

## **Building Strong Enrollments:**

### **Marketing & Recruitment Strategies for Adult Career Pathway (ACP) Programs**

*Compiled from presenter and participant ideas, ACP Webinar, 2/20/2020, Liz Andress*

#### **Definitions**

- Marketing – overall/multi-pronged strategy to meet enrollment goals
- Advertising – getting the word out
- Recruitment – getting the students in
- Retention – keeping the students once they're in

#### **Identify and actively recruit target student populations for ACP courses**

- Use SID to document students' career interests, at intake and on-going; then pull lists from SID for direct outreach to and recruitment of students for particular ACP courses.
- Be specific in your targeted recruitment. Examples:
  - Promote child development courses to parents in your family literacy classes.
  - Work with your school district to invite entry-level nutrition services workers into a food safety manager course; and to invite custodians into a boiler license class. These certifications provide a pathway to advancement.
- They can also be encouraged/enticed to participate in the concurrent support class (more contact hours) with a “reward” for participation and successful completion of the college class. (For example, welding students can be offered a PPE – personal protective equipment. Child development students have been offered financial assistance for books and transportation.)
- In a community/technical college course in which an ABE instructor is co-teaching / providing integrated instruction and/or providing a concurrent support class for ABE-eligible learners, TABE-test *all* students in the college class at the beginning of the term, both those who entered through the ABE ACP program and those who entered the class directly. You will find that many of them qualify for ABE services based on their TABE scores. For all co-teaching hours by the ABE instructor, those students can be counted for contact hours. They can be encouraged/enticed to participate in the ACP program with a “reward” for participation. (For example, welding students may qualify for a PPE – personal protective equipment. Tuition assistance, gas or bus vouchers may also be provided.)

## **“Brand” yourself for maximum appeal / clarity for target populations**

- Example: Mankato ABE has rebranded their former “FastTrack” ACP programs to “SCC Connects” (SCC is their local community college). Many ABE learners want to be college-bound, and this branding attracts their interest as a pathway to success in college.

## **Create effective and varied advertising materials**

- Ensure that materials intended to attract potential ACP students are information-light, graphically appealing, big font, with content that highlights the *benefits* of participation (leave out the TABE cut scores, schedule specifics, and other details for now; the goal is to get them in the door and then advise).
- Ensure that materials intended for potential referral sources includes all the information they need to know if a program is a fit for their clients.
  - Ask partners, e.g., at SNAP, the workforce center, employer human resources departments, etc. what info they need in order to determine eligibility for clients.
- Produce short videos with ACP program information and/or ACP student testimonials and post to your program website, include links in e-newsletters and ACP program announcements to potential students and referral sources. (Example: [Rochester ABE video](#) – bottom of page)
- Create and continuously update ACP program brochure(s) and flyer(s). (Example: [Metro South ABE Paraprofessional program flyer](#))
- Create a stand-up tabletop display with ACP program information, student and workplace photos and contact info / how to enroll. This can be used in-house and at community events.
- Use MailChimp online app to create easy designed/formatted e-newsletter(s) / e-mail messages, email to targeted subsets of contacts.

## **Emphasize the career opportunities available**

- Create career guides with location-specific information about job opportunities. (Example: [Healthcare Careers: Guide to Colleges and Careers in Healthcare in the Twin Cities Metro Area](#), International Institute of Minnesota, 34 pages)
- Create pathways sector charts. (Example: [Metro South ABE - Healthcare Pathways](#))
- Arrange guest speakers from businesses offering employment in the career sector and let prospective students know that they are hiring ACP program completers.

## **Advertise directly to potential ACP students**

- *Remind* app – compose and send text messages from ABE computer to students' phones.
- Produce an ABE program podcast to promote program offerings.
- Post flyers around the community.
  - Find out from current students what establishments they frequent
  - Invite students to volunteer to post flyers themselves in strategic locations
  - At community college, incl. veterans' resource center
  - Local workforce center
- Engage current ABE / ACP students – word of mouth is often the best method!
  - Students take a photo of ACP program flyer and share with family and friends via SnapChat or other social media
  - Tell their family and friends face-to-face
- Have information table, staff, students at community events

## **Use social media to reach potential ACP students**

- Consider Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, Instagram, TikTok.
  - Find out from your current learners which social media platforms they and their circles use most
  - Highlight ACP “graduations”, upcoming programs, student success stories
  - Examples: [Metro North ABE Facebook page](#); [#IamABE on Facebook](#)
- Use college interns to expand social media presence.
- Run targeted ads on Facebook or Google.
- Ensure prominent links to ACP programs on your ABE website homepage.

## **Recruit and inform students**

- ACP course instructor, navigator, and/or current/former ACP students visit your ABE classes, talk directly to student groups about benefits, answer questions, etc.
- Staff an ACP program information table at your ABE site prior to / during the enrollment period. Navigator and/or current/former ACP students can staff table, encourage students to enroll, answer questions, etc.
- Hold information / orientation / enrollment sessions about ACP program(s), invite potential students who have expressed interest.

### **Inform potential student referral sources**

- Build / sustain partnerships with employers (human resource departments, managers), job training centers, other referral sources so they understand and trust the quality of your programs.
  - Human resource departments can refer non-qualified job applicants to an ACP program to up-skill
- Create (and continually expand) email list of potential referral sources
  - Employers, non-profits, city, county, school district, community-based organizations, SNAP, MFIP, WIOA partners incl. Vocational Rehab Services (VRS), other service providers with clients that need ABE services / ACP programs
- Visit businesses where on-site ABE/ACP classes are offered; speak directly to managers and workers.
- Email ACP brochure / flyer
- Email ABE program newsletter that includes ACP programs, participant testimonials, etc.

### **Keep wait-listed students in the pipeline for next ACP course offering**

- Enroll them in distance learning directly related to the ACP program they are waiting to enter and/or to build basic skills needed to succeed in the ACP course
- Enroll them in a different, related course that will prepare them for success in the upcoming ACP course, or provide an additional credential or skill set
- Enroll them in “core”/standard ABE courses, help them “keep their eyes on the prize” – their goal to get their basic skills up so they qualify to enter and succeed in the ACP course/program

### **Set enrollment goals, consider attrition**

- Start with how many students you want to complete a course, or a multi-step career pathway program, anticipate a reasonable attrition rate, and work toward initial enrollment numbers high enough to meet the completion goals.
- Be clear what “completion” means within your ACP program – e.g., completing one / multiple / all steps in a career pathway program; obtaining an industry recognized credential; gaining employment

## **Structure the course/program to fit participant needs**

- Choose the best day(s) of the week. Example: A weekday child development class of high interest to women providing weekday childcare was moved to Saturdays and enrollment quadrupled.
- Combine classroom and online learning to reduce commute time for learners.
- Create an “on-ramp” ACP course for learners eager to enter the career area but not yet qualified based on NRS level. Continually track them from the on-ramp until they are able to enter the bridge or other ACP course.
- Offer ACP courses on a schedule that can ensure higher enrollments (i.e., beware of offering the same ACP course too many times in a row – the pool of participants may run dry for awhile).
- Ensure that ACP programs are high quality and the messaging is consistent. Word of mouth will reach potential future participants!