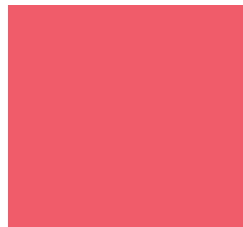


NO MATTER WHAT OBSTACLE IS THROWN MY WAY

Report from the Single Mothers' Career Readiness and Success Project

Sandy Goodman and
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A project of World Education, Inc., The National College Transition Network (NCTN) provides technical assistance and professional development services to community college, adult education, and workforce systems. We design accelerated career pathways, comprehensive student support services, and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships that help adults attain their educational and career goals and access greater economic opportunity. Learn more at www.collegetransition.org.



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Thank you to Silja Kallenbach, Vice President of World Education, for her leadership.



LIST OF COLLEGES IN THIS STUDY

Allan Hancock College (AHC)

CARE (Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education)
Santa Maria, California

Austin Community College (ACC)

Support Center
Austin, Texas

Clover Park Technical College (CPTC)

WorkFirst/Workforce Development
Lakewood and Puyallup, Washington

Community College of Philadelphia (CCP)

KEYS (Keystone Education Yields Success)
Women's Outreach and Advocacy Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Edmonds Community College (ECC)

WorkFirst
Lynnwood, Washington

Frederick Community College (FCC)

Project Forward Step
Parents LEAD
Frederick, Maryland

Holyoke Community College (HCC)

New Directions
Holyoke, Massachusetts

Jefferson State Community College (JSCC)

Single Mom Welding Program
Pell City, Alabama

Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC)

Family Resource Center
Valley Glen, Los Angeles, California

Manchester Community College (MCCNH)

Project STRIDE
Manchester, New Hampshire

Maysville Community and Technical College (MCTC)

Ready to Work
Maysville, Kentucky

Meridian Community College (MCC)

Career and Technical Education Support Services
Meridian, Mississippi

Niagara County Community College (NCCC)

Mapping Opportunities for Single Parents
Sanborn, New York

North Arkansas College (NAC)

Career Pathways Program
Harrison, Arkansas

Northampton Community College (NCC)

New Choices
KEYS
Spartan Aid
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Portland Community College (PCC)

Project Independence
Head Start Parents
Portland, Oregon

San Antonio College (SAC)

SWANS (Services for Women and Non-Traditional Students): includes Women's Center, Seguir Adelante, and Mi CASA (Career Advancement and Self-Sufficiency Assistance)
San Antonio, Texas





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Almost nine million families in the U.S. are headed by single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Most support their families on very low incomes, with inadequate funds for childcare, affordable housing, and health and dental care (Women Employed, 2011).

Single mothers make up an increasing part of the postsecondary student population in the United States. In the 2011–2012 school year, there were more than 2 million single mother college students, representing 11 percent of undergraduates. Eighty-nine (89) percent of single mother students were low-income, with 63 percent in poverty. Women of color are more likely to be single parent students (Institute for Women’s Policy Research [IWPR], 2017).

Consciously and specifically addressing the needs of single mothers is an essential part of any equity and completion agenda for colleges. Although similar in many ways to other nontraditional students, single mother students bring both a unique set of strengths and additional barriers to program completion. Yet, until recently, their particular experiences and challenges as a distinct student population have not gained the attention or resources required to address their needs effectively. To remedy this, a growing movement has emerged to give voice to student parents and to better understand and address their needs. This report aims to further that understanding.

INTERGENERATIONAL BENEFITS

With a powerful motivation to improve the lives of their families and set a positive example for their children, many single mothers pursue education and training that will lead to better-paying work and a meaningful career. Postsecondary education and training have the potential to reap life-changing benefits for single mothers and their children in the areas of employment, quality of life, and children’s outcomes. Investment in childcare, additional financial aid, and case management pays off through increased tax returns and reduction in public benefits costs (IWPR, June 2018). Single mothers, however, face daunting obstacles related to finances, childcare, and personal issues.



THE SINGLE MOTHERS' CAREER READINESS AND SUCCESS PROJECT

In order to better understand the needs of single mother students and the programs that have been created to support them, World Education embarked on an 18-month project, supported by ECMC Foundation. The Single Mothers' Career Readiness and Success Project involved identifying and documenting program models and service strategies, and, to a lesser extent, institutional and public policies, implemented in community college settings, to support single mothers. These strategies were aimed at increasing their rates of persistence and completion, leading to greater career and economic opportunities, and success for themselves and their families. The project began with a literature review and was followed by interviews with staff and students at 17 community colleges with programs and services that support single mother students. Information from these sources is compiled in this report.

KEY PRACTICES

Through the literature review and interviews, we identified key practices that support single mother students. These include personal support (counseling and advising); academic support; financial support; childcare; workforce development; family-friendly space and events; and community partnerships. A common thread throughout these programs and services is the centrality of relationship-building, communication, and collaboration among staff, between staff and students, among students, and with community partners for successful implementation of these supports. There is a web of connections among all these areas. In most of the programs featured, a small staff or even a single staff person is responsible for providing the services or making the referrals. The support they provide is greatly enhanced by relationships developed across college departments and with community partners. In addition, cultivating opportunities for peer support, whether formal or informal, is a key factor for students to believe they can succeed, to learn about resources, and to reduce any feelings of isolation.

All the programs featured emphasize the crucial nature of **personal support**, developing a trusting relationship, and “meeting the students where they are.” With their many responsibilities, single mother students experience role strain, and they often feel guilt at having limited time with their children. Program staff take a holistic approach, demonstrating openness and concern with students' overall wellness and with their financial, family, emotional, and personal needs and interests that extend beyond their academic schedules and program requirements. They support students in remaining resilient as they identify solutions to challenges. Taking a case management approach, staff help students navigate services on campus and provide personalized referrals to community resources. This centralized and personalized approach is particularly important for single mothers with compressed time on campus.

Although the featured programs generally encourage students to take advantage of existing **academic support** and accelerated programs, having dedicated space makes it possible to provide tutors or advisors in a family-friendly program area, making it more feasible for busy student parents to access it.



Since many single mothers are driven by the need to improve their family's economic conditions, **workforce development and career preparation** is a focus of many of the programs. Career advising and coaching is embedded in the programs to help students identify education and career pathways leading to high-demand jobs that can result in family economic sustainability and mobility. Some of the programs use work-study to provide not only financial assistance but also new workforce experiences that prepare single mother students for further employment.

Colleges assist students with their **financial needs** in several ways and access a variety of sources to do so. Some programs are designed to be tuition-free. Some provide direct cash assistance for specific costs; these are often programs designed for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. Colleges may develop sources of scholarships for single parents. Many colleges maintain emergency funds. Some programs offer a food pantry or snacks onsite, or loan books or laptops. Some colleges invest staff time in connecting students to public benefits for which they are eligible.

Childcare is essential for parents of young children. Some of the featured programs offer on-campus childcare or partner with Head Start. A few offer evening hours or care during school vacations. Many factors must be considered when assisting students with childcare needs, including schedules, cost, children's ages, location, and program quality. The colleges in this study have figured out a number of mechanisms to assist single parent students with this basic need, although many gaps persist.

To the extent possible, the featured colleges create a **family-friendly campus**, with spaces reserved for student parents where they can bring their children, workshops for parents, and fun events for families. These spaces and activities provide opportunities for students to build peer support and a sense of community.

Partnerships enable programs and students to tap into diverse funding sources, specialized resources, and professional expertise that it is rarely found in any one agency, campus, or program. Staff in single parent programs must be expert in outreach and partnership development and learn which agencies and programs provide what, how to identify students who might be eligible, how to best refer them, and how to sustain a mutual referral system. Through community partnerships, staff have at the ready referrals to housing agencies, food banks, multiservice centers, mental health agencies, childcare resources, dress-for-success, domestic violence centers, legal services, and community foundations.

In order to serve single mother students well, attention needs to be paid to **institutional capacity** to support this special population. This means collecting **data** on parenting status and following up with single mothers to offer services, and providing **professional development** to faculty and staff on the needs of single mothers and ways to be flexible without compromising standards. It also means collecting data on outcomes to evaluate programs and to make the case for needed programming. It means participating in **advocacy** for policies within and outside the institution that support single mothers' ability to access and complete a college education.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Institutional Capacity

- Recognize single mothers as a unique demographic and disaggregate data to better understand this population.
- Establish mechanisms for identifying single mothers at various junctures.
- Provide options for accelerated learning and time to completion and ensure that staff of student parent programs are well informed of these options and potential benefits to single mothers.
- Invest in staff time to develop community partnerships for mutual referrals and facilitated access to support services.
- Provide professional development for faculty and staff to better understand the needs of single mother students.
- Identify resources for developing institutional capacity.

Programs and Services

- Attend to the full range of intersecting needs of single mothers.
- Recognize and address the varied needs of single mothers with children of all ages.
- Facilitate opportunities for peer support and building of social capital among single mother students.
- Provide career counseling to help students identify and pursue viable, realistic career pathways and credentials with local labor market value that lead to economic mobility and career advancement.
- Develop relationships with local employers in high-demand fields to enable opportunities for meaningful work-study, career exposure, and employment.
- Provide dedicated family-friendly space for students to study and receive services and organize family-friendly events on campus.

Funding

- Include a full assessment of benefit eligibility in the application process and invest in dedicated, specialized eligibility screeners who can assess students' eligibility and help them access a full range of public benefits and potential funding to support their education.



- Leverage funding streams, such as Perkins and WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act), with provisions for special populations, including single mothers, women in nontraditional occupations, chronically unemployed or underemployed (previously “displaced homemakers” in Perkins Act).
- Leverage a diverse base of funding, including community and women’s foundations, to enable greater flexibility to accommodate single mothers who do not meet narrow eligibility rules determined by specific single-purpose funding sources.
- Raise flexible funds to provide emergency assistance grants.

Advocacy and Policy

- Advocate for public policies and funding to support single mothers’ postsecondary success as a vehicle towards economic sustainability and mobility. This is especially critical at the state level, where there is tremendous flexibility in how states may implement federal funding streams like TANF and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Invest in staff time to develop community partnerships and participate in coalitions that advocate for services and policies addressing the needs of single mothers.
- Raise policymaker awareness and advocate for policy changes about the “cliff effects” (i.e., the sudden loss of benefits, rather than a gradual reduction of support, when income goes up) that come into play as single mothers receiving public assistance return to the workforce.
- Connect single mother students’ needs to advocacy related to equity and inclusion, student basic needs, and college affordability.
- Include single mother students in advocacy efforts and invite state and local policy-makers to campus events to meet single mother students and hear their stories.

This report aims to further our understanding by sharing the insights and best practices we gleaned with educators, funders, investors, and policymakers so that, together, we can increase the opportunities and supports available to single mother students. We include examples from just 17 colleges, with the awareness that there are many others operating programs for student parents, in many cases as part of statewide initiatives, that we were unable to include, given the limited scope of this project. We hope that this report stimulates interest and resources for identifying additional program strategies and best practices.



Many of the recommendations above are well-aligned with the efforts underway at the national, state, and institutional level to address gaps in equity and inclusion, and improve the rates of student persistence, completion, and employment leading to economic mobility. Single mothers should be visible as a distinct group meriting attention and advancing the progress towards social and economic equity. Their educational success and economic mobility have the potential to reap the very intergenerational benefits such student success and equity efforts seek.

Introduction and Background

Almost nine million families in the U.S. are headed by single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Most support their families on very low incomes, with inadequate supports for childcare, affordable housing, and health and dental care (Women Employed, 2011). With a powerful motivation to improve the lives of their families and set a positive example for their children, many single mothers pursue education and training with the goal of attaining better-paying work and a meaningful career.

Single mothers make up an increasing part of the postsecondary student population in the United States. In the 2011–2012 school year, there were more than 2 million single mother college students, representing 11 percent of undergraduates. Eighty-nine (89) percent of single mother students were low-income, with 63 percent in poverty. Women of color are more likely to be single parent students (IWPR, 2017).

Education and training have the potential to reap life-changing benefits for single mothers and their children. The benefits of stable and meaningful work with opportunities for economic advancement are unlikely without postsecondary education. Structural changes due to technology and the increased complexity of work have led to an increase in jobs requiring postsecondary education and a decrease in jobs for those with a high school education or less. Jobs available for those with a high school diploma or less are increasingly low-skill and low-wage (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish, 2016).

Though the obstacles they face are daunting, some mothers are successful in their pursuit of postsecondary education. Among single mothers who started college from 2003 to 2009, only 28 percent obtained a credential in six years, while 57 percent of women without children did so (IWPR, 2017). It is important to note, however, that six years may be too short a time frame to assess outcomes for this population since many study part-time and discontinuously (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; St. Rose & Hill, 2013). With sufficient and accessible supports, many more could achieve credentials.



Although similar in many ways to other nontraditional students, single mothers bring a unique set of strengths as college students, as well as additional barriers to program completion. Yet, until recently, their particular experiences and challenges as a distinct student population have not gained the attention or resources required to address their needs effectively. To remedy this, a growing movement has emerged to give voice to student parents and to better understand and address their needs. Leaders in this movement include the National Center for Student Parent Programs, the Student Parent Success Initiative of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, and Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

Addressing issues of equity and inclusion to remedy disparities in educational opportunity and economic mobility is increasingly urgent. Ensuring that students of color, first-generation, adult, and other nontraditional college students have the support they need to persist and complete credentials with labor market value has captured the attention of higher education stakeholders and public and private funders. Completion by Design, Achieving the Dream, and Complete College America are just a few examples of initiatives to reform developmental education, redesign systems and pathways, and build institutional and practitioner capacity.

Single mother students have a great deal to offer the colleges that invest in them. This investment is especially worthwhile at a time when enrollments are declining, and colleges and states are striving to create equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for residents as well as meet ambitious college completion and workforce and economic development goals.

SINGLE MOTHERS' CAREER READINESS AND SUCCESS PROJECT

This paper is the outcome of an 18-month project, The Single Mothers' Career Readiness and Success Project, funded by ECMC Foundation. The goal of the project is to identify and document program models and service strategies, and, to a lesser extent, institutional and public policies, implemented specifically in community college settings to support single mothers and increase their rates of persistence and completion, leading to greater career and economic opportunities and success for themselves and their families.

The central role that community colleges play in the education and career advancement of single mothers and their families cannot be overstated. Like other students, single mothers choose community colleges because they are more locally accessible and affordable and offer a range of short-term certificate and degree options in a wide variety of programs. Community colleges are home to 42 percent of all parents enrolled in college. Nearly 40 percent of all women in community college are mothers and more than half (58 percent) of student mothers in community college are raising children without the support of a spouse or partner (IWPR, 2017).



With this investigation, we hope to contribute to the field's understanding of the landscape and illuminate the strengths and gaps in the support systems available to single mother students, with a focus on community colleges. Our ultimate goal is to share the insights and best practices we have gleaned with educators, funders and investors, and policymakers so that, together, we can increase the opportunities and supports available to single mother students.

Literature Review

In the first phase of the project, we completed a literature review (Appendix D) to identify evidence-based factors and a conceptual framework to guide our exploration of promising program models and practices that support single mothers' career readiness and success. We reviewed studies of nontraditional students, single mothers, and student parents in postsecondary education. Through the review, we gained a better understanding of the scope and variation in the single mother student population; the value of postsecondary education for two generations; evidence-based strategies and promising program practices; and policy issues.

The literature revealed a broad set of programmatic and institutional factors that support single mothers and parents in postsecondary education. These include case management and personal support; subsidized childcare; financial support; academic support; and partnerships with local agencies and community-based organizations to provide a variety of services and resources.

Outreach and Interview Process

In the second phase of the project, we sought community colleges with specialized, targeted services for single mothers that aligned with the key practices identified in the literature review. To identify the colleges, we used our networks across a variety of sectors, including federal agencies, community college systems, grant-making organizations, professional associations, and national nonprofits. We asked our contacts to recommend local community colleges with specialized programs for single mothers and to assist us in circulating our outreach materials to their constituents and members. We also reached out directly to community colleges identified through our literature review and online searches.

Given the descriptive, rather than evaluative, nature of the project, the limited availability of programs specifically for single mothers (versus student parents of any partner status or gender) and the diverse array of potential program models and strategies, our screening criteria remained flexible. At the same time, in order to identify programs and institutions with a comprehensive approach to serving single mothers, we considered only those programs that implement at least two of the key practices identified in our literature review.



Using the findings from the literature review as the framework for developing questions, we interviewed key staff from the selected programs to learn about their program design and services geared towards single mothers. We also interviewed 12 single mother students participating in six of the programs. A list of interview respondents can be found in Appendix B.

OVERVIEW OF FEATURED PROGRAMS

This report summarizes what we have learned about the specialized programs, targeted supports, and/or campus-wide services available to single mothers at 17 community colleges. The staff we interviewed and the insights we drew from them help us better understand a small, but diverse, sample of community colleges and the features of the specialized programs and campus-wide resources that are available to support single mothers. A list of those colleges, their locations, and the abbreviations used to refer to them is on page i. Specific information about each program, including student eligibility criteria, primary funding sources, and core services, can be found in the Program Profiles (Appendix A).

Because our emphasis is on single mothers and the programs available to support them, we refer, primarily, to program participants as “single mothers.” However, it is important to note that not all the featured programs serve single mothers only. Some are geared towards parents of all genders, mothers with or without partners, and women with or without children. As we discuss in the section on data collection, most of the colleges do not collect or disaggregate data to identify single mothers in particular. At the same time, respondents from the featured programs estimate, with a great deal of confidence, that the majority of their participants are single mothers. This estimation seems credible, given the national data on single mothers in community colleges and respondents’ firsthand knowledge as program coordinators and advisors of the participating students. Further, many of the featured programs are geared towards students eligible for TANF, the majority of whom are single mothers.

The featured colleges are spread across the U.S., in the Northeast, Southeast, West Coast, and Mid-Atlantic regions. They vary in size: some serve large metropolitan districts, while others are located in less populous districts of small towns and rural areas.

The design of the specialized programs available to single mothers and the criteria used to determine whether a student is eligible to participate are also quite varied and are largely driven by the sources of funding. For example, where programs are funded with federal funding streams such as TANF or SNAP, the allowable use of funds, participant eligibility criteria, and the types of education and training programs in which a participant may enroll are driven by a combination of federal regulations and the specific policies and performance measures established by the state agency that administers these dollars. Programs using federal Perkins funding to support single mothers, a special population under the Perkins Act, have another set of criteria for allowable use of funds and student eligibility pertaining

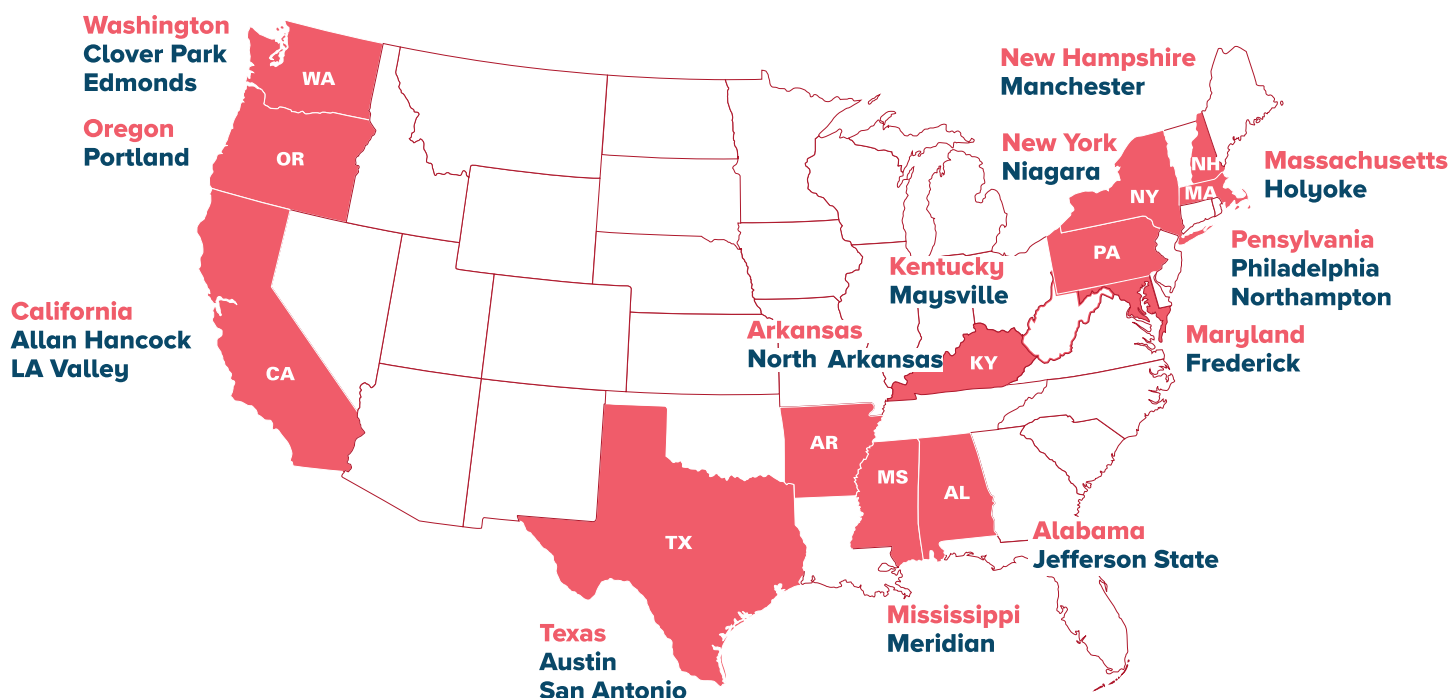


to Career and Technical Education programs. Programs funded by private foundations may be free from specific regulatory constraints that accompany public funding, but the design will typically be shaped by the mission, goals, and performance measures of each funder. Needless to say, all the programs are constrained by the level of resources available for single mothers to address the full range of needs.

While each program may be funded with and shaped by one or two primary funding sources, many combine, or “braid,” a variety of federal, state, institutional, and private funding streams, each with specific target populations, goals, and performance measures. This braiding enables them to expand the direct student aid and support services to a greater number of eligible students. This approach requires collaboration across college departments and agencies, comprehensive intake processes to identify the specific needs and eligibility of each student, matched with the appropriate funding source, and staff expertise to assess and administer the process.

In all cases, the design of the featured programs and the services they provide to single mothers are shaped by the specific funding sources as well as by the resources available campus-wide to any eligible student in need. These resources include, but are not limited to: federal, state, and institutional financial aid; academic support; food pantries; emergency assistance; childcare centers; and Federal TRIO programs. We describe these campus-wide resources through the lens of the specialized student parent programs and do not claim to capture the full breadth of what each college offers its entire student body.

FEATURED COLLEGES





Strengths and Challenges of Single Mothers

Single mothers bring a unique set of strengths as well as significant challenges. Although there is variation among the population, depending on the age of the mother, the age of the children, income level, and educational background, data have shown that the great majority are low-income and that women of color are more likely to be single parent students. Single mothers frequently experience educational disruptions, and they are more likely than other students to be first-generation college students. As sole parents, they suffer from role conflict and role strain. Research has shown a prevalence of abuse and trauma among adult women students. However, their children serve as a consistent motivation for these parents to persist in their education and career goals.

Single mother students demonstrate exceptional determination to overcome obstacles to their education, and they are powerful role models for their children. Mothers' higher education leads to an intergenerational effect, having significant short-term and long-term positive effects on their children's education (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; Wilsey, 2013; Karp, Osche, & Smith, 2016).

STRENGTHS

Through interviews with program staff and program participants, a picture emerges of a group of people who are great assets to their schools and communities despite the overwhelming challenges they face. *Determined, resilient, persistent, resourceful, and motivated* are the words staff and students most often use to describe single mother students. They have a seriousness of purpose that is not common in younger or non-parent students. With an ability to juggle multiple responsibilities and to get things done, they are often skilled at finding resources through their networks.



Asked about her strengths, former NCC student Delia Marrero spoke of her “ability to figure it out,” including how to juggle her time and how to avoid college debt.

Maggie Wheeler, a student at MCCNH, noted, “No matter what obstacle is thrown my way, I’m always able to somehow find a way over that and . . . get through it all.”

CCP student Tria Jones expressed her determination in this way: “Once I made my mind up that . . . hell or high water, I’m going to get it done . . . I tried not to think about things that caused me to worry about whether I could. Because I knew I had the drive.”

Single mother students are determined to create a better life for their children. They also see the importance of serving as a role model to their children to convey the value of education and the opportunities it can open up.



What I hear over and over and over again from single moms is that they’re here because they want to be a role model for their children, and . . . that gets them through so much. If they have struggles or they’re having a hard time with a class or things aren’t working out today for whatever reason, they continue to go. . . . They are so strong and so dedicated and they want to make a better life for their kids, but they want to show their kids that this is how you get a better life, . . . by working hard and by going to school. (Lori Wayson, New Directions Coordinator, HCC)

Being a low-income single parent often means dealing with complicated or even demeaning bureaucracies, but the staff described the students they worked with as able to be flexible and to work things out. For example, Kimberly Daniel, Director of KEYS at CCP, referring to the constraints and requirements of public assistance and of college, said, “If you can work around that aspect of it and keep your sanity, keep your dignity and make it work for you so that you can move from one thing to another, I think that’s phenomenal.” She praised students for “the courage, the perseverance, the persistence, and the pride people still try to maintain in a life that in a way . . . beats you down every day.”

Single parent students may also serve as examples for traditional-age students. As Mary Ann Haytmanek, Director of New Choices at NCC, put it:



They’re great role models for younger students in their classes. I’ve had faculty members say that to me, “I love when I have one of your students in my class, because the younger students are going to see her asking questions and realize it’s okay. Or know that she studied till two in the morning.” They learned from that, which was pretty cool.



Haytmanek inferred that their curiosity and willingness to ask questions came from their life experience. Kiri Villa, CARE/EOPS Counselor at AHC, concurs: “When you’re a parent, you have a little bit more wisdom and keep things in perspective too.”

Some respondents also noted how single mothers are willing to support other students. Steven Christopher, Associate Vice President, Student Accessibility and Social Support Resources, at ACC, remarked, “This comes from raising their children and having probably more life experience under their wings than the average student does.”

Gabriella Storey, a student at MCCNH, said that the trauma she has gone through in life has helped her to be more compassionate and will be of value in her chosen career as a medical assistant.

Some interviewees noted that this new maturity and motivation developed after earlier unsuccessful attempts at a college education. As Kelly Boswell, Success Coach/Retention Specialist at NCCC, put it, “They have a completely different mindset than they did before they had kids. . . . They have more of an understanding of themselves and what they want to accomplish.”

CHALLENGES

Admiration for single mothers’ determination, motivation, and resourcefulness does not preclude a recognition of the enormous challenges they face and the need for consistent, comprehensive, and caring help to overcome them. Single mothers are very often living in poverty, and this is the basis for many of their severe challenges, including housing insecurity, homelessness, hunger, lack of safe childcare, and lack of reliable transportation. Mothers face difficult choices for their families. One setback leads to another in a spiral of costs.

The most disruptive of the challenges I think [is] their having to handle the unexpected . . . anything from house [or] apartment repairs — you know, the air conditioning went out and I have to be here to let them in. . . [to a] sick child, that’s a big one. And we’re seeing more and more car repairs. . . . Now we always say our students are one flat tire away from dropping out. . . . They get a flat tire and can’t afford to get a new one, so [they] can’t get to work. Oops, “I just got fired, now I can’t get to school.” . . . And everything just unravels very quickly. (Steven Christopher, ACC)



Domestic violence came up in several interviews as a devastating problem. Domestic abuse may lead to homelessness and trauma for both a mother and her children, and may interrupt the mother’s education.



Both mothers and children may face physical and/or mental health challenges. In addition, some single mothers must deal with family members or partners who do not support their desire for an education and may actively intervene to prevent them from getting ahead. This may occur initially, when they express a desire to go to school, or towards the end of their program, when they are about to reach success. In other cases, families are not actively discouraging, but they are unable to help because the student is the first in the family to go to college and other family members lack knowledge about college processes.

Schedule conflicts and a lack of time are problems for students who have to work full-time as well as those who are receiving public assistance or other services. The latter students are expected to go to school and to work, but they must also fulfill other expectations, like meetings with agencies and appointments for their children, all of which may be happening at the same time. Speaking of the expectations for public assistance recipients, Kimberly Daniel (CCP) observed, “You now have an agency telling you what you have to do, how you have to do it.” Furthermore, students have to bring verification for all their activities, or they may lose assistance. They also lose privacy; many find it very difficult to relate their personal business to a caseworker. In addition, TANF recipients face time limits on their ability to continue to receive cash aid and to attend school.



We’re telling them that you have to do all these things, but then they don’t have time to do it and there’s not enough time in the day. They don’t have enough support to do all the other things that they’re responsible for and get everything done that they need to. . . . When you say, “Great, come have therapy, but you have to be here Thursday at two,” well, that’s in the middle of their work day and they have math class at two o’clock. . . . We’re expecting them to support their child’s mental health needs and go to the therapy, but we also expect them to work and go to school. (Brie Bickley, Ready to Work Coordinator, MCTC)

Time stress causes exhaustion. When asked what it was like to be a mother and a student simultaneously, students responded with terms such as *stressful, hectic, time-consuming, very busy, sacrifice, and challenging*. Maggie Wheeler (MCCNH) described it vividly: “It’s very go, go, go.”

Whether or not they are on public assistance, students may feel stigmatized because of continuing bias against single mothers. Worried that people may judge them, they may not want to reveal their single parent status. Staff may also feel reluctant to ask them about their domestic arrangements.

Many parents experience guilt for being unable to spend more time with their children, to pay attention to them when they are together, or even to cook for them. This came up in both student and staff interviews, although the mothers often found ways to reconcile their feelings by reminding themselves of their goals for their families. As Tria Jones (CCP) expressed it:

Sometimes as single parents you feel like you're choosing between your children and doing what you need to do. You tell yourself, "I'm doing this for my children, I'm doing this to better my status and my career," but . . . you feel guilty for wanting to do something for yourself, and you feel guilty . . . when your kids are actually doing something good in school and you can't go see them.



Most respondents downplayed the academic challenges for single mother students, though, with work and family schedules, it is often difficult for students to spend time at the school computer room or library or seek tutoring assistance. Some interviewees said that a low prior GPA could be a problem if students attended college when they were younger and less serious about school and may have dropped out of or failed classes. This could affect their financial aid when they returned to school after becoming a parent. There was also some mention of the danger of using up financial aid by paying for remedial courses and of a long trajectory to graduation if students start at a remedial level.

In short, huge challenges test the motivation of single mothers and their ability to achieve their educational goals. These students, however, have a great deal to offer the colleges and communities that invest in them. With their clear goals, determination, and life experience, they serve as role models for other students as well as for their own children.



Programs and Services that Support Single Mother Students

This section reports on key practices that support single mother students in the featured programs. These include counseling and advising; academic support; financial support; childcare; workforce development; family-friendly space and events; and community partnerships.

Given the complex lives of single mother students and the role strain and role conflict they experience, openness and flexibility are needed on the part of college staff and faculty to help them succeed. Addressing personal and emotional issues is often paramount. A dedicated space with human and physical resources (advisors, tutors, computer, printers, snacks, etc.) makes it feasible for busy parents to access supports and sometimes bring their children with them when they are studying. Financial support is needed for ongoing expenses such as tuition, childcare, and books, whether through financial aid advising, scholarships or grants. In addition, access to emergency funds for unexpected expenses can prevent derailing of a student's college completion.

As we noted in our literature review, a common thread throughout is the centrality of relationship-building, communication, and collaboration among staff, between staff and students, among students, and with community partners for successful implementation of these supports. Although this section is divided into specific areas of support, there is a web of connections among all these areas. In most of the programs featured, a small staff or even a single staff person is responsible for providing the services or making the referrals. The support they provide is greatly enhanced by relationships with college departments and community partners. In addition, the development of peer support, whether formal or informal, is a key factor for students to believe they can succeed, to learn about resources, and to reduce any feelings of isolation.



PERSONAL SUPPORT



... I think just having people around me that value education, and that have been through some of the things that I've been through. Just really being encouraging, always positive, always encouraging, anything you need, you just ask. That openness really makes you want to come back. ... I'll look back and know it was because of these programs that I was able to really make it, because of just that little bit of extra help. It's somebody there that has that faith in you that you can do it, and that's probably the biggest thing. (Lisa Gutierrez, student, AHC)

Since no single office, department, campus or community agency is equipped with the expertise and resources to address all these needs, the most crucial skill, then, lies in the ability to identify and leverage a wide array of campus and community resources on students' behalf, and to build partnerships to streamline and personalize referrals.

Single mother students need help navigating systems and accessing services. Role strain, role conflict, and disrupted educational progress result in a need for validation, for reassurance that they belong in an educational program, and for development of a student identity (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011).

Students who have developed a trusting one-on-one relationship with a counselor often seek their help with financial, family, and other personal and non-academic issues. While counselors cannot anticipate every issue or always be prepared with a solution, they can cultivate deep knowledge of and personal contacts with resources. All the programs emphasize the need to be experts in identifying and leveraging a host of resources to address the wide variety of issues and needs — financial, emotional, mental health, medical, housing, transportation, childcare, academic — that arise in the lives of single mother students. Since no single office, department, campus or community agency is equipped with the expertise and resources to address all these needs, the most crucial skill, then, lies in the ability to identify and leverage a wide array of campus and community resources on students' behalf, and to build partnerships to streamline and personalize referrals.

Counseling



... whatever they are working on, whatever their main concern is, let's start there and kind of work our way back and see what we can figure out. So, to me, it's really the conversations that are the most important because that directs us everywhere we need to go. And I think also just being open, being open to exploring what students need and helping them come up with their own solutions. (Kelly Boswell, NCCC)

Personal support and counseling are core features of all the programs investigated for this report. Job titles of the student support providers vary and include case manager, counselor, academic advisor, facilitator, advocate, and career coach. The professional training and background of support providers also vary. Many serve as points of contact or case managers and provide general support while referring students to specialized services on- or off-campus, such as mental health, domestic violence, academic advising, or career services, as needed.



Some colleges hire trained professionals in academic advising, social work, or mental health counseling to staff the single parent programs. The staff at the Family Resource Center at LAVC includes a child development specialist who is also a marriage and family therapist. In many cases, the program staff were once single mother students themselves, and sometimes even graduates of the program in which they now work.

While the job titles and professional training vary, all the programs emphasize that a caring and trusting student–counselor relationship is central to the program’s design. Some draw explicitly on student persistence and engagement research in their program design, emphasizing the centrality of relationships that give students a sense of belonging, grounding, and connection on campus.

A holistic approach is common to all the programs. Respondents describe this as one where they are concerned with students’ overall wellness and with the financial, family, emotional, and personal needs and interests that extend beyond their academic schedules and program requirements. They emphasize the importance of “meeting the students where they are” and responding to whatever arises that might interfere with a student’s academic and personal well-being. To a large extent, these programs see themselves as human service providers, as much as academic or career advisors.

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*[A student] can go to financial aid for that, or the learning center for tutoring – but who do you go to, to say, “My boyfriend’s in jail and I don’t want him to see my child,” . . . you know, the stuff that has nothing to do with academics but gets in the way of academic success?
(Maryann Haytmanek, NCC)*



Most programs describe the comprehensive support services they provide as “wrap-around” or “one-stop” services; they offer case management and coordination in addition to personalized support, with a goal of minimizing the number of offices students have to visit for help. Though they can not directly provide everything that the campus and community has available, they can at least help students navigate these other services and systems, and provide personalized referrals. This centralized and personalized approach is particularly important for single mothers with compressed time on campus. In smaller programs, there may be one staff person who coordinates the program, makes the referrals, and provides direct student support. In larger programs, there is more role differentiation and specialization. In all cases, students are assigned a specific counselor to maintain relationship consistency and a single point of contact.



All describe a strengths-based approach to student problem-solving, centered on encouraging students to discover their talents and potential, and cheering them on to success. When students falter in their confidence, worn down by a financial or family crisis, program staff help them to remain emotionally resilient as they look for solutions. Counselors remind students of their reasons for returning to school: their goals for themselves and their children's future.

Cristeen Crouchet, Director of Workforce Development at CPTC, explains that staff offer the type of support and encouragement that a traditional student might receive from parents: "We celebrate and praise student success and are the ones that put the A-plus essay on the board." At the same time, she stresses the importance of holding students accountable when they are late or do not keep a commitment, being direct with students about the need for improvement, coming from a place of love and compassion: "It's better they hear from us in a protected place, than from an employer, who has no tolerance and now you're terminated."

Addressing Role Strain

Over and over, interviewees observe that while academic challenges and financial issues are significant, the personal and emotional issues related to family crises, mental health, domestic violence trauma, and role strain are the greatest inhibitors to single mothers' progress and success. Some have unsupportive family members, partners or former partners, who cause a great deal of emotional strain. Threatened by the student's educational success, they may put her down or actively undermine her efforts. This is another reason why the student-counselor relationship is so central and powerful. This perspective was echoed by program and student interviewees alike.

Single mother students are pulled in many different directions, juggling family, school, and work responsibilities, and may feel that they are failing at all of it. They speak of squeezing every minute they can out of their time on campus while their children are in school or daycare so that they can put schoolwork aside and focus on their children's needs when they get home. Comparing her experience to students who do not have children, Rachel Losinger, a student at PCC, explains:



Having kids definitely makes it harder because I can't just come home and start working on my homework and stuff. I have to come home and take care of them. Because, you know, if it was just me, I wouldn't care about not having three meals a day or whatever. But since I have other people depending on me, I have to make sure that I go to the grocery store, and things like that. And then even when I am taking care of me, I'm feeling guilty about it.

Some program staff described addressing "mom guilt" head on with students by reminding them how their educational success will impact their children in the long run. They discuss strategies like doing their homework alongside their children and in between classes, and using their time more efficiently.



MCC student Gabriella Storey explains that at the beginning she felt panicked and didn't know how she would do all her schoolwork and be a mom, but she has learned how to manage her time more effectively and feels that being a student has “built up my confidence and my self-esteem, so I'm actually a better parent because I'm not as depressed.” Being in school herself has helped her relate to her daughter, student-to-student, and she says, “I'm connecting with my daughter in a different way now.” Like Gabriella, other students described connecting with their children as students and their enthusiasm in sharing what they are learning.

Participation Requirements

Most of the programs include some mandatory activities in which enrolled students are required to participate. In some cases, the requirements are determined by the funding source. Students participating in SNAP- or TANF-funded programs have specific program participation requirements, including regular submission of attendance documentation, typically collected by the program counselor. Documentation collection, then, can serve the dual purpose of a regularly scheduled counseling check-in as well as a compliance requirement.

Some programs require participants to attend a set number of individual counseling sessions, workshops or group meetings. For example, SAC requires individual meetings at specific “touch points” in the semester, when students are 15, 30, and 45 hours into the program. AHC requires two counseling appointments per semester that typically focus on academics — short- and long-term educational goal setting and planning. JSCC's Single Mom Welding Program describes its comprehensive programs as two-tiered, with required soft skills, goal setting and resume-writing classes in addition to welding training. MCCNH's Project STRIDE requires attendance in a weekly facilitated peer-support group. FCC's Project Step Forward requires a Student Seminar for students who are new to college.

Creating a welcoming, open-door atmosphere where students can drop in to speak to a counselor and get a sympathetic ear, words of encouragement, or help with problem-solving, as needed, is a priority for all the programs, regardless of participation requirements.

Student Engagement and Peer Support

I'm striving just through this term to be a better person and to be an example for the other women. This one woman who went through a major loss with her husband after 17 years the other day said, “You know sometimes I hear your voice and I think, ‘What would Tiffany do?’” I thought, well, that means everything in the world to me. Just getting that other validation from women. I need women in my life and I want that relationship that I'm building with them. I want that connection. (Tiffany Bailey, student, PCC)





Some programs, like PCC's Project Independence, JSCC, Parents Lead, and Project STRIDE at MCCNH, are cohort models, where students attend group meetings, classes, and informational and skill-building workshops together. These activities are often required of participants and provide opportunities for single mother students to develop a sense of community and peer support. Many programs that are not formally cohort-based also provide opportunities for community-building through peer-support groups, parenting clubs, and skill-building and informational workshops on topics such as personal success, career exploration, and goal setting.

Some programs also encourage students to participate in campus-wide activities such as student government, clubs, and campus work-study (required in some cases). Respondents emphasize the importance of nurturing peer support and community among students with common experiences as parents. At the same time, some feel it is equally important that single mothers see themselves as full members of the broader college community and not second-class citizens because they're enrolled in a specialized program or attached to a specific source of funding.

Single mother students interviewed described the benefit of work-study roles in the library, food pantry, and women's center. From these vantage points they can interact with and assist other students who are parents, but not enrolled in student parent programs. Some of the programs recruit students to serve as peer mentors and advocates to other, newer students, and in some cases (MCCNH and MCTC) work-study funding is used to support the peer-mentoring positions. This can be especially valuable for new students entering the program, because student mentors with more experience help them to identify campus and community resources. In some cases, they introduce the staff to resources previously unfamiliar to them.

Individual Advocacy



Students can do the academics. It's just that life blew up. Something happened — a surgery or a sick child or something like that — so a lot of my advocacy centers around advocating with faculty. (Lori Wayson, HCC)

Another role that student support staff play is liaison and advocate. They will intervene, for example, when a student is having trouble meeting a deadline or has missed many classes because of parenting responsibilities. They may speak directly with the faculty on the student's behalf, as well as coach the student to contact the faculty and advocate for herself. They emphasize that being in a special program shows initiative and motivation that faculty should recognize and respect. Program staff also advocate on behalf of students with other college departments and community agencies, for instance, when a student encounters a problem with financial aid or TANF eligibility verification.



ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Eligibility for single mother services and financial supports typically requires that a participant's academic performance meet the standard of good academic standing set by each college. Further, students receiving Pell grants must demonstrate satisfactory academic progress in credit-bearing courses. While our review of the literature indicated that single parents were likely to have academic issues due to interrupted education or poor schooling related to poverty, the need for intensive academic support or remediation was not emphasized as a primary concern by interview respondents. Staff and students interviewed underscored the need for available supports to be flexibly scheduled and available for students with limited time on campus.

As discussed in the section on student supports, many of the student support staff are trained academic advisors who assist students with education planning. For example, CPTC's and ACC's counselors are academic advisors who provide education planning and holistic support. While, functionally, the academic advising is similar to what is provided to all students, the advisors working in specialized student parent programs recognize the scheduling challenges and needs for flexibility and time-efficiency. Again, taking a holistic approach, as many do, means that they address academic issues in the context of students' challenges inside and outside of the classroom and help them remediate both so that they can meet their academic goals.

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I just try to help them problem-solve how to time-manage: "How about doing your homework with your kids? Or what about the half hour you have between classes here . . . what are you doing during that half hour? How about doing some more of your homework or studying then?" It's just kind of problem-solving how they can be more efficient and release some of that guilt they may be having. (Kelly Boswell, NCCC)



To a great extent, the featured programs rely on and leverage academic support services available to any student, such as study groups and labs, academic tutoring, coaching, and mentoring provided by student peers or faculty and staff. Some programs supplement what is available campus-wide through more personalized, flexible, and accessible services, such as drop-in tutoring, or cohort-based college success skills classes. Drop-in tutoring that is available in family-friendly spaces, as it is, for example, at LAVC and AHC, is especially valuable to single mothers.



Acceleration

In our review of the literature, we found increasing evidence for the value of acceleration strategies that move students more quickly towards credentials and completion, and help students avoid using time, tuition, and financial aid in noncredit developmental courses. Similarly, the literature review underscored the importance of effective advising on course selection that enables students to take the shortest path to a certificate or degree.

For the most part, where acceleration strategies are available at the profiled colleges, they are available to eligible students campus-wide and not geared specifically to student parents. These models include guided pathways, developmental education reform, paired courses, supported college-level courses, integrated education and training, credit for prior learning, and short-term workforce certifications.

For example, in addition to traditional semester-length courses, AHC offers eight-week fast-track courses in the fall, spring, and summer semesters. Students can take some of their general education requirements over the five-week winter intersession. AHC and MCCNH also offer college-level English and math courses with co-requisite and concurrent support courses, so that students progress more quickly towards their goals without losing time in developmental education. MCTC offers integrated basic skills and occupational training through Accelerating Opportunity KY (AOKY). This program enables eligible adult students to enroll in career and technical education programs while preparing for the GED test, so that they do not have to delay their career goals until after they earn a high school credential.

Online and Blended/Hybrid Learning

Online and blended learning can provide students with some schedule flexibility and reduce their travel time and expenses. Some colleges, like CPTC, are adding more hybrid class formats to the catalogue. At the same time, while online learning can reduce time required on campus, it can be challenging for single mothers to carve out quiet time and space at home for studying. Even when their children are in care or school, single mothers face multiple demands and distraction at home — housework, food preparation, etc. Some may not be able to afford internet service in their homes and need to stay on campus for online study or seek other venues with public internet access. Furthermore, online study can be isolating to single mothers who can benefit from a sense of belonging to a cohort and engaging in peer support and campus resources.

Parents Lead at FCC is piloting a model of cohort-based hybrid learning that seeks to maximize the advantages and minimize the liabilities of online learning for single mothers. Students come to campus just one evening or day each week for the face-to-face portions of their courses and that day remains a constant every semester, affording students longer-term schedule predictability and stability around which they can plan childcare and work, etc. The remaining portion of the coursework is completed online. Building online learning skills and confidence is a theme of the Parents Lead English 101 class so that they are prepared for the unique challenges that students new to online learning frequently encounter.



College Success and Study Skills

The literature indicates that transition programs can play an important role in acculturating adult students to the academic environment and bolstering their academic skills, college knowledge, and self-confidence. Of the programs profiled, Project Independence at PCC most closely fits the description of a college preparatory program. Students earn their first seven credits in courses such as career and life planning, computer literacy, overcoming math anxiety, and college survival and success; these are geared towards building their confidence, student identity, and study skills before they tackle the demands of a full academic course load. Many profiled programs supplement their academic coursework and workforce training classes with student success workshops designed to build student confidence, time management, goal setting, and study skills.

Tutor and Mentor Support

Many programs provide academic coaches, mentors, or tutors directly, while others leverage those available campus-wide. The CCP KEYS program has an academic mentor for both English and math on staff. The program assistant at Elaine Mareb Center at HCC helps students with computer skills they need for online learning. AHC has drop-in tutoring available at the EOPS/CARE space. One AHC student explained how important the drop-in tutoring is to her, because, although tutoring is available at the academic support center, it has to be scheduled in advance and she described this as one more appointment that she misses because of a family commitment.

A tutor, and sometimes an academic counselor, are available in the LAVC study lounges. These lounges are spaces where student parents can bring their children and both adults and children can receive homework help from a tutor. Student parents can meet with the academic counselor on site while children are playing or doing their homework.

Early Alert Systems

Many colleges use early alert systems implemented via student enrollment and retention management software. These systems enable faculty to document attendance and performance concerns that then trigger alerts to advising, student support, or other departments established in the system settings. A number of program staff interviewed indicated that the systems are set up to include them in these early alerts so that they can follow up with the affected students in their programs.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS PREPARATION

Postsecondary education has the potential to yield family-sustaining wages for single mothers who complete a credential. Short-term certificate programs are valuable in leading to employment in a field of interest, but there is less evidence that they provide sufficient income gain for a family-sustaining wage (Farrell & Martinson, 2017); ideally, they would be promoted as the first step in a career pathway (Taliaferro, 2018). There is tremendous



variation in credentials, their value in the labor market, and the earnings they yield. A certificate may be sufficient to enter a viable career pathway in one region, while in another, an associate's degree may be required to enter a similar occupation.

Given that the primary motivation of many single mothers is to improve their family's economic conditions, programs need to help them identify education and career pathways leading to high-demand jobs with wages that can result in family economic sustainability and mobility. Single mothers have limited time to invest in education, but expediency must be balanced with the assurance that the credentials will enable them to increase their earnings, or, at a minimum, start them on a career pathway with opportunities for additional training and advancement.

Community colleges are charged with engaging local and regional employers and workforce systems to design programs that meet the needs of local business and industry and align with high-demand and high-growth occupations. While high demand and high growth may ensure that there are job openings when a student completes training, these indicators do not guarantee that the wages lead to self-sufficiency without additional training and advancement. Career advising, to help single mothers make well-informed education and career choices, is critical. The curriculum should equip them with specific occupational training as well as broader, transferable employability and lifelong learning skills needed for continued advancement and the changeability of the 21st century workforce.

Career Advising and Coaching

Career advising and coaching are typically embedded into the support component, in varying degrees. In many cases, students have to be enrolled in specific types of workforce or career and technical education programs in order to be eligible for these specialized supports. At a minimum, most programs help students identify education and career goals and help them stay focused on making progress towards those goals. Many programs also provide workshops on career exploration and career development topics. Programs that are specifically geared towards workforce education, career and technical education, and employment outcomes describe career exploration and decision-making as a more explicit and central component of their programs.

Most of the respondents describe offering career advising to some degree within their overall advisement and support. Programs use their college's career services and job placement office and, in some cases, the local American Job Center (One Stop Career Center) when housed on campus. JSCC's welding program for single mothers begins with a goal setting and resume writing component. SAC's SWANS includes the Mi CASA Career Transitions Lab. PCC's Project Independence includes a two-credit Career and Life Planning course and a one-credit Values Clarification course. AHC students may take a three- or one-credit Personal Career Exploration course to satisfy a general education requirement. These types of courses provide students with opportunities for self-reflection and information, and tools to make informed education and career plans and develop job-search skills. CCP recruits faculty and staff to mentor students and matches them based on the student's career goal.



Traci Simmons, Associate Dean of Student Development at PCC, emphasizes the importance of providing rigorous career exploration and planning to help single mothers develop realistic short-term goals. She suggests that noncredit vocational training leading to employment in jobs with higher earning potential can make a significant difference to single mothers and their families. Well-informed career decisions can yield economic benefits and set single mothers on a path to future education and advancement.

Kiri Villa, AHC CARES, describes education and career planning as an explicit focus of the required student–advisor meetings. Advisors help students revisit and revise the plans so that they align with student interests and the credentials they can earn within the time they have remaining on cash assistance, and the two-year degrees available at AHC. The college is beginning to implement Roadmaps to Success, a statewide guided pathways initiative to redesign curricular pathways and support services that help students explore, select, and succeed in an educational pathway.

The Family Resource Center (FRC) at LAVC is collaborating with the college’s Workforce Development Department on a project called Strengthening Working Families. Now the FRC offers their specialized family support services to participants in noncredit Workforce Academies, short-term WIOA-funded training in high-demand occupations with immediate goals for job placement.

Advisors interviewed enthusiastically described the ways they work to inspire, encourage, and build students’ confidence to set ambitious career goals and help them put the support systems in place to achieve them. But sometimes they advise students to scale back their goals or timelines and take into consideration the multiple stressors in their lives. Many are familiar with the dilemma of female students who wish to be nurses without fully understanding the duration and rigor of this undertaking. Advisors present students with information about shorter-term healthcare occupations that they might pursue in order to build a more incremental path towards nursing. Patricia Bedford, College Counselor at MCCNH, describes the dilemma this way:

They usually have a passion. . . . I had a student interested in biology; she was just about homeless with three children and she didn’t have any money. I said, “Look, you would do better not going to school right now. We have a medical assistant program that’s phenomenal right now, in our state. You get hired by a medical center for \$10 per hour, they pay you to go to school for eight weeks, then they put you in a medical assistant job with full benefits. You’d be better off doing that now and then coming back to school for your dream job when your children aren’t so young.”

”



Work-Study as Workforce Preparation

Work-study is a strategy used by some of the programs to provide financial assistance and new workforce experiences that prepare single mother students for further employment. Some of the featured programs offer students paid work-study positions as peer leaders, mentors, and office assistants in their programs.

Work Ready Kentucky provides eligible students with paid internships that satisfy their TANF 20–30 hour per week work requirement while they continue their education towards a credential. The internships are intentionally designed to help students gain meaningful work experience, job training, and employability skills aligned with their interests and field of study, not merely to give them work hours to remain in compliance. Internships may be on- or off-campus, so developing relationships with employers, who can provide meaningful internship placements, is key to the program's success. Brie Bickley, MCTC's Ready to Work Coordinator, explains that a student with internship experience can "enter the workforce right away. And if they are already working at a hospital, for example, that student already has six months or a year of work experience and can be hired through that hospital into the same job."

Employer partners are vital to the Career Pathways program at NAC because they provide placements for the work-based learning component of the program. Employers come to campus to speak to students, and these visits give them firsthand understanding of the students and the program. They understand that, in addition to the occupational training, students have training in employability skills, like teamwork, budgeting, and emotional intelligence, which is attractive to employers. Some students have been subsequently hired by the companies where they interned.

Programs of Study and Job Placement

The emphasis on employment and career pathways, type of credentials targeted (credit or noncredit, short-term certificate versus two-year associate's degree), and duration and time to completion varies among the featured programs.

To a large extent, primary funding sources determine the goals of the program and/or training options from which students may choose. Programs leveraging TANF, SNAP, and Perkins funds are typically shaped by those funding streams. This means that they must verify that the training programs available to funding-eligible students are aligned with high-demand, high-growth sectors of the local and regional economy and respond to employer skill needs. In cases where Perkins funding is used, the programs of study must be Perkins-eligible, credit-bearing Career and Technical Education.

The performance metrics related to time-to-credential completion and employment may also determine whether students will have the option of enrolling in a training that extends beyond a specific number of weeks or months. State policy may also determine the options for training from which students may choose. There are parameters based on their state's

work first requirements and whether and what type of educational activities can be counted towards the required work or work-related activities requirements. The duration of a training program, e.g., a short-term noncredit certificate versus a two-year associate's degree, may depend on the state policy as well as the number of months the student has left on cash assistance.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Colleges assist students with their financial needs in several ways and access a variety of sources to do so. Some programs are designed to be tuition-free. Some provide direct cash assistance for specific costs; these are often programs designed for TANF recipients. Colleges may have connections with scholarships for single parents. Many colleges maintain emergency funds. Some programs offer a food pantry or snacks onsite or may loan books or laptops. Work-study is an important option for students, allowing them to work on campus or in a field related to their career interest; for some programs, this is a core element of their approach to supporting students. Some programs, on their own or in partnership with a community organization, provide financial education and coaching. All of these make a crucial difference to single mothers' ability to continue their education.

Staff expertise and connections with college offices and community partners are essential to taking advantage of all possible sources. Careful record-keeping is also needed to track use of available supports. A flexible approach to funding is necessary if colleges are committed to supporting all students, including those who are undocumented immigrants or otherwise ineligible for government aid. Staff may also actively seek private donations or grant funding to benefit their students through such vehicles as scholarships and emergency funds. College foundations are an important vehicle for flexible funding to meet needs.

Crucial Nature of Financial Assistance

Our literature review indicated that the decrease in value of the Pell grant relative to college costs resulted in the need for most low-income students to work while attending college. More than a third of Pell recipients are parents. Further, we found that even a modest additional grant can be a crucial support (Brock & Richburg-Hayes, 2006).

Our interview respondents also emphasized that a small amount of money can make the difference between completing a program and dropping out. An anecdote from Christine McLain, Career Counselor (JSCC), exemplifies what we found in the literature review and interviews. She described a situation in which a student, lacking the money to fix a light on her car, was pulled over by the police and given a ticket. Unable to pay the ticket, she avoided going to court. When she applied for her pharmacy license for the state of Alabama, she was unable to get it because of her court issue.

Similarly, Tria Jones, a nursing student at CCP, was stymied in her ability to buy all the items for the uniform needed for her clinical and was only saved by an anonymous donation from another student.



Brenda Fortson, CTE Support Services Coordinator at MCC, related the story of a student who almost dropped out just before she was due to complete her program because she was short on funds for books. Fortunately, the program was able to intervene with the \$90 needed.

Cash Assistance in Program Design

Programs that are designed specifically for TANF recipients may include cash assistance as part of the program design. For example, students in California's CARE program are TANF recipients, primarily single mothers. They receive a cash grant for education and childcare costs of about \$300–\$400 per semester, as well as gas cards, book vouchers, and monthly cafeteria vouchers.

Similarly, Ready to Work students in Kentucky receive supportive service funds through TANF for transportation needs, such as car insurance or repairs. Exam and test fees are also allowable costs, e.g., tests for nursing students or GED tests. They can access \$1,500 in supportive service funds annually, and receive an additional \$400 clothing allowance for an interview or job placement, e.g., uniforms for a clinical. Students also receive a childcare subsidy. Ready to Work staff help students to access benefits.

The KEYS program in Pennsylvania provides TANF recipients with a book voucher for up to \$1,000 and transportation funds that can be used for bus passes, a gas card, or a car repair. In common with other TANF-funded programs, in order to access the funds, students must fill out regular time sheets and make their grades available. They also have the possibility of earning an incentive card, e.g., for turning in time sheets or going to the learning center.

Emergency Funds

Many colleges maintain emergency funds to help students (not necessarily single mothers) with unexpected situations. These funds allow them to respond quickly and flexibly to sudden needs which may include such varied examples as a housing deposit, rent, moving costs, emergency childcare, transportation, utilities, CPR classes, exam fees, or a prep course for board exams. For Delia Morrero at NCC, access to an emergency fund meant she was able to replace her broken glasses, without which she could not have continued in school. When emergency funds are provided through a grant or donations, however, funding may not be sustained indefinitely.

Transportation, Supplies, and Food Assistance

Assistance with transportation and with food came up most often as needs. Transportation is a particularly challenging issue for single parents because they not only have to get to college themselves, but they also have to drop off and pick up their children at daycare or school and, with older children, shuttle them to various afterschool activities. The high cost of housing in the vicinity of a college may mean that student parents have to live far away from campus. Debra Huie, a student at NAC, found assistance with gas expenses a highly important benefit because she has to drive 120 miles roundtrip to school. Some colleges provide subsidized bus passes.



CCP's KEYS program provides snacks such as fruit, granola bars, and soup throughout the day. Once a month, they provide a hot breakfast, which is very popular. The college is also planning to plant a vegetable garden. When students have food emergencies, staff can give them supermarket gift certificates. For Tria Jones, a mother of four, food assistance at CCP in the form of lunch vouchers or snack packs was essential to her ability to continue in the nursing program.

LAVC works with a campus program called Helping Hands, which organizes a twice-weekly food pantry in the center of campus with fresh organic produce. The Family Resource Center is a satellite location for the food pantry, and staff wrote grants for the funding.

We also really have a lot of food to give away. We have a refrigerator always stocked so that students can come in and just make a sandwich or have a cup of coffee. We actually have a kitchen in the Family Resource Center. . . . One of our student workers does the weekly shopping. . . . And I think that's a big part of why students are comfortable coming and just hanging out here. (Marni Roosevelt, FRC Director, LAVC)



Some colleges provide textbook libraries or laptop loan programs that allow students to borrow materials for the full semester, rather than the usual short-term loans. Some provide school supplies like paper, pencils, and highlighters, as well as tools and uniforms, if their program of study requires them. They may also cover state licensing tests.

In some cases, students organize to assist their peers. NAC's Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) program has a student leadership/peer-support group that does fundraising. They award part of the funds to community groups, but part is provided to other students at the college who have emergency needs. They consider it a pay-it-forward model. At MCCNH, nursing students worked with program staff to conduct a diaper drive.

Financial Education

When asked what programs or services she would like to see added, one student suggested that teaching women how to budget could help them get out of poverty. CPTC does just that, working with the United Way of Pierce County in an initiative they call Center for Strong Families. They are in the second year of a pilot project to provide a financial professional to help their TANF-recipient students create personalized budgets. Similarly, MCTC has a strong relationship with the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which provides financial education and microsloans to help students improve their credit scores and save money.



Work-Study

In some states, work-study is a means of providing an income to single mother students that does not count against their cash benefits and also allows them to work conveniently on campus or in a local organization or business where they can gain skills relevant to their career goals. The Ready to Work program in Kentucky invests most of its funding into work-study.

Scholarships

Program staff may develop partnerships for scholarships and assist students in accessing them. At NCC, as graduate Delia Morrero described:



New Choices taught me how to search for scholarships – where do I look for funding for school and how do I keep that funding? – and that continued for us because I graduated even with my bachelor’s with no debt. . . . Learning how to ask questions and how to say, “Okay, do you have other scholarships in your school?” – just little things that helped me get further because I learned how to ask these questions and how to do things that I had no idea were necessary.

Some colleges have established long-standing community partnerships for scholarships. SAC has partnered with the Women’s Club of San Antonio, which has provided \$10,000 for scholarships over the past eight years, and LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), which has provided half a million dollars’ worth of scholarships. Similarly, the Women’s Foundation of Mississippi provided scholarships to women students at MCC in response to a grant application. In Arkansas, there are single parent scholarships organized by county. LAVC also provides scholarships through their foundation office.

Benefits Access

In addition to providing direct assistance, colleges may help students figure out which public benefits they are entitled to and walk them through the application process. Program staff need to have training and expertise about various funding sources to be able to appropriately screen students and potential students for their eligibility for a variety of financial supports. Several respondents mentioned Single Stop on campus as a resource for eligibility screening and referral to safety net programs.

NCC had a large grant from private foundations for this purpose, administered by the Center for Law and Social Policy and the National Association of Community Colleges, from 2012 to 2014; the college maintained the program after the grant funding ended. The purpose of the grant was to help students access benefits such as SNAP so that they could afford to continue their education and complete their degrees. Cristeen Crouchet of CPTC also reported that they assess single mothers’ needs and eligibility for public benefits and services and give them a “warm handoff” to the relevant agencies, i.e., a specific person to see at a specific time.

CHILDCARE

Daycare is extremely expensive. I don't know how anybody affords it, so they're kind of stuck between a rock and a hard place. They don't have enough money, but they want to be able to get that degree to be more economically stable, and they have to jump through these kind of frustrating hoops. (Lori Wayson, HCC)



A primary need and potential barrier for single mother students is the need for reliable, safe, high-quality, affordable, and accessible childcare. In the literature review, we found that childcare was most frequently cited as a crucial need for single mother students, whether in a job training program or in college (Anderson & Hess, 2017; Beeler, 2016; Bober, 2017; Cerven, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2011; IWPR, 2011).

The issue is complex, however, since it is necessary to consider the ages of children (including the fact that some parents have several children of different ages), the time of classes, transportation, and funding. Some institutions offer on-campus childcare, primarily for children below school age. Some single mothers are able to rely on family members to care for their children. Some are eligible for state vouchers, though the process of obtaining them is complicated.

Childcare Funding

There are several mechanisms to pay childcare costs. For programs like KEYS in Pennsylvania and CARE in California, with students receiving assistance through TANF, the relevant state office generally pays the childcare provider. Students can select a licensed provider and make the arrangements with the office that administers childcare funding. The process may be complicated and requires regular verification of attendance and minimum class hours to qualify. Even if study time is included, students who are not full-time may have to come up with other ways of making up the hours, e.g., through work-study or volunteer work, which may add to their stress.

There are other sources of childcare resource and referral vouchers for those HCC students who do not qualify for TANF vouchers, but there are very long waiting lists. The application process is inconvenient and requires that voucher recipients identify open slots in their communities. NAC's CPI program has funds to pay for childcare during class hours for students who cannot access other assistance.

CCAMPIS (Childcare Access Means Parents in School), a federal grant, is one source of funding for on-campus childcare. After a period of decline, CCAMPIS funding increased in the 2018 budget; some of the colleges where we interviewed staff had new or renewed CCAMPIS grants. Colleges with a CCAMPIS grant may offer childcare slots or stipends. For example, at CCP, the new grant administered by the Women's Center will provide stipends for around 40 Pell-eligible students at either the on-campus center or an accredited center near their home or work. Each college with a CCAMPIS grant may have a different



model. At PCC, for instance, the grant is only for students who have completed at least 24 credits. Some on-campus childcare centers that are not fully subsidized may offer a sliding fee scale. Private funds can be tapped for some limited assistance. At SAC, students with financial need may benefit from a scholarship provided by United Way and administered by the SWANS program. They need to either be enrolled full-time or be working while studying part-time. Most colleges have emergency funds which can be accessed for an emergency childcare situation, such as a sick child, or even for transportation to take a child to and from a childcare provider.

A local partnership may provide the childcare resources. For example, although JSCC does not provide funding for childcare, they recruit parents from Head Start or Preschool Partners, so the students are already receiving the services.

Some single mothers rely on family or a neighbor to provide childcare. This can be a considerable advantage in several ways even if the students need to pay the family or community member. It may be the most affordable option if a student does not have access to a subsidy.



I'm also blessed with a supportive family. My parents are close, so they help out a lot. Like, if I can't make it back, if my kids need to be picked up for something, I've usually got somebody that I can count on and I know that's a huge, huge blessing. (Debra Huie, student, NAC)

Those students who are able to secure slots in on-campus childcare centers for their young children benefit from several advantages: high-quality care, proximity to the child during class time, a chance to make connections with other student parents, some opportunities for sliding scale fees or subsidies, and an opportunity to be connected to services.

Childcare on Campus

Several of the colleges in our report have an on-campus childcare center. Some are lab schools where the college's child development students are trained, while others are external programs (Head Start or private centers) located on campus. Those students who are able to secure slots in these centers for their young children benefit from several advantages: high-quality care, proximity to the child during class time, a chance to make connections with other student parents, some opportunities for sliding scale fees or subsidies, and an opportunity to be connected to services. Although this is rare, some campus childcare centers, like those at LAVC and FCC, do offer evening hours for students taking evening classes.

These on-campus centers are not ideal for all parents, however. Students often prefer childcare closer to their home because they can pick up their child after class and go directly home or because the childcare may be closer to their other children's schools. It may also be easier for them to arrange for transportation by family or friends in the neighborhood, particularly if the college is far from home.



Campus childcare centers may also have long waiting lists for their limited slots. Several respondents reported that few of the students they serve use on-campus centers whether because of the hours, location, limited slots, cost, or age of their children.

School-Age Children

Some of the respondents reported that many or most of the students they work with have school-age children. LAVC has paid special attention to the needs of parents with school-age children. Their CCAMPIS grant was designed specifically to fund a classroom at the on-campus child development center for school-age kids along with student parent programs. In addition, they offer drop-in childcare for school-age children, which is particularly important when the public schools are closed but the college is open. Faculty appreciate the LAVC Family Resource Center because the alternative during public school vacations was to have the children sitting in the college classroom or hallways, or have parents missing their classes. Afterschool programs at public schools or community organizations also make a difference, especially if they provide transportation.

Childcare Referrals

Programs generally have staff who make referrals to local childcare providers. In the case of programs in which students are TANF recipients, the referrals may be through the state office. For example, CARE students at AHC have a Welfare-to-Work plan and get referrals from their county social-service worker. The county office pays for childcare. CARE staff also refer mothers to an agency which keeps a list of all the licensed childcare facilities and providers in the area. Similarly, at MCTC, the Ready to Work coordinator keeps a resource list of childcare options in the surrounding counties and gives contact information to students. Unfortunately, in rural areas there may not be many options.

Christine McLain of JSCC emphasized the importance of referring students to high-quality community programs, so that the children are “not just sitting in front of a television, they’re also going to school.”

Many factors must be taken into account when assisting students with childcare needs, including schedules, cost, children’s ages, location, and program quality. The colleges in this study have figured out a number of mechanisms to assist single parent students with this basic need, but many gaps persist.

DEDICATED SPACE AND FAMILY EVENTS

Everything that I needed to come and do, whether it was meet with an academic counselor or pop in for a workshop, everything I was able to do, I was able to bring my children with me.
(Amber Angel, former student parent and currently staff at LAVC)





Once a year they have a big thing on campus for the whole community. . . . They show all of the science experiments and they have all kinds of stuff and it's open for everybody, so I bring the kids to that. It's cool for them to come on campus and see what it's like. . . . They relate something cool and exciting to school. . . . and it's not like a foreign scary place. . . . They just know that they're going to go to college eventually someday. (Lisa Gutierrez, student, AHC)

A dedicated space for student parents, family-friendly space, and family events on campus are meaningful to single mothers and enormously helpful. They send a signal that the college welcomes student parents and that staff are responding to their needs. In addition, the children benefit from exposure to the college their mothers attend, helping them to understand their mother's activities and inspiring their own college aspirations.

Dedicated Space for Student Parents and Family-Friendly Space

Space is at a premium in many colleges, and programs are limited in their access to dedicated space for parents. Where this is possible, both students and staff attest to its value.

LAVC's Family Resource Center took advantage of a remarkable opportunity to build dedicated space for their program. The college president asked them to work with a developer who was required to give money to the city for childcare for low-income children. After FRC Director Marni Roosevelt participated on a committee with the developer, he ended up donating \$1.5 million to the college. The FRC gained a dedicated building next to the college's new child development center. This space allows the FRC to provide counseling, workshops, tutoring, and study rooms in a family-friendly area where parents can bring their children with them. Interns, some of them from the local high school, are brought in to watch the children while parents are studying. Children can play with each other in a mixed-age environment; older children can use the time to do their homework. This arrangement makes it much more feasible for a student parent to see a counselor, receive tutoring, or use on-campus computers.

AHC has a popular CARE Center, a dedicated space for students and their children. There is a lounge where they can relax, use computers and printers, study, and work with math tutors onsite. There is also a children's nook with toys, child-sized furniture, and a television. Lisa Gutierrez related that the CARE Center makes her feel welcome as a student parent at AHC. She appreciates the opportunity to meet other students with whom she has a lot in common. Her children also enjoy the opportunity to go to the center with her.

Although they may not have spaces where parents can bring children when they study, some of the colleges in our study have spaces for students to go when they need to decompress. For example, the Elaine Marieb Center at HCC is a place where nontraditional women students can meet, use computers and printers, relax, take a quick nap on a couch, and generally relieve their stress.



Events for Families

When a program is able to organize events for families, this serves several purposes. It is a chance for students to connect with other single parents; to have fun and de-stress; to show their children where they study and make the college environment familiar to them; and to receive goods or activities at no cost, alleviating financial stress.

Several programs do family events connected to holidays, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Some, like NAC, also offer movie screenings, face-painting, and other children’s activities. Kelly Boswell of NCCC explained that she organizes family activities because of her own personal experience of being a single mother, remembering how bringing her children with her to such events created a level of comfort that was important both to her and them.

At AHC, staff organize annual events for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The CARE turkey event, now in its tenth year, provides students with a turkey and all the trimmings; funds to support the event are donated by the college community.

AHC also has an event called the Angel Tree. On paper snowflakes, students request gifts for their children for Christmas; students, staff, and faculty pick a snowflake and donate the gift. This is combined with a holiday event featuring treats, cocoa, and crafts. Student Lisa Gutierrez confirmed how important the Angel Tree has been to her and her family; the children received gifts that she was not financially able to provide. At MCCNH, a student club whose members are single parents themselves organizes holiday events for families.

Family events provide an opportunity for students to connect with other single parents; to have fun and de-stress; to show their children where they study and make the college environment familiar to them; and to receive goods or activities at no cost, alleviating financial stress.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

I have a family coach. I’m just really learning to set aside my pride and ask for services. I’ve always known about the resources. My husband supported us and I didn’t really need them. Now I need them, and I’m trying to not have pride. Just utilize what’s out there for me and then pass it on to other women. (Tiffany Bailey, PCC)



Single mother students have complex lives. This complexity is reflected in the extensive web of services and supports that programs weave together to anticipate and respond to whatever challenges the student and her family might encounter. Partnerships enable programs and students to tap into diverse funding sources, specialized resources, and professional expertise that it is rarely found in any one agency, campus, or program. Staff in single parent programs, then, must be expert in outreach and partnership development; they must learn which agencies and programs provide what, how to identify students who might be eligible, and how to best refer them. Through such partnerships, staff have at the ready referrals to housing agencies, food banks, multiservice centers, mental health agencies, childcare centers and childcare assistance resources, dress-for-success, homeless shelters and transitional housing, domestic violence and rape crisis centers, legal services, and community foundations.



Many staff are personally and professionally involved in community coalitions and nonprofit boards of human service, domestic violence, and anti-poverty groups. Through their participation, they gain deep awareness of a host of resources, bring visibility to their campus program, and pave the way for informal and formal collaborations.

Respondents describe varying degrees of partnership formality and depth. For example, some are built on MOU's (Memoranda of Understanding), others on simply getting to know what is available and knowing, by name, who to contact when needed.

What is clear, across the interviews, is that the programs rely heavily on partnerships with other programs and departments across their campus, and with community organizations and state agencies. The resourceful and creative ways that they collaborate to leverage resources to benefit single mother students are impressive and mirror the breadth and depth of the best community-based multiservice centers. For example, the KEYS Program at PCC partners with a food-distribution organization that enables students to use their food-access card to shop for fresh food at reduced prices; MCTC has developed a close relationship with the Women's Crisis Center for students experiencing domestic violence; and CTE Support Services at MCC has formal referral agreements with two local mental health agencies, referring students there who are in crisis, suicidal, or grieving the death of a family member.

All respondents identified partnership development as an integral staff activity that occurs both organically and deliberately over time. SAC SWANS has a staff role dedicated to outreach and developing community partnerships. Many respondents are personally and professionally involved in community coalitions and nonprofit boards of human service, domestic violence, and anti-poverty groups. Through their participation, they gain deep awareness of a host of resources, bring visibility to their campus program, and pave the way for informal and formal collaborations.

In all cases, gaining an insider's view of the intake, referral, and eligibility screening systems used by partner organizations, especially those administering specialized funding streams, is a key return on the investment of staff time used to build informal contact networks and formal collaborations.

Personalized Referrals



... because of our community involvement and because there's a coalition of all the nonprofits working together, when we make a referral, it's a true referral, meaning that they know who they are going to talk to at housing. They know we've already called and said, "So-and-so is coming down for such-and-such services," and so they're expecting the person. (Rebecca Martin, Director, Career Pathways Initiative, NAC)



One goal of outreach and partnership development is to establish a network of personal and organizational contacts that enable staff to make what some call “a warm-hand-off” or “personalized referral.” Handing a student a slip of paper or business card and sending her off to make a call would hardly count as a referral to the programs featured here. Instead, they aim for a personalized referral where they can tell the student who to call, what the appointment will entail and that they will personally call them to let them know the student will be coming.

Personalized referrals can help ease a student’s anxiety about seeking help from an unknown source because a trusted advisor communicates their confidence in the agency and individual to whom they’re referring the student.

Recruitment Sources

Programs build relationships with community agencies to assist with outreach and recruitment to identify potential students who fit the eligibility criteria and could benefit from the supports offered to single mothers. For example, JSCC recruits from Head Start and can be confident, then, that childcare is in place for these potential students. ACC outreach has led to a partnership that will enable residents of a local affordable housing development agency to receive services from the Support Center upon their enrollment at ACC. SWANS at SAC receives referrals from a local housing authority to serve students living in transitional housing.

AHC and other TANF-funded programs collaborate with staff at county social services and TANF-administering agencies for referrals. Direct contact between program and agency staff, and periodic updates and check-ins, ensure the lines of communication remain open for referrals and support.

Internal recruitment requires program staff to develop partnerships with other departments on campus and make personal connections with faculty, faculty advisors, and staff in admissions, advising, and financial aid. Some present the program at new student orientation and visit classrooms to speak about the program. When faculty and staff are familiar with the program and equipped with personal staff contact information to share with students, then they can help eligible students find their way to additional support services provided by specialized programs for student parents. These internal referral systems illustrate the depth, reach, and rootedness of student parent programs in the broader institutions and require outreach, personal relationships, and partnerships to maintain the program’s visibility, especially when factoring in faculty and staff turnover. An outcome of internal partnerships includes programming student retention software systems such as Starfish and Qualtrics to trigger referrals to student parent programs.



Institutional Capacity

The preceding section describes the programs and services available for single mothers among the colleges profiled in this paper, with a focus on counseling and advising, academic supports, financial support, childcare, workforce preparation, and partnerships. Through our inquiry we identified these practices to be those most commonly adopted and essential elements of programming to address the needs of single mothers, despite variation in design and scale of implementation. That is not to say that they are sufficiently resourced or address all the needs of all single mother students, but they are practices supported by research and embraced by professional wisdom.

Programs serving single mothers do not operate in isolation from their broader institutions. They assist their students in navigating and obtaining a host of institutional resources, systems, and expertise operating campus-wide, such as financial aid, academic support, and college foundation-funded food pantries and emergency aid. At the same time, it was difficult to get a sense of the broader institutional strategy and capacity for supporting single mother students. Further, the task of identifying and recruiting single mothers to offer targeted support seems to fall primarily on the small numbers of staff in the specialized programs who have limited capacity to be at every potential recruitment event or engage other faculty and staff in their efforts.¹

This section primarily addresses institutional policies and practices, versus program-specific services, which reflect an intentional and cohesive approach that promotes widespread awareness of and sustained attention to the needs of single mothers and student parents. These include data collection and analysis, strategic and comprehensive outreach, faculty and staff professional development, and advocacy on behalf of single mothers. We were unable to identify examples of substantial or widespread institutional policies and practices in these key areas. However, these strategies are vital if institutions are to scale specialized supports to reach all student parents in need and warrant further attention and development.

¹It is important to note that, in most cases, we interviewed just one or two people at each institution — primarily staff and administrators with direct responsibility for coordination and management of specialized programs for single mothers. We cannot claim to have deep knowledge of each of these institutions.



DATA COLLECTION

A recommendation gleaned from our literature review was for institutions to collect more complete data on single mother student demographics, enrollments, and completion rates, and to conduct an assessment of the resources they provide to inform the development of supportive programs, partnerships, and policy. With a few exceptions, the colleges and programs featured in this report do not routinely collect data on the parenting status of students. As a result, statistics on enrollment and completion by single mothers is incomplete, and data may be lacking to evaluate programs and to demonstrate the need and value of programs to potential funders. In addition, the lack of information on parenting status at entry hampers program recruitment efforts.

Defining and Identifying Single Mother Students

Some respondents contended that it is problematic to define a single mother. They felt that varying levels of family support created different realities for students. A single mother may be never married, divorced, or widowed; she may be living with a partner or close family member or an extended family; there are also same-sex couples who are not married. Situations also vary according to the ages of the children. One program mentioned that some women may be in the process of regaining custody of their children. A student's parenting status may also change during her college trajectory.

Other respondents raised the issue of stigma, saying staff may feel uncomfortable posing the question to students, and students may be worried that staff would judge them negatively. Some colleges or programs do include the question of single parent status on intake forms but make it optional.

Colleges are also concerned about making their application material overly long and cumbersome. There are both technical issues and issues of staff time. They may prefer asking additional questions at a later stage, e.g., at an orientation for new students or in a survey. Survey participation can be increased with an incentive, such as a drawing for a prize. These methods do not reach all students, however.

Using Data for Program Recruitment

Despite the best efforts of staff and community partners, students and potential students are not always aware of programs and services on campus. They may only learn about a service after enrollment through a chance conversation with a staff member or fellow student. If parenting status were identified on college application forms, data would be available for staff to reach out and encourage student parents to take advantage of any special services offered at the college. Knowing the level of support for which they would be eligible might even prevent some applicants from deciding against enrolling. Those who do enroll could get information immediately to help address their specific needs.

Using Data to Track Outcomes and Evaluate Programs

Having accurate data on single mothers is important to making the case for programs focused on their needs. Setting up a data collection and analysis system requires leadership from the administration to ensure cooperation between institutional research departments and programs which serve single parents.

Programs that serve a broader population than exclusively single mothers have varied levels of data on their students' retention (fall to spring, fall to fall) and completion of a certificate or degree. Most of the interviewees were able to estimate with a high level of confidence either the percentage of single parents and/or the percentage of single mothers in their programs. In some cases, single parents made up the great majority of the participants, and very few of those were single fathers. These were generally not hard data, however.

An effort to disaggregate data on single mothers may be spurred by a funding opportunity. Some grants or scholarships may require explicit single mother status or data on parenting status. Such opportunities for funding may lead colleges to develop a system to ascertain students' parenting status. Then these markers could be used to correlate with college data on enrollment, retention, grades, and completion data, including which programs single mothers have enrolled in. Grants and scholarships may also require reports, evaluations, and follow-up data specifically on single parents or single mothers. One example is funding from a women's foundation; the funded program had to report to the foundation on the children of the single mother students and the effects of the mother's educational involvement on the children. Some programs are required by a grant to serve only single parents; they have also been required to provide detailed reports to the foundation that provided the grant or scholarships. Monitoring and evaluation data, however, are tailored to the program and grant, and are often not consistent across programs.

There are some examples of in-depth evaluations. NAC's Career Pathways Initiative was evaluated extensively by College Counts using nine years of data (College Counts, 2018). The Western New York Women's Foundation collected 10 semesters of demographic, outcome, and campus climate data on the MOMs pilot program at NCC. In both instances, the intention was to produce reports that would inform other institutions interested in similar goals and programs.

In the case of programs funded by TANF or SNAP, the relevant state agencies have extensive data on students' income, benefits, and family size. They may require individual colleges to report the number of single mother participants to the state office that coordinates the program. Pennsylvania's KEYS program, for example, has to meet performance benchmarks each year and relies on a data system to assess progress. Childcare centers on campus may ask about marital status and head of household status as part of an income determination.

We did not interview institutional research staff at the colleges, and our respondents were generally unclear what cross-tabs those staff could or do create. The numbers in some



programs are such a small percentage of the college enrollment that there may not be much interest on the college level in putting resources into disaggregating the data. There are different levels of participation, ranging from small intensive programs to drop-in services, that are open to all student parents.

Some respondents, however, told us that they were working with institutional research staff to figure out what to track and how. Some colleges are exploring the use of FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) data to obtain data on student parents. There are some limitations to these data; for example, they would not capture students who have children after completing the FAFSA. Some program staff are interested in having their college ask about student parent status once students are accepted in the college. Another issue is that community colleges generally look at three-year completion data, and it often takes adult students longer to complete, especially if they are studying part-time.

Post-program follow-up outcome data may be difficult to obtain if students move and when program staff need to concentrate their efforts on serving their current students. There is a tension between spending time on data and research and spending it on immediate direct service needs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR FACULTY AND STAFF



I'm not looking for an easier way for single moms, but to help faculty understand that they have choices about how they structure their courses. How they structure their instructional delivery. . . . Do you want your students to be successful? Well, you've got to adapt to the kind of students who are in front of you . . . and they have different lives that require different strategies for you to be successful or for them to be successful in your course. (Steven Christopher, ACC)

Our literature review indicated that institutions would better serve student parents and single mothers if they provided professional development (PD) for faculty and staff about that population to encourage a more welcoming and supportive environment (Karp, J., 2016; Gault, Noll & Reichlin, 2017). Faculty and staff PD can build their capacity to show compassion, understanding, and flexibility towards student parents and single mothers, thus reducing stigma and barriers to persistence these students experience. In addition, faculty and staff who are well-informed about resources available on campus for student parents (and any student experiencing food insecurity, housing issues, or financial crises, for example) can contribute to outreach efforts to address student needs.

In our interviews we did not find any examples of professional development that is required of, or routinely and systematically provided to, faculty and staff to increase their awareness of the issues encountered by or resources available to student parents and single mothers.



Anne Hofmann, of Parents Lead at FCC, facilitates informal brown bag lunches to engage faculty who are teaching Parents Lead courses. The faculty were initially identified because of their interest in understanding the unique barriers of student parents and their willingness to be creative and flexible without lowering standards and rigor. She uses these meetings to share information and get their feedback on what is working online and in the classroom, and to share strategies and approaches, as well as frustrations. She wants faculty to feel encouraged that “the work they’re doing matters, is cutting edge, and is recognized.”

Many faculty and staff are also working parents — even single parents — and can relate with empathy and compassion to students. But others who may have more parenting support and resources or whose children are grown (or who never had children) may fail to relate to low-income student parents on their campus. All staff and students interviewed cited numerous encounters with supportive and flexible faculty on campus. Interviewees have also encountered inflexibility and judgment of single mother students from faculty, and all agreed that PD, on a variety of topics, would be beneficial in creating a more parent-friendly campus.

First and foremost, respondents suggested PD to raise faculty and staff awareness of the strengths and contributions of single mothers on campus, as well as the challenges they face. Training on trauma-informed approaches to teaching also emerged as a specific topic. Some suggested faculty PD topics based on experiential learning activities that they themselves have participated in, such as poverty or hunger simulations, where participants manage, for some defined period, with the limited resources of SNAP and TANF, as some of their students do. Another suggested an activity where participants envision all the arrangements for herself and her children that a single mother had to make just to get to campus on a given day.

In most institutions, faculty have autonomy over how they structure their course requirements and leeway in how they manage absences, late assignments, extensions, and incompletes. Professional development that raises faculty awareness about student parent experiences can include guidance on how to write course requirements and syllabi that respond to parents with empathy and flexibility — perhaps even proactively, with language indicating that “if you are a parent, and you have a family issue on the day an assignment is due . . .” Rebecca Martin of NAC recounted a conversation with a faculty member who told her how her advocacy on behalf of single mothers has changed his approach to test administration. He asks the class if they feel that they have had time to prepare and, if a sick child has interfered with a parent’s ability to prepare, he allows them to take the test at the testing center at a later date.

The sorts of accommodations and flexibility that Title IX requires colleges to provide to women during pregnancy, childbirth, and related complications can serve as a model for how faculty might accommodate a single mother who has a sick child home from school or whose daycare is closed for vacation.

Just as some colleges are engaging in syllabus audits to add language that reflects a commitment to equity and inclusion, they might do the same with language around



accommodating the needs of student parents. This would convey, proactively, that if the student encounters a challenge meeting a course requirement or deadline because of parenting responsibilities, the instructor will try to work with her on a solution that enables her to successfully complete the course and its requirements.

There are many competing demands for faculty time, attention, and professional development; the preponderance of adjunct faculty further complicates an institution's leverage for mandating participation in multiple professional meetings. Further, not all community colleges have well-established or comprehensive faculty resource and development centers. Similarly, colleges are engaged in a number of institutional reforms that already fill the agenda of faculty day events, special taskforces, and planning committees. However, many of these trending issues in community colleges are well-aligned with and overlap with improving educational outcomes of student parents and single mothers. Information to raise faculty and staff awareness of the experiences and perspectives of student parents, and strategies for best serving them, could, at a minimum, be woven into professional development events and faculty meetings addressing topics such as enrollment, retention, and persistence; first-generation college students; diversity, equity, and inclusion; special populations (Perkins Act); and Title IX compliance.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY

In this section, we address advocacy for institutional and public policies that have the potential to benefit students on a larger scale. This type of advocacy differs from the advocacy for individual students described in the section on counseling and advising.

Most of our interviews were with coordinators and/or direct service workers such as advisors, and they often indicated that policy advocacy would be conducted at a higher level in their college hierarchy, at the level of the president or a vice president. Program staff focused on advocating for individual students with faculty and staff within the college or with outside nonprofit organizations or government agencies. Several described how they teach students to advocate for themselves. All this falls within the counseling or advising functions. Both a lack of time and a fear of doing something inappropriate were impediments to their advocating in the policy arena. In addition, some respondents pointed out that in order to advocate for policies for single mothers or single parents, the college would need to recognize these as a special category of students, as it does veterans, for instance.

Several respondents spoke of the value of having a college president or vice president who truly understands the needs of single parents and/or low-income students, perhaps through personal life experience. That understanding is likely to translate into advocacy within and outside the college for greater access to and support for particular categories of students in higher education. One example is advocacy for the state TANF agency to give more options for students to pursue higher education, rather than being tracked directly into a job.

In addition to helping students advocate for their individual needs, some college staff have encouraged and sometimes trained students to advocate on a broader level, such as for the creation or preservation of a program or policy that affects students. Students have engaged in letter-writing, visiting legislators, marching, and rallying, sometimes on their own and sometimes with staff support. Student visibility on an issue may then result in program staff being called on as experts to give input to the college administration or to legislators.

Institutional Policies

We did find some examples of advocacy for institutional policies. For example, Dr. Claudia Curry (CCP) researched and wrote a student lactation policy that was adopted by the college. College Title IX coordinators also review policies for gender equity. HCC's committee on nontraditional students conducted a student survey. As a result, the committee recommended that the college devote more attention to issues like childcare, mental health counseling, extended tutoring services, and credit for prior learning.

Public Policies

Several areas of public policy changes were recommended in the literature review. These include TANF, Pell grants, childcare, and workforce development.

Policy recommendations on TANF included ending the time limits on education, allowing education to be counted towards the work requirement or reducing required work hours for students, and establishing stronger relationships between TANF counselors and education programs.

Recommendations were made to raise Pell funding, to adjust the calculations based on the additional financial needs of parents, and to allow Pell grants to be used for short-term certificate programs.

Childcare recommendations included a dedicated funding source for on-campus childcare facilities and an increase in CCAMPIS funding (which did actually occur).

In the area of workforce development, some writers proposed that WIOA funds be used for supportive services, that women be encouraged to consider nontraditional careers, and that funding for comprehensive career pathways models in community colleges be increased.

In addition, some of our interview respondents mentioned the "cliff effect," the abrupt cutoff of benefits when a student's income increases with employment, as a public policy barrier to career advancement.

Staff at several of the programs included in this report were active members of community partnerships or coalitions that tended to be focused on the needs of low-income residents.



These groups may take positions on state policies and advocate for changes that would benefit families. They may ask for revisions in grant requirements, eligibility for services or benefits, or other areas in which they have expertise based on their on-the-ground experience. Community colleges can ensure that they are represented in these local anti-poverty or workforce development groups to be a voice for the needs of their students.

Some college programs have advisory groups that include external agencies. One example is the EOPS/CARE advisory committee at AHC. Advocacy may emerge from these groups. Some colleges are also represented on statewide groups, such as the EOPS/CARE committee in California or the Oregon Pathways to Opportunity, where they can advocate for policy changes or new programming. Colleges may also make connections with existing statewide, multi-state, or national advocacy groups. Foundations that fund single mother programs can also elevate the needs of those students.

Better communication about policy issues and advocacy efforts at all levels of the colleges would result in more focused efforts to improve conditions for single mother students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On one level, we found many commonalities in respondents' descriptions of the strengths and challenges of student parents and the types of services, partnerships, and financial supports their colleges have put in place to support them. At the same time, we know that a more granular examination and analysis, beyond the scope of this project, would reveal multiple and varied factors that shape the design, implementation, and sustainability of each. Such variables militate against a prescription for any type of one size-fits-all approach, including:

- The extent to which an institution has assessed its policies, capacity, and resources that hinder or support its ability to identify and serve single mothers
- The extent to which data systems are in place for identifying single mother students, collecting and analyzing data on their needs and the availability of resources to address them, and tracking their educational persistence and completion outcomes
- The program's unique history, mission, philosophy, and location within the institution's organizational structure
- Funding streams used and the specific provisions, allowances, and restrictions attached to each
- Variability in state policy attached to state-administered funding streams, such as TANF, SNAP, WIOA, financial aid, and scholarship funds



RECOMMENDATIONS

The featured programs offer powerful examples of key strategies and approaches for others to draw on, learn from, and replicate, as reflected in the recommendations for programs and services below.

Much remains to be done to increase not only the availability of specialized programs for single mothers, but also the resources and flexibility of funding to enable colleges to serve all who could benefit. Without building broader institutional support and capacity, many single mothers who stand to benefit will remain unidentified by institutions, unaware of what is available to support them on their campuses, and un-served, as a result. Even if they are identified, some single mothers will still be ineligible for services, unless the funding streams are broadened and diversified to accommodate the varied needs of single mothers.

The recommendations that follow are organized into functional categories that can be implemented, with different degrees of scale and impact, by individual colleges, state community college systems, funders and investors, and policy makers.

Institutional Capacity

- Recognize single mothers as a unique demographic and disaggregate data to better understand this population — ages of children, financial and personal needs, benefit eligibility, programs of study, completion and employment outcomes, etc.
- Establish mechanisms for identifying single mothers at various junctures — intake, orientation, and ongoing engagement — and solicit their direct input to learn about their challenges and needs.
- Provide options for accelerated learning and time to completion, and ensure that staff of student parent programs are well informed of these options and potential benefits to single mothers.
- Invest in staff time to develop community partnerships for mutual referrals and facilitated access to support services.
- Provide professional development for faculty and staff to better understand the needs of single mother students; consider options for flexibility in course structure and assignments; and ensure faculty and staff have sufficient training on available services, programs, and specialized funding sources, to make appropriate referrals.
- Identify resources for developing institutional capacity. (The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit [2017] from Endicott College provides data-collection processes, and survey and focus group questions as models for colleges looking for data on student parents. Monroe Community College requires students to respond to survey questions each semester with questions on their parenting status.)

Programs and Services

- Attend to the full range of intersecting needs — personal, financial, academic and career development — with support from knowledgeable, empathetic, and non-judgmental staff to help single mothers problem-solve a wide range of issues.
- Recognize and address the varied needs of single mothers with children of all ages.
- Facilitate opportunities for peer support and building of social capital among single mother students.
- Provide career counseling to help students identify and pursue viable, realistic career pathways and credentials with local labor market value that lead to economic mobility and career advancement.
- Develop relationships with local employers in high-demand fields to enable opportunities for meaningful work-study, career exposure, and employment.
- Provide dedicated family-friendly space for students to study and receive services, and organize family-friendly events on campus.

Funding

- Include a full assessment of benefit eligibility in the application process; invest in dedicated, specialized eligibility screeners who can assess students' eligibility for and help them access a full range of public benefits and potential funding to support their education.
- Leverage funding streams, such as Perkins and WIOA, with provisions for special populations, including single mothers, women in nontraditional occupations, chronically unemployed or underemployed (previously “displaced homemakers” in Perkins Act).
- Leverage a diverse base of funding, including community and women's foundations, to enable greater flexibility to accommodate single mothers who do not meet narrow eligibility rules determined by specific single-purpose funding sources.
- Raise flexible funds to provide emergency assistance grants.

Advocacy and Policy

- Advocate for public policies and funding to support single mothers' postsecondary success as a vehicle towards economic sustainability and mobility. This is especially critical at the state level, where there is tremendous flexibility in how states may implement federal funding streams like TANF and SNAP.
- Invest in staff time to develop community partnerships and participate in coalitions that advocate for services and policies addressing the needs of single mothers.



- Raise policymaker awareness and advocate for policy changes about the “cliff effects” (i.e., the sudden loss of benefits, rather than a gradual reduction of support, when income goes up) that come into play as single mothers receiving public assistance return to the workforce.
- Connect single mother students’ needs to advocacy related to equity and inclusion, student basic needs, and college affordability.
- Include single mother students in advocacy efforts and invite state and local policy makers to campus events to meet single mother students and hear their stories.

This report aims to further our understanding by sharing the insights and best practices we gleaned with educators, funders, investors, and policymakers so that, together, we can increase the opportunities and supports available to single mother students. We incorporate examples from just 17 colleges, with the awareness that there are many others operating programs for student parents, in many cases as part of statewide initiatives that we were unable to include, given the project’s limited scope. We hope that this report stimulates interest and resources for identifying additional program strategies and best practices.

Many of the recommendations above are well-aligned with the efforts underway at the national, state, and institutional level to address gaps in equity and inclusion, and improve the rates of student persistence, completion, and employment leading to economic mobility. Single mothers should be visible as a distinct group meriting the attention of and advancing the progress towards social and economic equity. Their educational success and economic mobility have the potential to reap the very intergenerational benefits such student success and equity efforts seek.

APPENDICES



PROGRAM PROFILES

ALLAN HANCOCK COLLEGE

Santa Maria, California | <https://hancockcollege.edu>

CARE (Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education) <https://www.hancockcollege.edu/care/index.php>

Program Mission:

To provide underserved populations with equitable access to education and provide additional “over and above” support services.

Eligibility:

Single heads of household, with at least one child under the age of 18, who receive TANF or CalWORKS state cash aid and who meet the income eligibility for Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS).

Application:

<https://www.hancockcollege.edu/eops/ENGLISH%2019-20%20All%20Programs%20Application%20Final.pdf>

Funding Sources:

EOPS is funded through Title 5 regulations. EOPS, CARE, and CalWORKS funding is administered by the Chancellor of California Community Colleges <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/SSSP/EOPS/Training/Comparison%20of%20EOPSCARECalWORKSprograms.pdf>

Core Strategies and Services:

- Academic advising/planning, drop-in tutoring, support
- Personal counseling and referrals; career counseling
- Peer support
- Financial assistance
- On-campus childcare, through the AHC Children’s Center
- Referrals to community services
- Workshops
- Dedicated child-friendly study space
- Use of computers and printers

CARE is a component of EOPS. All California community colleges have a CARE program, but this is the first college with a dedicated CARE center for students (and their children).

**Data:**■ **Annual College Enrollment:**

- 11,500 credit students across four campuses. (Santa Maria is the main campus.)

■ **# Students Served/Year in Featured Program:**

- 115–130 per year; 80 in the Fall 2018 semester
- Percentage that are single mothers: 95 percent

AHC tracks outcomes for students enrolled in CARE compared to single parents who are not enrolled in CARE.

| Program Year | CARE Students | Single Parent Students not CARE-Enrolled | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--|-----------------|-------------|
| | F – S Retention | C or better | F – S Retention | C or better |
| 2015–2016 | 78% | 61% | 72% | 54% |
| 2016–2017 | 75% | 60% | 73% | 56% |
| 2017–2018 | 78% | 60% | 75% | 62% |

Contact:

Kiri Villa, CARE/EOPS Counselor, kvilla@hancockcollege.edu

Secondary Contact:

Alexandra Spiess, CARE Coordinator, alexandr.spiess@hancockcollege.edu



AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Austin, TX | <https://www.austincc.edu>

Support Center | <https://www.austincc.edu/students/support-center>

Program Mission: To provide specialized assistance and referrals to a select group of students who would benefit from additional assistance to overcome challenges and complete their education.

Eligibility: Students with a zero EFC (Expected Family Contribution) for the purposes of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The majority of participants are single parents (primarily single mothers), but that’s not the central criteria.

Application: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSch2xZjun_7p-A1d_uKQEeNvKqeQAC6Btk_Vbn-3ftFCbmr1Gg/viewform

Funding Sources: Initiated with Perkins funding in 1993 (for CTE-enrolled students only) and now operates with both Perkins and institutional funding

Core Strategies and Services:

- Case management provided by “advocates” to eligible support center students
- Subsidized childcare and textbook assistance
- Textbook library (a collection of textbooks selected for classes offered in workforce programs that students may borrow for an entire semester)
- Referrals to community supports
- Financial support (scholarships, emergency funds, institutional aid, textbook purchases)

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 103,510 enrolled, 2017–2018 (duplicated)
- Fall and Spring semesters: ~ 38,000–40,000 each + ~24,000 enrolled for summer semester

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- 2,000 students per year on caseloads; 400 receiving childcare assistance and textbook assistance.
- Support Center students who are single mothers: 285 in Fall 2017; 376 in Fall 2018.

■ Persistence:

| Program Year | Single mothers participating in support center services | ALL ACC |
|---------------------|---|---------|
| Fall '17–Spring '18 | 79% | 79% |
| Fall '17 – Fall '18 | 68% | 58% |

Contact: Steven Christopher, Associate Vice President, Student Accessibility and Social Support Resources, schris@austincc.edu



CLOVER PARK TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Lakewood and Puyallup, WA | <http://www.cptc.edu>

WorkFirst/Workforce Development | <http://www.cptc.edu/workforce-development/workfirst>

Program Mission:

Workforce Development is dedicated to the creation, implementation, and facilitation of quality short-term educational programs, funding opportunities, and student-centered supports by being responsive to business/industry and community needs.

The WorkFirst program serves families receiving TANF through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), helping them start, continue or finish their education and training leading to employment and self-sufficiency.

Eligibility: TANF and WorkFirst-eligible

Funding Sources:

WorkFirst is funded through the Department of Social and Health Services for eligible TANF recipients. Additionally, Workforce Development administers a variety of funding sources that might support single mothers who are determined eligible: Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET); Worker Retraining; Washington Opportunity Grant; and the Early Achievers Grant.

Workforce Development Eligibility Program Specialists assess each student's eligibility for funding sources and make sure that funding is awarded in an equitable and appropriate manner, leveraging as many resources as possible to support students' education pathways.

Core Strategies and Services:

- Tuition, book, and admission expenses for eligible participants (as funding allows)
- WorkFirst work-study (paid employment) for those who qualify
- Educational planning, including transition, graduation, and transfer assistance provided by a dedicated Workforce Development Counselor
- Learning Center, including computer use and free printing
- Laptop loan program for eligible students
- Crisis counseling as needed
- Advocacy (Workforce Development Eligibility staff are dedicated to student success and can provide resource assistance, referrals, barrier removal, and assistance navigating WorkFirst program requirements.)
- Subsidized childcare and childcare referrals
- Outreach and recruitment (Workforce Development office has staff co-located at three DSHS offices to speak directly to current and prospective WorkFirst and BFET clients about the educational opportunities and supports offered by the college and has a full-time staff member located at the local One-Stop Career Center to address the training/educational needs of our community.)



Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment (2018):

- 6,523 head count
- 4,159 Total FTE
- 6,158 State-funded head count
- 3,915 State-funded FTE

■ # Students Served in Workforce Development:

- 2018-2019 (July–April): 1,139
- 2018-2019 to date: Awarded \$1,322,990 in tuition and wraparound services
- 2018-2019 to date: 63 percent of the total served are women with children (42 percent of all Clover Park Technical College students have children)
- 2018-2019 through March 2019*:
 - 22 associate degrees have been earned by women
 - 16 certificates have been completed by women

*This does not reflect end-of-year graduation information

Contact:

Cristeen Crouchet, Director, Workforce Development, Cristeen.Crouchet@cptc.edu



COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | <https://ccp.edu>

Keystone Education Yields Success (K.E.Y.S.) | <https://www.ccp.edu/student-support/keys>

Program Mission:

An employment and training program for the state of Pennsylvania, KEYS (Keystone Education Yields Success) assists public assistance recipients to earn a credential and secure employment that would help them move towards self-sufficiency.

Eligibility: TANF and SNAP recipients

Funding Sources: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

Core Strategies and Services:

- Case management
- Counseling
- Career advising
- Job search skills
- Job development
- Referrals to community services
- Access to supportive services
- Academic support

Other Key Services: Women's Outreach and Advocacy Center (WOAC),

<https://www.ccp.edu/student-support/women%E2%80%99s-outreach-and-advocacy-center>

Mission:

The Center provides services that address the academic, social, emotional, and personal development needs, as well as the health and safety concerns of female students. Programs and services include drop-in consultations, referrals, workshops, a safe space, advocacy for students, and student-initiated projects.

WOAC has a new, four-year grant to subsidize childcare while parents are in classes or engaged in college-related activities. The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Grant, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education by providing childcare stipends for 40 Pell-eligible student parents each semester at Community College of Philadelphia.

Open-door policy:

Although the Center primarily serves women students at the college, men may also participate in the programs and services. The Center does not track single mother status.



The Women's Center is funded by the college. During the 2018–2019 academic year, nearly 1,200 students were impacted through direct services, such as consultations, advocacy and referrals, and programs and activities designed to educate, empower, and retain students.

KEYS Data:

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- 410 actively enrolled July to November 2018; 215 on day of interview
- 90 percent of students served are custodial parents

■ Persistence/Retention rates for program participants:

- 69 percent year to year (from July 2017 to June 2018)
- Course successful completion rate: 74 percent (from July 2017 to June 2018)

Contact (1):

Helena Pizarro, Director, KEYS, hpizarro@ccp.edu

Contact (2):

Dr. Claudia Curry, Director, Women's Outreach and Advocacy Center, ccurry@ccp.edu

Secondary Contact:

Linda Wallace, Director of Communications, liswallace@ccp.edu



EDMONDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Lynnwood, WA | <https://www.edcc.edu>

Workforce Funding Programs (WorkFirst, Basic Food Employment Training [BFET] [SNAP], Worker Retraining, Opportunity Grant, Perkins funds) | <https://www.edcc.edu/paying-for-college>

(see Tuition Assistance Programs, below)

Program Mission: The Edmonds Community College Workforce Funding Programs staff, a team of 10 people, believes in working together to leverage the different funding streams to provide the best support for our students.

Single mothers are often eligible for WorkFirst funding. The WorkFirst team believes in the Washington state goal for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients: “A job, a better job, a better life.” One of the best ways to reach this goal is through free education and training through WorkFirst, BFET, and/or Worker Retraining funds.

Eligibility: Each of the programs listed above has different requirements, but often a student will be eligible for more than one. Potential students can see if they might be eligible by completing a short survey at <http://www.startnextquarter.org>; they will then be directed to the right program staff. See www.sbctc.edu for full information. For WorkFirst: the client must be currently receiving TANF (cash assistance from Department of Social and Health Services [DSHS]), have DSHS case manager approval to attend full-time vocational education, and enroll in specific certificate programs designed to be linked to a specific career ladder that will lead to better skills and higher wages.

Application (for free college prep classes): <https://www.edcc.edu/paying-for-college/workfirst/documents/transitional-life-skills-application.pdf>

Funding Sources: Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Washington State Department of Education, Washington State Employment Security Department, Washington State legislature

Core Strategies and Services:

The WorkFirst grant pays for tuition, books, and fees; provides for individualized support; and enrolls students in prep courses designed to enhance their self-efficacy, determine their career pathway, and teach them to succeed in college.

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 4,800 Annualized FTE students (around 18,000 students per year)

■ # Students Served in WorkFirst:

- 40–60 students per quarter. (The data are not disaggregated, but the coordinator estimates that 80 percent are single mothers.)

■ Persistence/Retention rates:

- For program participants: Around 80 percent for the last couple years
- For overall college population, Fall 2017 to Winter 2018 — 66 percent

Contact: Terry Cox, Vice President of Workforce Development & Training, terry.cox@edcc.edu

Secondary Contact: Penny Robins, Instructor, penny.robins@edcc.edu



FREDERICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE (1 OF 2)

Frederick County, MD | <https://www.frederick.edu>

Project Forward Step | <https://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/adult-services/project-forward-step.aspx>

Program Mission:

Project Forward Step (PFS) provides counseling, support, referrals, and consideration for program scholarship, in order to help single parents and displaced homemakers achieve economic self-sufficiency. This goal is accomplished through the following objectives: assist single parents and displaced homemakers with setting and achieving personal, educational, and vocational goals by providing career counseling, academic advising, referrals, and support; increase access and remove barriers to beginning, continuing, and completing higher education by providing single parents and displaced homemakers with financial aid resource referrals.

Eligibility:

Single parents (of any gender) and displaced homemakers (adults 24 years and older who are unemployed or underemployed) who are beginning or continuing their education in order to enter the workforce, increase their marketable skills, change careers or advance in a job to become economically self-sufficient are eligible for program services. To be eligible for program scholarship consideration, participants must be enrolled in credit-bearing courses, including developmental education, and demonstrate financial need. To be eligible for Perkins direct student aid, PFS participants must be enrolled in an approved Career and Technical Education program and demonstrate financial need. Developmental courses are not eligible for Perkins-supported aid. For both types of aid, students must be in satisfactory academic standing (not on Academic Probation) and have either attended an Adult Services workshop or had that requirement waived due to demonstrated success in college. Single parents and displaced homemakers who are not eligible for program scholarship or Perkins direct student aid may still receive PFS support services.

Application:

The application process begins with an intake interview with a counselor in the Adult Services Department.

Funding Sources:

The College pays for the core services and staff. Direct student aid and PFS program scholarships toward educational costs (including tuition, books and materials, childcare costs, and transportation costs) are funded through a variety of sources: In the 2017–2018 fiscal year, Maryland State Department of Education provided Perkins funding to assist eligible students enrolled in approved career programs of study. The Frederick Community College (FCC) Foundation administered PFS scholarships funded by grants from a variety of local and national philanthropic organizations and private donors.



Core Strategies and Services:

- Intake and needs assessment
- Academic advising and career counseling
- Referrals to college and community services
- College success seminar
- Personal support
- Financial aid resources and referrals

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- Total: 15,656 (Credit = 8,896, Continuing Education and Workforce Development = 7,107)

■ # Students Served/Year in PFS:

- 383 individuals were served in PFS during 2017–2018 fiscal year
- Of those, 231 (60 percent) were single parents/single pregnant women
- 227 PFS participants enrolled in credit classes during that period; 136 of them were single mothers (60 percent)
- 14 of the 23 PFS participants who earned a degree in 2017–2018 were single mothers (about 61 percent)

■ Persistence:

- Fall 2017 to Spring 2018 retention rate for PFS participants enrolled in credit classes was 72.5 percent, compared to the college-wide retention rate during that period of 70 percent.
- Fall 2017 semester average Grade Point Average (GPA) for PFS participants was 2.935, compared with the college-wide semester average GPA of 2.687.

Contact:

Janice Brown, Director for Office of Adult Services, JBrown@frederick.edu



FREDERICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE (2 OF 2)

Parents Lead | <https://www.frederick.edu/student-resources/adult-services/parents-lead.aspx>

Program Mission:

Parents Lead (PL) provides student parents with academic, financial, and campus-wide resources to aid in the completion of a college credential. Parents Lead connects students with a supportive learning community, offers courses that minimize the amount of time students are on campus, and provides scholarship funds roughly equivalent to the cost of off-campus childcare during the time students are on campus.

Eligibility:

Primary caregivers of children 18 years or younger with financial need who are ready for college-level courses. PL students must enroll in a minimum of six credit hours (two classes) per semester and be available to attend specific PL cohort courses on campus one day or evening per week.

Application:

<https://app.perfectforms.com/PresentationServer/Form.aspx/Play/dCmlgAIF?f=dCmlgAIF>

Funding Sources:

Scholarships and emergency aid are provided by the college foundation. The college provided initial start-up investment in faculty time for course development (faculty course release) and program marketing.

Core Strategies and Services:

- Cohort-based hybrid courses with daytime or evening options
- Course schedule stability and consistency from semester to semester
- Specialized curriculum
- Personalized advising assistance
- Financial assistance for tuition, fees, books
- Childcare scholarship
- Emergency aid

Participants earn their first 31 general education requirements towards an AA in a series of hybrid courses. Students come to campus just one evening or day each week for the face-to-face portions of their courses; that day remains a constant every semester, affording students longer-term schedule predictability and stability around which they can plan childcare and work, etc. The remaining portion of the coursework is completed online. Building online learning skills and confidence is a theme of the Parents Lead English 101 class so that they are prepared for the unique challenges that students new to online learning frequently encounter.



Data:

■ # Students Served/Year in Parents Lead:

- 15 per semester
- Almost all the PL participants are women and sixty percent are single mothers.
- The Parents Lead program continues to support a diverse student population. Since its inception in Spring 2018, the cohort has served a population made up of 100 percent parent students, 96 percent women, and 56 percent students of color.
- The median reported household income of PL students is \$30,700, 43 percent above the Frederick County poverty line for a family of four and 63 percent below the Frederick County ALICE (Asset, Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) household survival threshold for a family of four.
- Students in this program passed 83 percent of their attempted credits, withdrew from 7 percent, and failed 10 percent.

■ Persistence:

- The program retention rate of 92 percent supersedes that of the average FCC student by 15 percent.

Contact: Anne Hofmann, Parents Lead Program Manager, Associate Professor of English,
AHofmann@frederick.edu



HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Holyoke, MA | <https://www.hcc.edu>

New Directions for Adult Learners | <https://www.hcc.edu/courses-and-programs/academic-support/new-directions-for-adult-learners>

Program Mission:

HCC's New Directions college success program serves students age 24 and older, parents, and veterans, including those who have been out of school for many years. We recognize that adults often need help balancing college life with career, family, personal, and/or military responsibilities. New Directions is free. Our only goal is to help you succeed at HCC, define your career and educational goals, and discover opportunities for transfer to a four-year college or university.

Eligibility:

Students age 24 and older, parents, and veterans, including those who have been out of school for many years. Includes students with some prior credits who stopped out.

Funding Sources:

Perkins (90 percent) and HCC College Trust (10 percent). As a result, 90 percent of participating students should be enrolled in Perkins-eligible CTE programs and no more than 10 percent can be enrolled in liberal arts programs.

Core Strategies and Services:

- Pre-enrollment counseling
- Help navigating the admissions process
- Information about financial aid
- Academic advising
- Orientation workshops, such as Smart Start study skills and college preparation
- Transition to college support
- Basic computer instruction
- Career and transfer guidance
- Scholarship assistance
- Referrals to HCC Thrive Center and Food Pantry and other resources for HCC students with financial and other service needs
- Childcare referrals
- Elaine Marieb Center (<https://www.facebook.com/Elaine-Marieb-Center-130627683645370/>), a lounge, computer lab, and study area for nontraditional female students participating in New Directions and Pathways (transfer) programs



Data:

■ **Annual College Enrollment:**

- 6,740

■ **Students Served per Year in New Directions:**

- Approximately 200 per year
- The Coordinator estimates that 30 percent are single parents, primarily single mothers.

| | Female students participating in New Directions | Female students who applied, but did not participate in New Directions |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Fall '15–Spring '16 | 88% | 60% |
| Fall '16 – Fall '17 | 82% | 61% |

Contact: Lori Wayson, Senior Special Programs Coordinator, New Directions for Adult Learners, lwayson@hcc.edu



JEFFERSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Pell City Campus, Birmingham, AL | <http://www.jeffersonstate.edu>

Single-Mom Welding Class | <http://www.jeffersonstate.edu/free-single-mom-welding-class>

Eligibility: Must be a single mother and resident of Jefferson County with a high school diploma or GED, living at or near poverty level. Must be able to attend all classes. Mothers with children enrolled in St. Clair County Head Start get priority for enrollment in available training slots.

Funding Sources: The Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham, City of Birmingham, and others

Core Strategies and Services:

- Noncredit welding training program
- OSHA 10 safety training and certification
- Job readiness classes on goal setting, study skills, professional success, and employability skills
- Career counseling
- Wraparound service referrals
- Tuition, books, materials
- Transportation stipend (paid retroactively)
- Referrals to childcare (for those with pre-school-age children who aren’t already enrolled in the partnering Head Start or Pre-School programs)
- Free tuition for program completers for a three-credit course of their choice to encourage future college enrollment

For BOLD (Building Opportunities for Lasting Development) Women of Welding Program informational video, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CmCIpr1odY>.

The college also offers New Options program for non-traditional adults — single adults (25 and older), single parents, married adults, or GED recipients — who are beginning college for the first time or who are returning to college after an interruption in their education. See <http://www.jeffersonstate.edu/new-options-program>.

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 14,000

■ # Students Served per Semester in Single-Mom Welding Program:

- 10–15 per grant program
- Ten students were enrolled in the Spring 2018 Single-Mom Welding cohort and all 10 completed the program. Within one month, seven were employed in welding positions, two were not physically able to take a welding job right away, and a third decided not to pursue a welding career.
- This is Jefferson State’s seventh specialized training program for single mothers, and the graduation rate has been approximately 85–90 percent for all programs.

Contact: Christine McLain, Career Counselor, Jefferson State Community College, Center for Workforce Education, cmclainjeffstate@gmail.com



LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE

5800 Fulton Avenue, Valley Glen, CA 91401 | <https://www.lavc.edu>

Family Resource Center | <http://lavcfamilyresourcecenter.org>

Program Mission:

The mission of the Family Resource Center (FRC) is to advance social and economic mobility by reducing barriers to higher education and jobs through integrating family support services for underserved populations.

The program is housed under Workforce Development and the director reports to the Dean of Adult/Community Education and Workforce Development.

Eligibility:

Open-door policy to all students enrolled in at least one class at Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) with a child under the age of 18 living in the home.

Application:

<http://lavcfamilyresourcecenter.org/enroll>

Funding Sources:

Federal and state grants, private foundations

Core Strategies and Services:

- Dedicated space for Two-Generation (2Gen) programs
- A menu of programs and services designed to meet the varied needs of families in support of academic and career success

Programs:

- Student Parent Program
- Strengthening Working Families (for short-term workforce training participants)
- Helping Hands (food- and housing-insecure student program with food pantry)
- 2Gen Lab for high school/college student internships

Services:

- Academic counseling/advising
- Family counseling
- Tutoring (student and child)
- Study lounge where parents can bring children
- Computers and printers
- Interns (high school and college) to supervise children when parent studies
- Playgroups for infants and toddlers



- Children's clothing exchange
- Free diapers and formula
- Food pantry with produce from local farmers' market/stocked kitchen
- School supplies and textbook library
- Emergency funds
- Drop-in school-age playgroups
- Support for students in job training and adult education
- Workshops for parents
- Childcare referrals
- Fun family events

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 26,624

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- 1,000
- 67 percent of student parents served are first-generation college students
- 72 percent are low-income
- 44 percent of them have children under 5
- 86 percent are women

■ Persistence/Retention rates:

- For program participants (Fall 2018 Data):

FRC Student Parent Success: 80 percent

FRC Student Parent Retention: 92 percent

- For overall college population (Fall 2018 Data):

LAVC Success: 69 percent

LAVC Retention: 84 percent

■ Other data:

- Workforce (WF) training participants who receive FRC services have higher job placement rates than those participants who went through job training without holistic family support. (This statistic refers to being employed in their sector three months post completion of a workforce academy.)
- FRC Job Placement: 97 percent
- WF Job Placement (without FRC support): 86 percent

Contact: Marni Roosevelt, Founder/Director, roosevm@lavc.edu

Secondary Contact: Amber Angel, Program Coordinator, angelam@lavc.edu



MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Manchester, NH | <https://www.mccnh.edu>

Project STRIDE | <https://www.mccnh.edu/services/academic-success-center/project-stride>

Program Mission:

Project STRIDE is a support program for single parents, displaced homemakers and single pregnant women. The program provides a weekly support group and referrals to community resources.

Eligibility:

Any single parent or displaced homemaker enrolled in the college is welcome to join STRIDE and attend the support meetings.

Perkins grants are available for Project STRIDE members who are matriculated in Perkins-eligible Career and Technical Education programs and meet program requirements. To be eligible for a Perkins grant from STRIDE, a student needs to apply and qualify for Federal Financial Aid. Grants are awarded to students after completing the fall semester upon enrollment in the subsequent spring semester. To qualify for a grant, Project STRIDE members must:

- Enroll in at least six credits per semester
- Maintain at least a 2.5 Cumulative Grade Point Average
- Attend and participate in group meetings or check in regularly with the STRIDE Coordinator
- Attend mandatory support group meetings
- Have applied for financial aid and have an unmet need that is equal to or greater than the Project STRIDE grant amount

Application: https://www.mccnh.edu/pdf/asc/stride_app.pdf

Funding Sources:

Institutional funding supports the Project STRIDE Coordinator position. Perkins funding (\$10,000 per year) is divided among the eligible students participating in Project STRIDE and distributed as a direct stipend.

Core Strategies and Services:

- Flexible stipend that can be used to fill gaps in college and living expenses
- Cohort-based weekly support group for women enrolled in Project STRIDE
- Advising, support, and referrals from Project STRIDE Advisor
- Addition resources available at Manchester Community College for single mothers:
 - > Food pantry for low-income students
 - > Federal Work–Study, a federal financial aid program where students work on campus and are paid with financial aid funds
 - > On-campus childcare at Child Development Center
 - > A children’s section in the campus library

**Data:****■ Annual College Enrollment:**

- 2,624 on campus, 1,261 online

■ # Students Served per Year in Project STRIDE:

- 10–15 single mothers annually receive a Perkins stipend, and more may participate in the support group and other activities.
- Percentage that are single mothers: 100 percent

■ Persistence/Retention:

- 88 percent of Project STRIDE students remained enrolled from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018, compared to 67 percent for all Manchester Community College students.

Contact: Patricia Bedford, College Counselor, Academic Support Center, pbedford@ccsnh.edu



MAYSVILLE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Maysville, Kentucky | <https://maysville.kctcs.edu>

Ready to Work | <https://maysville.kctcs.edu/current-students/academic-resources/ready-to-work.aspx>

Program Mission:

To educate low-income parents so they can gain family-supporting employment; to fuel economic development

Ready to Work (RTW) is a partnership between the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health & Family Services, Department for Community Based Services. Three other campuses of this college and 16 colleges statewide have the Ready to Work program.

Eligibility:

Low-income student parents, primarily single mothers (TANF recipients) who are enrolled at the college, working on GED, or transitioning to college, and former students seeking employment help.

Funding Sources:

Federal TANF funds, the majority of which are dedicated to work–study

Core Strategies and Services:

A key strategy is the use of work–study funds to meet employment requirements under TANF without reduction of benefits. Work–study placements may be on or off campus and, whenever possible, match students' career interests. The program also:

- Offers case management, advising, mentoring, and career coaching
- Provides academic support
- Connects students to public benefits, supportive service funds, childcare, and community resources
- Advocates with faculty
- Encourages self-advocacy

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 4,802

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- 65 at a time, one third in GED or college-prep program
- Statewide Ready to Work served 1,130 college enrolled students and 556 adult education students in 2017–2018.

Contact: Brie Bickley, Ready to Work Coordinator, brie.bickley@kctcs.edu

Secondary Contact: Shauna King-Simms, Chancellor's Office, Kentucky Community and Technical College System (for historical and statewide perspective), shauna.king-simms@kctcs.edu



MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Meridian, MS | <http://www.meridiancc.edu>

CTE Support Services | <https://www.meridiancc.edu/prospectivestudents/advising/disability-support-services>

Program Mission:

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Support Services provides members of special populations equal access to recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities, and to the full range of educational programs available. No one shall be discriminated against on the basis of his/her status as a member of a special population.

The CTE Support Services Office strives to encourage independence, to assist students in realizing their academic potential, and to facilitate the elimination of physical, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers.

Self-identification is voluntary. However, the CTE Support Services Office can be of service to students only to the extent that their individual needs are made known. Students and prospective students are encouraged to make an early contact with the CTE Support Services Office.

Eligibility: Students are considered part of a special population and eligible for voluntary specialized services, if they are enrolled in Perkins-eligible CTE programs and self-identify that they are:

- economically disadvantaged
- educationally disadvantaged
- a displaced homemaker
- a single parent
- preparing for non-traditional training and employment
- with limited English proficiency

Funding Sources: Perkins is the primary funding source

Core Strategies and Services:

- Career guidance
- Support counseling
- Support groups to help build self-confidence and to offer solutions for time- and stress-management
- Semester-long textbook loan
- Campus food pantry
- Advocacy support
- Community referrals and networking

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 4,727 in 2017–2018

■ # Students Served in CTE Support Services:

- 130 students in Fall 2018. Approximately 85 percent were single parents, mostly mothers or grandmothers.

Contact: Dr. Brenda Fortson, CTE Support Services Coordinator, bfortson@meridiancc.edu



NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Sanborn, New York | <http://www.niagaracc.suny.edu>

Originally MOMs (Mapping Opportunities for Mothers); now Mapping Opportunities for Single Parents, part of the First Year Experience | <http://www.niagaracc.suny.edu/moms>

Program Mission: As part of the First Year Experience initiative, Niagara County Community College offers academic and career services to single mothers and fathers who are enrolled in degree and certificate programs, as well as in non-credit Workforce Development programs. Our goal is to improve retention and graduation rates of students who are parents, and to help them find employment that offers family-sustaining wages.

Eligibility: Single parents (originally only single mothers, but now a few single fathers are served)

Funding Sources:

Original funder: Western New York Women's Foundation (three years of grant funding; funded two full-time positions). The Foundation has continued to fund an emergency scholarship for the women in the program. Currently funded by the college as part of its First Year Experience (.5 FTE).

Core Strategies and Services:

Philosophy:

- Meet people where they are, be open to any kinds of needs, help directly or refer, and help them devise their own solutions.

Program elements:

- Individualized, flexible, and caring counseling/advising and personalized assistance from Success Coach
- Ongoing academic assistance
- Advocacy and support groups
- College and community referrals
- Developing time- and stress-management strategies
- Learning study skills
- Improving financial literacy
- Workshops for single mothers
- Developing job search skills
- Emergency funding
- Family events
- Scholarships

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 5,200

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- 61, Fall 2018; previously more than 100 per semester with higher funding level

Contact: Kelly Boswell, Success Coach, kboswell@niagaracc.suny.edu



NORTH ARKANSAS COLLEGE

Harrison, Arkansas | <http://www.northark.edu>

Career Pathways Program | <http://www.northark.edu/student-and-community-services/careerpaths/index>

Program Mission:

To coordinate publicly funded education with social services and workforce and economic development programs to produce a better-trained workforce and promote economic growth through a career pathways approach.

Eligibility:

Arkansas residents with children at home under age 21 and income up to 250 percent of federal poverty level

Application:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/NorthArkansasCollege1/CPIQualificationForm>

Funding Sources:

Federal TANF funding through state Department of Workforce Services; college gives in-kind support

Core Strategies and Services:

Focus on overcoming barriers to education and training through:

- Financial assistance
- Academic advising
- Career advising
- Academic support
- Family-friendly study space
- Soft skills instruction
- Robust partnerships with community organizations
- Collaboration with faculty and staff
- Job search after completion

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 2,000

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- 275
- Outcomes: 80 percent of students enrolled in Career Pathways who successfully complete a certificate or degree remain employed in their chosen field after two years.

Contact: Rebecca Martin, CPI Program Director, rmartin@northark.edu



NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania | <https://northampton.edu>

New Choices, KEYS, Spartan Aid | <https://northampton.edu/student-services/new-choices.htm>

Program Mission:

New Choices was a federally-funded displaced homemaker program from 1980 to 1998. Now it is a state-funded intensive career decision-making program with wider eligibility that includes those in work transitions.

KEYS (Keystone Education Yields Success) assists TANF and SNAP recipients to attend and complete community college.

Spartan Aid increases student access to college and community resources (e.g., on-campus food pantry, scholarship information, transportation assistance) in order to facilitate college retention and completion.

Eligibility:

New Choices: Displaced homemakers, single parents, dislocated workers, single pregnant women, people interested in a career not traditional for their gender

KEYS: People receiving TANF cash assistance or SNAP. (SNAP students must be enrolled in a Perkins-approved program or one preparing for a high-priority occupation.)

Spartan Aid: Open to low-income students with financial emergencies

Application:

KEYS students must be referred by Department of Human Services. No application is required for New Choices or Spartan Aid.

Funding Sources:

New Choices: Funded by a line item in the Pennsylvania state budget (\$500,000 statewide, \$48,000 at Northampton) as well as private donations

KEYS: State Department of Human Services (KEYS is a statewide program located at each of the 14 community colleges.)

Spartan Aid: Originally funded by private foundations (Ford, Lumina, Open Societies, Kresge); administered by Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the American Association of Community Colleges under the name Benefits Access for College Completion (BACC); three-year pilot program with competitive application process. Currently funded by the college.



Core Strategies and Services:

New Choices:

- Career exploration and career decision-making class
- Developing self-esteem
- Job search
- Non-traditional careers
- Financial assistance

KEYS:

- Financial assistance for college-related expenses (books, transportation, childcare) through TANF
- Incentives

Spartan Aid:

- Connecting students to college, community, and public benefits
- Awareness campaigns
- Advocacy

General:

- CCAMPIS, federally funded program to assist low-income students with on-campus childcare

Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 34,000 in all programs at all campuses; 14,000 in credit programs

■ # Students Served/Year in Featured Program:

- New Choices: 50, around 70 percent single mothers
- KEYS: State Department of Human Services: 99 in 2018–2019, approximately 80 percent single mothers
- Spartan Aid: 100–125/year, around 20 percent single mothers

■ Persistence/Retention rates:

- KEYS persistence/retention: consistently averages 85–90 percent each year
- Overall college population: Fall 2016–Fall 2017, 59 percent retention rate for full-time students and 49 percent for part-time students
- Credential completion rates for program participants: We report completion rates as aggregate data. Because the retention and completion rates are in the 85–90 percent range, that includes those students in credentialed programs.
- New Choices and KEYS participants regularly report anecdotally that the support provided by the KEYS and New Choices staff is the most significant part of the programs.

Contact: Maryann Haytmanek, Director, New Choices Program, MHaytmanek@northampton.edu



PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Portland, OR | <https://www.pcc.edu>

Project Independence (Cascade Campus) | <https://www.pcc.edu/women/cascade/services/project-independence>

Program Mission:

Project Independence (PI) is a cohort-based program designed for single parents, returning women students, or women seeking additional support. Classes focus on learning how to be successful in college, exploring careers, and planning an educational path.

Eligibility:

Originally a displaced homemakers' program, PI serves single parents, returning women students, and women seeking additional support. Participation in all classes is mandatory while in the program.

Funding Sources:

Tuition for credit-bearing PI classes is covered by the general fund. The fund also assists students with transportation, books, and supplies.

Core Strategies and Services:

- Tuition and fees for seven credit-bearing college preparation courses, in subjects such as College Survival and Success, Career and Life Planning, Values Clarification, Assertiveness/Communication, Overcoming Math Anxiety, and Adult Fitness (self-care)
- Career exploration
- Childcare support (limited)
- Transportation assistance (bus and parking passes)
- Academic and career advising
- Personal counseling
- Tutoring
- Referrals to campus and community resources and services

In addition to the services provided directly through Project Independence, PCC (varies by campus) offers:

- Lactation rooms
- Emergency loans and grants
- Food pantry
- Clothing closet
- Emergency bus tickets
- Student parent scholarships
- Parenting club
- Campus-based childcare operated by partner organizations
- Parent support group for students with children in Albina Head Start



Data:

■ Annual College Enrollment:

- 2017–2018 total enrollment = 71,000
- Credit students = 48,000
- Noncredit students = 23,000

■ # Students Served/Year in Project Independence:

- 2018–2019 — 42 students attended PI, 28 successfully completed the program, and 21 are currently attending PCC with an cumulative average GPA of 3.48
- Single mothers are not disaggregated in the student count

Contact: Traci Simmons, Associate Dean of Student Development (Cascade Campus), traci.simmons15@pcc.edu



SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE

San Antonio, Texas

Services for Women and Non-Traditional Students (SWANS) includes three programs: Women's Center, Seguir Adelante, and Mi CASA (Career Advancement and Self-Sufficiency Assistance) which are co-located in the Empowerment Center | <https://www.alamo.edu/sac/about-sac/college-offices/services-for-women-and-non-traditional-students> | <https://www.alamo.edu/sac/about-sac/college-offices/services-for-women-and-non-traditional-students/department-programs>

Program Mission:

SWANS offers comprehensive services in a one-stop environment for both students and the community. Services are designed to empower women and other non-traditional populations to enter college, retain their courses and complete their program of study.

The Women's Center was started in the 1980s to provide support for women returning to school.

The Seguir Adelante Program serves as a resource and support for people in the community who desire to improve their family's economic security and stability by furthering their education.

Mi CASA supports and promotes self-sufficiency by providing free comprehensive career counseling, job search and college preparation.

Eligibility:

SWANS Services are provided for women and non-traditional students, including single parents, displaced homemakers, first-generation college students, public housing residents, dislocated workers, and other individuals needing support to succeed in a college environment.

Funding Sources:

Primarily institutional funding, though the department pursues external funding to provide a wide range of programs and activities, including:

- Grant from city of San Antonio for supportive services, GED program
- HUD HSIAC (Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities) grant for building funds
- Private donations for scholarships, including from the Women's Club of San Antonio, LULAC, and individual donors

Core Strategies and Services:

SWANS offers comprehensive wrap-around one-stop service including:

- Case management
- Academic advising
- Academic skills development
- Career counseling
- Financial support (emergency funds, textbook assistance, scholarships)
- Crisis intervention



- Childcare referrals
- Parenting support programs
- Workshops
- Community resource referrals and assistance with social services
- Scholarship resources
- Employability skills development
- GED services
- Available career, student, and community learning labs

The Women's Center focuses on advising, counseling, and support services for women students. Seguir Adelante offers college readiness, GED to college transition, employability skills and supportive services. Mi CASA Program includes career development, job readiness skills, and computer literacy.

Data:

■ **Annual College Enrollment:**

- 20,000+

■ **# Students Served/Year in Featured Program:**

- Served 10,350 students and 22,048 community members in 2017–2018
- At least 80 percent of students served are women
- 300+ students and community members served per year in Seguir Adelante, primarily women; 40 percent are single parents; median family income is \$10,700

■ **Data for Fall 2017 Empowerment Center FTIC (first time in college) Caseloads:**

- 135 FTICs
- 114 returned for Spring
- 84 percent retention
- 30 of the 135 had a GPA below a 2.0
- Average GPA 2.71

■ **Seguir Adelante Fall 2017 outcomes for COSA Economic Development Grant:**

For college track participants:

- Average GPA 2.24
- 75 percent enrolled for Spring 2018

For career readiness participants:

- 89 percent completed career readiness training

For GED through college participants:

- Average GPA 2.04
- 70 percent of those who passed GED enrolled in college
- 66 percent retention, Fall to Spring

Contact: Dr. Helen Vera, Director, Empowerment Center, mvera@alamo.edu



LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

AMBER ANGEL

Program Coordinator
Family Resource Center
Los Angeles Valley College

CHELSEA BAAK

Student
Allan Hancock College

TIFFANY BAILEY

Student
Portland Community College

PATRICIA BEDFORD

College Counselor
Project STRIDE
Manchester Community College

BRIE BICKLEY

*Ready to Work/Work and Learn
Coordinator*
Ready to Work
Maysville Community and Technical
College

KELLY BOSWELL

Success Coach/Retention Specialist
First Year Experience and Mapping
Opportunities for Single Parents
Niagara Community College

ROBIN BRITTEN

Student
North Arkansas College

JANICE BROWN

Director
Adult Services, Project Forward Step
Frederick Community College

STEVEN CHRISTOPHER

Associate Vice President
Student Accessibility and Social
Support Resources
Austin Community College

TERRY COX

*Vice President of Workforce
Development and Training*
Edmonds Community College

CRISTEEN CROUCHET

Director of Workforce Development
Clover Park Technical College

DR. CLAUDIA CURRY

Director
Women's Outreach and Advocacy
Center
Community College of Philadelphia

JENNIFER DELLINGER,

Program Manager
Washington State Board
for Community and Technical
Colleges

KIMBERLY DANIEL,

Director
KEYS Program
Community College of Philadelphia

JACK EATON

Executive Director
Single Parent Scholarship Fund
of Benton County, AR

LINSEY HART

Student
Allan Hancock College

DEBRA HUIE

Student
North Arkansas College

BRENDA FORTSON

*Career and Technical Education
Support Services Coordinator*
Meridian Community College

LISA GUTIERREZ

Student
Allan Hancock College

MARYANN HAYTMANEK

Director
New Choices Program
Northampton Community College



ANNE HOFMANN

Program Coordinator
Parents Lead
Frederick Community College

LINHPHUNG HUYNH

Program Manager
Washington State Board for Community
and Technical Colleges

TRIA JONES

Student
Community College of Philadelphia

SHAUNA KING-SIMMS

Chancellor's Office
Kentucky Community and Technical College

AIMÉE LAFOLLETTE JULIAN

Director
Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support

RACHEL LOSINGER

Student
Portland Community College

DELIA MARRERO

Graduate
Northampton Community College

REBECCA MARTIN,

Director
Career Pathways Initiative
North Arkansas College

CHRISTINE MCLAIN

Career Counselor
Center for Workforce Education
Jefferson State Community College

PENNY ROBINS

Life Skills Instructor
WorkFirst/Workforce Education Department
Edmonds Community College

MARNI ROOSEVELT

Director
Family Resource Center
Los Angeles Valley College

TRACI SIMMONS

Interim Dean of Student Development
Portland Community College

JACOB SMITH

Grants and Research Director
The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, AL

ALEXANDRA SPIESS

CARE Coordinator
CARE Program
Allan Hancock College

GABRIELLA STOREY

Student
Manchester Community College

DR. MARY HELEN VERA

Director
Services for Women and Non-traditional Students
San Antonio College

KIRI VILLA

CARE/EOPS Counselor
CARE Program
Allan Hancock College

LORI WAYSON

Senior Special Programs Coordinator
New Directions for Adult Learners
Holyoke Community College

MAGGIE WHEELER

Student
Manchester Community College

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STAFF

A. DESCRIBE THE VARIOUS SERVICES OFFERED TO SINGLE MOTHERS WHO ARE STUDENTS.

Philosophy and history

1. What was the catalyst for the program or set of practices?
2. Why and how did it get started? How did it grow?
3. How would you describe the overall philosophy or mission that drives your approach to single mother students?
4. How are single mother students involved in offering input, decisions, and implementation of supports?

Comprehensiveness, coordination, and commitment

1. How are the services coordinated? Are they presented as a coordinated, comprehensive set of services? (What does this look like, how presented to students?)
2. To what extent are you describing a special program versus an institution-wide approach?
3. Institutional commitment: Who would you say are the champion(s) and driver(s) of this program by role? How does the institution demonstrate commitment overall to single mothers?
4. What are the sources of funding for services?
5. Describe the staffing.
6. Approximately how many students participate in/receive these services and/or benefits?

Outreach, eligibility, and application process

1. What are the eligibility requirements? Are there services available to single mothers that don't fit the narrow eligibility of a particular program?
2. How are students recruited? How are services promoted/communicated across various academic and student services departments?
3. [If we haven't already found evidence of program on website or other public materials, ask for help finding student-facing info materials.]
4. What is the process for accessing services? For example, would I go to a number of different offices/departments to apply for each service separately or is there a single point of entry for a set of services? What does it look like from the student's perspective?

For each of the following, describe what is available to single mothers in your program/on your campus:

1. Case management/counseling
2. Childcare
3. Financial Support
4. Partnerships with campus departments and community agencies



B. WHAT DO YOU OBSERVE ABOUT THE UNIQUE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF SINGLE MOTHERS ON CAMPUS AND HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THESE?

1. What are the unique motivations and strengths of single mothers?
2. What do you observe about the role conflict/tensions for single mother students?
3. Does your program do anything to explicitly address or strengthen single mothers' identities as students as well as mothers?
4. What are the elements of your program that make the greatest difference to single mothers' persistence and success?
5. Do you have a cohort-based or other model that facilitates connection between single mother students?
6. Time in school is often an issue for single parents and accelerated programs have been found beneficial. Are there any accelerated or transition programs to shorten the time to completion?
7. Institutional Policies
 - a. What accommodations are made for single parents under stress?
 - b. Are there other institutional policies helpful to single parents?

C. WHAT DATA DO YOU COLLECT ON SINGLE MOTHER STUDENTS AND THE PROGRAMS THAT SERVE THEM, INCLUDING PROGRAM EVALUATIONS?

1. Do you collect data on single mother student demographics, enrollments, and completion rates?
2. Approximately how many students participate in/receive these services and/or benefits?
3. Do you track the programs of study that participating students are enrolled in?
4. Do you conduct assessments of
 - a. the resources provided on campus, by program
 - b. institutional policies that support single mothers
 - c. inter-departmental and external partnerships to leverage resources

D. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

1. Do you offer any professional development for faculty and staff related to working with single mothers or parents? Are parents or single mother students discussed as a special population?
2. Do you hear any faculty questions or concerns about single parent students?
3. Have you seen any results from professional development?

E. DO YOU ENGAGE IN ANY ADVOCACY WITHIN OR OUTSIDE THE INSTITUTION TO IMPROVE THE SITUATIONS OF SINGLE MOTHER STUDENTS?

1. Is there advocacy within the institution to improve the situation of single mother students? By whom? On what issues? Are students involved?
2. How are issues related to single parent students communicated to government relations leaders?
3. Does the college engage in advocacy related to state and federal policies that affect single parent students?



STUDENTS

Interview Questions – Students

1. What is it like for you to be a mother and a student at the same time?
2. When did you first enroll in this college (semester, year)?
3. Are you enrolled full-time or part-time?
4. What's your major/program of study?
5. How many children do you have and what are their ages?
6. Why did you enroll in college? What were your goals at the time?
7. What programs or services do you participate in on campus? What about in the community? Which of these are geared towards single mothers?
8. How did you learn about the services on campus? How did you learn about the services in the community?
9. How have these services helped you to stay in school?
10. Can you think of a time when something or someone really made a difference for you as a single parent student?
11. What's unique about your experience as a student?
12. What do you think are your unique strengths as student who is a single parent?
13. What else would be helpful that's not available (on campus, in the community)?
14. Have you, on your own or with other students, requested or advocated for additional services? What response did you get?
15. Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your experience?



LITERATURE REVIEW

April 2, 2018

This literature review presents a summary and analysis of research and reports on single mothers engaged in postsecondary education and training. It includes numerical data on the scope of the population; an explanation of the value of postsecondary education for two generations; typical characteristics and needs as well as variation within the single mother student population; examples of institutions providing career-focused programs; promising program practices; and policy issues. The majority of the literature we located was based on a college student population, ranging from those in community college certificate programs to those in baccalaureate programs. Although fewer studies were available on students in career and technical education, short-term certificate programs, or career pathway programs that bridge to college, available material did indicate similar needs. We also reviewed material on nontraditional students that was not limited to a single mother population.

This literature review is the first step in identifying evidence-based factors and a conceptual framework to guide our exploration of promising program models and practices that support single mothers' career readiness and success.

DATA ON SINGLE MOTHER STUDENTS

Single mothers are an increasing part of the postsecondary student population in the United States. In the 2011-2012 school year, there were over 2 million single mother college students, representing 11% of undergraduates. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of single mother students were low income, with 63% in poverty. Women of color are more likely to be single parent students. Although similar in many ways to other nontraditional students, single mothers face additional barriers to completing programs. Among single mothers who started college from 2003-2009, only 28% obtained a credential in six years, while 57% of women without children did so (Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2017). It is important to note, however, that six years may be too short a time frame to assess outcomes for this population since many study part-time and discontinuously (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; St. Rose & Hill, 2013). Looking at the data from another angle, among women age 25 and older, only 31% of single mothers had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 40% of all women (Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2017).

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training have the potential for life-changing benefits for single mothers and their children. Structural changes due to technology and the increased complexity of work have led to an increase in jobs requiring postsecondary education and a decrease in jobs for those with a high school education or less. These changes were accelerated by the recent recession: from 2010-2016, workers with a bachelor's degree or higher benefited from



an increase of 8.4 million jobs; those with an Associate's degree or some college regained the lost jobs for a net increase of 3.1 million, while those with a high school diploma or less lost over 5.5 million jobs. In total, 11.5 million of the 11.6 million jobs created in the recovery went to workers with some postsecondary education. Jobs available for those with a high school diploma or less are increasingly low-skill and low-wage (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish, 2016). Mothers seeking stable and meaningful work find they need postsecondary education.

Another benefit of postsecondary education is the availability of social interactions and access to networks that can assist with employment, services, and emotional support (Attewell & Lavin, 2007; Deutch & Schmertz, 2011; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2011). Attending and succeeding in an educational program also had psychological benefits such as an increase in self-efficacy (Bober, 2017).

A mother's education has significant short-term and long-term positive effects on her children. Attewell and Lavin (2007) conducted a rare longitudinal study of the effects of higher education on underprepared students and on the next generation. They followed up on CUNY students accepted in the early 1970s when open admissions was implemented. They found that enrollment in college changed the way women raised their children, and parenting practices affected children's outcomes. A mother who attended college had a positive effect on children's early vocabulary and on reading and math scores. Mothers with some college, and, even more so, mothers with a bachelor's degree, engaged in more cultural activities with children and were more involved in their children's schools. Mothers' college-going was also associated with greater social capital and community involvement. If a mother had a bachelor's degree, her children's probability of attending college and completing college was greater. Similarly, survey data indicated that the children of undergraduate student mothers showed increased motivation in school and higher educational aspirations (Wilsey, 2013; Karp, Osche, & Smith, 2016).

CHARACTERISTICS OF SINGLE PARENT STUDENTS

Qualitative studies as well as policy reports have given us a picture of common characteristics of single parent students. Their educational progress is frequently disrupted, whether because of pregnancy, caregiving, gendered messages designed to undermine aspirations for education or career, or abuse (Beeler, 2016; Deutch & Schmertz, 2011; Kahne & Mabel, 2009); this includes delayed high school graduation, and means they are likely to be older than traditional-aged students (Women Employed, 2012). They are also more likely to be first-generation students (Miller, Gault & Thorman, 2011). Some researchers have reported on the prevalence of abuse and trauma among adult women students (Bober, 2017; Kaplan-Bucciarelli, 2018). Gender issues related to control and domination by male partners may negatively affect enrollment and persistence. Similarly, negative messages from family members and others may lead to self-doubt (Cerven, 2013; Deutch & Schmertz, 2011).

For single mothers, the most consistent and striking motivation for seeking an education is their children. There are several facets to this. One is the sense of obligation to provide for their children financially and ensure them a better life. Another is the passion to be a role model for their children, to show them the value of education, and to teach them not to give up on their goals (Beeler, 2016; Bober, 2017; Cerven, 2013; Lovell, 2014; Wilsey, 2013). Not having another parent to share in these responsibilities heightens the mothers' sense of determination (Bober, 2017).

Attending postsecondary education may be stressful for many students. For single mothers, this is particularly true since, as sole parents, they suffer from role conflict and role strain (Beeler, 2016). As Beeler reports, they feel pressure to be both an "ideal student" and an "ideal parent" (p.71), an impossible standard. Although they feel they are making worthwhile sacrifices for the future, many student parents report distress at missing time with their



children (Beeler, 2016; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Lovell, 2014; Marx, 2002). Single women also experienced more financial difficulties than other students because of their generally lower wages and added family responsibilities (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011). The need to juggle their many roles may lead student parents to neglect their health (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2011).

Despite these pressures, some mothers are successful in their pursuit of postsecondary education, and several studies highlight the features that contribute to this. Cerven (2013) portrayed families as more likely to be a positive than a negative influence on single mothers aspiring to or enrolled in postsecondary education. In Martin et al.'s (2014) study of persistence factors, they found that a family member or other champion who assisted in managing time and demands made a difference. Having clearly defined career goals was an important factor in a successful trajectory, while confusion about goals or changes in majors led to lost time. They maintain that highly motivated students with clear goals are able to overcome academic underpreparedness.

VARIATION WITHIN THE POPULATION

A caution is in order not to overly generalize about single mothers when designing programs for them. There are variations among the population depending on the age of the mother, the age of the children, income, and educational backgrounds. In her study of undergraduate student mothers, Wilsey (2013) found that younger student parents focused more than the older ones on extrinsic motivation and improving their job prospects while older mothers had more intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Lovell (2014) found that mothers with older children had self-fulfillment goals while mothers of younger children were more focused on supporting their children financially. A study of programs in eight four-year colleges and universities (Karp et al., 2016) reported that younger student parents tended to be needier and would benefit most from wraparound programs with clear requirements.

NEEDS OF SINGLE MOTHER STUDENTS

Unsurprisingly, childcare is most frequently cited as a crucial need for single mother students, whether in a job training program or in college (Anderson & Hess, 2017; Beeler, 2016; Bober, 2017; Cerven, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2011; IWPR, 2011). Parents need to arrange childcare not only during class hours, but also when they work; they may need to patch together a series of childcare arrangements, including weekend and evening care (Miller et al., 2011).

Low-income single mothers have financial needs beyond what is provided by Pell grants; they need to provide for their children as well as meeting their own educational costs. Lack of financial security may force single mothers to work more than half time, creating a lower likelihood of completing an educational program. Housing is also a need for some, connected to lack of financial resources (Karp et al., 2016; Gault, Noll & Reichlin, 2017), and transportation costs may be a barrier to attendance (Anderson & Hess, 2017).

Student support services including counseling, advising, and career planning tailored to this population are needed given their specific challenges and the first generation status of many single mothers (Cerven, 2013; IWPR, 2011). In addition, peer support plays an important role for many by providing advice, information, and encouragement (Marx, 2002).

Given the disruptions in their education and the likelihood of a lower quality K-12 education, single mothers are often in need of academic support. They have a greater likelihood of needing developmental education (Beeler, 2016). They need to develop a new identity as a student in addition to their identities as worker and parent (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Reddy, 2012).

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Following are some examples of programs that have shown promising approaches towards assisting student parents in completing certificates or degrees. All of the programs combined financial assistance with counseling. These programs used random assignment so that the outcomes of the treatment group could be compared with those of a control group.

Under the umbrella of the Opening Doors Project, two Louisiana community colleges, working with the Department of Social Services and MDRC, and using TANF funding, initiated a performance-based scholarship program accompanied by additional counseling. Students, most of whom were single parents, were granted a \$1000 scholarship each semester for two semesters if they met certain benchmarks. The evaluation showed that the treatment group was more likely than the control group to enroll full-time; they passed more courses; and they had higher rates of registration in the second and third semesters. Due to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, longer-term outcomes could not be assessed (Brock & Richburg-Hayes, 2006).

The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) also used TANF funds while not requiring all students to be TANF recipients. It provided education and training to over 30,000 low-income parents at 22 community colleges and three university technical centers. Case management included advising, career planning, and financial assistance with childcare and college expenses. The evaluation reported that 52% of participants graduated as compared to 24% of the control group. CPI students of color graduated at three times the rate of their non-CPI peers. There was also evidence of income gain and reduction in use of public benefits (*College Counts*, 2018).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded programs through their Health Profession Opportunity Grants. One of these was located in King County, Washington. Program elements included case management/navigation; tuition for healthcare training at community or technical colleges or through vouchers; employment services; and financial assistance. Most participants chose nursing assistant training, and the majority selected private training providers rather than community colleges due to location, schedule, and short training cycles. Close to half of participants were TANF recipients; others were low-income; the majority were age 25 and over; and most were black or Hispanic. After assignment to the treatment group, 82% of participants enrolled in training; 45% attended at least one healthcare training while the others took prerequisites only; and 46% of those in training programs completed. Compared to the control group, the treatment group was more likely to attend training although not more likely to obtain a credential; they were more likely to obtain a job in healthcare (Glosser, Judkins, & Morrison, 2017).

PROMISING PROGRAM PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDED INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Through this literature review, we identified some existing, promising program practices as well as recommendations for institutional policies that support students who are single mothers. A common thread throughout is the centrality of relationship-building, communication, and collaboration among staff, between staff and students, among students, and with community partners for successful implementation of these supports.



Comprehensive student supports

Comprehensive supports are recommended so that single mothers have information and assistance in one location rather than piecemeal and so that follow-up is conducted regularly. They need help navigating systems and accessing services, including employment services. Support could be provided through a case manager, staff at a childcare center, or a one-stop center at a campus or community program (Anderson & Hess, 2017; Karp et al., 2016; Beeler, 2016; Cerven, 2013; Romo & Segura, 2010). It is important that students be assigned to a consistent counselor or case manager and that counselors be trained on the lives of single mothers; mandating a set number of counseling meetings is also recommended (Karp et al., 2016; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011). The case studies cited above used a comprehensive approach to support services.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Institutions could collect more complete data on the single mother student population demographics, enrollments, and completion rates, and conduct an assessment of the resources they provide to inform the development of supportive programs, partnerships, and policy.

Professional development

Institutions would better serve student parents if they provided professional development for faculty and staff about that population in their programs or campuses to encourage a more welcoming and supportive environment (Karp, 2016; Gault, Noll & Reichlin, 2017). This includes professional development about creating a trauma-informed environment (Kaplan-Bucciarelli, 2018).

Accelerated transition curriculum

There is increasing evidence for the value of acceleration through integrated education and training (basic academic and career and technical/occupation training taught concurrently and contextually) or the integration of remedial and college-level instruction. These strategies move students more quickly to credentials (Wachen et al., 2012). Math requirements and math teaching styles should be re-evaluated since they are often a barrier to progress (Bober, 2017). Transition programs also play an important role in acculturating adult students to the academic environment and bolstering their academic skills, college knowledge, and self-confidence (Kaplan-Bucciarelli, 2018).

Personal and academic support

Role strain, role conflict, and disrupted educational progress result in a need for validation, for reassurance that single mothers belong in an educational program, and for development of a student identity (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011). Peer support groups are important in this context, whether informal or structured (Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Marx, 2002). Students may benefit from a cohort model which supports the development of relationships with other students. A community space and activities dedicated to students who are parents is another recommendation (Karp et al., 2016; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011). Faculty and staff also play an important role through their teaching style and relationships with students. Deutsch & Schmertz (2011) propose incentives for faculty to mentor adult students. Community or peer mentors can also be cultivated. Flexible policies and accommodations for parents under stress contribute to retention (Karp et al., 2016).



Academic and career advising

Effective advising on course selection enables students to take the shortest path to a certificate or degree (Martin et al., 2013). Women students often need encouragement to enter higher paid nontraditional or science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs; advisors need training to perform this role (St. Rose & Hill, 2013).

Income support

The Louisiana program described above suggests that performance-based scholarships are effective in promoting persistence. Even a small additional grant can make a difference (Brock & Richburg-Hayes, 2006). In addition, an unexpected expense like a car repair can derail educational progress; emergency funds can make the difference between remaining in school and withdrawing (Anderson & Hess, 2017).

Childcare

On-site childcare or childcare referrals, including to community programs and home care, are valuable program elements. On-site childcare provides convenience, peace of mind, a quality experience for children, and connections to other parents. Collaborative relationships with community childcare programs, including availability of subsidies, may provide access to programs closer to students' homes. A network of vetted home care providers is a cost-effective option for younger children (Karp et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2011).

Access to support services and housing

Some institutions provide staff support to help students determine eligibility for and access public benefits and assist them in obtaining housing (Gault et al., 2017).

Community partnerships

Partnerships with community organizations may be the most effective, practical, and cost-effective means of providing some support services to college or job-training participants, e.g. for childcare, housing, mental health, or domestic violence services (Karp et al., 2016; Gault et al., 2017).

FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY ISSUES

The literature identifies national and state policy issues in four areas: welfare, financial aid, childcare, and workforce development.

TANF

Under the 1996 welfare reform (PRWORA), recipients may engage in up to two years of education, but only if they simultaneously work. Implementation of TANF guidelines varies from state to state, and some states are more supportive of education. Since TANF is a block grant and is not limited to income support, two of the programs described above were able to use TANF funds for educational supports that were not restricted to TANF recipients (Brock & Richburg-Hayes, 2006; *College Counts*, 2018).

Frequent policy recommendations in the literature are to end the TANF time limits on education, allow education to be counted towards the work requirement or reduce required work hours for students, and/or establish stronger relationships between TANF counselors and education programs (Beeler, 2016; Cerven, 2013; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Faul, 2012; Gault et al., 2017; Johnson, 2010; Marx, 2002; Romo & Segura, 2010; IWPR, 2011).



Financial aid

Low-income students rely on the Pell Grant for their college expenses, but the Pell has not kept pace with the increases in college costs; on average, community college students have an unmet need of \$4000. As a result, most Pell Grant recipients have to work while attending college: almost half both work and study full-time, and some have to take out loans. More than a third of Pell recipients are parents, and they are more likely to be students of color. CLASP recommends that the Pell be strengthened by preserving mandatory funding, raising appropriations caps, and indexing it to inflation (Walzer, 2017). Karp et al. (2016) point out that the FAFSA does not adjust calculations based on the additional financial needs of parents; policies should be revised to better meet those needs. Kahne and Mabel (2009) recommend increasing grant aid overall and providing more funds for part-time students and those seeking certificates. As Congress considers the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, there is currently an interest in allowing Pell grants to be used for short-term certificate programs (Taliaferro, 2018). Karp et al. (2016) recommend work-study opportunities targeted to parents as a more convenient and productive use of their work time.

Childcare

On-campus childcare provides not only convenience for student parents, but also a high quality experience for the children and connections among parents. However, the availability is highly limited and declining: it meets only 5% of the need. In 2009, less than half of community colleges and extremely few private institutions offered childcare. It is rare to find on-campus afterschool care for children of school age; infant and toddler programs and weekend and evening care are also in short supply. Free or low cost childcare is essential for low-income single parent students. However, costs for institutions, especially for the youngest children, are high, and public colleges have experienced budget cuts. The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) recommends a dedicated funding source for on-campus childcare facilities; demonstration projects by charitable organizations; coordination of services for student parents through childcare centers; an increase in CCAMPIS funding and a revision of the funding formula; and advocacy for childcare based on the impact on student parents; enrollment, persistence, and completion (Miller et al., 2011).

Workforce development

The workforce development system is inadequate to meet the needs. Kahne and Mabel (2009) make several recommendations to improve the system for single mothers. First, they advocate for greater support for workforce intermediaries as public/private partnerships that support career pathways to high wage jobs. Second, they propose integrating community college funding sources into a career pathways model encompassing GED, remedial, and occupational education, and they advocate for an increase in state funds for public colleges. Third, they support providing simplified access to underutilized income supports such as SNAP through a one-stop model.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) permits use of funds for supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and housing assistance. Single parents are identified as special populations in need under WIOA and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Gault et al., 2017).

There is a need to identify high-wage job opportunities, including those that are not traditional for women (Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative, 2017). Short-term certificate programs are valuable in leading to employment in a field of interest, but there is less evidence that they provide sufficient income gain for a family-sustaining wage (Farrell & Martinson, 2017); ideally, they would be the first step in a career pathway, as promoted under WIOA (Taliaferro, 2018). Women tend to choose or be steered toward middle skill careers that

pay significantly less than those that are predominantly male; they may have concerns about discrimination or harassment in male-dominated fields. Despite a policy that states increase the numbers of female and male trainees in fields where they are underrepresented, enforcement is lacking. More could be done in the areas of recruitment and counseling (Field, 2018).

CONCLUSION

With a powerful motivation to improve the lives of their families and set a positive example for their children, many single mothers are pursuing education and training that will lead to better paying work and a meaningful career. The obstacles they face are daunting, but there are policies and practices that can help these determined and resilient women move forward.

While the needs of single mothers overlap with those of other nontraditional postsecondary students, review of the literature has demonstrated that the single mother population has been identified as a group of special interest in academic studies and in policy reports by nonprofit organizations. This may in part be a reflection of the growth in this category of student. The focus, however, has generally been on students in a college or university setting. Further investigation is needed to determine to what extent the findings are generally applicable to single mothers in career and technical education and career pathways programs.

The literature review provides a basis for our planning project to lay the foundation for viable and scalable implementation nationwide of programs and policies that prepare single mothers for success in career pathways. As we consider the findings and gaps in this initial review, the project team will develop a conceptual framework and questions for investigation of program models. We will examine the assumptions in the literature that the provision of additional supports will smooth the way for single parents to succeed in the existing educational structures and consider various models.

After developing our conceptual framework, screening criteria, and questions, we will identify programs to study through interviews with staff and faculty, lead administrators, and single mother students. We will document the models and practices we find through detailed program profiles. This investigation will lead to recommendations for an implementation and dissemination plan.

Appendix E

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