

# **EFFECTIVE FEATURES OF ABE-TO-COLLEGE TRANSITION PROGRAMS: FINDINGS FROM THE ADULT TRANSITIONS LONGITUDINAL STUDY (ATLAS)**

<http://www.collegetransition.org/services.webinars.atlas.html> (2014 presentation)

## **About the ABE-to-College Transition Study**

This study, conducted by Christine A. Smith, presents the findings about effective features of adult basic education-to-college transition programs based on a longitudinal study of 225 adult students who participated in a transition course in 2007-2008 in 11 programs in New England. Participants attended a 15 week course that included instruction in (1) academic subjects such as reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic and beginning algebra; (2) personal skills such as time management, study skills, note-taking skills, life management and computer skills and (3) college skills such as obtaining financial aid, understanding the college culture and terminology and navigating the college system. Different program features were studied in relation to participants' persistence and success in college as determined by earning at least 3 college credits (one course) that were transferable for a certificate or diploma program (not developmental education).

This study used a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative data to answer the following research question: *What are the outcomes of participating in the ABE-to-College Transition Program, and what are the individual, program and college factors that influence those outcomes?* This paper reports the findings on completion of at least 3 college credits within four years of completing the transition program; therefore, data from 2007-2011 were used. At least two data points provided data for 216 of the original 225 participants. Each participant completed a survey questionnaire each year for four years; college transcripts augmented self-reports; and college transcripts documented college achievement. Data were also collected on performance in the college transition courses.

Demographic data on the original 225 participants demonstrated that 80% were female, 67% were white, 78% were born in the US, 53% earned a high school diploma with 47% earning a GED and the median age was 31 years.

## **Findings from Research**

Earning 3 college credits, as individuals, was significantly more likely to occur if participants

- Completed the transition course.
- Made gains on Accuplacer arithmetic score during the transition course. A student who gains 20 points on their Accuplacer arithmetic test is twice as likely to complete a college class as a student who makes no math gains
- Were immigrants to the US

- Were rated as having overall readiness characteristics for college
- Were rated as having fewer obstacles to college

College transition programs were more effective in participants' earning 3 college credits if they included

- Grades given
- High level of feedback to students on their work in the course
- More traditional, teacher-directed approach rather than a collaborative approach
- Included explicit student life skills classes

## Specific Implications of the ABE-To-College Transition Study

**Implication: Implement college transition classes that meet certain criteria.**

*What the research says: College transition classes that include specific features help adult basic education students persist to achieve at least three college credits*

**Therefore, you should...**

... Use college transition classes for ABE students that include extensive instruction in math, demonstrate what students expect college to be like and explicitly teach life skills.

### Strategies

- **Emphasize the teaching of math** in the basic skills part of the college transition course.
- **Give grades for performance in the college transition course.** Letter grades for work, including homework and essays, increase the odds of a participants completing at least three college credits.
- **Give a high level of feedback on student work,** such as written comments.
- **Use a traditional, teacher-directed approach** rather than a collaborative approach extant in the literature.
- **Offer an explicit life skills course** rather than inclusion of life skills in other program components.