

## Minnesota Announces FastTRAC Adult Career Pathway Model

Minnesota recently received legislative approval to implement its [FastTRAC](#) adult career pathway model. FastTRAC—training, resources and credentialing—is a collaboration among [state, local, and national partners](#) to align their resources to achieve long-term outcomes for adult learners and to meet the common skills needs of Minnesota businesses. By 2013, community and technical colleges may offer FastTRAC programs and Minnesota’s Adult Basic Education (ABE) system will be a required partner in all of them. Pairs of ABE and college instructors will co-teach bridge and integrated courses for credit. To make attaining a postsecondary degree manageable and to ensure employment, the program provides basic skills, targets occupations in high demand by local employers, and is tailored to adults who are managing many responsibilities, such as working full-time and taking care of a family. Thus, it offers career and academic advising and support services, such as childcare and transportation.

To date, 88 percent of participants in FastTRAC credit-bearing, integrated ABE/postsecondary courses have successfully completed them. In contrast, traditional approaches result in a lack of basic skills among about 25 percent of adult learners who are completing their remedial coursework. And only 4 percent complete a degree or certificate within five years of enrollment. In addition to the [FastTRAC](#) website, visit [All Hands On Deck](#), Minnesota’s blueprint for strengthening its workforce and closing its skills gap.

## Welcoming America for Welcoming Immigrants

[Welcoming America](#) describes itself as “a national, grassroots-driven collaborative that works to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans.” The organization says that its “ultimate goal ... is to create an atmosphere—community by community—in which immigrants are more likely to integrate into the social fabric of their adopted hometowns.” Welcoming America was founded in 2009 to establish a network of affiliates across the United States to spread the message that “immigrants make us stronger.” It was inspired by the recent high immigration rates in small cities and towns that had little experience welcoming different languages and cultures and where tensions had begun to rise. The Welcoming America founders noted that, while organizations assisted immigrants in adjusting to life in the U.S., few helped U.S. communities to be receptive to their new neighbors.

The model used in the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, an initiative of [Welcoming Tennessee](#), was awarded the *E Pluribus Unum* prize by the Migration Policy Institute in 2009, and has been adopted by Welcoming America. It emphasizes counteracting negative messages by disseminating positive messages and using face-to-face contact to build mutual respect and understanding. The model prepares local leaders to develop plans suited to the locality’s circumstances and to form a welcoming committee to lead those planned efforts. The communitywide communication of positive messages leads to thoughtful conversations across different cultures and builds an understanding and appreciation of values, commonalities, and differences. Welcoming America has active affiliates in 20 states, from California and Idaho in the West, to Alabama and Tennessee in the South, Iowa and Illinois in the Mid-West, and New York and New Hampshire in the Northeast.

## Report on Opportunities for Immigrant Students From CCCIE

The [Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education \(CCCIE\)](#) is a network of 23 community colleges and other professional and research entities hosted by Westchester Community College, in Valhalla, N.Y. CCCIE has issued the report [Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community College Strategies for Success](#) to raise awareness of the role community colleges play in delivering educational opportunities to immigrants and to expand the range and quality of programs and services for immigrant students among community colleges.

The featured colleges recognize the contributions of immigrants to their communities’ economic growth and cultural diversity. With the aging of the U.S. population, immigrants and their children will be an increasing proportion of the labor force. As a consequence, the report argues, educational access and success by immigrants are essential to increased U.S. college completion, improved workforce readiness, and sustained productivity. The report illustrates how CCCIE colleges are improving educational and employment outcomes for immigrant students, including accessibility, affordability, degree or certificate completion, and job placements. In addition, through their English as a Second Language (ESL), career, and academic programs, the colleges are addressing community and regional skills shortages.

The colleges profiled are diverse not only in location and size, but also in the populations they serve, which have a wide range of English language proficiency, educational and skill levels, and countries of origin. Their immigrant student populations often come from low-income backgrounds and include older adult students who must immediately meet work and family responsibilities, learn a new language, adjust to new educational and community services systems, and acclimate to a new culture.

The report describes the Framework for Supporting Immigrant Student Success, which identifies 11 key factors in the programs of the CCCIE colleges, including executive commitment and follow-through; proactive community outreach; multi-sector partnerships; redesign of ESL and ESL faculty professional development; and development of immigrant student leadership skills.