

Implementation Findings from the First Year of Accelerating Opportunity

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Based on a report by The Urban Institute and The Aspen Institute

Overview of Presentation

- Introduction to the AO Model
- The Evaluation Design and Major Research Questions
- First Year Implementation Findings and Implications

AO Vision

Increase the ability of students with low basic skills to earn valued occupational credentials by enrolling them in for-credit career and technical education courses at local community colleges as they improve their basic education and English language skills

AO Initiative Overview: First Year

- 33 colleges across five states: Kansas, Kentucky, Illinois, North Carolina and Louisiana
- 2,137 students enrolled the first year
- 91 Integrated Educational Pathways created in the first year
- 2,272 credentials and 11,753.5 credits

Activities

2-Year Outcomes

**College
& Career
Pathways**

**Culture
Shift**

**Scale &
Sustain-
ability**

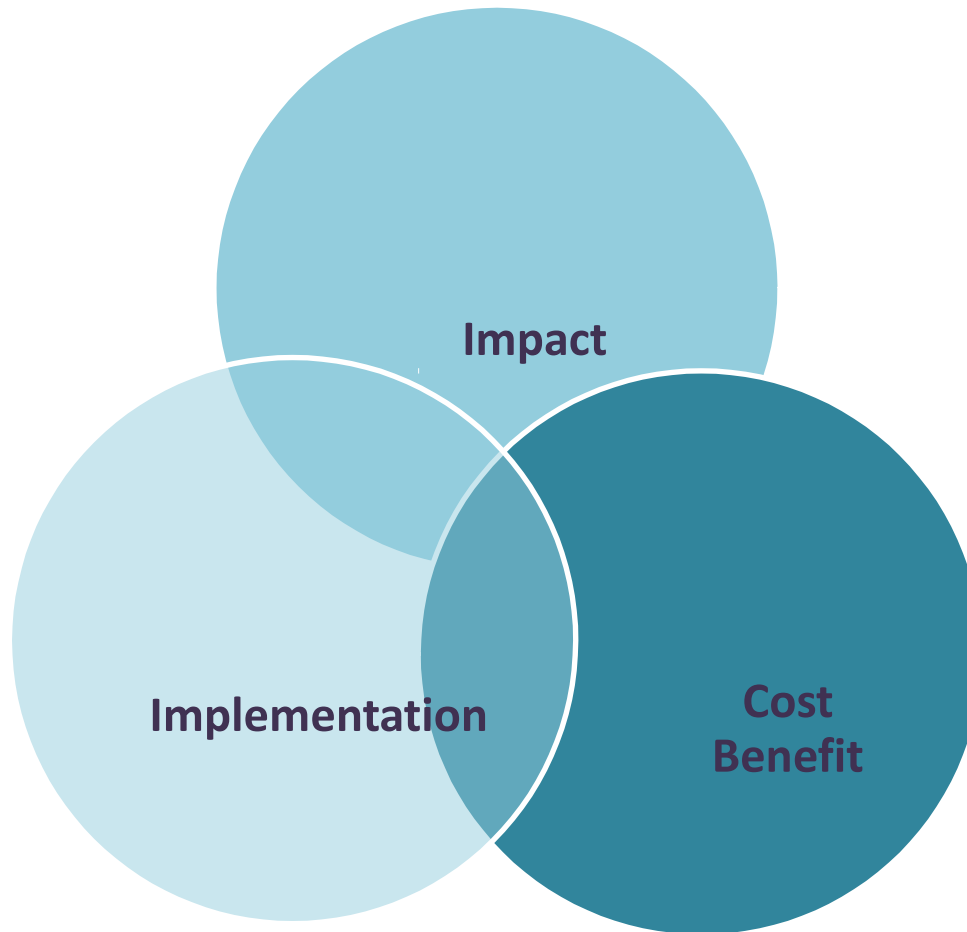
Primary Long-Term Outcomes

3

AO Model Components

- Two educational pathways with strong local demand
- Contextualized learning and use of hybrid course designs
- Evidence-based dual enrollment strategies
- Comprehensive academic and social student supports
- Achievement of marketable, stackable, credit-bearing certificates and degrees and college readiness
- Award of some college-level professional technical credits
- Partnerships with Workforce Investment Boards and employers

Evaluation Components



Implementation Evaluation: A Closer Look

Objective

To document the process of implementing integrated college and career pathway designs and taking these designs to scale

Data Collection: First Year

- Site visits to four original AO states (Fall 2012)
- Interviewed state team and partners
- Interviewed staff and partners from two colleges in each state
- Quarterly calls with state offices and two colleges per call
- Year 1 survey of all AO colleges in original four states (February 2012) 100% response rate

Major Research Questions on Implementation First Year

- What do the AO pathways look like?
- What types of students did AO serve?
- What interactions did colleges have with community partners and employers?
- How did the states support the colleges during the first year of implementation?

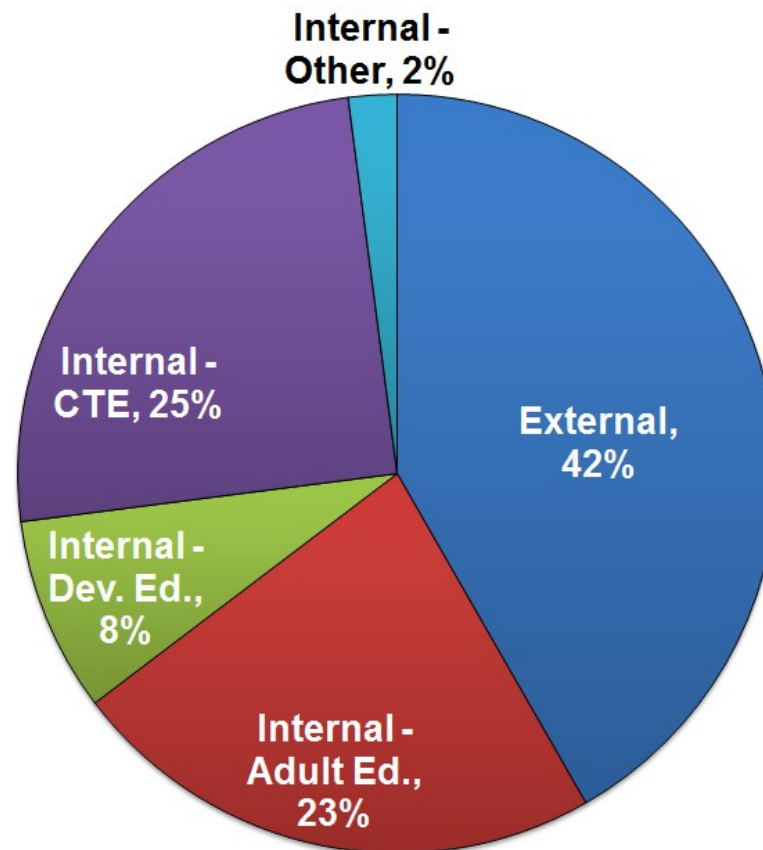
AO at the student level

What type of students did AO serve during the first year?

Recruitment and Target Population

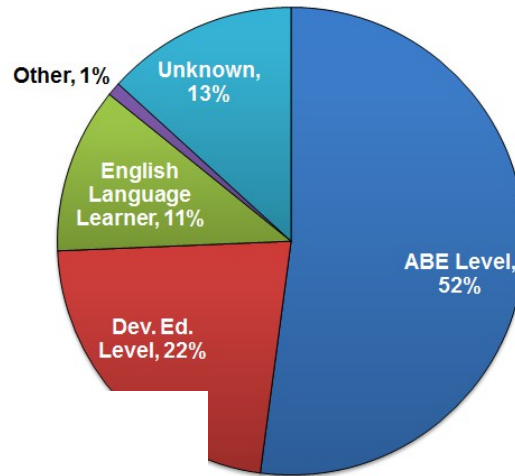
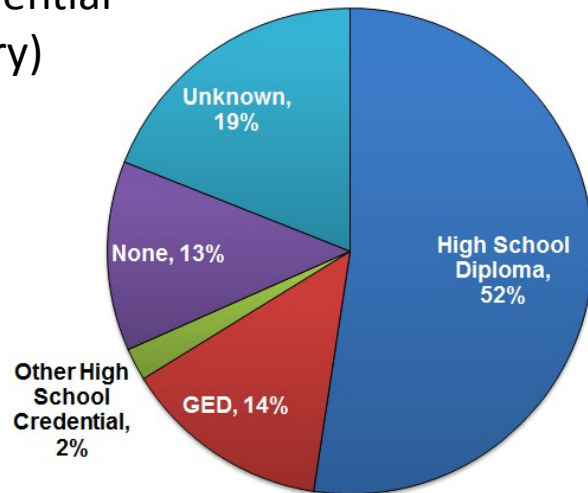
- Recruitment strategies were similar across colleges, but success was not universal
- Across the initiative, colleges adapted recruitment plans as result of changes to the ability to benefit provisions for Pell Grants
- Most students were recruited from local adult education programs and came from inside the college

Most AO Students Came from Inside the College



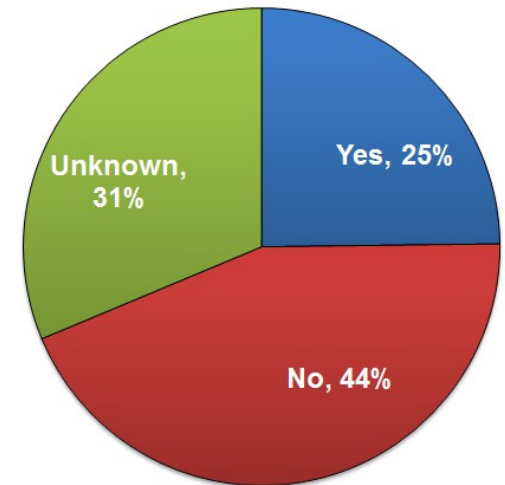
Education Levels and Employment

Secondary Credential (Entry)



Qualification for AO

Employment (Entry)

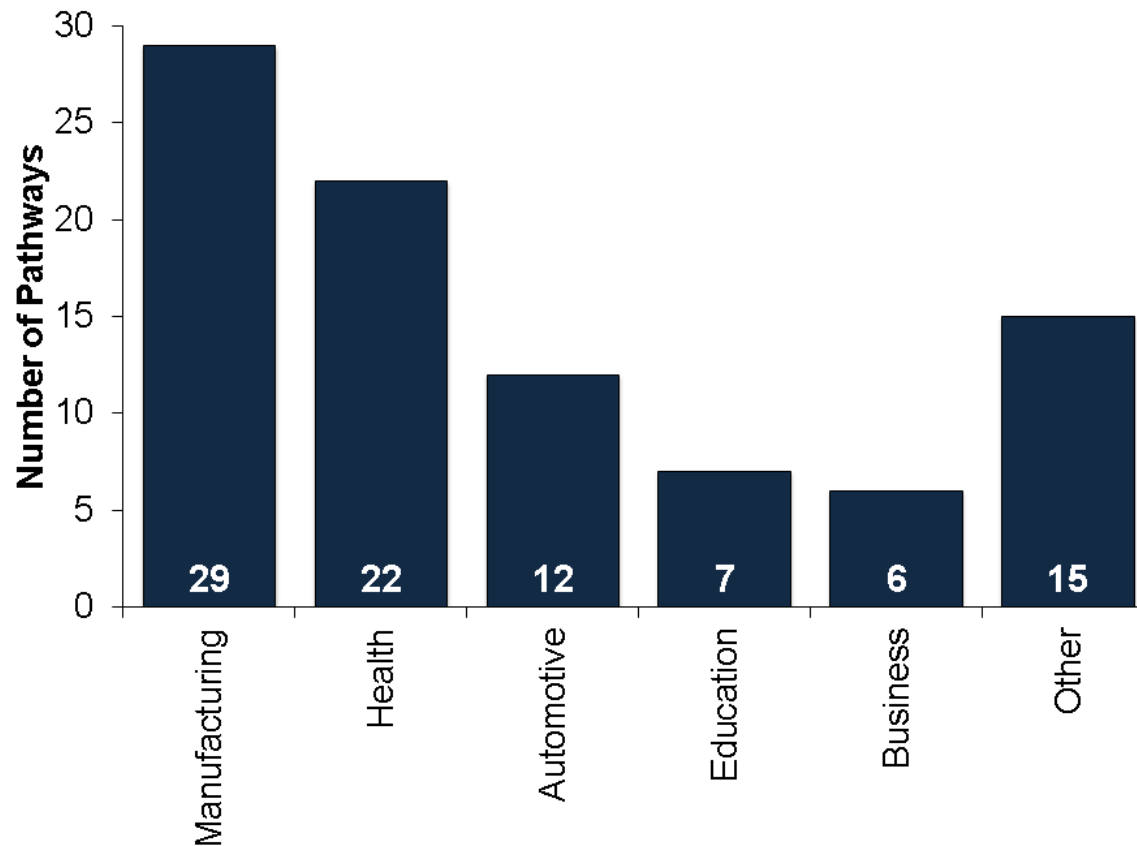


Initial Student Response

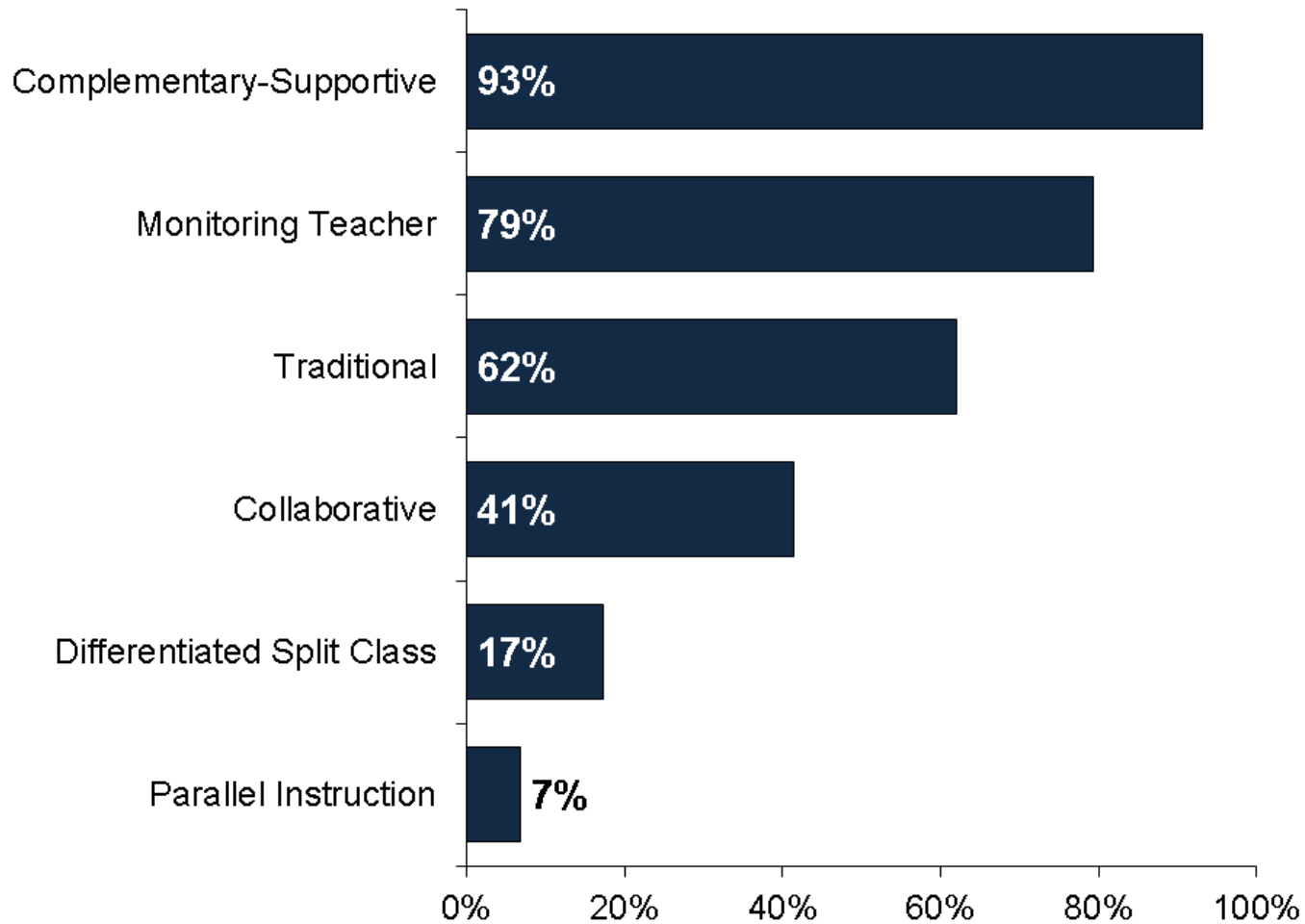
- Students mostly reacted positively to the program
- Students liked:
 - Cohort structure
 - Extra support from both ABE instructor and case managers
 - The opportunity to access college courses
- According to student accounts, there was some unawareness to the range of supports available, especially related to job search after program

AO at the college level

AO Pathways By Industry



AO Pathways By Integrated Instruction Approach



Support Services for AO Students

- Three most common support services were case management, college navigation, and tutoring
- Many colleges relied on partner organizations to provide support services
- Many support services were not highly differentiated for AO students

The role of the states

State Support of AO Implementation: First Year

- All states leveraged existing structures and initiatives to support AO
- Partnerships at the state level were important in galvanizing support for AO
- State leadership identified a series of policy levers in order to advance policy change and ensure the sustainability of the AO through the grant period and beyond

Moving Forward

- What are the costs of AO, the distribution of the costs, and the sources of funding?
- What were student outcomes? How many completed pathways, obtained credentials, became employed in their area of training, and experienced wage increases?
- How did AO impact the student outcomes relative to what they would have achieved otherwise?
- Did cultural change occurred as a result of AO, on either the state or college level? Did AO result in policy changes?
- Did AO achieve scale? Which aspects of AO were seen as most sustainable?

