

Free College Tuition Programs for Adults:

Where Are They, How Do They Work, and How Can Employers and Colleges Work Together to Grow Such Programs?

JULY 2021

CARPE

Center for Applied Research
in Postsecondary Education

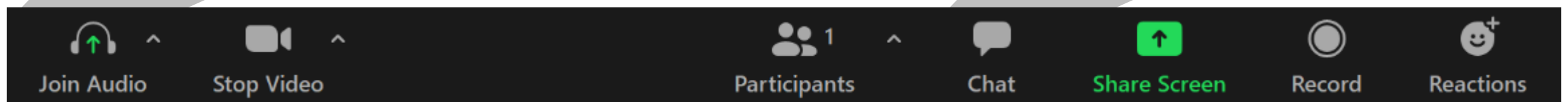
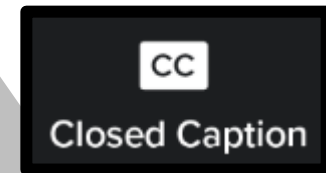
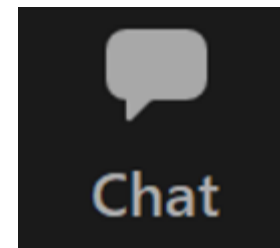
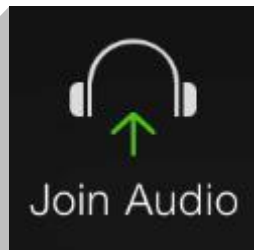
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Introductions



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Agenda

1. Welcome and CARPE Overview
2. Free College Tuition Programs for Adults Overview
3. Panel Discussion
4. Question and Answer Session

CARPE: What We Do

We tackle postsecondary education's most pressing challenges by generating actionable insights and helping the field implement effective solutions.



How We Do It



We ground our work in practice.



We build the field's capacity to improve outcomes.



We apply our deep research expertise.



We share what we discover.

Presentation: Free College Tuition Programs for Adults: Where Are They and How Do They Work?

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Co-Authors: Katherine Hughes, Roman Ruiz, Ji Hyun Yang, and Christopher Carvajal Rivera, AIR

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Organization of This Presentation

- Background
- What we did
- What we found
 - Where are free college tuition programs located?
 - How do these programs work?
 - Adult-eligible vs. adult-friendly programs
- How you can explore these data
- Implications for policy, practice, and research

Background

- ↑ Cost of college
- ↑ Need for postsecondary training
- ↑ Support for free college tuition programs
- Programs are oriented predominantly toward recent high school graduates
- Little is known about programs open to adults



What We Did

Established inclusion criteria:

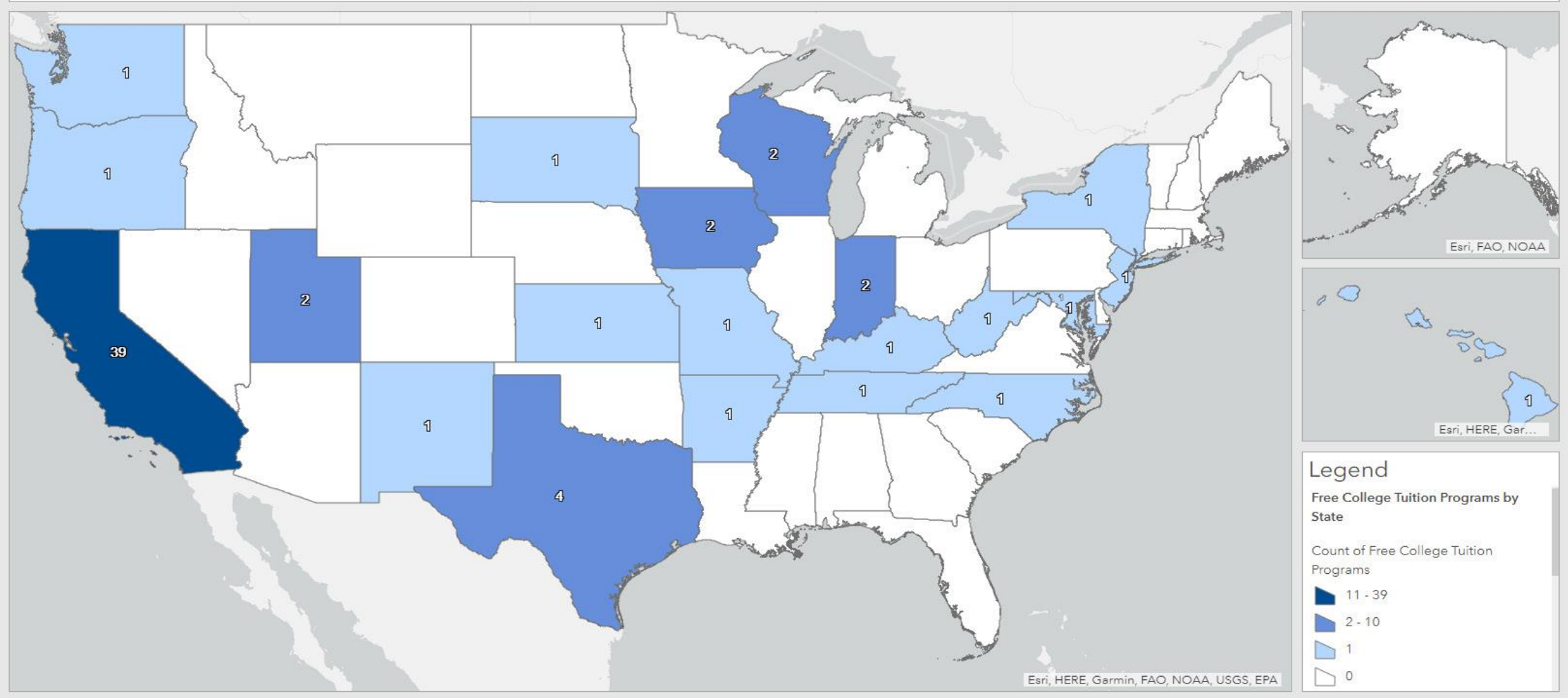
- Cover full tuition for a certificate or degree
- Universal/broad eligibility

Reviewed several hundred programs for possible inclusion

Coded the official websites of all potential programs

Established a list of 67 programs **open** to adults

What We Found: Where Are These 67 Programs?



What We Found: How Do These Programs Work?

- 63 programs required participants to apply for financial aid
- 18 programs required participants to demonstrate financial need



What We Found: How Do These Programs Work?



- 57 programs included at least one 2-year public college
- 18 programs allowed participants to enroll at a 4-year public college

What We Found: How Do These Programs Work?

- 9 programs required participants to pursue a particular program of study, often identified as high need or high demand
- 5 programs had postgraduation residency and/or work requirements



What We Found: Prior Postsecondary Attendance Allowed

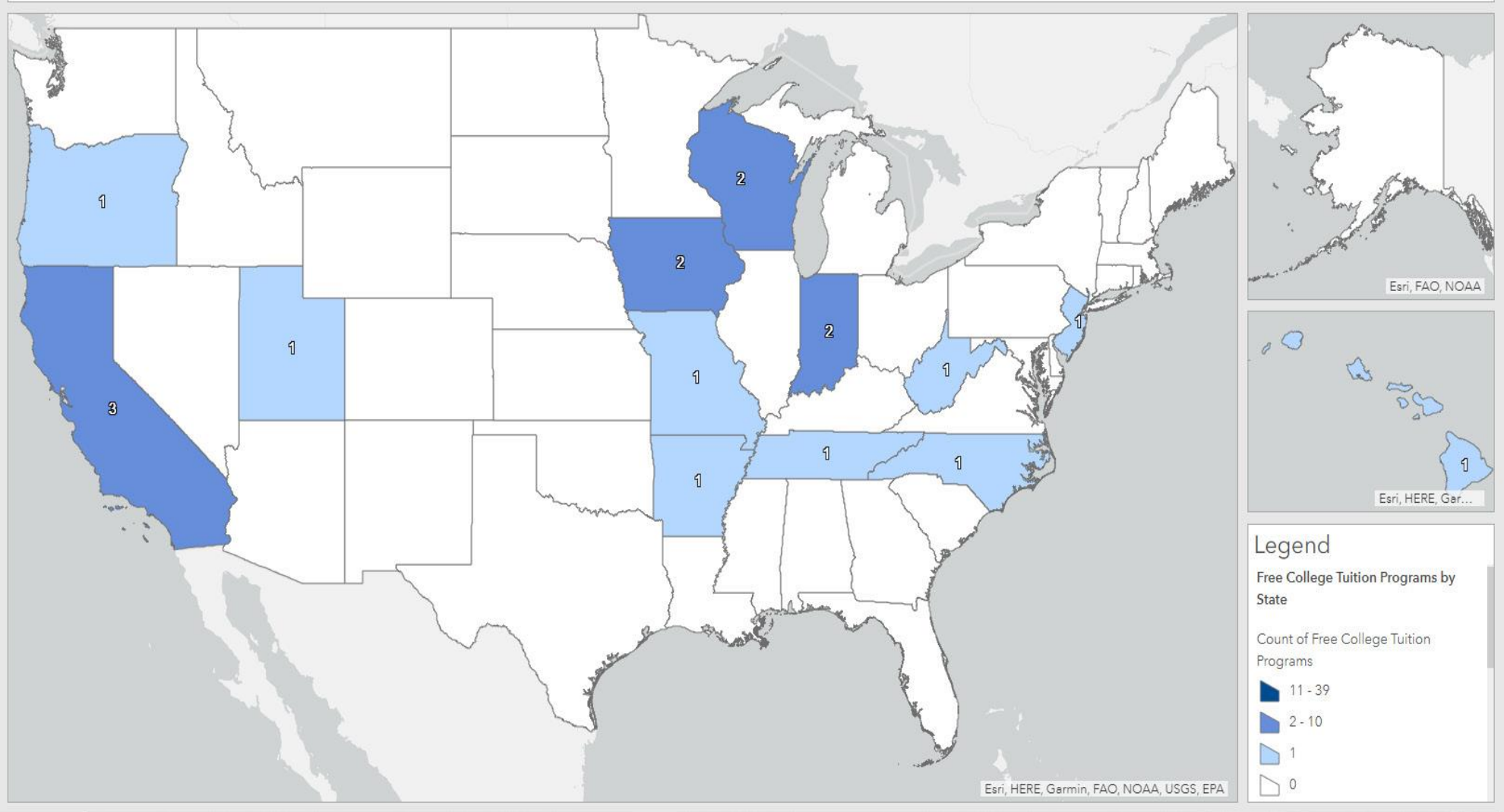
Adults who have
some college but
no degree

20%

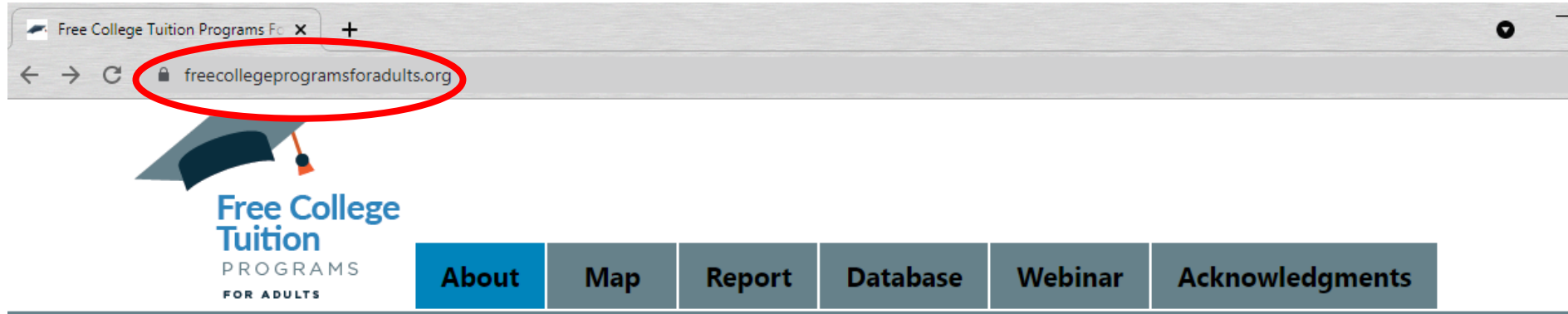
37

adult-eligible programs
would exclude them

What We Found: Part-time Attendance Allowed



How You Can Explore These Data



About

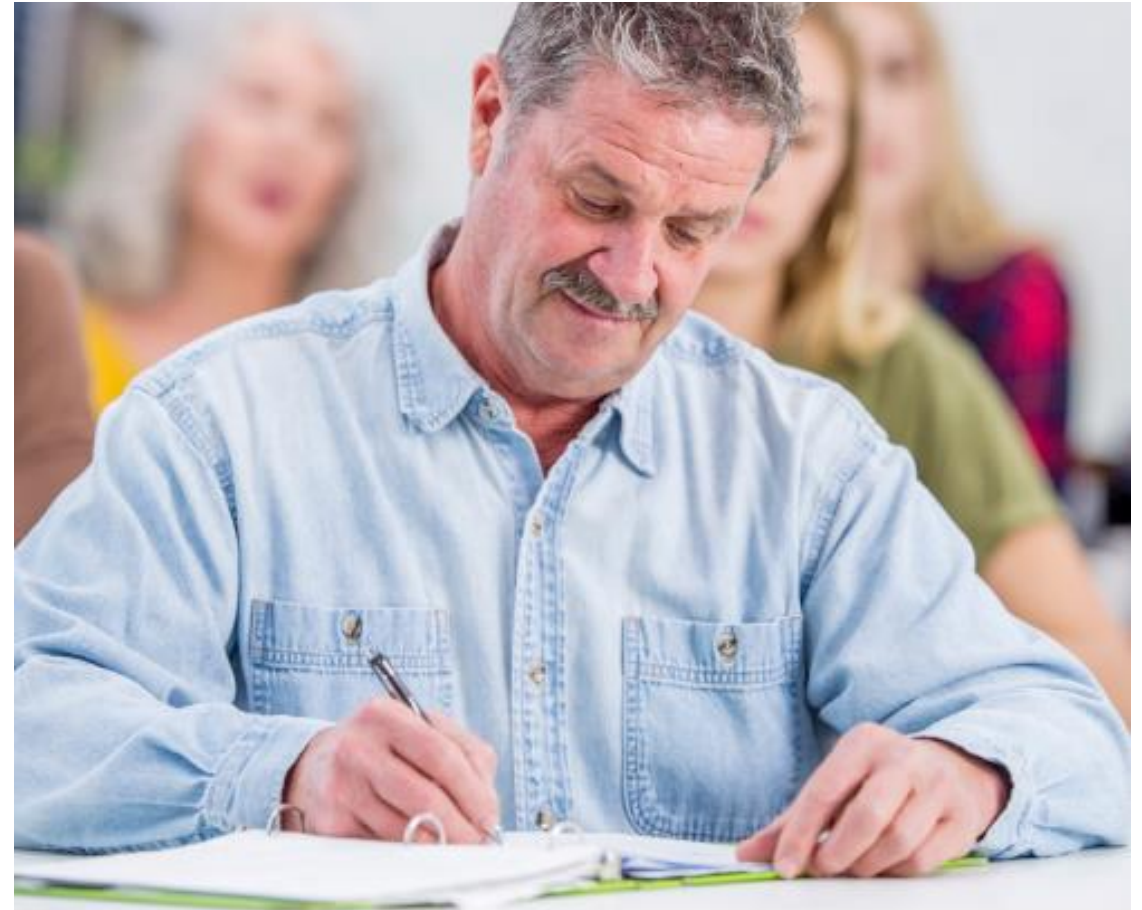
The rising cost of college and growing need for postsecondary education and training has generated great interest in free college tuition programs. Yet many of these programs aim to serve recent high school graduates and little is known about the programs open to adults. To fill this knowledge gap, the American Institutes for Research, under a grant funded by Walmart, conducted a scan of free college tuition program websites in spring 2021. This scan culminated in this project website, which contains an interactive map, a report, a downloadable database of programs, and a webinar that explores how free college tuition programs for adults might better leverage employers in establishing and advancing programs.



Map

Implications for Policy and Practice

- Carefully consider program requirements
- Improve marketing and communication about programs
- Collect data



Implications for Research

Explore:

- Funding models
- Role of partners
- Student voice
- Participants' outcomes



Panel Discussion

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AYD Core Components Remove Barriers

- **Financial**
 - Little to no upfront costs for learners - removes financial barriers through deferred billing
 - Utilizes available employer tuition assistance dollars; leverages federal/state aid (FAFSA filing) to stretch \$
- **High touch supports**
 - “Concierge” model; including onsite sessions, mid-term grade monitoring, coordinator point of contact
- **Employer-driven**
 - Employers choose relevant credential pathways for needs
 - Employer-specific application portal

AYD Shows Promising Outcomes

Since program inception Fall 2016:

- **Enrollment:** nearly 4,600 total AYD participants
 - Majority are part-time, averaging 6 credits a term
- **Retention:** average 74% Fall-Spring; 55% Fall-Fall
- **Completions:** over 1,100 learners have earned associate degree or certificate credential
- **Employer AYD Partners:** 220+

Panel Discussion

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Questions

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