

Building Bridges: What Holistic Student Support Looks Like for Voc Rehab Students at a Large Community College in Oregon

Marisa Moser, ICAP Coach
Caitlin Potts, ICAP Coach



Disclaimer

- The contents of this presentation were developed under grant Number H421C210026 from the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this presentation may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this presentation does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This publication is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed or materials provided by any Federal agency.
- We will also be using person-first language as it is consistent with the way our grant was written.



Thank you for being here!!



Outline

- Introduction, Overview, Grant Goals/Objectives, Eligibility
- Here is what “Enhanced Coaching” looks like
- How our program has grown over four years of trial and error
- Where our program lives in relation to other College programs/departments
- Important relationships with inside and outside organizations
- Connection between supported education and academic/employment success
- Program Challenges, ICAP Successes
- The Final Countdown...June 30, 2026: When ICAP Ends
- Ways to infuse our experiences at your institution
- Pair and Share, Collective Brainstorm, & Questions



Acronyms we will be using!

- ICAP - Inclusive Career Advancement Program
- PCC - Portland Community College
- VR - Vocational Rehabilitation
- BIPOC - Black & Indigenous People of Color
- CPC- Career Pathway Certificate
- STEP - SNAP Employment & Training Program
- AEDR - Accessible Ed & Disability Resources
- PTO - Pathway to Opportunity
- CC- Community College
- HS- High School



Learning Objectives

- How to build strong relationships with internal campus and external community organizations - specifically, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the College's Accommodation Office - the value of VR partnering directly with the Community Colleges
- Accomplished via small-group discussions and larger share-outs
- Collective brainstorming
- The connection between holistic support during education leading to better employment outcomes. Relationship between education and employment.
- Group participation - collective brainstorm, story telling



Where we come from...

- Predominantly white Community College in a predominantly white state.
- The grant specifically states a target of serving 500 Vocational Rehabilitation clients with 45% of participants identifying as Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color (BIPOC).
- The students at our institution are primarily returning students or “non-traditional”, first-generation, low socioeconomic status.
- We serve an adverse bunch, with many of our students identifying as: foster alum, being in recovery, parents, and more.
- The population we serve at the Community College reflects the people of our community and we will be talking about this during our presentation.



Marisa Moser:

My values:

- Transparency, Effort, Determination, and Balance
- Community of care - build a longer table not a taller fence
- Boundaries and Vulnerability

My experiences

- Grew up in a single-parent, low SES family with lots of familial support
- Always encouraged to go to College by a parent who went to school while I was very young
- Came out at 21 and changed my major due to safety concerns
- Work in various Poverty-Reduction programs



Caitlin Potts:

My values:

- Lived experience
- The student experience... What is this?
- Affirmations: all hours, of all days
- Sacred spaces
- Incentives wherever we can
- ALL things fall and spooky season
- Intentional parenting
- Room for messiness.... Unfinished thoughts

My experiences:

- Grew up in the under class
- Foster alum
- Finished HS at my current institution!
- Decided that I would finish my BS degree while living in a shelter with my newborn son
- Worked in various non-profits to give me a diverse perspective of the students I would one day serve in higher education



Program Overview

- ICAP is a poverty-reduction support program for students with disabilities who are attending a community college and are working with Vocational Rehabilitation.
- ICAP will provide people with disabilities the opportunity to gain skills and postsecondary credentials toward achieving competitive integrated employment that is not just a job—but a career!
- ICAP is funded through a Disability Innovation Fund grant through the US Department of Education.
- When working with a Coach, students are provided additional support while in school (college navigation, regular check-ins, referrals to resources, etc.), job search preparation support, and 90 days of Job Search support post completion of their training.



Program Objectives

→ Objectives

- ◆ 1- Exploration
 - Establish partnerships, develop frameworks
- ◆ 2-Installation
 - Install the program at 10 CCs
- ◆ 3- Initial Implementation
 - Engage and serve students with initial 10 CCs
- ◆ 4-Full Implementation
 - Expansion to additional CCs



Program Service Goals

Education and Training Outcomes	Target	45% BIPOC
Number of participants that will enter a Career Pathway	500	225
Number of participants that will complete ICAP education/training	375	169
Number of participants that will attain one or more recognized postsecondary credential	375	169



Program Service Goals Cont.

Employment Outcomes	Target
Participants will achieve CIE through ICAP	259
75% of participants will achieve hourly wage gains	194
50% of participants gain employer-provided medical benefits	129
65% of participants will increase weekly hours worked	168
50% of participants will receive a promotion or additional responsibilities resulting in an increase in salary	129
35% of participants in CIE will report income as their primary support at exit	91
65% of participants in CIE will report public benefits as their primary source of support at exit	168



ICAP Eligibility

- Deemed eligible for State of Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation services
- Entering a program at PCC that is designed as two years or less in a Career Technical Program (not General Studies or Transfer Degree)
 - ◆ Career Pathway Certificates
 - ◆ Less Than One Year Certificates
 - ◆ One Year Certificates
 - ◆ AA Degrees
- Desire additional “coaching” support at the College



What is Enhanced Coaching?

- Student-led in both in content and frequency
- College Navigation
- Cultivating relationships with students that foster lasting impacts on their education and career paths
- Wrap-around support, Collaborative team building for our students
- Being Point-person at the college
- Braiding of resources/ bridge between program
- Assisting with documentation for VR partners



Four Years In....

→ On paper:

- ◆ We have met our target goal for overall enrollment, still short of servicing the BIPOC target
- ◆ Coaching ends in less than a year
- ◆ Support beyond ICAP is unclear
- ◆ Order Of Selection

→ In the Real World:

- ◆ Meaningful relationships with students and VR Partners
- ◆ New found/reaffirming passion for disability services work
- ◆ Fulfilling work life
- ◆ Seeing the shortfalls of our College
- ◆ Overall awareness of VR with College faculty/staff/students
- ◆ Shifting how we currently approach outreach and referrals with the anticipation of our grant ending, and VR moving to Order of Selection



Where Are We Situated?

- PCC's ICAP program is housed within our Career Pathways (CP) & STEP program
- What is CP & STEP? From our webpage: PCC offers more than fifty short-term Career Pathways certificates (12-44 credits) that lead to jobs and degrees. Every student in the Career Pathways & STEP program is connected with a coach who will work with you one-on-one to:
 - Navigate the college environment
 - Find the best educational path for the career you want
 - Achieve your college and career goals
 - Connect you with available financial resources
 - Find in-demand internships and jobs
- Being able to leverage CP & STEP programming is vital to many of our ICAP student's success at PCC.



Where Are We Situated Within the College

→ Academic Affairs

- ◆ Academic & Career Pathways Division
 - Workforce Development Department
 - Pathways to Opportunity Program
 - ◆ Inclusive Career Advancement Program Grant



Important Relationships

→ Vocational Rehabilitation

→ CC Consortia

→ Community partners

- ◆ Job developers
- ◆ Supported education specialist
- ◆ Mental health professionals

→ Various college departments

- ◆ Advising
- ◆ Financial Aid
- ◆ AEDR
- ◆ Basic Needs
- ◆ CP & STEP
- ◆ TRIO



Strengthening Partnerships

- How to build strong partnerships both inside and outside of the college - specific focus on VR and AEDR.
 - ◆ Increased and intentional communication frequency
 - ◆ Specific asks - “Do you need anything else from me?”
 - ◆ Invite internal and external partners to monthly meetings. Upon doing this, you can use the space to share any updates regarding system changes, answer questions, celebrate successes, and address challenges together.
 - ◆ Avoid “gatekeeping” information and processes, when we empower one another, the shared knowledge helps us better leverage resources and support our collective caseloads
 - ◆ Attend outreach events together.
 - ◆ Affirm your partners, personally, and publicly- they’re valuable, and they deserve to hear about their impact.



Connection between support & success

Student Stories



ICAP Challenges

- Grant goals- overcoming barriers related to reaching program specific targets
- Meeting each student's needs - varying levels of dependence/support
- Institutional and systemic implications- we don't make the rules, we just work within them
- Coach capacity - 2 Coaches with unlimited caseloads
- Lack of dedicated administrative support
- Disadvantages with ongoing adjustments to institutional policies, including financial aid qualifications, forcing students to modify their VR education plans
- VR eligibility requirements in relation to outreach efforts
- VR Policy changes & VR Order of Selection



ICAP Successes

- Early in their journey, we introduce students to two essential tools- confidence and self-advocacy, with the hope that they'll have the opportunity to develop and apply them as we continue working together. Highlighting one of the most rewarding parts of our work has been witnessing student's apply these tools.
 - ◆ Why are these so important?
- Seeing students expand their educational goals beyond the short-term credential.
- Watching students obtain their credentials and move into their careers.
- Fostering lasting relationships with students
- Raising awareness about VR has been fruitful. Many community members we've engaged with over the course of our grant had never heard of their agency. Even amongst our college colleagues who are familiar with VR, many were unaware of the services they offered, or our specific work with them.
- Reaching grant goals!



The Final Countdown...June 30 2026: When ICAP Ends

- We are strengthening our relationships with other programs so that our students have ongoing campus support when our grant ends. We are also encouraging students to develop relationships with these programs as well.
- Encouraging students to regularly meet with their advisors so that they have continued guidance
- Our STEP/ ICAP students will stay with us in the STEP program if they are STEP eligible.
- Ensuring they know how to contact the Accessible Ed and Disability Resources Office, and/or their particular disability counselor.
- Depending on their VR status, preparing the student for what the transition to VR only support will look like.



Things to Think About at Your Institution

→ Coaching programs

- ◆ If you don't already have coaching programs available to your student body, inquire about how to start one.
- ◆ If your institution DOES have coaching, consider connecting with them to talk about the possibility of expanding their services or moving towards “enhanced” coaching.

→ Partnerships with services for students with disabilities

- ◆ Disability Services
- ◆ Vocational Rehabilitation
- ◆ Center for Independent Living
- ◆ Commision for the Blind
- ◆ School for the Deaf



Pair and Share

- How are you implementing any of these practices (coaching, partnership building, supporting students with disabilities) at your institution?
- What new practices would you like to implement at your institution?
- What steps would you need to take to start these conversations?



Collective Brainstorm

New things to try when you get back home.



Questions?

marisa.moser@pcc.edu
caitlin.potts@pcc.edu



Thank You!

