Findings from the Adult Transitions Longitudinal Study

presented by Cristine Smith
Findings from the Adult Transitions Longitudinal Study

Sandy Goodman
Director of Career Pathways

Ben Bruno
Media Specialist

• 25 ABE programs partnered with local community colleges.
• Designed and managed by the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education
• Funded by Nellie Mae Education Foundation
• Foundation for the National College Transition Network (NCTN) and the College Transition Toolkit
College Prep Model

• Stand-alone 14 week program
• 6 hours of instruction and advising per week
• Cohorts of 15-20 students per session
• Participants had high school credentials at time of enrollment
Adult Transitions Longitudinal Study (ATLAS)

Results from a longitudinal study of ABE-to-College Transition Program participants

Cristine Smith, Associate Professor

A two-part webinar:
February 11, 2014: 2:00-3:30 pm
March 4, 2014: 2:00-3:30 pm
ATLAS Study

Funded by Nellie Mae Education Foundation

Implemented by:
University of Massachusetts

World Education

New England Literacy Resource Center

National College Transition Network

Special thanks to Laura Gluck, Research Coordinator
Research Questions

• What are the educational outcomes for adult students who participated in the ABE-to-College Transition Program?

• What are the factors that influenced those outcomes?
  • **Individual factors:** life situation, supports and barriers, motivation, academic skills
  • **Program factors:** features of transition program design
  • **College factors:** support services, social networks
Brief facts about ATLAS

- Study started in 2007; data collection ended in 2012
- Tracked 227 participants from 11 ABE-to-College Transition programs in New England
- All participants enrolled in Fall 2007 or Spring 2008 fifteen-week transition course that offered some combination of:
  - Academic skill building (math, writing, computer skills)
  - Career exploration
  - Knowledge about applying to and studying in college
  - Study and life skills
- Panel study: no control or comparison group
ATLAS data

- Yearly survey of all participants:
  - Year 1: background info, educational history, goals, literacy skills
  - Years 2 and 3: college participation and status, supports and hindrances
  - Year 4: college participation and status, supports and hindrances, literacy skills

- Yearly audiotaped interview with 24 randomly selected participants

- 13 videotaped “educational biography” interviews with purposely selected participants
ATLAS data

- Information from transition programs: intake, exit, scores, attendance, program features

- College transcripts for all participants who enrolled in college

- 208 participants completed year 4 survey
- 195 participants completed at least 3 surveys
- 133 participants completed all 4 surveys
Key characteristics of our sample

- 81% female
- 80% U.S. born
- Average age = 36 (range: 21 to 62)
- 81% English as their first language
- 56% European-American, 13% African-American, 8% Hispanic or Latino/a, 16% identified multi-ethnicity
- 44% single, 34% married, 10% domestic partnership, 12% divorced
- 79% young children; 21% no or teenage children
Key characteristics of our sample

- 52% earn less than $250/week, 35% earn less than $500/week
- Annual household income:
  - 7% = Less than $5,000
  - 24% = $5,000 - $20,000
  - 18% = $20,000 - $29,000
  - 13% = $30,000 - $40,000
  - 29% = Over $40,000
- 46% received GED, 37% traditional h.s. diploma, 17% alternative h.s. diploma
- College goal (as stated in year 1):
  - 61% - Associates degree
  - 18% - Bachelor’s degree
  - 16% - Professional certificate
  - 5% - Graduate degree
## Six Educational Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Outcome (Dependent Variable)</th>
<th>N=220, whole sample</th>
<th>% of whole sample</th>
<th>mean, enrolled in college (138)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trajectory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never enrolled in college</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ever enrolled, dropped out</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Still enrolled or graduated at end of study (includes stop outs)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enroll</strong></td>
<td>2. Completed 3 non-dev ed (transferable) credits</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Enrolled in college within 1 year after transition course</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persist</strong></td>
<td>4. Mean semesters completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success</strong></td>
<td>5. Mean credits completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Reached “tipping point” (30 transferable credits)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost 2/3 of ATLAS participants enrolled in college at some point following their participation in the transition program (n=220).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trajectory</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never applied to college</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied but not accepted</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied and accepted but didn’t enroll or start class</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled but dropped out</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently enrolled but stopped out and returned</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently enrolled and continuously enrolled since first semester</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned an Associates Degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from a vocational or college certificate program (at least 1 year duration)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of semesters completed

For those 138 who ever enrolled in college...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of semesters completed</th>
<th>N = 138</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or 11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes:
Number of Developmental Education Classes

Of those who ever enrolled in college for whom we have this data: n=128

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of DV classes</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean # dev ed classes taken: 1.39 (s.d.=1.78)
Mean # English dev ed taken: .55 (s.d.=.88)
Mean # Math dev ed taken: .79 (s.d.=1.07)
Analysis of significant factors influencing educational outcomes: Analytic framework

- Co-variates for enrollment outcomes – we controlled for:
  1. Age
  2. Literacy skills
  3. Transition course completion
  4. Being a single parent
  5. Support factors (people,
  6. Hindering factors/barriers
  7. Parents’ (ever) college attendance
  8. Type of diploma earned (GED or high school diploma)

*Enrollment outcomes: acquire 3 college credits, enroll within one year, overall college trajectory
(Note: added country of origin to these variables when running trajectory)*
Analysis of significant factors influencing educational outcomes: Analytic framework

- Co-variates* for **persistence and success outcomes** – we controlled for:
  1. Age
  2. Transition course completion
  3. Having no or older children
  4. Marital status
  5. Support factors
  6. Hindering factors/barriers
  7. Country of origin
  8. Type of diploma (GED or high school diploma)

*Non-traditional college student factors (Sedlacek)

Persistence and success outcomes: number of college semesters, total college credits, reached “tipping point” momentum
Factors influencing college outcomes

Individual factors → Transition program factors → College Outcomes → College factors
Significant Individual Factors

- Having a spouse or partner
- Health
- Age
- Country of origin
- Arithmetic skills
- Accuplacer scores
- Learning disability
- Completing ABE-to-College transition course
- # hours attending college transition course
- Career planning skills, specific job goals, goal-setting skills
- Support networks
Significant Individual Factor: Spouse or Partner

For those who ever enrolled in college, having a spouse or partner related to persistence (more semesters) and success (more credits)

# SEMESTERS

# CREDITS
Significant Individual Factor: Health

Participants who reported poor health

**TRAJECTORY**

**TIPPING POINT**
Significant Individual Factor: Age

Older participants less likely to earn 3 college credits:
A student 10 years younger 1 ½ times more likely to complete 3 credits; 20 years younger, twice as likely
Significant Individual Factor: Country of Origin

Participants born in other countries more likely to enroll and stay in college

Immigrants more than twice as likely to enroll, and those who enrolled more than twice as likely to stay enrolled than U.S.-born participants.
Significant Factors: Arithmetic skills

Higher Accuplacer arithmetic scores at end of transition course related to earning 3 credits
Significant Individual factor: Accuplacer scores

Higher Accuplacer Compiled Score* at end of transition course related to earning 3 credits

*Compiled score: Arithmetic, sentence skills, reading comprehension
Significant Individual Factor: Accuplacer scores

Change in Accuplacer compiled score by end of transition course related to earning 3 credits
Significant Individual Factor: Accuplacer scores

Change in Accuplacer compiled score by end of transition course related to reaching 30-credit tipping point

[Diagram showing box plots for Accuplacer score gains: arithmetic, reading comp, and sentence skills. The plot compares students who did not attain the tipping point momentum and those who attained at least 30 credits.]
Significant Individual Factor: Learning Disability

Not having a learning disability made participants three times more likely to acquire 3 credits.
Significant individual factor:
Completing transition course

Completing transition course significantly related to both enrollment and success educational outcomes

TRAJECTORY

TIPPING POINT
## Factors related to transition course completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance policy</th>
<th>Did not complete course (n=74)</th>
<th>Completed course (n=153)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected, not mandatory</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student life skills component</th>
<th>Did not complete course</th>
<th>Completed course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No component</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium or high component</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Did not complete course</th>
<th>Completed course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than U.S.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significant Individual Factor: Attendance in transition course

Attending more hours in transition course related to enrollment outcomes

TRAJECTORY

EARNED 3 CREDITS

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Cristine Smith: NCTN webinar, February 11 and March 4, 2014

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Significant Individual Factor:  
Career planning skills

Knowledge of and planning for careers (composite) related to both enrollment and success

TRAJECTORY

TIPPING POINT
Significant Individual Factor: Specific job goals

- Ideal job specificity: Participants who could name a specific job, rather than just a field or a role, were significantly more likely to:
  - enroll in college (earn 3 credits)
  - enroll within 1 year,
  - earn more credits, and
  - complete more semesters.
Participants who scored high on the “goal setting” composite score (goal planning and strategizing) were more likely to:

- Enroll in college (3 credits)
- Enroll in and stay in college (trajectory)
- Reach 30 credit tipping point momentum
- Complete more semesters
- Earn more credits.
Significant Individual Factor: Support Network

- Having broader combined support across categories of people—family and friends, college transitions, work and community—was related to
  - earning 3 credits and
  - reaching 30-credit tipping point.
Significant Individual Factor: Transition Staff Perceptions

- Those participants whom transition program staff rated as likely to have “personal psychological” problems on the exit rating form were much less likely to enroll, persist and succeed in college.
Significant Program Factors

- ABE-to-College transition program grading policy
- Staff feedback on assignments
- Mentoring component in transition program
- Time spent on career planning in transition program
- Support from college transition staff
Significant Program Factors: Grading Policy

Grading Policy of Transition Program

![Bar chart showing grading policy of transition program]

- Never applied; Applied but not accepted; Accepted but didn't enroll
- Enrolled and attended but dropped out
- Continuously or not continuously enrolled; Graduated certificate or AD program

Legend:
- Blue: pass/fail or no grades
- Green: grades

Percent
Significant Program Factors:
Staff feedback on assignments
during transition

Did the participant enroll in college within 1 year of transition program’s end date?
Significant factors: Mentoring program

Presence of a mentoring component in program

![Bar chart showing the percentage of participants who attained at least 3 transferable college credits (post-transitions) with and without a mentoring component. The chart indicates a higher percentage of participants who attained these credits with a mentoring component.]
Significant program factors: Career planning

Effect on overall trajectory of more and less time spent on career planning in transition course

![Bar chart showing the effect of career planning on final trajectory status. The chart compares low (less than 2 hours) and medium (3-9 hours) career planning time. The categories for final trajectory status include: Never applied, Applied but not accepted, Accepted but didn't enroll, Enrolled and attended but dropped out, Continuously or not continuously enrolled, Graduated certificate or AD program. The data shows a higher percentage of successful outcomes for programs with medium career planning time compared to low career planning time.](chart.png)
Significant factors: Support from Transition Staff

• Having more support from people associated with college transitions course related to:
  • earning 3 credits
  • overall trajectory (staying enrolled)
  • reaching 30-credit tipping point
Significant College Factors

- Support from people in college
- Engagement in college activities
Significant College Factors: College People Support

- For those who ever enrolled in college...support from people in college—fellow students, instructors, members of clubs joined*—was related to:
  - earning more credits
  - completing more semesters.

*Once in college, family/friends support, work colleague support, community people support, or college transition people support were not significant
Significant College Factors: Engagement in College Activities

- Once in college, ATLAS participants who more often engaged in college activities (seminars, study sessions, etc.) or took advantage of college supports (library, student support center, etc.) were significantly more likely to persist and succeed.
Factors that mattered for enrollment vs. persistence and success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matters for enrolling (getting in to college)</th>
<th>Matters for persistence and success (only for those who ever enrolled)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3 credits, overall trajectory OR enroll within 1 year)</td>
<td>(number of semesters, total credits earned OR reaching tipping point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being younger</td>
<td>Working less than full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an immigrant</td>
<td>Getting support from people in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer financial obstacles (composite)</td>
<td>Engaging more in college activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less family reliance on income</td>
<td>Having better ideal job planning skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving grades on transition course assignments</td>
<td>Higher GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring component in transition program</td>
<td>Being married or having a partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Factors that mattered for enrollment vs. persistence and success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mattered for enrolling (getting in to college)</th>
<th>Mattered for persistence and success (only for those who ever enrolled)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3 credits, overall trajectory OR enroll within 1 year)</td>
<td>(number of semesters, total credits earned, tipping point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having a learning disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium emphasis on student life skills in trajectory program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium emphasis on career planning in trajectory prog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition program helped with application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s higher opinion of transition program helpfulness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors that mattered for enrollment AND success

- Completing the college transition course
- Having stronger goal setting skills (composite)
- Ability to state a more specific ideal job
- Having fewer health obstacles (composite)
- Having more categories of support people
- Ability to state career planning steps (composite)
- Improving Accuplacer arithmetic and compiled score (for 3 credits, enroll within 1 year, and reaching tipping point momentum)
Implications for Practice: “Malleable factors”

• Transition program
  • grading policy
  • feedback from staff on assignments
  • mentoring component
  • study skills component
  • career planning skills component
  • academic component

• College components:
  • Information, support, counseling
Implications for practice

- **College transition programs should:**
  - Give grades and ample feedback from staff on assignments
  - Include a mentoring component
  - Include components on study skills and career planning (but not TOO much time on them)
  - Help participants improve their Accuplacer skills
  - Help participants set specific goals and plan how to reach them
  - Help participants think about their ideal job and steps needed to reach it
  - Help student directly apply to college
  - Provide mentoring and extra support to older participants
Implications for practice

• **Colleges should:**
  - Help students strategize how to deal with health challenges
  - Ask teachers to include goal setting in each class
  - Make linkages between classes and students’ ideal jobs
  - Encourage students to make friends in classes, go see their instructors, reach out to others
  - Encourage students to engage in college activities: clubs, out-of-class seminars or trips, etc.
Questions for further research

• What is the reason that completing the transition program makes a difference to enrolling in college?
  • Skills learned?
  • Self-efficacy gained?
  • Ability to manage life turbulence?
  • Other reason?

• Why do older participants find it harder to enroll in college?
## Significant* Individual Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Not significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial obstacles, being the breadwinner</td>
<td>Logistical obstacles (composite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Household income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status (for those ever enrolled in college)</td>
<td>Being a single parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Parents went to college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being the “breadwinner” in the household</td>
<td>Number hours worked per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people relied on for support (only for attaining 3 credits)</td>
<td>Social capital (composite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of categories of people supporting</td>
<td>Family obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant for at least one of the six educational outcomes
# Significant Individual Factors: Cognitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Not significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuplacer arithmetic score</td>
<td>Literacy test score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuplacer change in arithmetic score</td>
<td>Change in literacy test score (year 1 to year 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuplacer change in overall score</td>
<td>Academic obstacles (composite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA (for those who ever enrolled)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of developmental ed classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Significant Individual factors: Non-cognitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Not significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>General planning skills (protocol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of attendance at transition program</td>
<td>Self-efficacy (protocol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of transition program</td>
<td>Positive outlook (protocol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal job planning skills</td>
<td>Strength of goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career planning skills</td>
<td>Type of goal: material, fulfillment, identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in college activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual goal setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal job specificity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Significant Transition Program Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant (all related to enrollment outcomes)</th>
<th>Not significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grading policy</td>
<td>Attendance policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of staff feedback</td>
<td>Program association with community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career planning component</td>
<td>Program location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring component in program</td>
<td>Earn college credit as part of transition program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student life skills</td>
<td>Computer class as part of transition program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program helped with college application</td>
<td>Days/week or timing of classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Significant college factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Not significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support from college transition people (for 3 credits, trajectory, and tipping point)</td>
<td>Knowledge of college culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from people in college (for semesters and total credits)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for attending!

Findings from the Adult Transitions Longitudinal Study

*presented by Cristine Smith*

Recording and slides from this webinar will be emailed to you and posted on our website:

*collegetransition.org*

Look for NCTN presenters at COABE 2014!