans with students to increase accountability and follow through, generating organization systems to balance priorities and complete tasks efficiently, self-direction, communication skills, creating realistic expectations and scheduling self around those expectations

Career

Interview preparation, resume building, researching opportunities to gain experiences in field of interest, doing informational interviews, networking, best practices for determining fields of interest, job searches

Commitments

Creating schedule and routine, calendar organization, guiding student through exercises to prioritize commitments and plan time accordingly, communicating with those needing to know about schedule and priorities, asking for help to balance multiple priorities, short and long-term planning

Finances

Personal budgeting strategy, managing work and school, utilizing support networks to navigate financial obstacles, generating awareness and use of campus financial resources/personal financial resources, anticipating future financial obstacles, scholarship searches

School Community

Navigating school resources and directories, preparing for conversations with campus subject matter experts, building and maintaining strong relationships with financial aid, advisors and other campus resources, building social and personal connection to campus environment, establishing community and support system, developing strong communication skills, asking for feedback from instructors

Graduation

Unpacking primary motivation for school, generating visions for graduating and post-graduation, understanding support networks, balancing long-term and short-term planning, postgraduate research

Health

Self-care, energy management, budgeting time for sleep and personal wellness, balancing commitments for personal health, understanding campus and external resources around health, creating healthy habits that support school

Student adoption and ongoing engagement with mentoring

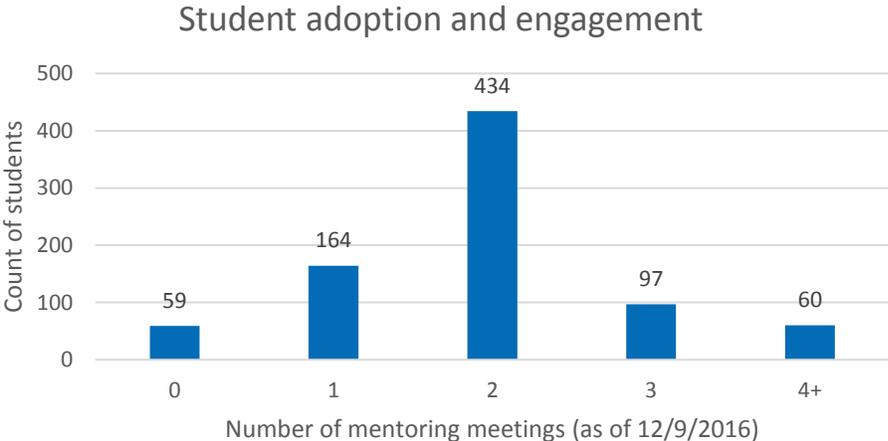
Prior to the launch of mentoring, MOHE and InsideTrack collaborated on how to operationalize the mentoring requirement for students. The decision was made to require that students have four mentoring meetings by the end of the spring 2017 semester to successfully meet the expectation of participation in mentoring. This requirement however does not limit the amount of interaction

possible between a student and mentor. The goal is to personalize mentoring to each student and keep a focus on outreach and interactions that drive impact, student persistence and completion.

Mentors track all their interactions with students and have a proactive outreach plan that supports students meeting the requirement. Engaging students is not a “one size fits all” methodology. Strategies for engaging students derive from what the student has both identified directly as their preference for engagement as well as their behavioral patterns in engaging with mentoring. An individual student engagement strategy is based on student preference and behavior, level of risk, urgency and seriousness of risk areas, and mentoring topics needing to be addressed. Channel (phone, email, and SMS text), frequency, time and day, and combined outreaches are all carefully and intentionally considered in constructing engagement strategies.

Table 4 below shows the first semester (fall 2016 term) of mentoring engagement with initial adoption as a 1st meeting with a mentor and then subsequent on-going meetings. Meetings follow the InsideTrack coaching model of assessing and advancing in an agreed-upon area. A meeting is defined by a longer interaction with a student that often drives the co-creation of a full plan of action toward an area of opportunity. A contact is defined by a shorter interaction with a student that often contains assessment, relationship building, and a shorter burst of impact. Contacts often include advancing the student or creating next steps toward a specific action. If we were to look at engagement with mentoring based on a defined contact, we would see a higher level of interaction going on between mentors and students. We often see this through the channel of SMS text, where students can message their mentor with brief questions that do not require a full meeting to discuss. We have specifically highlighted meeting rates because the grant renewal requirement for participating in mentoring is defined as meetings not just contact.

Table 4: Initial student adoption and on-going engagement with mentoring



Understanding risk factors to drive student retention and completion

For the purposes of the evaluation of mentoring, “retained students” will be considered those who retain from first to second year, or graduate within the first year, at the school that issued the Occupational Grant and continue in the same grant-eligible program. Additionally, any students added after September 30, 2016 will still receive mentoring, but will not be part of the official retention

measurement. To be able to set a comparable baseline for this retention measurement, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education provided InsideTrack with a historical dataset of fall 2010 to fall 2014 cohorts. These cohorts were limited to programs included in the Occupational Grant pilot program. An analysis was then completed to provide context for historical retention rates. The fall-to-fall average historical retention rate for these cohorts is 40.0%.

Given the primary objective to impact retention and overall student success, the key is to understand the primary risk factors for each individual student and other potential barriers that may lead to a student not retaining into their second year. Early on in mentoring, the goal is to gain a clear picture of the primary risk factors and to capture these risk factors using the eight focus areas. This allows us to understand key trends with risk across all students and to use this information to inform the types of conversations and strategies mentors need to use to drive retention impact.

The primary risk factors that have emerged for students over the first semester of mentoring are predominantly commitment to graduation, effectiveness, and managing commitments. The area of commitment to graduation is most often coming up for students who are questioning whether or not they want to be in college or struggling to feel a commitment to the program that they initially selected to pursue and for which they are receiving Occupational Grant funding. The areas of effectiveness and managing commitments have also shown to be key areas of risk across the cohort. There are several students who are working outside of going to school and balancing both has proven to be challenging. There is often a pull to focus time and attention at work, especially if a student is already working in a field that they are also pursuing in school. The area of effectiveness is showing up as a challenge for students to follow-through with all they set out to do with school and the challenge to maintain the overall commitment to accomplish short-term tasks and goals.

Student stories

The following are student stories as narrated by the Mentors. Each story gives you a glimpse into the experiences of Occupational Grant students and the impact of mentoring. The student names have been anonymized to protect the identity of the students.

Student story 1

Saint Paul College, Computer Programming (AAS)

“Henry started the semester confidently. However, in the first few weeks he ran into trouble with understanding his different instructors’ expectations. For example, his online course was confusing and he wasn’t getting a response back from the instructor as quickly as he had hoped. Henry reached out to me for support. Together we brainstormed specific questions to get what he needed from his online instructor. After this, Henry came to mentoring meetings with new concerns about other instructors’ expectations, test taking, and communication. Through reflecting and brainstorming in mentoring, Henry gained the clarity of each instructors’ expectations, developed his own best practices for success on tests and effective communication with his resources. Henry is ending the semester proudly and has created a strong start plan for the spring semester.”

Student story 2

Saint Paul College, Pre-Engineering (AS)

“Jennifer was really excited about starting college this year...until her Chemistry class posed challenges she wasn't expecting. Communication issues and a slight language barrier with her instructor were new frustrations that she'd never had to navigate before. She felt unsupported in class and found that she was trying to teach herself unfamiliar material. Despite having high grades and rewarding experiences in her other courses, the student felt uncertain and a bit defeated. In mentoring meetings, Jennifer and I first normalized the situation as a common occurrence for many students during college. Jennifer also brainstormed ways to get the support she needed - talking with other students about workarounds and other solutions, adjusting study strategies, initiating one on one communication with the instructor and connecting with her advisor. Recently, Jennifer reached out to say that she could adjust her prep strategies for the class after talking with classmates and after the instructor assigned a take-home test. With her new strategies in place, the student earned a 95/100 on that exam and shared that she is very proud of her 81% in the class heading into the final! Jennifer has always valued open and consistent communication, but found this particular situation a bit daunting because the language barrier component was new and felt overwhelming. When asked how she might handle similar experiences in this course or with future courses, the student had this to say in a texting exchange: I think something that I could try is if I run into any problems I could definitely go to my instructor and try to better communicate with them. I think trying that wouldn't be a bad idea because being able to reach good communication with my instructor would be the best ideal solution in this situation.”

Student story 3

Anoka Technical College, Architectural Technology AAS

“Sarah is studying Architectural Technology. While she thought about nursing in high school, she decided to go with this program because she had taken some drawing classes that she liked. She let me know that she had some uncertainty with her program choice at first, but liked her instructors and courses. Sarah expressed curiosity about what she would want to do and the possible careers available to her and how to find out more information. In addition to a desire to learn more about her career options, she shared with me that in addition to school she was working and looking for a second job. Based on those early conversations, I noted that the areas we would likely want to spend some time focusing on would fall under the categories of commitment to graduation, effectiveness, and career. By the end of our second mentoring session, we focused in on identifying the elements she wanted out of her eventual dream job and developed a list of places to gather more information about how specific careers might match with what she is looking for. As we continued meeting over the course of the semester, Sarah and I began to focus more on planning skills, how to use her career research and new planning strategies to help boost motivation over the length of the program, and ideas to manage test anxiety. By the end of the semester, Sarah shared additional strategies and tools she had added beyond what we had discussed, she could confidently articulate what was working for her. She also expressed that she was feeling more organized and confident in her ability to get things done. In the next semester, we will aim to expand on these topics and tackle anything else that may impact her overall progress. Sarah is currently wrapping up her finals and is planning to register for spring.”

Student story 4

Ridgewater College, Automation and Robotic Systems Technology (AAS)

“In our first phone meeting in early October, Peter expressed frustration with his program and courses because it was moving so fast, he felt like he could not absorb things. I asked him about additional support in the form of tutoring, out-of-class meetings with instructors or study groups with friends from class. The simplest plan that he was receptive to was speaking with friends from class. He was interested in trying something different, but didn't come across as confident and seemed to have minimal belief in how much it could help. We had our next meeting a week and a half later and he had a completely different tone - it was working! He had a totally different perception of his program and his willingness to stay with it because the connections he had made with classmates had been so beneficial. Things shifted dramatically for him and have stayed in a very healthy and beneficial place for the remainder of the semester, with high hopes for next semester and beyond.”

Student story 5

North Hennepin Community College, Business Computer Systems and Management (AAS)

“Brian and I connect weekly as part of his plan to stay focused and on track. His motivation to be in college is to make his dad proud and to fulfill his passion to learn as much as he can about Business. He struggled his first semester with prioritizing his schoolwork and following through with his plans. He has made a lot of improvements in making more time for homework by quitting his second job, cutting down on the amount of times he takes the two hour bus ride to Minneapolis for studio rap sessions, and saying no to friends when they ask him to go out. He has made gains in following through with his plans by finding better places to study and communicating regularly with his teachers. His biggest challenge has been feeling like he doesn't have people he can really trust when he is struggling in school because his dad is in Africa. When Brian and I meet we talk about finding the support he needs, his plans to get caught up, how to stay motivated, and what he needs to do to be on track with the grant requirements.”

Student story 6

North Hennepin Community College, Accounting (AS)

“Cathy is working two jobs, commuting over 30 minutes to campus, has internet issues at home, and is trying to find ways to manage her stress and motivation. She feels passionate about graduating from college and eventually getting her MA in Accounting. Frequently checking in with Cathy and having a mentor that believes in her abilities has proved to be the most beneficial for her. I take the time to listen to what is causing stress for Cathy, help her come up with a plan then connects her back to the reason she is in school and why graduating is important for her. For example, Cathy was unsure of why she did not score very high on her quizzes and previous speeches for her speech class. I worked with her to create an email to her instructor asking for advice and access to her old quizzes so she could determine where her mistakes were and where previous material was being pulled from. She is still waiting for the grade from her last speech and quiz but she believes she did well. I will also occasionally send her motivational quotes and ask Cathy to create reminders of why school is important. So far Cathy has reported that she is getting at least B's in her classes and is happy with her progress.”

Additional Information

Table 3 below shows the distribution of students by institution for the 814 grant recipients receiving mentoring, as of December 9, 2016.

Table 3: Student distribution by institution

| Institution | Count | % of total |
|---|------------|---------------|
| Alexandria Technical & Community College | 69 | 8.5% |
| Anoka Technical College | 22 | 2.7% |
| Anoka-Ramsey Community College | 25 | 3.1% |
| Central Lakes College | 33 | 4.1% |
| Century College | 56 | 6.9% |
| Dakota County Technical College | 30 | 3.7% |
| Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College | 1 | 0.1% |
| Hennepin Technical College | 10 | 1.2% |
| Hibbing Community College | 14 | 1.7% |
| Inver Hills Community College | 5 | 0.6% |
| Itasca Community College | 27 | 3.3% |
| Lake Superior College | 18 | 2.2% |
| Mesabi Range College | 4 | 0.5% |
| Minneapolis Community & Technical College | 24 | 2.9% |
| Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical | 17 | 2.1% |
| Minnesota State Community and Technical College | 64 | 7.9% |
| Minnesota West Community & Technical College | 40 | 4.9% |
| Normandale Community College | 55 | 6.8% |
| North Hennepin Community College | 23 | 2.8% |
| Northland Community & Technical College | 35 | 4.3% |
| Northwest Technical College | 15 | 1.8% |
| Pine Technical & Community College | 9 | 1.1% |
| Ridgewater College | 62 | 7.6% |
| Riverland Community College | 15 | 1.8% |
| Rochester Community and Technical College | 42 | 5.2% |
| Saint Paul College | 22 | 5.2% |
| South Central College | 21 | 2.6% |
| St. Cloud Technical & Community College | 52 | 6.4% |
| Vermilion Community College | 4 | 0.5% |
| Total | 814 | 100.0% |

Table 4: Student distribution by qualifying program

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|--|-------|------------|
| Accountant (AAS) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Accounting (AAS) | 11 | 1.4% |
| Accounting (AS) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Addiction Counseling (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Advanced Manufacturing Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Advanced Solar Thermal Energy Systems (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Agri Business (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Agri Business (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Agribusiness Production (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Agribusiness Service Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Agricultural Science and Technology (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Agriculture Education Technology Partnership (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Aircraft Technician - Airframe (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Alcohol and Drug Counseling (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Architectural Construction Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Architectural Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Architectural Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Architectural Technology and Design (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Athletic Coaching (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Auto Body and Collision Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Auto Body Collision Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Auto Body Collision Technology (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Auto Body Technician (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Auto Service Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Auto Service Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Automation and Robotic Systems Technology (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Automation and Robotic Systems Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Automobile Mechanic (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Automotive Engine Repair, Suspension and Brakes (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Automotive Service Technician (AAS) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Automotive Service Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Automotive Service Technology (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Automotive Service Technology (DIP) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Automotive Services Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Automotive Technician (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Automotive Technician (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Automotive Technology (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Automotive Technology (Ford ASSET) (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Aviation Maintenance Technology (AAS) | 7 | 0.9% |
| Aviation Maintenance Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Aviation Management (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|---|-------|------------|
| Basic Nursing (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Biomedical Core (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Biomedical Equipment Technician (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Biomedical Equipment Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Biomedical Technology (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Building Utilities Mechanic (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Business (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Business (AS) | 17 | 2.1% |
| Business Administration (AS) | 17 | 2.1% |
| Business Computer Systems and Management (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Business Management (AAS) | 18 | 2.2% |
| Business Management (AS) | 16 | 2.0% |
| Business: Management, Marketing and Sales (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Business--Marketing and Management (AAS) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Carpentry (DIP) | 12 | 1.5% |
| Central Services Technician (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Child Development (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Child Life Assistant (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Child, Adult Care and Education/Para (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Child, Youth, and Family Studies (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Civil Engineering Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Cloud Security & Virtualization Forensics (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| CNC Machinist (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| CNC Manufacturing Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| CNC Manufacturing Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Coaching (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer Aided Drafting and Design (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer and Web Programming (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer Information Systems (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer Information Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer Network Administration (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Computer Networking and Telecommunications (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Computer Programmer (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Computer Programmer (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer Programming (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Computer Science (AS) | 21 | 2.6% |
| Computer Support (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computer Support and Network Administration (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Computer Support Technician (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Computer Technology (AAS) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Computer Technology (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computerized (CNC) Precision Machining Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Computers/Information Management (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|--|-------|------------|
| Construction Electrician (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Construction Electricity (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Construction Plumbing (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Cosmetology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Cosmetology (DIP) | 10 | 1.2% |
| Criminal Justice - Law Enforcement (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Criminal Justice - Law Enforcement (CERT) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Criminal Justice - Law Enforcement (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Criminal Justice - Police Science (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Criminal Justice (AS) | 12 | 1.5% |
| Culinary Arts (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Culinary Arts (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Cyber and Information Security (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Cybersecurity, Virtualization, and Forensics (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Dairy Management (DIP) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Dental Assistant (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Dental Assistant (DIP) | 7 | 0.9% |
| Dental Assisting (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Dental Assisting (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technician (DIP) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Diesel Mechanics (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Diesel Mechanics and Heavy Equipment Maintenance (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Diesel Technology (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Diesel Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Early Childhood and Paraprofessional Education (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Early Childhood and Youth Development (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Early Childhood Education (AAS) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Early Childhood Education (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Early Childhood Education (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Education (AS) | 12 | 1.5% |
| Education Foundations (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Electrical Construction and Maintenance Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Electrical Construction and Maintenance Technology (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Electrical Construction Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Electrical Construction Technology (DIP) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Electrical Lineworker (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Electrical Lineworker Technology (AAS) | 10 | 1.2% |
| Electrical Lineworker Technology (DIP) | 10 | 1.2% |
| Electrical Maintenance and Construction (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Electrical Maintenance Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Electrical Technology (DIP) | 11 | 1.4% |
| Electrician (AAS) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Electrician (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|---|-------|------------|
| Electronic Engineering Technology - Industrial Controls (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Electronic Engineering Technology (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Electronic Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Electronics Technology/Automated Systems (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Elementary Education Foundations (AS) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Emergency Medical Services (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Emergency Medical Services Specialist (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Emergency Medical Technician (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| E-Merging Computer Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Engineering (AS) | 28 | 3.4% |
| Engineering Broad Field (AS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Engineering CAD Technology (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Engineering Fundamentals (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Enterprise Computing Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Entrepreneurship (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Equine Science (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Equine Science Riding/Training (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Farm Operation and Management (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Farm Operation and Management (DIP) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Finance Management (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Firefighter/Paramedic (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| GPS/GIS Technology for Agriculture (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| GPS/GIS Technology for Agriculture (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Guitar Repair and Building (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Gunsmithing & Firearms Technician Journeymen (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Health Information Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Health Information Technology/Coding (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Health Sciences (Broad Field) (AS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Health Sciences Broad Field (AS) | 29 | 3.6% |
| Health Technology (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Healthcare Systems Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning/Refrigeration (HVAC/R) (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Heavy Construction Equipment Mechanic (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Heavy Construction Equipment Technology (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Heavy Duty Truck Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Heavy Equipment Operation and Maintenance (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| High Performance Engine Machinist (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| High Performance Engine Machinist (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Horticulture Science (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Human Resources (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|--|-------|------------|
| Human Resources (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Human Service Worker (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Human Services (AS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Human Services (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Human Services Eligibility Worker (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Human Services Specialist (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| HVAC/R - Advanced (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Industrial Maintenance and Mechanics (DIP) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Industrial Mechanical Technology (DIP) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Information and Telecommunications Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Information Security and Assurance (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Information Systems (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Information Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Information Technology (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Information Technology Management (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Integrated Manufacturing Technology - CNC Machine Programmer (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Integrated Manufacturing Technology - CNC Machine Programmer (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Integrated Manufacturing Technology - Welding (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Internet Programming (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Introduction to Health Care Careers (CERT) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Land Surveying/Civil Engineering Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Landscape Technology (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Landscape/Horticulture (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Law Enforcement (AAS) | 30 | 3.7% |
| Law Enforcement (AS) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Law Enforcement (CERT) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Machine Tool Technology (DIP) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Management and Supervision in Healthcare (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Marine Engine Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Marine, Motorcycle, and Powersports Technician (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Marketing (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Marketing (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Marketing and Sales Management (AAS) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Marketing Design Specialist (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Marketing Management (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Massage Therapy (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Massage Therapy (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Mechanical Design Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Mechanical Drafting, Design and Engineering Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Mechatronics (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Mechatronics Engineering Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Mechatronics Industrial Maintenance (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Medical Administrative Specialist (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|--|-------|------------|
| Medical Assistant (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Medical Assistant (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Medical Lab Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Medical Laboratory Technician (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Medical Laboratory Technology (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Medium/Heavy Truck Technician (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Medium/Heavy Truck Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Motorsports Technology (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Network Administration (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Network Administration and Security (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Network Systems Administration (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Nondestructive Testing Technology (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Nursing (AS) | 23 | 2.8% |
| Nursing (MANE) (AS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Nursing Assistant (CERT) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Office Technology Assistant (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Orthotic and Prosthetic Fitter (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Outdoor Recreation Therapy (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Paraeducator (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Pharmacy Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Power Sports Technology (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Powerline Technician (DIP) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Powerline Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Practical Nursing (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Practical Nursing (DIP) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Precision Agriculture Equipment Technician (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Pre-Engineering (AS) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Professional Pilot (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Prosthetic Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Prosthetics Technician (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Radiologic Technology (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Residential Plumbing/HVAC (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Sales Management Specialist (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Sales, Marketing, and Management (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Sheet Metal & HVAC Ducts & Fittings (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Small Business Management (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Social Media Marketing (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Software Development (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Software Development (DIP) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Special Education (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Sterile Processing (CERT) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Supervisory Leadership (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |

| Qualifying program | Count | % of total |
|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Surgical Technology (AAS) | 7 | 0.9% |
| System Administration (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Technical Management (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Vacuum and Thin Film Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Veterinary Technology (AAS) | 5 | 0.6% |
| Water Environment Technologies (AAS) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Welding (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Welding (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Welding (DIP) | 6 | 0.7% |
| Welding and Fabrication (AAS) | 2 | 0.2% |
| Welding and Fabrication (DIP) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Welding Technology (AAS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Welding Technology (CERT) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Welding Technology (DIP) | 13 | 1.6% |
| Welding/Fabrication (DIP) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Young Child Education (AS) | 1 | 0.1% |
| Total | 814 | 100.0% |

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