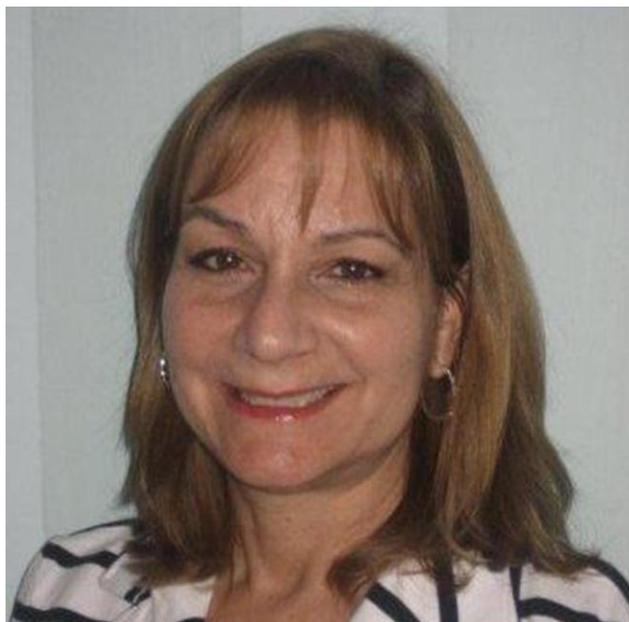


# OVAE CONNECTION



## OVAE Welcomes Rosanne Andre!

Rosanne Andre recently joined OVAE's Division of Academic and Technical Education (DATE) as an audit resolution specialist. She is responsible for reviewing single audits of vocational and adult education programs administered by state education offices. She will also develop proposed recommendations for settling cases of expenditures not allowed under *Perkins IV* and applicable federal regulations. Prior to joining DATE, Andre was with the Department's Federal Student Aid Office as both a senior financial analyst and an audit resolution specialist. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from James Madison University.

## Education and Employment Strategies for Low-Income Adults

A recent education research synthesis brief from the [Urban Institute](#), [Improving Employment and Earnings for TANF Recipients](#), reviews strategies found effective in increasing employment and earnings among welfare recipients to reduce their long-term reliance on welfare benefits. The findings show a clear role for skills enhancement, but also suggest balancing a focus on job-seeking and work with goal-directed education and training. Promising programmatic tools identified include financial incentives to increase job retention and earnings, as well as participation in and completion of education and training, experienced job placement intermediaries to help welfare recipients find and move into better jobs; and high-quality sectoral training with strong employer ties. While several strategies were found effective, they have not proven to be transformational, and thus, the brief indicates, much still remains to be learned about how best to increase the self-sufficiency and financial well-being of low-income parents.

## Student-Identified Barriers to Community College Success

A recently released study, [Student Voices on the Higher Education Pathway: Preliminary Insights & Stakeholder Engagement Considerations](#) reported on the opinions of current and former community college students (including completers and non-completers) about the expectations for and experiences in college. This report, by Public Agenda and WestEd, is a part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Postsecondary Success initiative, Completion by Design. In the focus groups that inform the substance of this study, the authors paid particular attention to how some students succeed while others do not. The report also focuses on students' opinions about those factors that could have enhanced their success.

As the report notes, one of the central tenets of efforts to improve the community college experiences focuses on student-centeredness. In such an effort, keeping students' opinions and experiences at the center of reform plans can enhance the implementation of these reforms. Generally speaking, five themes came to the fore in the focus groups that were shared by both current and former students.

*Theme One.* Students wanted more exposure to career possibilities so that they could make better-informed decisions about the goals they set out to achieve and the steps necessary for success.

*Theme Two.* While former and current community college students consistently reported that they lacked readiness for college, most believed that the student success and developmental education courses intended to bring them up to speed were not offered in a way that helped them succeed.

*Theme Three.* Participants believed that having clear goals and being in programs with well-defined pathways gave them a greater chance of persisting, completing, or transferring.

*Theme Four.* Advisors, counselors, and faculty members who offer support and guidance that is accurate, accessible, and tailored to students' education and career goals are in high demand and can be hard to come by.

*Theme Five.* Students are aware that colleges offer a wide range of services, but they report that finding the specific information or services they need often required going on a "wild goose chase" and navigating silos.

The last section of the study offers a set of questions developed to encourage dialogue and collaborative problem solving among college stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

The [Internal Stakeholder Engagement Workshop Toolkit](#) (2012) developed by Public Agenda for Completion by Design offers guidance on designing and conducting problem-solving dialogues aimed at enhancing student success at community colleges.