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Early Evaluation Findings from Mississippi Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (MIBEST)

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Presentation Overview

- Introduction to the MIBEST initiative
- Overview of the MIBEST evaluation
- Findings from MIBEST student survey
- Takeaways from site visits
- What's next for MIBEST and the evaluation?

Introduction to the MIBEST Initiative

- Statewide career pathway initiative implemented beginning in 2016
- All 15 Mississippi community colleges
- Targeting low-income individuals without a high school credential
- Concurrent career and technical education (CTE) and adult education classes
- Team teaching, modeled after I-BEST
- Academic, financial, and personal supports
- MIBEST Navigators

Introduction to the MIBEST Initiative

Mission: Increase the rate of low-income students with low basic skills entering into and succeeding in postsecondary education programs that ultimately lead to self-sufficient family wages

Overarching Goals:

1. Increasing wages among individuals without a high school credential and other nontraditional students by improving education outcomes and career-focused skills
2. Scaling the integrated career pathways approach statewide

Funding: The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Kellogg), the Mississippi Workforce Enhancement Training Fund, the Women's Foundation of Mississippi, and other sources, including funds leveraged by the colleges

Overview of the MIBEST Evaluation

- The Urban Institute contracted with the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCCB) to evaluate MIBEST beginning in February 2017
- Mixed methods evaluation
 - Theory of change
 - Implementation analysis
 - Outcomes and impact analyses
 - Cost study
 - Racial equity lens

MIBEST Evaluation: Conceptual Framework

State Workforce Needs

MIBEST Program Implementation

Short-Term Outcomes

Long-Term Outcomes

- Employers in high-demand industries need skilled workers to fill job vacancies
- Low-income adults need access to accelerated education and training programs that will prepare them for middle- or high-skill occupations
- Individuals with barriers to postsecondary education and employment (e.g., individuals without a high school credential, low-income and unemployed adults, English language learners, individuals eligible for public assistance, and veterans) need academic and supportive services to succeed in training programs and obtain jobs paying family-supporting wages
- Community colleges need to build their capacity to provide education and training in key industry sectors to nontraditional students
- Increased alignment is needed between industry, community colleges, the public workforce system, CBOs, and public assistance agencies

- Colleges revise policies to remove barriers for underprepared adult learners to enter training programs
- Colleges create career pathways in high-demand occupations, including credit-bearing programs
- Colleges recruit and enroll nontraditional students
- Career pathways include team teaching, structured course sequences, and stackable credentials
- Pathways include accelerated learning strategies, such as credit for prior learning and concurrent enrollment in GED and CTE courses
- Colleges provide participants with intrusive counseling and supportive services
- Colleges provide soft skills training, work-based learning opportunities, and next step supports
- Colleges build and enhance partnerships with employers and workforce/CBO providers
- Colleges collect and report key student data and outcomes

- Participants enrolling in and completing MIBEST career pathway programs
- Participants earning high school equivalency credentials
- Participants earning credits toward a postsecondary degree
- Participants earning industry-recognized credentials and pursuing further education along career pathways
- Participants employed and retained in their chosen field of study
- Increased participant earnings
- Increased use of data to measure training program outcomes and impacts in MS

- Improved educational outcomes and career-focused skills among low-income adults in MS
- Increase in family-sustaining wages among people with barriers to postsecondary education and nontraditional students in MS
- Integrated career pathways approach implemented statewide in all key industry sectors
- Significant progress made toward closing the state skilled workforce gap
- Increased systems alignment between industry, community colleges, public workforce system, and supportive services
- Systematic use of data to measure key educational, employment, and industry indicators in MS

Contextual Factors: State Policy Climate, Local Labor Markets, and College Budget Constraints

Overview of the MIBEST Evaluation: Activities

- Student Survey
 - Pilot: Apr-May 2017
 - Full: Apr-May 2018
- Site Visits
 - All 15 colleges: Oct-Nov 2017
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Observations
 - 7 colleges: April 2019
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Focus groups

2018 MIBEST Student Survey

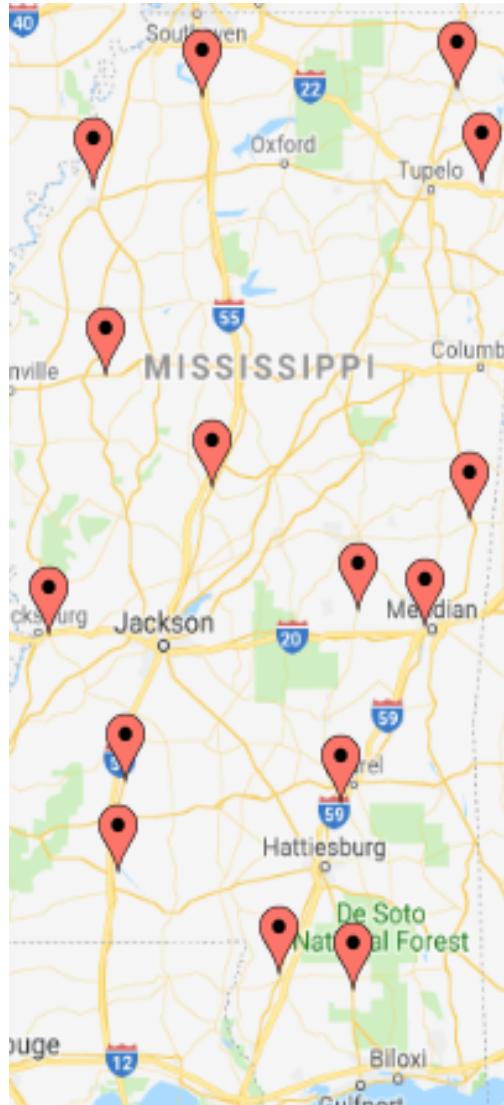
- Worked with MCCB and colleges to get consent and contact info to field the survey online
 - 448 total MIBEST participants in Spring 2018
 - 334 submitted consent forms
 - 211 took the survey; 47% response rate
- Demographics
 - 69% female; 30% male; 1% other
 - median age 26
 - 47% white; 47% Black or African American; 4% Hispanic
 - 51% parents; 75% single, divorced, or separated
 - 53% worked in last month
 - 34% receiving SNAP; 4% receiving TANF

2018 MIBEST Student Survey

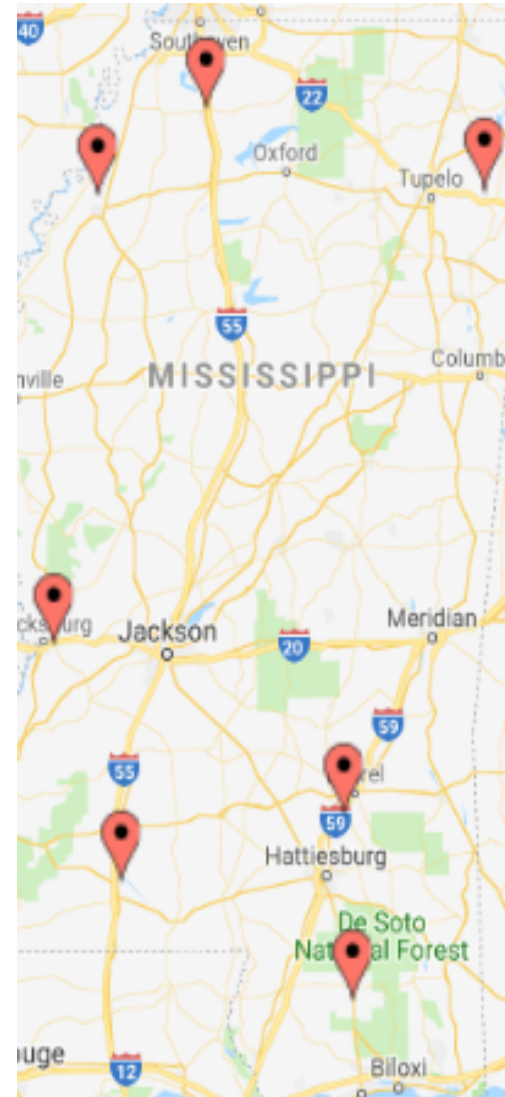
- Most respondents felt their MIBEST workload was easy to handle and that they spent enough time on CTE, career readiness, and HSE content
- Most felt MIBEST prepared them for higher education
- Most were very satisfied with all aspects of the program, and many respondent comments stressed the supportiveness of MIBEST staff and instructors
- Most felt that MIBEST:
 - built their confidence and self esteem
 - increased their hopes for a better future
 - helped them develop mental toughness and determination
- Many felt MIBEST inspired other family members to go back to school or inspired their kids to focus more on education
- Many felt they would never be enrolled in college without MIBEST

MIBEST Site Visits: Colleges Visited

First Round: 15 colleges
October-November 2017



Second Round: 7 colleges
April 2019



MIBEST Site Visits: Respondents

- MIBEST Project Coordinators
- MIBEST Navigators
- Deans and other college leaders involved with MIBEST
- CTE and adult education instructors teaching MIBEST students
- Employers with connections to MIBEST pathways
- Community-based organization partners **(Round 1 only)**
- Current and former MIBEST participants **(Round 2 only)**

Takeaways from First Round of Site Visits

- MIBEST helped increase collaboration and cooperation across college adult education, workforce development, and CTE departments
- About half of the colleges reported awarding credit for prior learning to MIBEST students.
- Biggest policy change as a result of MIBEST was allowing students without a high school credential to enroll in college
- Amount and type of team teaching varied across colleges due to
 - Curriculum and course content
 - Student needs
 - Level of comfort between instructors
- MIBEST Navigators provided tutoring, connected students with resources, and provided direct coaching and counseling

Takeaways from First Round of Site Visits (Continued)

- Several college leaders cited MIBEST Navigators among the most important staff positions and resources for MIBEST students
- Transportation assistance was mentioned as one of the biggest needs of MIBEST students by staff at 14 of the 15 colleges
- Employer engagement
 - Most successful when leveraging pre-existing relationship with the college
 - Most common involvement was advisory committee engagement
- Employers valued
 - Career readiness skills
 - Core/basic technical training provided as part of MIBEST career pathways

Takeaways from Second Round of Site Visits

- Level of integration of MIBEST and other students had implications for
 - Cohort model (or lack thereof)
 - Employer engagement approaches
- Employers that hired MIBEST interns or employees said they performed comparable to or better than a typical community college student hire
- Local employment context matters
 - Low unemployment rates decreased demand for technical training for several colleges, making the MIBEST program less attractive than it might be in a high-unemployment environment
 - Low unemployment rates also meant students might have been less likely to continue on with training beyond receipt of initial certifications

Takeaways from Second Round of Site Visits (Continued)

- Team teaching continues to vary in level of intensity across each site
- Some colleges can leverage various sources of funding and resources more easily than others
- Uncertainty around additional MIBEST funding was effecting
 - Recruitment
 - Ability to retain staff hired with MIBEST funds
- Transportation and childcare issues remain the biggest barriers not fully mitigated by MIBEST
 - Lack of public transportation infrastructure
 - Low levels of car ownership
 - Rural areas with long distances to college campuses
 - Limited child care available

Takeaways from Focus Groups

- All MIBEST pathways include career readiness, adult education (HSE courses), and technical training
 - The amount of classroom versus hands-on learning varies depending on the pathway
 - Students varied a lot on where they were with HSE attainment
- Technical instructors play a vital role providing extra help and connecting students to employment opportunities
 - Several students also referred to instructors as being personally invested in their success and wellbeing
- The availability of work-based learning activities is affected by industry, type of work, and worksite safety constraints
- Some students expressed that it was still hard to find work even with MIBEST or that they needed more help from MIBEST staff to find jobs

Takeaways from Focus Groups

- Students mentioned the flexibility of MIBEST program schedules as well as MIBEST financial assistance as being especially important
 - *“No student loans!”*
- Students expressed satisfaction with MIBEST staff and services
 - *“Not only do they do their job, but it’s like a family thing. To have someone who is concerned about you, it’s a blessing, and that’ll motivate you in school to do more than you thought you could do.”*
 - *“I had a flat one morning, and she helped me get a ride, and then she helped get the tire fixed. I was back on the road.”*
 - *“There was no service I needed that the program didn’t provide.”*
- MIBEST is life-changing for many students, providing them with opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise have
 - *“[MIBEST] is giving me a career path to get me started.”*
 - *“[MIBEST] is putting me in formal settings to learn skills I’ll use later in life.”*
 - *“I just want to stress that I now operate my own business because this program has really moved me forward.”*

What's Next?

- MCCB and the colleges are currently working to secure additional funding for MIBEST from Kellogg
 - Continue current MIBEST career pathways
 - Expand to include additional MIBEST career pathways
- Upcoming Evaluation Activities and Reporting
 - Outcomes analysis: completion, education, and employment
 - Interim evaluation report late 2019
 - Impact analysis, cost study, and final report 2020



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Questions?

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