



Lessons Learned from Michigan's

Academic Catch-Up Programs

mcca.org/Academic-Catch-Up-Report



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Acknowledgements

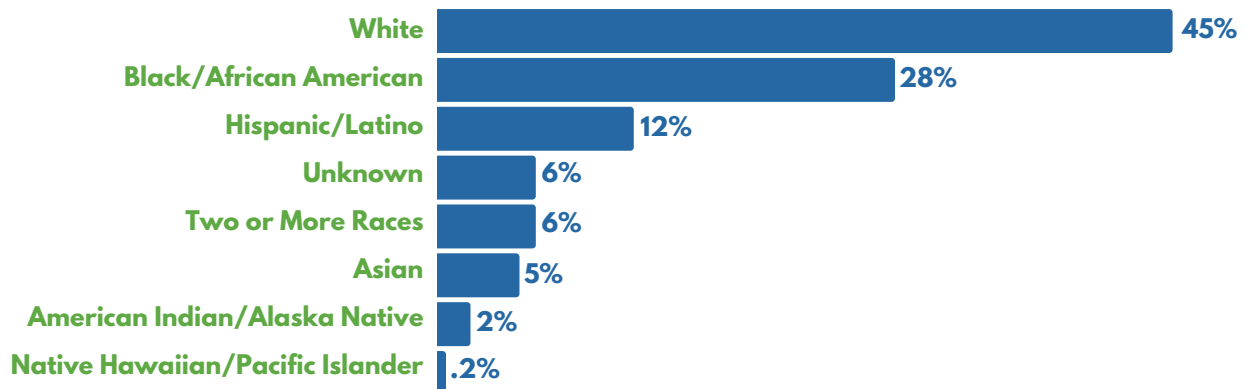
I would like to thank everyone at the colleges who contributed to this study, including those who completed the survey and participated in interviews and focus groups. I especially thank the administrators, faculty, and staff from the four case study colleges who shared so much of their time, insights, and data with me so I could learn about their programs from multiple angles. I promised everyone confidentiality, so I am not going to list all of the names of those who participated, but please know that I am incredibly grateful for how willing you were to meet with me and answer my endless questions. I feel like I have barely scratched the surface of all the hard work that all 27 colleges committed to developing, implementing, and refining their Academic Catch-Up Programs, and I look forward to seeing how the programs develop in the future.

Introduction

Michigan’s Public Act 144 allocated \$10 million in funds to address learning loss due to the pandemic by supporting summer educational programs at community colleges. Colleges that chose to apply for the funding, administered by the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA), committed to offering free summer programs focused on English and mathematics; programs also included a College Knowledge component covering student success skills, campus resources, and career exploration. Participants received transportation assistance, access to a laptop and the internet, and support for basic needs. Twenty-seven of MCCA’s 31 colleges chose to offer a program in Summer 2023, serving a total of 1442 students. Of these students, 73% enrolled during the fall 2024 semester, earning an average GPA of 2.5; 46% of the ACU completers who enrolled in the fall received Pell Grants.

Summer 2023 Student Demographics

(Students could belong to more than one group)



Many colleges continued to provide support to ACU students who enrolled in fall 2023. The support typically took the form of ACU faculty and staff proactively checking in on the students and reunion events to bring everyone back together, with colleges often taking this opportunity to gather more feedback from the students. Eleven colleges also used ACU funds to offer programs for admitted students who were enrolled in gateway English or mathematics courses with corequisite support. These fall programs offered the same wraparound support as the summer programs. An additional 235 students were served by these programs.

To explore the landscape of Michigan’s Academic Catch-Up (ACU) programs, a three-phase, mixed methods study was conducted; this report details findings from all three phases of the study.

Study Methodology

Phase 1: Survey

In late Summer 2023, a survey was administered to all 27 colleges that offered an ACU program, and all 27 colleges responded. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A. The survey consisted of two sections. The first section included questions about the structure, content, and delivery of the programs; responses to these questions were used to create matrices of program characteristics to detail the landscape of programs being offered (Appendix B) and are summarized in the narrative of this report, with summary data tables in Appendix C. The second section of the survey included questions about the colleges' successes, challenges, and future plans. Responses to these questions were synthesized with data gathered in Phases 2 and 3 and are discussed in the report narrative.

Phase 2: Interviews with Program Leads

In Fall 2023, program leads from a sample of colleges were interviewed about their design process, recruitment efforts, implementation, successes, challenges, and plans for sustainability. Twelve representatives from eight colleges participated. Phase 2 colleges included: Delta College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, Macomb Community College, Montcalm Community College, Muskegon Community College, Northwestern Michigan College, and Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College. Although the colleges that participated in Phase 2 are identified, the information they shared is discussed in this report without reference to college names to preserve confidentiality.

Phase 3: Mini Case Studies

In this phase of the study, four colleges were selected to be the subjects of mini-case studies, and a wider selection of representatives from each college shared their perspectives on their colleges' ACU programs. A total of 25 representatives from the 4 colleges participated in individual or group interviews in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024. Phase 3 colleges included Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Macomb Community College, Muskegon Community College, and Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College.

The Landscape of Michigan's Academic Catch-Up Programs

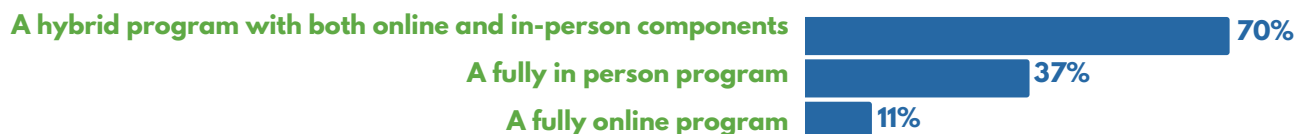
Colleges had a great deal of flexibility in designing their Academic Catch-Up programs, and while some of the colleges found this to be a challenge and wanted more guidance, colleges also took the opportunity to design programs that were uniquely theirs. This included some very creative program names, including Husky Hype-up, Inspiring Eagles, Lumberjack Launchpad, Raider Ready, Ready Set Jet, Red Hawks Rise, Roadrunner Ready, Success Express, and Hawk Advantage. Colleges varied in the structures of their programs; their recruitment strategies; the design and implementation of their math, English, and College Knowledge components; and the additional activities and supports they provided.

Program Formats

At almost all of the colleges that were interviewed, the development of the ACU program was a team effort led by representatives from student services and academics, with input from multiple departments and offices. Typically, math and English faculty designed the academic components of the program, while the College Knowledge components were developed by staff in a wider variety of roles, including counselors, advisors, success coaches, career services staff, library staff, tutors, Writing Center staff, and instructors of first year experience courses. The resulting programs varied widely in their structures and content. Across the 27 colleges that completed the survey, programs ranged in length from two to ten weeks, meeting for one to five days per week, for three to seven hours per day. While most colleges offered one or two ACU sessions, five of the colleges offered three or more sessions in order to meet their enrollment goals.

Nineteen colleges (70%) offered a hybrid program with both online and in-person components, while ten colleges (37%) offered a fully in person program, and three colleges (11%) offered a fully online program. Because some colleges offered their program more than once, these percentages exceed 100%.

Most colleges offered a hybrid program with both online and in-person components.



Recruiting Students

Colleges promoted their ACU programs through a variety of mediums including social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), press releases, news stories on radio and television, flyers, brochures, postcards, information on the college websites and dedicated webpages, emails, direct mailings, and phone calls. Programs were promoted at different events including general college admissions and recruiting events, new student orientation, college tours, and dedicated information sessions. Colleges promoted their programs to intermediary audiences including high school counselors, principals, and superintendents; TRIO advisors; Adult Education directors; and other educational partners including Detroit Promise, Kalamazoo Promise, Lansing Promise, and MCAN. Colleges directly targeted potential participants including new student applicants, dual enrollment and early college students, former and current CTE students, incoming TRIO students, incoming student athletes, Michigan Reconnect students, and currently enrolled students who had not yet completed math or English. Colleges also relied on word of mouth, especially for their Fall 2023 programs. One college created a gift box of college information, ACU promotional materials, and college swag for area high school counselors to encourage them to promote the program to students.

Most of the colleges that were interviewed reported that recruiting students was not a major challenge, but ensuring they actually attended was. This was a frustration for many of the colleges, particularly when there was a waitlist, and a spot could have been offered to another candidate. Most of the colleges reported that at least one-fourth, often more, of the students who had signed up for their programs did not end up attending the program. The colleges that offered multiple ACU sessions learned that they could accept more applicants for later sessions, because many of the students who signed up would not attend. The colleges are considering ideas for following up with applicants to gauge their level of interest and confirm their intent to attend.

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges: Recruiting Strategies

College ABLE: Macomb Community College promoted the program on social media, on the general admissions page and at admissions and outreach events, in admissions letters for summer and fall applicants, at events for high school counselors, and through emails and other communications directed towards superintendents, high school principals and counselors, graduating dual enrollment students, and current Macomb students who had not yet taken English or math.

Macomb began its recruiting efforts before it was ready to register students, instead directing early interest to a landing page with an inquiry form. The College ABLE team followed up on over 500 inquiries and ultimately enrolled 102 students.

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges: Recruiting Strategies (continued)

Connecting to College: Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College focused its recruitment efforts on area high schools, sending the student services team with informational brochures, tee-shirts, and pizza to talk to graduating seniors. The program was also promoted on social media and through word of mouth. Although the Connections to College team was worried that no one would sign up for an 8-week program, one of the longest ACU programs offered by the colleges, they exceeded their goal and enrolled 20 students.

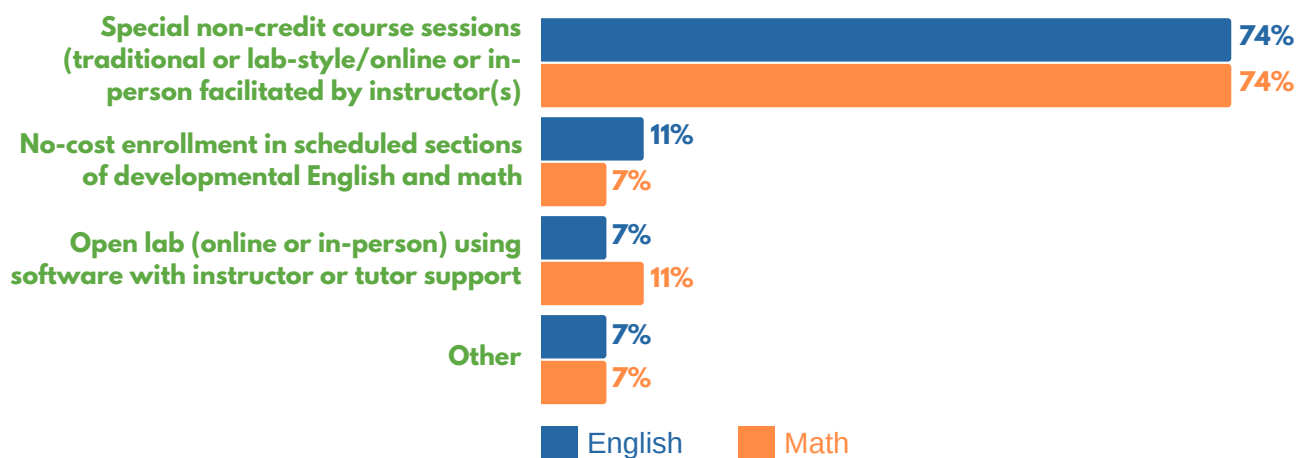
Kick Off: Muskegon Community College focused on targeting prospective participants along with their parents and grandparents through social media, particularly Facebook, flyers, a website, and a local news story. MCC also sent postcards to graduates of Muskegon Area Promise schools, and one of the instructors and the college's DEI officer met with local area superintendents to promote the program. For Fall 2023, recruitment efforts included a follow-up local news story, this time with student voices, and postcards sent to students who applied and never attended or dropped all their classes to encourage them to return for the Kick Off program and ease their transition into college.

Valley Advantage: Kalamazoo Valley Community College leaned on its marketing department to help recruit students, promoting the program through radio ads, a webpage, emails to prospective students, and college recruitment events. KVCC also sent mailers to prospective students in the hopes that parents would see them and encourage them to attend. Because of the short lead-up time to launching the program in the summer, the team was not able to connect with area high schools in the way it would have liked. However, in the future, the college plans to connect with high school counselors and promote the Summer 2024 program to students during Spring 2024 campus tours and new student orientations.

Math and English Supports

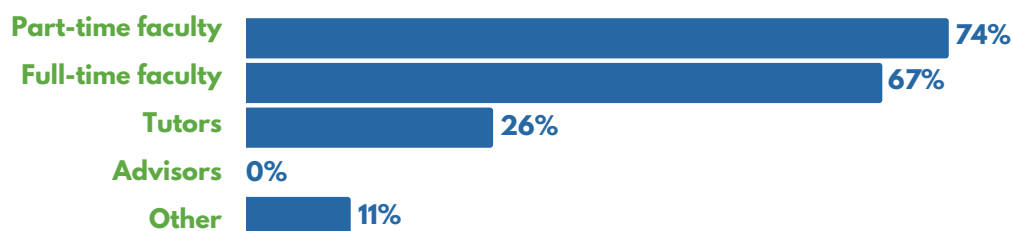
For their math and English components, 20 colleges (74%) offered special non-credit course sessions (traditional or lab-style, online or in person) that were facilitated by an instructor for both English and math. Colleges also offered no-cost enrollment in scheduled sections of developmental English (11%) and math (7%), and open labs using software with instructor or tutor support (7% in English and 11% in math). “Other” formats included one college offering credit bearing courses with embedded English and math support, and one college offering math and English workshops. Sixteen colleges (59%) used placement tests, such as Accuplacer and ALEKS, to determine students’ support needs during the program, while the other eleven colleges (41%) did not.

Most colleges offered special non-credit course sessions for both English and math.



Twenty colleges (74%) relied on part-time faculty and 18 (67%) relied on full-time faculty to deliver math and English instruction; seven colleges (26%) relied on tutors. Three colleges provided “other” responses including “Academic Success Coaches, Course Assistants,” “Certified Teachers,” and “Supplemental Instruction Leaders.” Because colleges were able to select more than one response, these percentages exceed 100%.

Most colleges relied on part-time or full-time faculty to deliver math and English instruction.



On the survey and in interviews, colleges reported challenges with designing programs when they were unsure of what students' skill levels would be and then implementing programs when there was a high degree of variability in those skills, particularly in math. According to one survey respondent, "The most significant challenge was really just meeting everybody where they were and ensuring that despite this being a generalized program, everybody received help and guidance at the level of preparedness and understanding they're at." According to another, "Students entered the program at a wide range of skill levels, and it was different for each session. Our instructor had to re-write the curriculum entirely for the second math section we offered because the overall skill level of the participants who entered were so much lower than the group that preceded them."

In designing their math and English programming, colleges often drew on their previous experiences with developmental education and other math and English supports. Most of the ACU faculty had taught developmental courses and were also familiar with the skills students would need to be successful in their gateway math and English courses. When designing their ACU program, faculty at one college built the class around "What would students need to know and what would be beneficial to them so that they can hit the ground running in a first-year writing class and have an advantage in some ways, with a preview of some of the important aspects of the class and skills." Another instructor shared "I asked myself if I was a college freshman coming into my class, what were the skills that I would want to walk in the door with but not necessarily what are the skills I'm going to be learning in class." Faculty also emphasized the importance of ensuring the curriculum aligned with the expectations of the gateway math and English courses. One instructor shared how they had been involved in other bridge programs where non-instructors design a program that isn't in line with what, or how, faculty teach in the gateway course "and it ends up being fun but not productive."

English content at the colleges that were interviewed focused primarily on active reading strategies, critical thinking, writing as a recursive practice, peer review, and writing annotated bibliographies. Some of the colleges briefly touched on grammar and punctuation as a refresher, though a couple of faculty reported that they learned that students did not have the expected basic skills, so it was really more of an introduction than a refresher. Several of the colleges required students to visit the Writing Center, sometimes taking the class as a group, to "get them past that hurdle of feeling scared to walk into the Writing Center."

Math programming was more diverse, with some colleges focusing on practical "everyday math," some on basic math skills typically covered in a developmental math course, and some on individualized modules using ALEKS. Most of the colleges that were interviewed emphasized the importance of direct instruction. Several had implemented programs that relied on ALEKS and received feedback from students that they wanted more direct

teaching rather than working individually at their own pace. Math faculty at one college emphasized the value in students learning alongside other students, even if they already knew some of the content; unlike individualized modules, where they are generally working on content that they struggle with, “Working on something you already kind of understand is a big confidence booster and helps gives you a more positive outlook on the next topic which might be more difficult for you.” They emphasized the value of not “just being fed the things you need to work on.” They also noted that students often have had years of bad experiences with math and it is helpful to provide them with positive experiences with a human who was a “math person.”

Students were often supported in their math and English classes by supplemental instructors and embedded tutors. This extra support was especially helpful when class sizes were large. Colleges also incorporated student success skills into their math and English classes including identifying and using campus resources, note-taking and test-taking skills, and technology usage, including how to use a scientific calculator, formatting Word documents, and uploading PDFs to the learning management system (LMS). One college blended its English and math components with its College Knowledge component; English focused on academic integrity, citing sources, and finding library resources, and math focused on personal finance, money management, and paying for college.

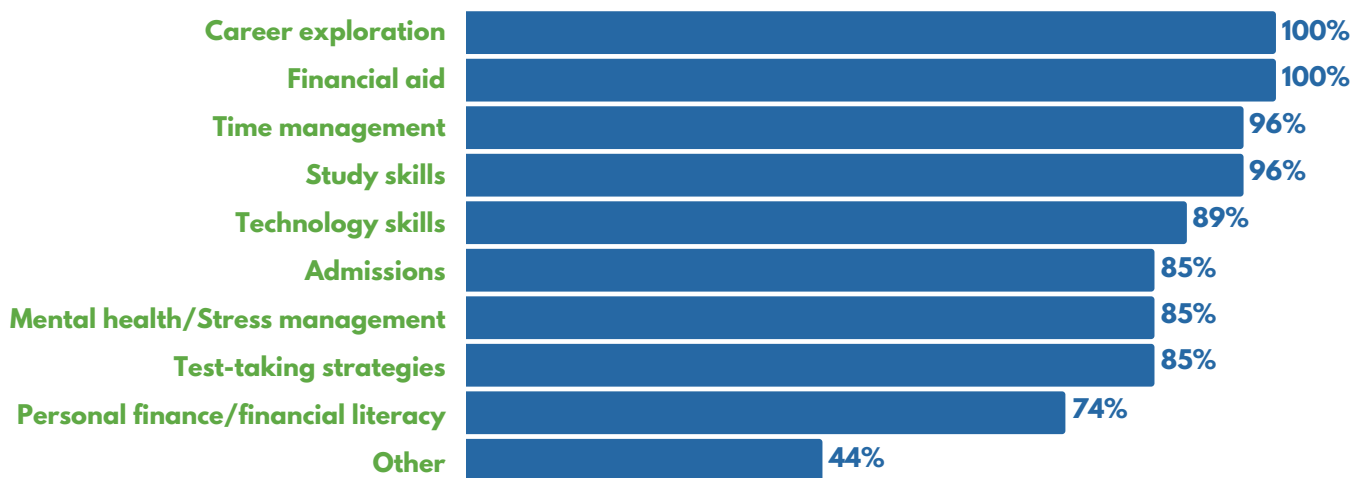
Most of the colleges that were interviewed administered a placement test for math at both the beginning and end of the program, and reported that most of the students increased their scores. This was less common in English and several of the English faculty who were interviewed mentioned that incorporating a post-test or other measure of growth would be helpful. They reported that, while the instructors were able to see the growth in their students’ writing skills, students had less tangible evidence of improvements. They also suggested that having a post measure could also be valuable as a tool for guided self-placement.

On the survey, most of the colleges reported that they would be determining whether students who enrolled for fall would need co-requisite support in their math and English courses using standard placement practices, including placement tests, multiple measures placement, and guided self-placement. Most of the colleges that were interviewed spent time during their ACU programs presenting the different English and math options to the students prior to having individual conversations about which math pathways students should pursue and whether they would benefit from enrolling in the co-requisite math or English course.

College Knowledge

In addition to offering support in math and English, colleges also offered College Knowledge sessions, covering a variety of topics. All the colleges covered career exploration and financial aid; other commonly offered topics included time management (96%), study skills (96%), and technology skills (89%). Colleges also indicated that they covered “other” topics, including barriers to success, benefits of college, physical health, campus resources and activities, and leadership.

Colleges covered a variety of College Knowledge topics, including career exploration and financial aid.

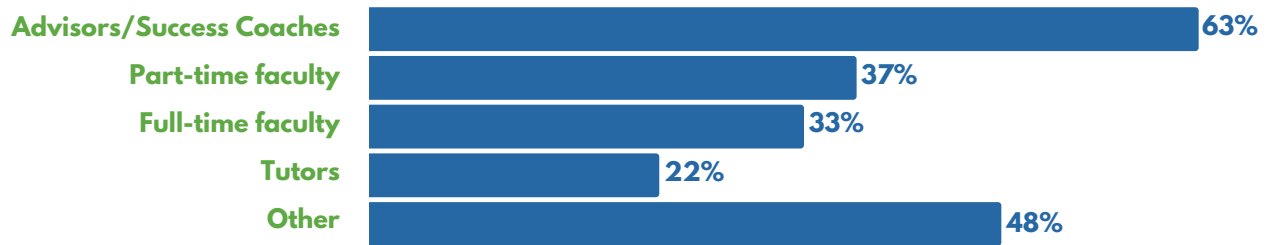


The colleges that were interviewed reported offering the topics discussed above, but also provided more details. One college offered a session specifically for undecided students and administered the Strong Interests inventory followed up with individual appointments for career counseling. Another college offered a session on the physiology of anxiety and how to manage it. Students learned about the life cycle of a panic attack and learned some tools to manage their anxiety, including breathing and visualization techniques. The instructor directly related the content to college stressors, inviting students to identify examples of what might create anxiety for them. At another college, students learned about the True Colors personality test and were placed into groups with a balance of colors. The colleges reported that students were generally highly engaged in the College Knowledge portions of the programs, particularly sessions about mental health, and one interviewee reported that “they were hungry for this type of information.”

Seventeen colleges (63%) relied on advisors or success coaches to deliver the College Knowledge portion of their programs. Ten colleges (37%) relied on part-time faculty, nine (33%) relied on full-time faculty, and six (22%) relied on tutors. Thirteen colleges (48%) provided “other” responses, most commonly administrators and student services staff. At

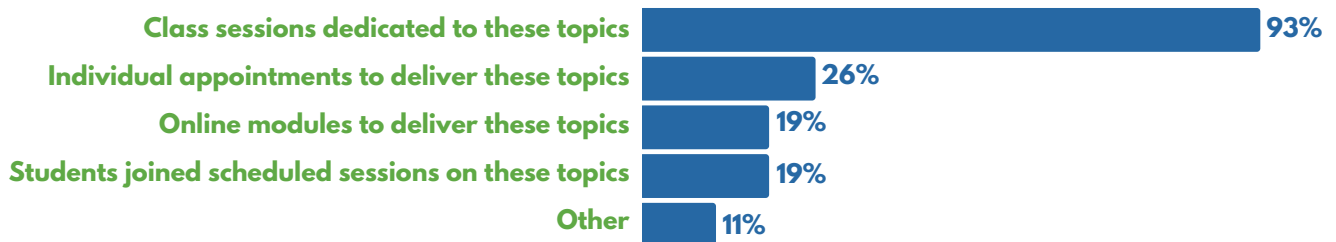
several of the colleges that were interviewed, College Knowledge programming was developed and facilitated by instructors of first year experience (FYE) courses who adapted the FYE courses to fit the time constraints of their ACU programs. According to one college, “it’s like a trial run of the full class.”

Colleges relied on advisors and faculty to deliver the College Knowledge portion of their program.



Twenty-five colleges (93%) offered the College Knowledge portion of their program through class sessions dedicated to these topics. Seven colleges (26%) offered individual appointments, five (19%) offered online modules, five (19%) had students join scheduled orientation sessions, and three (11%) provided “other” responses, including breakout sessions and staff coming to the class sessions. Because colleges were able to select more than one response, these percentages exceed 100%.

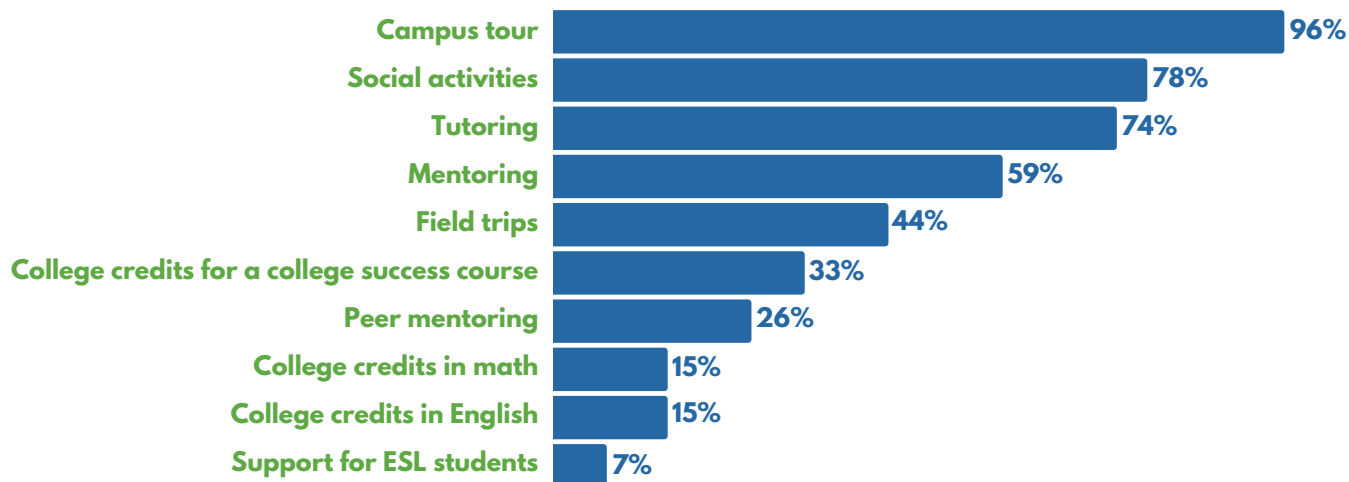
Most colleges delivered the College Knowledge portion of their programs through dedicated class sessions.



Additional Activities and Supports

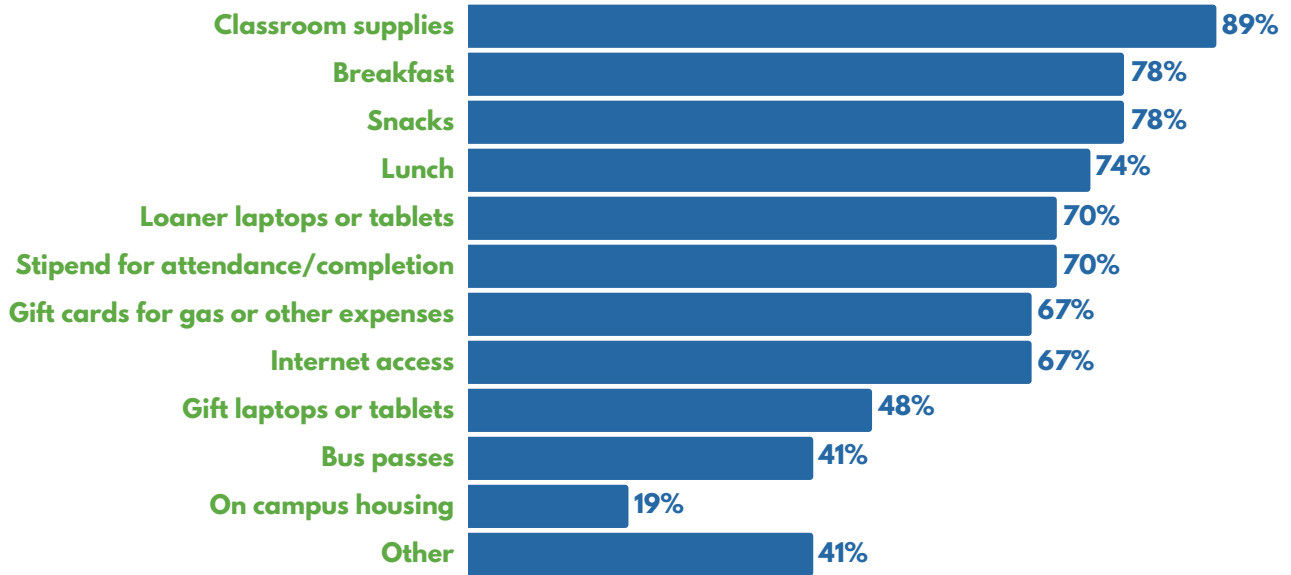
Colleges also offered additional activities and academic supports, most commonly campus tours (96%), social activities (78%), tutoring (74%), and mentoring (59%). The least commonly offered activities and supports included support for ESL students (7%), college credits in English and math (15%), and peer mentoring (26%).

Colleges offered additional activities and supports, including campus tours, social activities, tutoring, and mentoring.



Colleges also provided a variety of financial supports to participating students. The most commonly offered supports included classroom supplies (89%), breakfast (78%), snacks (78%), lunch (74%), loaner laptops or tablets (70%), and stipends for attendance or completion (70%). The least commonly offered supports included on-campus housing (19%), bus passes (41%), and gift laptops or tablets (48%). Colleges also indicated that they offered “other” supports including scholarships, bookstore credits, food shares, dinner, and childcare expenses.

Colleges addressed students' basic needs by providing classroom supplies, food, laptops, and stipends.



Twenty-four colleges (89%) provided compensation to participants in the form of stipends, bookstore credits, and scholarships in amounts ranging from \$100 to \$1,200. At most of the colleges, compensation was predicated on attendance and/or completion of the program. However, three colleges required students to pass the math and English portion or demonstrate a skill increase, and five colleges required students to enroll at the college in the fall to receive the incentive.

Most of the colleges that were interviewed continued to provide support to ACU students who enrolled in the fall semester, to varying degrees. The support typically took the form of ACU faculty and staff proactively checking in on the students and reunion events to bring everyone back together, with colleges often taking this opportunity to gather more feedback from the students. Colleges also assigned ACU students to success coaches and retention and completion coaches. One college provided more intensive ongoing support by offering five cohort meetings throughout the fall semester, including group field trips, and retaining their ACU tutor to serve as a mentor to the ACU students.

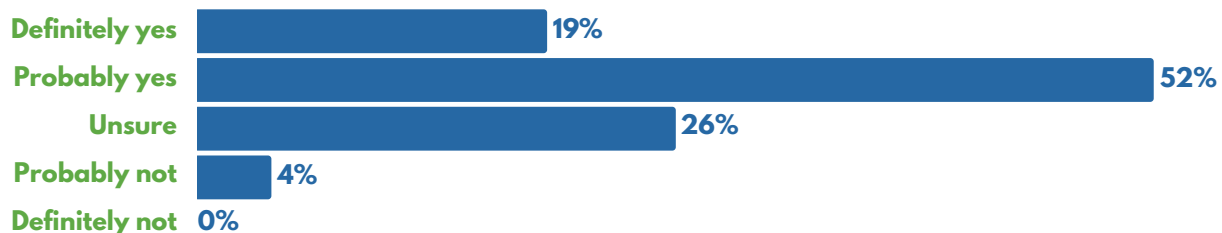
Successes, Challenges, and Sustainability

In both their survey responses and interviews, colleges reported that students enjoyed and were engaged in the program, improved their skills in math and English, were exposed to valuable college resources, increased their self-confidence and self-efficacy, and made connections with other students, faculty, and staff. Many of the colleges reported high satisfaction and completion rates for the participants. Tribal colleges also found the ACU program to be helpful in “getting some students through the door” who might otherwise have been unaware of the colleges or might have assumed they must be tribal members to attend.

The primary challenges encountered by colleges were low enrollment, students registering for the program but then not starting, a lack of student engagement, low attendance for some activities, teaching students with a variety of skill levels and support needs, and logistical issues such as staffing, scheduling, housing, distributing stipends, and transportation. At many of the colleges, logistical challenges were rooted in the practices of their business and finance offices, which resulted in delays in students receiving their stipends, particularly if they were disbursed weekly rather than at the end of the program. At some colleges, the business and finance offices were also resistant to providing gift cards to students for gas, ride shares, or taxis; this sometimes resulted in students being required to fill out weekly mileage reimbursement sheets.

Despite the challenges they faced, most of the colleges wanted to continue offering their ACU programs. Five of the colleges (19%) indicated that they planned to continue offering their program in the future, and another 14 colleges (52%) reported that they would probably offer the program again. However, one college (4%) said it would probably not offer the program again, and seven colleges (29%) were unsure.

Most colleges indicated that they will definitely or probably continue offering their program in the future.



The primary barrier to colleges sustaining their ACU programs was funding. According to one college, “Our ability to offer this program was entirely dependent upon the state funding that covered all its costs. Without continued state financial support, we would probably not be able to afford offering this program.” Grant funding provided them with the opportunity to offer very robust programs with numerous tangible supports to students, but this came at a high cost. While colleges were already thinking about how they could scale their programs back, and noted that ongoing costs would be lessened by the structure and foundations already being in place, colleges largely agreed that it was important to sustain the stipends and food. Colleges were also concerned with the staffing demands of the program, especially with full-time faculty off contract in the summers, and some unwilling to participate. Colleges were already working to develop a larger pool of full-time and adjunct faculty and staff who could facilitate and teach in the program.

Case Study: College Able

“We liked the ability to let them pick and choose from the buffet and do what served them best to be successful.”

The Academic Boost for Learning Experiences (ABLE) program at Macomb Community College was developed by a team led by the Director of Admissions and the Director of the Learning Centers and Reading and Writing Studios to ensure representation from both student services and academics; later a dedicated project manager was hired to administer the program. Full-time math and English faculty designed and taught the math and English content based on their experiences with co-requisite support courses; the College Knowledge portion of the program included career services, admissions, counseling and advising, financial aid, and student success coaches. Macomb chose to house College ABLE in the continuing education department; while this required more collaboration and logistical challenges, the college made this choice to avoid impacting students’ credit transcripts. Participating students received snacks, loaner laptops as needed, and an incentive for completing the math and English portions of the program plus six hours of students success seminars; students could choose from a \$550 scholarship if they enrolled in the fall, a \$550 bookstore credit towards the purchase of a laptop or tablet, or a \$550 stipend.

Program Structure and Content

Macomb developed a four-week hybrid program consisting of one day each week in person with four days online and an optional tutoring day on campus or online. Twelve cohorts, with a total of 102 students, participated in College ABLE, with morning and evening sessions offered at two campuses, starting in May, June, and July. A two-hour long orientation was held the week before each program to cover program requirements and introduce students to the technologies they would be using.

EXAMPLE SCHEDULE	Center Campus		South Campus	
	Morning cohort	Evening cohort	Morning cohort	Evening cohort
English Ready and Able: Writing about the College Experience	Tuesdays 8:00-9:55	Tuesdays 6:00-7:55	Wednesdays 8:00-9:55	Wednesdays 6:00-7:55
Math Ale: Mastering Fundamentals and Effective Study Skills	Tuesdays 10:30-12:25	Tuesdays 8:00-9:55	Wednesdays 10:30-12:25	Wednesdays 8:00-9:55
College Knowledge	6 hours of student success workshops			

The math class was developed and taught by a math instructor with extensive experience in developmental education. The curriculum was based on a math study skills course that was piloted at Macomb several years earlier as a math co-requisite. This course was designed to be beneficial for students in any level of math; rather than directly teaching math content, the course focused on examining attitudes about math and learning to study and take notes, while also allowing time for questions specific to the students' math classes. Although the study skills course was not sustained due to low enrollment, the content was a good fit for the College ABE program. At the beginning of the program, students took the ALEKS placement test and spent two hours each week working independently on math modules. In-person time was spent helping “overcome the mental barriers a lot of people have towards math and teaching people how to learn.”

The English class was developed and taught by a small group of veteran faculty and focused on “anything we could do to make students more successful or make them feel more confident the first time they step into a college classroom and take down some of that trepidation and make them feel like they were competent.” This included brief coverage of grammar, punctuation, and formatting with more extensive focus on critical thinking, close reading, writing with a purpose, and understanding the rhetorical situation (i.e., audience, context, and tone). Students completed a profile of a person in a field or career of interest, which allowed them to gain experience incorporating quotations and primary and secondary sources, skills that students often struggle with coming into the first-year writing course. Students were introduced to writing as a recursive practice, developing a rough draft, doing peer reviews, and then revising their essays. According to one College ABE team member, “The way we approached it was as a bridge...what would students need to know and what would be beneficial to them, so that they can hit the ground running in a first-year writing class.”

To further support students in their math and English classes, in addition to having access to the college's regular tutoring services, College ABE gave some tutors from the college's Learning Centers and Reading and Writing Studios access to the courses' LMS pages, and scheduled tutoring hours at the same time and place as the math and English classes but on a different day, for ease of accessibility to students. Based on student feedback, College ABE later began offering tutoring in a hybrid format for increased accessibility.

In addition to the math and English classes, students were required to complete six hours of College Knowledge workshops; Macomb allowed students to personalize their experience by choosing from the college's robust roster of student success workshops, provided by Career Services, along with additional Admissions and Outreach events and a few workshops created just for College ABE. Topics included stress management, note-taking, career exploration, preparing for jobs, social networking, time management, diversity in the

workplace, critical thinking, personal wellness, financial aid, registering for classes, Michigan Reconnect, and financial literacy; the program also included individual sessions with advisors, career services, and success coaches as options. To allow students to focus on math and English, they had until late summer to complete the College Knowledge workshops, regardless of which session they participated in.

Successes

Among the 102 participants, 72% completed the program, and 77% subsequently enrolled at Macomb; these students had an average GPA of 2.5 in Fall 2023. Students reported on surveys and at a Board of Trustees meeting that they felt more connected to the college and more prepared, motivated, and confident going into their first semester; they also liked the different student success seminar options and connecting with faculty, staff, and other students. College ABLÉ team members reported that the biggest successes of the program were that students “got a leg up” in math and English, improved their math self-efficacy, gained clarity about their next steps at Macomb, built connections, and increased their confidence about starting college. According to one College ABLÉ team member, “An emphasis on confidence is not to say that the academics weren’t there, just that the confidence is what left the students with the ability to persist in college rather than to feel overwhelmed.”

Case Study: Connections to College

“If students have that feeling of belonging, they’re going to stick with it and they’re going to make it through to the end.”

Connections to College, at Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College (SCTC), was designed by the Dean of Institutional Advancement, the Dean of Students, a full-time math and English instructor, and a success coach who also teaches SCTC’s first year experience course. The program consisted of three weeks of English, three weeks of math, and one week of College Knowledge content. Participating students received graphing calculators, laptops, supplies, \$100 weekly stipends, snacks, lunch, and weekly field trips.

Summer 2023 Program

A total of 20 students participated in Connections to College in Summer 2023. They met from 10am to 2pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesday, with a break for a shared lunch each day; Thursdays were reserved for field trips. English was covered in the first three weeks, followed by a weeklong break for the 4th of July, then a week focused on College Knowledge, and finally three weeks of math. Supplemental instructors were assigned to the program, and Writing Center staff also provided support. The program was designed to align with the colleges’ values and reflect the Seven Grandfather Teachings of truth, wisdom, bravery, humility, respect, love, and honesty.

SCHEDULE		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Weeks 1-3	10:00-2:00	English (and lunch)	English (and lunch)	English (and lunch)	Excursions and Activities
Week 4	Break				
Week 5	10:00-2:00	College Knowledge (and lunch)	College Knowledge (and lunch)	College Knowledge (and lunch)	Excursions and Activities
Weeks 6-8	10:00-2:00	Math (and lunch)	Math (and lunch)	Math (and lunch)	Excursions and Activities

The English component of the program was developed and taught by a full-time English faculty member with support from two supplemental instructors, which allowed students to be divided into smaller groups to receive more focused care. The class covered basic writing standards, active reading, and university resources. The class also helped build students’ discussion skills, which can be a challenge for Native students who may struggle

with Western expectations around classroom discussions. The instructor included both Western and Native discussion styles to ensure students were prepared for the expectations of their other instructors both at SCTC and any other institutions they may attend in the future.

The math component of the program was taught by an academic specialist in math and gave students a taste of developmental math content and the three math pathways. In the future, the college would like to focus more on bridging the gap between high school and college math, covering fundamental concepts that are needed regardless of what math pathway they choose, and incorporating more games to increase engagement.

The College Knowledge portion of the program focused on “things that would help them in the summer or skills that they can take for the rest of their life.” Each College Knowledge session began with a question of the day to help the students connect their own lives and experiences with the course content. For example, students were asked whether they had enough time in their day, and why or why not. Students then discussed time management and learned how to use the planners they were provided, also learning about procrastination and self-discipline. They talked about their personal goals and made vision boards; because some of the students had a goal of finding a job, sessions also focused on networking tips, Interview techniques, and resume writing. The final session covered next steps for college, and students were able to make appointments to meet with the financial aid officer who spoke to the class.

In addition to the math, English, and College Knowledge content, Connections to College devoted one day each week to excursions and activities, with educational content woven in. These included spear throwing with Native American Studies faculty, a picnic, a visit to petroglyphs to discuss Native history, a visit to the Detroit Institute of Art for a showcase of Native women artists, and a visit to Silver Lake for a sand dune ride. The excursions provided an opportunity to combine learning with a fun activity; some of the writing assignments in the English component of the program reflected the excursions. SCTC continued to support the students into the fall semester, assigning all students to a success coach and checking in with them to work on their success plans and connect them to resources as needed.

Fall 2023 Program

SCTC also offered Connections to College in Fall 2023, with a focus on English. Students who were enrolled in the gateway composition course with a co-requisite could choose to also participate in the program; the program was led by an elder in the community who was also one of the supplemental instructors from the Summer 2023 session. A couple of non-SCTC students who heard about the program through word of mouth also chose to

participate. The program thematically focused on Killers of the Flower Moon; students met for two evenings each week, reading the book and working on small group and individual activities on note taking, reading for purpose, and relating what they learned back to the Seven Grandfather Teachings. They also viewed the movie together as a group.

Successes

Of the 20 students who participated in the Summer 2023 program, 17 completed the program (85%), and four students subsequently enrolled in the fall; these students had an average GPA of 3.2. All seven of the Fall 2023 students completed the program. As a result of the program, students were able to become more familiar with the campus and connect with other students, faculty, and staff. According to one Connections to College team member, “building that sense of comfort on campus with us before they even get here was a huge advantage for them, because it’s not just you’re going to college to get your degree, it’s OK we’re in a safe place, we have fun here, we know everybody, and they’re helping us through our academic needs as well as our non-academic needs.”

Case Study: Kick Off

“In addition to helping students succeed, our goal was to try some different methods to see what’s sustainable for the college.”

Kick Off at Muskegon Community College (MCC) was led by the College Success Center, including the chair of the department, the Writing Center manager, a math instructor, and other department staff. The team built the program around the college’s first year experience course supplemented by math and English instruction. Participating students received meals, school supplies, loaner laptops, internet access, bus passes and gift cards for gas, and a \$400 stipend upon successful completion. MCC took advantage of grant funding to pilot four different models of the program.

Model 1 (Summer 2023)

In Summer 2023, a total of 56 students were enrolled in two cohorts, one in-person and one online. Kick Off participants were able to meet MCC staff and tour the campus at a large welcome event for the program. They enrolled in MCC’s three credit College Success Seminar (CSS) along with English and math workshops and an online readiness training. CSS focused on test taking and study skills, stress and anxiety, critical thinking, diversity, acclimating to college, career exploration, and campus resources; students also completed annotated bibliographies and journal assignments. The English workshops, developed by the Writing Center manager, consisted of structured lessons on prewriting, revising, and other writing skills to support students in CSS. Two Writing Center professionals taught the workshops so students could be split into two smaller groups. The math workshops, developed by a math instructor with extensive experience with developmental education, consisted of independent work on ALEKS modules with the support of an adjunct math instructor and a professional tutor. Students met four days per week for five weeks, with breakfast, two hours of CSS, and lunch each day, and 1.5 hours of math and English on alternating days. A large celebration of students’ success ended the program

One unique aspect of Kick Off was that the professional tutor was retained as a mentor to provide continued support to participants who enrolled at MCC. According to one Kick Off team member, “Connections matter to students, and we just wanted to continue that for them in whatever way we could.” The mentor, a recent graduate of MCC, was able to build strong connections with the students, as “It’s different to go to someone who is a near peer than it is to go to someone who has been teaching for years.” The mentor proactively reached out to students early in the fall semester to see what help they needed, connected

them with college resources, and coordinated cohort meetings throughout the semester, including attending a theater production and an experiential learning trip to the Chicago Field Museum. Although fewer students attended the meetings and events than was hoped for, it appears that these activities provided much needed opportunities for the shyer students in the program to connect with other students as a “built in group.”

Model 2 (Fall 2023)

Although MCC was eliminating its pre-requisite math courses, there were still students enrolled in pre-requisite math for Fall 2023; the course was offered for free to all enrolled students, and 16 of the students in the course also chose to participate in Kick Off, which required five visits to the Writing Center for mini workshops modified from the more comprehensive summer program, and five student success workshops facilitated by the math instructor, who addressed social belonging, college resources and supports, implicit bias, career exploration, financial literacy, and growth mindset. Students were also required to meet with an advisor.

Model 3 (Fall 2023)

This hybrid version consisted of meeting two evenings each week, for 1.5 hours, for six weeks, with additional time spent online. Meetings included five integrated English and student success sessions, with a focus on reading and writing strategies, five math sessions consisting of individualized learning using ALEKS PPL, and two College Knowledge and DEI sessions. A total of 15 students participated in one of two Kick Off sessions, starting in early and late October.

Model 4 (Spring 2024)

In Spring 2024, Kick Off participants are meeting for two days each week for seven weeks, with two hours of CSS and one hour of math each day. MCC returned to offering the full CSS course, adjusting the content to incorporate more reading and writing instruction; these changes will be incorporated into all offerings of CSS in the future. The math portion of the program consisted of 14 sessions of group instruction and individualized instruction using ALEKS PPL. Although only 3 students enrolled in the Spring 2024 Kick Off program, MCC is still learning from its experiences with this model, which will help it build the strongest Kick Off program it can.

Successes

Among the 56 Summer 2023 participants, 93% completed the program, and 75% earned a passing grade of C or better in the College Success Seminar, with 52% of the participants earning an A. When asked how prepared they felt for college on a five-point scale, students' average score increased from 2.6 to 4.3. Students also reported that they enjoyed making friends and meeting faculty and staff, weren't as anxious to start college because they knew what to expect, and had developed strategies to help them be successful students. Seventy percent of the participants subsequently enrolled at MCC and earned an average GPA of 2.7 in Fall 2023; 59% successfully completed their gateway English course, and 23% successfully completed their gateway math course. Among the 31 Fall 2023 participants, 81% completed the program.

With the grant funding, MCC was able to pilot four different models; the college is still determining which model will best meet the needs of its students while also being sustainable once grant funding ends. However, offering the full CSS course and math support with a combination of group instruction and individualized work using ALEKS PPL appears to be beneficial.

	Model 1 (Summer 2023) 5 weeks	Model 2 (Fall 2023) Semester	Model 3 (Fall 2023) 6 weeks	Model 4 (Spring 2024) 7 weeks
College Knowledge	Enrollment in CSS course with free tuition	5 student success sessions (1 hour each)	5 sessions of integrated English and student success sessions plus one session on career exploration and one session on diversity (1.5 hours each)	Enrollment in a redesigned CSS course with integrated reading and writing with free tuition
English	Writing Center workshops (1.5 hours, 2x per week for 5 weeks)	5 Writing Center mini workshops (20 minutes each)		(2 hours, 2x per week for 7 weeks)
Math	ALEKS supported by instructor and tutor (1.5 hours, 2x per week for 5 weeks)	Enrollment in pre-requisite math course with free tuition	5 sessions of ALEKS sessions supported by instructor plus 2 additional sessions (1.5 hours each)	14 sessions of group instruction and individualized ALEKS (1 hour, 2x per week for 7 weeks)

Case Study: Valley Advantage

“It’s like orientation on steroids”

Valley Advantage, at Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC), was co-led by the Director of the Kalamazoo Valley Accelerated Associate Program (KVAAP) and the Dean of Liberal Arts, who assembled a team of faculty with a passion for developmental education to design the math and English programming along with additional faculty and staff to provide student success content. The team developed a robust program, consisting of 12 days of in-person programming (four days per week for three weeks). Participating students received breakfast or lunch, food shares and a starter cooking kit, gas cards and bus passes, loaner laptops, classroom supplies, and a \$550 stipend, dispersed incrementally based on weekly completion of required work.

Summer 2023 Program

Four cohorts, with a total of 68 participants, participated in Valley Advantage in Summer 2023, with morning and afternoon cohorts in July and August. Each session began with breakfast or lunch, during which students were introduced to campus departments and resources. Students then participated in 90 minutes of math or English programming (alternating days) and 75 minutes of College Knowledge programming, focused on student success skills; topics included technology, career exploration, growth mindset, test anxiety and test-taking skills, stress management, self-advocacy, and mental health.

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Morning Cohort	8:00-8:30	Breakfast/Resources	Breakfast/Resources	Breakfast/Resources	Breakfast/Resources
	8:30-9:45	College Knowledge	College Knowledge	College Knowledge	College Knowledge
	10:00-11:30	Mathematics	Reading and Writing	Mathematics	Reading and Writing
Afternoon Cohort	1:00-1:30	Lunch/Resources	Lunch/Resources	Lunch/Resources	Lunch/Resources
	1:30-2:45	College Knowledge	College Knowledge	College Knowledge	College Knowledge
	3:00-4:30	Mathematics	Reading and Writing	Mathematics	Reading and Writing

Students participated in six hours of math and English class time each week with additional support from the learning center and required ALEKS math modules outside of class. The focus was on exposing students to the knowledge and skills they would need to be successful in their first math and English courses while also building students' confidence and countering any negative educational experiences students previous had, particularly in math. In both math and English, students met individually with the instructors at the end of the program to discuss the most appropriate course placement, based on their final essay in English and ALEKS math placement score.

The English class emphasized both reading and writing and focused on conducting research, writing annotated bibliographies, and crafting a persuasive essay; these skills are the backbone of the gateway English course, so it was important to build students' familiarity with and confidence in doing these tasks. The class was built around a healthy food theme, to connect with the food share program and help mitigate any stigma associated with the food share program.

The math class began with students taking the ALEKS placement test and being divided into three groups based on their scores. Students in the two lower scoring groups received direct instruction, tailored to the needs of each group and designed to help students move one level higher in the math sequence. Students in the highest scoring group worked through ALEKS modules with the support of a tutor who provided individualized support. Instruction on technology, including using a scientific calculator, scanning documents, and using the college's LMS was incorporated into the math class.

Students who subsequently enrolled at KVCC were connected with a retention and completion coach to provide them with ongoing support. KVCC also held two reunion events to reconnect with students in the fall.

Fall 2023 Program

KVCC offered one section of Valley Advantage in Fall 2023. Recruitment efforts benefited from word of mouth; three of the 12 fall participants were referred by summer participants. Based on lessons learned in the summer, KVCC added an orientation day to ensure all students had their KVCC IDs, understood parking, received their loaner laptops, and could login to their email and other accounts. This additional support proved incredibly valuable, as the fall program had a larger proportion of adult learners who experienced more challenges with technology. KVCC also shifted to a two-day schedule; although the number of college knowledge sessions were reduced, students still received the same number of contact hours for math and English, taking them on the same day instead of alternating days. Although the orientation day worked well and will be continued, the team discovered

that the less frequent meetings in the fall hindered community building; although students did still develop bonds with each other and their instructors, “it’s not the same as seeing them every day.”

Successes

Among the 68 Summer 2023 participants, 91% completed the program, 85% improved their ALEKS placement scores (among these students the average increase was nine points), and 76% subsequently enrolled at KVCC. These students had an average GPA of 2.4 in Fall 2023, higher than the college average; additionally, 69% passed their English course and 67% passed their math course. Among the 12 Fall 2023 participants, 83% completed the program, and 58% improved their ALEKS placement scores (among these students, the average increase was six points). Students left the program with stronger academic foundations in math and English, awareness of college resources, and a community of faculty, staff, and other students to support them in their first semester.

Valley Advantage gathered feedback from the students through a survey and time for reflection and sharing during the celebration at the end of the program and the reunions in the fall. On average, students rated their overall experience with Valley Advantage a 9.5 out of 10 and reported having more confidence about starting college and valuing the connections they made with other students, instructors, and staff. Some students even reported that their favorite part of the program was math, to the delight of some of the Valley Advantage team.

Emerging Best Practices

The colleges that offered Academic Catch-Up programs in Summer 2023 and Fall 2023 are still learning what formats and content are most appropriate and impactful for their students. However, some potential best practices are emerging from their experiences.

Take a Team Approach

Almost all of the colleges that were interviewed took a team approach to designing and implementing their programs, engaging voices from across campus. According to one college, “It’s easy sometimes to feel like that department doesn’t care as much as our department, but when we all get on the same page, you see that we all do care, we’re just doing it in different ways, and when we do it all together, what we can accomplish is pretty amazing.” The colleges were generally very proud of their ACU programs, and several interviewees reported that coming together to build something new had energized them and their institutions. According to one college, “It created some excitement on our campus...I think people wanted something to get behind.” According to another, “We had the best of the best and no one ever said no I can’t do this, everybody helped us from the moment that these students stepped on campus.” Representation from multiple areas of campus was valuable for program logistics, ensuring different perspectives were considered when designing the programs, and exposing students to multiple faculty and staff in different roles who could support them in the future.

Involve faculty and staff with a passion for student success.

However, it wasn’t enough to pull together a large team with cross-unit representation; it was also important that those involved had the “right personality” and skillset. According to one college, “We were very methodical about who we brought into that space.” Colleges pointed to the importance of including faculty and staff who are enthusiastic, hands on, and focused on holistic student success, with one interviewee sharing “you see instructors who just come in and teach their classes and leave, and we needed instructors who were going to build connections with each student and check on them a bit and get to know them and provide a little bit of individualized learning.” Colleges pointed out that ACU was often students’ introduction to college, and they needed to be welcomed warmly.

Rely on team members’ expertise to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Although the short period of time in which they had to develop their ACU programs was a challenge, it also forced colleges to think about what they were already doing well that could be used to help build their programs. Many of the colleges developed their College Knowledge content by reviewing their first year experience courses and deciding which information would be most impactful for students prior to starting college; several colleges

offered the full first year experience course to ACU participants. One college already had a plethora of student success content developed for its accelerated associate program that could be incorporated into its ACU program. Math and English instructors drew upon years of experience working with developmental education and co-requisite courses, and several colleges had experience with math student skills courses and bootcamps that could be modified to fit their ACU programs.

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges

Valley Advantage credited the program's success to efforts to involve the right people with representation from across the college. The program was co-led by representatives from student services and academics, input was solicited from across the college, the math and English components were designed by faculty with extensive experience working with developmental education, and each College Knowledge session was facilitated by a different instructor to expose students to a variety of topics and people who could support them throughout their college careers. The college reported that "people were willing to sacrifice and give time even when people have a lot on their plates...I was really impressed with the amount of people who really stepped up to help out." KVCC also pointed to the importance of ensuring those on the team were relationship builders who were empathetic, highly collaborative, and passionate about student success and developmental education. According to one team member, "if we don't have the right people, it doesn't matter how much funding we have."

As one of the colleges with the highest expectations for enrollment, and the knowledge that in order to meet their target numbers they would need to offer numerous sessions starting in May, Macomb Community College needed to be strategic about building upon what it was already doing well. According to one of the College ABLE team members, "We thought 'What are we already doing that we know is amazing?' as opposed to saying, 'Who's got time to create something from scratch, and by the way we need it in two months'." This included designing the math component around a previously offered math study skills course and involving experienced English faculty with a well-developed toolbox of materials and assignments to draw from. It also included leveraging the large number of student success seminars that "were already happening, we just had to tell people about them."

Offer a Supported Introduction to College

Colleges highlighted the importance of designing programs that ease students into the college experience. Several referred to their ACU programs as a “trial run” for the fall semester, and emphasized the value of a supportive and “non-threatening experience.” According to one college, “This program enabled so many students to become better prepared for college life by giving them an opportunity to explore and grow in a non-threatening environment. Students were able to explore and identify their strengths and weaknesses, forge relationships and study partners while getting acclimated with the expectations of being a college student.” According to another, “It introduced them to the college and its resources at a time when it maybe wasn’t as overwhelming as it might have been starting in the fall in the midst of other students and more distractions.”

Mitigate students’ technology challenges.

Colleges stressed the importance of being able to resolve students’ issues with technology before the fall semester started. Several of the programs incorporated orientations into their ACU programs, with the first day of the program spent helping students set up multifactor authentication, log into their emails, and become familiar with how to use the LMS, including uploading documents. Colleges’ experiences with their ACU programs led them to start reassessing how the college in general onboards students and supports them in their first semester. In particular, a couple of colleges noted that the online format of new student orientation does not allow for this hands-on support that they were able to provide in the ACU program.

Address students’ confidence and self-efficacy.

While English faculty also talked about the importance of building students’ confidence, the importance of confidence and self-efficacy was emphasized more heavily among the math faculty. One college built its math programming around “trying to overcome the mental barriers a lot of people have towards math.” The math faculty at this college reported that they were able to see students’ attitudes and self-efficacy regarding math improve dramatically. Faculty at another college also emphasized the importance of addressing the mental barriers students, especially older students, have around math, saying “objective number one is to make sure you address students’ beliefs in themselves, their growth mindset, that you address their past experiences with math, and ask ‘Was there a time when you started to hate it?’”

Provide stipends and other tangible supports.

Thanks to grant funding, colleges were able to provide tangible supports to students in the form of stipends, food, laptops, transportation assistance, classroom supplies, and internet access. When thinking about the future of their programs, most of the colleges were concerned about how to sustain these extra incentives. They acknowledged that sustaining

the same level of support was unlikely, but most felt that it was especially important to provide stipends and food; several of the colleges specifically shared that they felt that stipends were more impactful than gifting students a laptop and that loaner laptops were sufficient. Although a couple of interviewees lamented that students were incentivized by the stipend rather than intrinsic motivation, the students who could most benefit from ACU programs may need that external motivation. According to one college, “None of them want to do it at the start; they want to do it by the midpoint just for the sake of doing it, but you need some sort of carrot for the student.” Some students may also need the stipend to help compensate for attending the program when they could be working instead.

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges

Although it created logistical challenges, and sustaining Valley Advantage might be easier without the stipend, the team members agreed that it was important to not only provide a stipend but also disburse it throughout the program, rather than at the end. The monetary incentive was not only a means of getting students to enroll but also provided ongoing motivation to persist in the program. According to one team member, “It’s the hook to get them signed up, but it’s also the hook to get them to do the work when there’s no grades attached.” In addition to being provided with breakfast or lunch, Valley Advantage participants also benefited from the college’s food share program. Each week students received a box of fresh produce, protein, nuts, snacks, and recipes; the college also provided students with starter cooking kits. The meals and food shares were especially important for students with food insecurity.

College ABLE was intentionally designed as a hybrid program through its continuing education program to allow students an opportunity to navigate being in an online college class in a supported, low-stakes environment, where any struggles would not affect their GPA. College ABLE also included an orientation session before each session which focused on helping students activate their accounts and login to their student emails and the LMS. According to one College ABLE team member, “So many challenges students face is they just need some one-on-one time with help to get logged into their account and get their multifactor authentication set up...those are barriers that are stopping people...every new student should get this, so it was exciting to feel like you were setting people up on the right starting path.”

Muskegon Community College was unique among the case study colleges in offering credit for their college success course. Enrolling in an actual college course with a grade helped familiarize students with the true college experience, rather than having

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges (continued)

“a program that felt like summer camp.” It was especially helpful for students to be able to complete the CSS course in the summer; a common issue with freshman seminar courses is that students generally take them alongside other courses in their first semester, and often critical content is covered too late to be meaningful to the students when they need it the most. Also, the more compressed format of the course in the summer, with two hours per day for four days rather than the one hour twice a week in a normal semester, made it easier to “really dig in and keep the ball rolling” and keep students engaged in the content.

Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College embedded success coaches and supplemental instructors in the Connections to College program, which not only provided more help to students in their math and English classes, but also helped the college more easily identify students who needed support. They reported that “being able to identify those students over the summer is just so valuable, because in the mix of a fall start with all of our students on campus, those are the students who are much more likely to slip through the cracks.” The intentional development of community also aided with this, as students were able to make connections with faculty and staff “so it’s easier for them to reach out...and we can support them right off the bat instead of having to wait a few weeks.”

Build Community in a Fun and Engaging Environment

Almost all of the college spoke of how students had developed relationships that were maintained into the fall semester. Several of the colleges reported that students had started group chats, and one joked that the students were “kind of like a grumpy family, they didn’t always get along, but by the end they all knew that they were there to help each other out.” Although several colleges reported that this group bonding happened organically, with one saying, “there’s a magic that happens when you do things together on a regular basis,” the colleges also emphasized the importance of intentionally building community among students and between students and faculty/staff.

Humanize faculty and staff.

Several of the colleges specifically mentioned the importance of humanizing faculty and staff to help build connections with students so they “realize they are really humans who care about your success.” This was achieved largely through sharing food, with instructors, presenters, success coaches and tutors joining students at breakfast, lunch, and snack

times. At one college, the math and English faculty participated in the College Knowledge sessions with the students, so they had more to talk about and more opportunities for casual interactions. Faculty and staff also found opportunities to share openly about their own experiences and mistakes they made in college, and one college specifically encouraged presenters to talk about their own backgrounds so that students could better relate to them. Connecting with faculty and staff helped made students more likely to seek help. As one college shared, “Community college students are not help seeking, they try to do everything on their own, and if they get stuck, even then, they don’t want to ask questions or ask for help, so getting that relationship with someone who they feel comfortable asking for help and who is available makes it easier.”

Have fun and celebrate successes.

Although the focus of the ACU programs was math and English, colleges recognized that students would be more engaged if there were opportunities for fun activities. According to one college, “we’re obviously here to learn, but we want this to be a relaxed and comfortable setting, and we want you to have fun and we want you to be engaged.” One college had a competition that ran the duration of the program to build group cohesion; activities included trivia, chalk art, disc golf, Odyssey of the Mind, and Mario Kart. A couple of the colleges reserved one day out of each week to dedicate to excursions and other activities. One college realized that students were running out of steam halfway through the program and decided to take a break and spend a day watching a movie and playing games together to reenergize. Several of the colleges had celebrations at the end of their programs to recognize all of the hard work on the part of the students. According to one interviewee, “I would never want to do this without that, because it helps the students, they’re feeling some pride inside about what they’ve done and to be able to voice that and verbalize that in front of others and to be able to hear their instructors say great things about them, I think that was a real good springboard into starting the next semester.”

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges

The Valley Advantage team incorporated active learning and group activities, offered a variety of topics with different presenters, and created a relaxed environment. Faculty and staff ate with the students and also attended the College Knowledge sessions, producing more opportunities for interaction. The team also modeled engaged behavior for the students, with faculty and staff asking questions or sharing their thoughts during the College Knowledge sessions. According to one presenter, “it created an environment that made it more comfortable to engage with the person in front of the classroom which I think will translate into the classroom.” One or both of

Spotlight on Case Study Colleges (continued)

the co-leads were on-site every day, providing continuity and facilitating transitions between the different sessions, debriefing the students and engaging them in what was to come. According to one of the College Knowledge presenters, who was less involved with the program outside of the session they presented, “I could feel their rapport just by walking in...They had created a sense of community. I wasn’t there to witness how they created it, but I could feel it when I walked into the room.”

One of the great values of Kick Off was students being able to start their college experience getting to know their peers, faculty, and staff in a “super supportive environment.” According to one Kick Off team member, “Content is important, but maybe even more important is the connections that students are making with the college, with staff, and just making them feel like they belong.” Students were also able to meet other students who helped ease the transition into college. According to one Kick Off team member, “it helped them get to know each other and build friendships that I still see to this day.” The program also showed the value of connecting students with a single point of contact dedicated to their success, in the form of the tutor turned mentor. The students felt comfortable coming to her for support, even with very sensitive issues, and she was able to help connect them with others at the college who could provide additional support as needed. She also facilitated even stronger bonds among the students through the social activities that were planned in the fall.

Connecting to College devoted one day each week to fun and educational excursions which allowed students to share in a new experience. According to one Connecting to College team member, “I know they’re a pain, and I know they’re hard to plan, and transportation is an issue, but it really helped those students come together and bond as a group.” The excursions also provided an opportunity for faculty and staff to get to know students in a more relaxed setting. For example, the College Knowledge instructor visited petroglyphs with the students and was able to get to know them before her class started, which helped with facilitating meaningful discussions about the class content.

Appendix A: Academic Catch-Up Survey

As part of the Academic Catch-Up (ACU) program, you have been submitting quarterly reports to MCCA; however, MCCA would like to learn more about the programs being offered. MCCA is working with Dawn Coleman to conduct a study of Academic Catch-Up and this survey is the first stage of the study. In the next stage, a sample of colleges will be invited to participate in interviews to learn even more about their experiences implementing ACU.

This survey consists of two parts. The first section includes questions about the structure, content, and delivery of your program. Responses to these questions will be used to create a matrix of all of the colleges and the characteristics of their programs to see the landscape of programs being offered; so, responses to these questions will be connected to the name of your college in the study report. The second section of the survey includes several open-ended questions. Responses to questions in the second section will not be connected to your college. Survey data are being collected by Dawn Coleman, and raw data will not be shared with MCCA; responses to questions in the second section of the survey will be synthesized and discussed in the study report with no reference to the colleges' names. We want to ensure that you can feel comfortable freely sharing your perspectives on these questions.

The survey consists of 25 questions and is anticipated to take 15 minutes to complete. All of the questions in the first section are required, so you will not be able to advance from one page to the next without responding to each item. A PDF of the survey was attached to the email with the survey link to allow you to review the questions before beginning the survey.

If you have any questions about this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Dawn Coleman at colemanevaluation@outlook.com.

Section 1

1. What is the name of your college?* _____

2. What is the name of your Academic Catch-Up program?* _____

3. Did your college already offer a summer bridge program prior to Academic Catch-Up?*

- Yes – ACU funding was used to offset normal operating costs for our summer bridge program
- Yes – ACU funding was used to expand our summer bridge program
- No – ACU funding was used to develop a new program

4. How many times did you offer your program in summer 2023?* _____

5. Which of the following did you offer? (If you offered your program in multiple formats, check all that apply.)*

- A fully online program
- A fully in person program
- A hybrid program with both online and in-person components

6. How many weeks was your program?* _____

7. How many days per week did your program meet?* _____

8. How many hours per day did students meet?* _____

9. Which of the following tangible supports did you provide to students? (Check all that apply.)*

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Snacks
- Bus passes
- Gift cards for gas or other expenses
- Loaner laptops or tablets (students return them at the end of the program)
- Gift laptops or tablets (students get to keep them)
- Internet access (i.e., wi-fi hot spots)
- Classroom supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)
- On campus housing
- Stipend for attendance or completing the program
- Other: _____ *

10. If you provided a stipend, how much was the maximum amount per student? _____

11. What did students have to do or complete in order to receive the stipend? _____

12. Which of the following best describes your Academic Catch-Up program for English?*

- No-cost enrollment in scheduled sections of developmental English
- Open lab (online or in person) using software with instructor or tutor support
- Special non-credit course sessions (traditional or lab-style/online or in-person) facilitated by instructor(s)
- Other: _____ *

13. Which of the following best describes your Academic Catch-Up program for math?*

- No-cost enrollment in scheduled sections of developmental math
- Open lab (online or in person) using software with instructor or tutor support
- Special non-credit course sessions (traditional or lab-style/online or in-person) facilitated by instructor(s)
- Other: _____ *

14. Did you use placement tests (i.e., Accuplacer, ALEKS, etc.) to determine support needs during the program?*

- Yes
- No

15. Who delivered instruction for the math and English portion of your program? (Check all that apply.)*

- Full-time faculty
- Part-time faculty
- Advisors
- Tutors
- Other: _____ *

16. How did you (or will you) determine whether students who enroll for fall will need co-requisite support in their math and English courses? _____

17. Which of the following did you offer as part of your program? (Check all that apply.)*

- Peer mentoring
- Social activities
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Field trips
- Campus tour
- Support for ESL students
- College credits in English
- College credits in math
- College credits for a first-year experience/college success course

18. Which of the following topics were covered in your program? (Check all that apply.)*

- Career exploration
- Financial aid
- Personal finance/financial literacy
- Admissions
- Mental health/Stress management
- Time management
- Test-taking strategies
- Study skills
- Technology skills
- Other: _____ *

19. How did you deliver the College Knowledge portion of your program? (Check all that apply.)*

- Class sessions dedicated to these topics
- Individual appointments to deliver these topics
- Online modules to deliver these topics
- Students joined scheduled orientation sessions on these topics
- Other: _____ *

20. Who delivered instruction for the College Knowledge portion of your program? (Check all that apply.)*

- Full-time faculty
- Part-time faculty
- Advisors
- Tutors
- Other: _____

Section 2

You have completed Section 1 of the survey. Your responses to the questions in Section 1 will be reported with your college name to create a matrix of colleges and program characteristics. Your responses to the remaining five questions on the survey will not be associated with your college name; they will be summarized with responses from other colleges. Please be candid so we can learn more about the perspectives of colleges offering an Academic Catch-Up program.

21. What were the most significant successes of your Academic Catch-Up program?

22. What were the most significant challenges you encountered? _____

23. Do you think your college will continue offering your Academic Catch-Up program in the future?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Unsure
- Probably not
- Definitely not

24. Why or why not? _____

25. If there is anything else you'd like to share about your program, you can do so here: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions or would like to share more about your experiences with the Academic Catch-Up program, please contact Dawn Coleman at colemanevaluation@outlook.com.

Appendix B: Program Descriptions

College	Program Name
Alpena Community College	Lumberjack Launchpad
Bay College	Bay College Success Academy
Delta College	SPARK
Glen Oaks Community College	Ready Set Go!
Grand Rapids Community College	Bridges to College: Raider Ready
Henry Ford College	College Bound - The Hawk Advantage
Jackson College	Ready Set Jet Program
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Valley Advantage
Kellogg Community College	Kellogg Kickstart
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College	Inspiring Eagles
Kirtland Community College	Kirtland Kickstart
Lake Michigan College	Red Hawks Rise
Lansing Community College	College Connect
Macomb Community College	College ABLE
Mid Michigan College	College NOW!
Monroe County Community College	Bridges to College: Husky Hype-up
Montcalm Community College	Success Express
Mott Community College	Summer Academic Acceleration
Muskegon Community College	Kick Off
Northwestern Michigan College	College Edge
Oakland Community College	OCC Jumpstart Program
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College	SCTC's Connections to College
Schoolcraft College	Step Ahead
Southwestern Michigan College	Roadrunner Ready
Washtenaw Community College	Summer Advantage
Wayne County Community College District	Academic Catch-Up
West Shore Community College	College Edge

Program Design	Program Format			Length of Program		
	fully online	fully in person	hybrid	# of weeks	days per week	hours per day
Alpena			●	5	4	4
Bay	●	●		2-4	2-4	2-4
Delta			●	5	4	6
Glen Oaks			●	3	4	6
Grand Rapids		●		7	4	4-6
Henry Ford			●	3	4	6
Jackson		●		5.5	3	3
Kalamazoo Valley			●	3	4	3.5
Kellogg			●	6	2	3
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa			●	2	5	6
Kirtland			●	3	3 in week 1, online in week 2, 1 in week 3	7
Lake Michigan			●	5	4	4
Lansing			●	3	3	3
Macomb			●	4	1	2-4
Mid Michigan			●	10	4 in week 1, then online	4
Monroe County			●	9	2-4 for College Skills, 1-2 for Math and Reading/Writing Boot Camps	4.5
Montcalm		●		5	4	6.5
Mott	●	●	●	8	2-4	3
Muskegon		●	●	5	4	3.5
Northwestern Michigan			●	4	4	4
Oakland		●		3	4	5
Saginaw Chippewa			●	8	4 in person, 1 virtual	4
Schoolcraft	●	●		2	5	5
Southwestern Michigan		●		5	4	4
Washtenaw			●	3	4	5
Wayne		●		4	5	6
West Shore			●	10	1-5	5-10

Math and English Supports	Delivery		Instruction			
	English	Math	FT faculty	PT faculty	Advisors	Tutors
Alpena	non-credit course	non-credit course		●		
Bay	non-credit course	non-credit course		●		
Delta	non-credit course	non-credit course		●		
Glen Oaks	non-credit course	non-credit course	●			
Grand Rapids	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		●
Henry Ford	non-credit course	non-credit course		●		
Jackson	no-cost dev course	non-credit course	●			
Kalamazoo Valley	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		●
Kellogg	non-credit course	non-credit course		●		●
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa	non-credit course	non-credit course	●			
Kirtland	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		
Lake Michigan	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		
Lansing	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		●
Macomb	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		
Mid Michigan	no-cost dev course	no-cost dev course	●	●		
Monroe County	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		
Montcalm	non-credit course	open lab		●		
Mott	no-cost dev course	no-cost dev course	●	●		
Muskegon	non-credit course	non-credit course		●		
Northwestern Michigan	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		
Oakland	other	other	●	●		
Saginaw Chippewa	non-credit course	non-credit course	●			
Schoolcraft	other	other	●			●
Southwestern Michigan	non-credit course	non-credit course	●	●		
Washtenaw	open lab	open lab				●
Wayne	open lab	open lab		●		
West Shore	non-credit course	non-credit course	●			●

non-credit course = Special non-credit course sessions (traditional or lab-style/online or in-person) facilitated by instructor(s)

no cost dev course = No-cost enrollment in scheduled sections of developmental math

open lab = Open lab (online or in person) using software with instructor or tutor support

College Knowledge	Topics Covered								
	Career exploration	Financial aid	Personal finance/ financial literacy	Admissions	Mental health/ Stress management	Time management	Test-taking strategies	Study skills	Technology skills
Alpena	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bay	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Delta	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Glen Oaks	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Grand Rapids	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Henry Ford	●	●		●					
Jackson	●	●		●		●	●	●	
Kalamazoo Valley	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Kellogg	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kirtland	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Lake Michigan	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lansing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Macomb	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	
Mid Michigan	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Monroe County	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Montcalm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mott	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Muskegon	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Northwestern Michigan	●	●			●	●		●	●
Oakland	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Saginaw Chippewa	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Schoolcraft	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Southwestern Michigan	●	●			●	●	●	●	●
Washtenaw	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Wayne	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
West Shore	●	●	●	●		●		●	●

College Knowledge	Delivery					Instruction				
	Dedicated class sessions	Individual appointments	Online modules	Joined orientation sessions	Other	Full-time faculty	Part-time faculty	Advisors and Success Coaches	Tutors	Other
Alpena	●							●		
Bay	●	●					●	●		●
Delta	●	●						●	●	
Glen Oaks	●		●					●	●	●
Grand Rapids	●				●			●		●
Henry Ford		●		●				●	●	●
Jackson	●			●		●		●		
Kalamazoo Valley	●					●	●	●		●
Kellogg	●	●					●			●
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa	●				●	●				●
Kirtland	●		●					●	●	●
Lake Michigan	●						●			
Lansing	●					●	●	●		
Macomb	●				●	●				●
Mid Michigan	●	●	●					●		●
Monroe County	●						●			
Montcalm	●					●		●		
Mott				●				●		
Muskegon	●						●			●
Northwestern Michigan	●					●	●	●	●	
Oakland	●					●	●			
Saginaw Chippewa	●							●		
Schoolcraft	●		●	●		●		●		
Southwestern Michigan	●	●						●	●	
Washtenaw	●									●
Wayne	●						●			
West Shore	●	●	●	●						●

Tangible Supports Provided	Breakfast	Lunch	Snacks	Bus passes	Gift cards for gas or other expenses	Loaner laptops or tablets	Gift laptops or tablets	Internet access	Class-room supplies	On campus housing	Stipend
Alpena	●	●		●		●		●	●	●	●
Bay		●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●
Delta	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		
Glen Oaks	●	●	●		●	●		●	●	●	●
Grand Rapids	●		●	●		●	●	●	●		●
Henry Ford	●	●		●	●		●	●	●		●
Jackson	●	●	●			●		●	●	●	
Kalamazoo Valley	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●
Kellogg	●		●	●		●		●	●		●
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa	●	●	●		●	●		●	●		●
Kirtland	●	●	●		●	●	●		●		●
Lake Michigan	●		●		●	●	●		●		
Lansing	●		●	●	●	●			●		●
Macomb			●			●					●
Mid Michigan	●	●			●	●	●	●	●		●
Monroe County	●	●					●	●	●		●
Montcalm	●	●	●		●		●		●		●
Mott				●	●	●		●			
Muskegon	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●
Northwestern Michigan	●		●		●	●		●	●		
Oakland	●	●	●		●		●		●	●	●
Saginaw Chippewa		●	●	●	●		●		●		●
Schoolcraft		●	●				●	●	●		
Southwestern Michigan	●	●	●		●	●			●	●	
Washtenaw	●	●				●					●
Wayne		●	●	●				●	●		
West Shore	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●

Other Program Components	Peer mentoring	Social activities	Tutoring	Mentoring	Field trips	Campus tour	Support for ESL students	College credits in English	College credits in math	College credits for a college success course
Alpena		●	●	●	●	●				
Bay		●	●	●		●				
Delta	●	●	●	●	●	●				
Glen Oaks		●	●	●	●	●				
Grand Rapids		●	●	●	●	●	●			
Henry Ford		●	●	●		●				
Jackson	●		●		●	●		●		●
Kalamazoo Valley				●		●				
Kellogg			●	●		●				●
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa		●		●		●				
Kirtland		●				●				
Lake Michigan		●		●	●	●				
Lansing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Macomb			●			●				
Mid Michigan			●	●		●		●	●	
Monroe County	●	●	●			●			●	●
Montcalm		●	●	●	●	●				●
Mott		●	●	●				●	●	●
Muskegon	●		●	●		●				●
Northwestern Michigan		●	●		●	●				
Oakland		●				●				●
Saginaw Chippewa	●	●	●		●	●				
Schoolcraft		●	●			●				●
Southwestern Michigan	●	●	●	●	●	●				
Washtenaw		●				●				
Wayne		●				●		●	●	●
West Shore		●	●		●	●				

Appendix C: Survey Results

The tables in this appendix include survey responses from all 27 participating colleges.

Did your college already offer a summer bridge program prior to Academic Catch-Up?	#	%
Yes – ACU funding was used to offset normal operating costs for our summer bridge program	2	7%
Yes – ACU funding was used to expand our summer bridge program	1	4%
No – ACU funding was used to develop a new program	24	89%
Total	27	100%

Which of the following did you offer? (If you offered your program in multiple formats, check all that apply.)	#	%
A fully online program	3	11%
A fully in person program	10	37%
A hybrid program with both online and in-person components	19	70%

Which of the following tangible supports did you provide to students? (Check all that apply.)	#	%
Breakfast	21	78%
Lunch	20	74%
Snacks	21	78%
Bus passes	11	41%
Gift cards for gas or other expenses	18	67%
Loaner laptops or tablets (students return them at the end of the program)	19	70%
Gift laptops or tablets (students get to keep them)	13	48%
Internet access (i.e., wi-fi hot spots)	18	67%
Classroom supplies (backpacks, notebooks, pens, etc.)	24	89%
On campus housing	5	19%
Stipend for attendance or completing the program	19	70%
Other	11	41%

Other responses included: "\$1000 Scholarship for completing the program"; "\$300 scholarship if they enroll in at least 9 credits at OCC in the fall; 3 of which must be college-level English or Math"; "ALEKS, Online Access Codes"; "Bookstore credit, we used an LMC van to transport 9 students who had no way of getting to campus"; "Bus passes, gas cards, and hot spot cards were offered but no students needed"; "child care expense"; "Dinner for the evening cohort"; "Food share and cooking kits"; "Scholarships of \$1,000 for successful completion of the program"; "Student had access to food support through our Family Center and received outreach as part of the program"; "transportation stipend."

Which of the following best describes your Academic Catch-Up program for English?	#	%
No-cost enrollment in scheduled sections of developmental English	3	11%
Open lab (online or in person) using software with instructor or tutor support	2	7%
Special non-credit course sessions (traditional or lab-style/online or in-person) facilitated by instructor(s)	20	74%
Other	2	7%
Total	27	100%

Other responses: "Credit bearing courses with embedded English support"; "Credit course for college readiness with workshops for English"

Which of the following best describes your Academic Catch-Up program for math?	#	%
No-cost enrollment in scheduled sections of developmental math	2	7%
Open lab (online or in person) using software with instructor or tutor support	3	11%
Special non-credit course sessions (traditional or lab-style/online or in-person) facilitated by instructor(s)	20	74%
Other	2	7%
Total	27	100%

Other response: "Credit bearing courses with embedded Math support"; "Credit course for college readiness with workshops for Math"

Did you use placement tests (i.e., Accuplacer, ALEKS, etc.) to determine support needs during the program?	#	%
Yes	16	59%
No	11	41%
Total	27	100%

Who delivered instruction for the math and English portion of your program? (Check all that apply.)	#	%
Full-time faculty	18	67%
Part-time faculty	20	74%
Advisors	0	0%
Tutors	7	26%
Other	3	11%

Other response: "Academic Success Coaches, Course Assistants"; "Certified Teachers" and "Supplemental Instruction Leaders"

Which of the following did you offer as part of your program? (Check all that apply.)	#	%
Peer mentoring	7	26%
Social activities	21	78%
Tutoring	20	74%
Mentoring	16	59%
Field trips	12	44%
Campus tour	26	96%
Support for ESL students	2	7%
College credits in English	4	15%
College credits in math	4	15%
College credits for a first-year experience/college success course	9	33%

Which of the following topics were covered in your program? (Check all that apply.)	#	%
Career exploration	27	100%
Financial aid	27	100%
Personal finance/financial literacy	20	74%
Admissions	23	85%
Mental health/Stress management	23	85%
Time management	26	96%
Test-taking strategies	23	85%
Study skills	26	96%
Technology skills	24	89%
Other	12	44%

Other responses included: "Academic Advising; Disability Support Services; Campus Tutoring Resources; Communication Skills"; "Campus Life, Campus Jobs, Academic Advising"; "DEI and library presentations"; "Experiences in Art, Science, Physical Ed, Mindfulness"; "Growth mindset, self-advocacy, examining biases"; "Leadership"; "Learning Lab, Sports, Library Services, Advising, Learn4Word, Academic Integrity, E-Learning"; "Meet the Chancellor, The Value of a Community College Education, How Strong is Your Squad, Student Life/Engagement, Library Services & Public Safety"; "Organizational skills"; "Physical health, benefits of college, barriers to success"; "Public safety, student activities and athletics, student housing, disability services, academic advising, college academic programs"; "Situational awareness, advising, degree exploration, Student Success Services Overview, Pantry Support, community resource referrals"

How did you deliver the College Knowledge portion of your program? (Check all that apply.)	#	%
Class sessions dedicated to these topics	25	93%
Individual appointments to deliver these topics	7	26%
Online modules to deliver these topics	5	19%
Students joined scheduled orientation sessions on these topics	5	19%
Other	3	11%

Other responses included: "Breakout/ engagement sessions"; "college staff came to the class sessions in person and via zoom"; "Some college knowledge sessions like the campus tour were held in person."

Who delivered instruction for the College Knowledge portion of your program? (Check all that apply.)	#	%
Full-time faculty	9	33%
Part-time faculty	10	37%
Advisors or Success Coaches*	17	63%
Tutors	6	22%
Other	13	48%

* The survey response was "Advisor"; however because there were so many "Other" responses that referenced success coaches and navigators who play a similar role to advisors, these responses were recoded into a combined "Advisors or Success Coaches" response option.

Other responses included: "academic and student services administrators and support staff"; "Administrators" (2 respondents); "Career Services Professionals"; "Department coordinators; Student Success Navigator; B2C Program Coordinator"; "Departmental Administrators"; "Full-Time Staff"; "HFC Departmental Staff"; "special presenters also came to class"; "Staff"; "State police, college staff such as Director of Office Accessibility, Testing Service Manager, Director of Academic Success, Tutor Coordinator, Michigan Works!"; "Student Affairs staff"; "Student Services Staff"

Do you think your college will continue offering your Academic Catch-Up program in the future?	#	%
Definitely yes	5	19%
Probably yes	14	52%
Unsure	7	26%
Probably not	1	4%
Definitely not	0	0%
Total	27	100%

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

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