Career Advancement for Immigrants: Building on Students’ Strengths to Chart a Personalized Path in Accelerated Career English at HCC

New England Workforce Conference
March 17, 2023

What is ACE?
Contextualized, Career-focused English Language Instruction & Advising (12 weeks)

Scholarships, English learning opportunities, advising/coaching, tutoring/exam prep, employer engagement and job placement

Education Careers: paraprofessional, yoga teacher, tutors, school admin. support
Environmental pathways
Bookkeeping, Small business, Insurance
Health Careers: Dental Assistant, Medical Interpreters, Community Health Worker, etc.
Information Technology
Paralegal
College certificates and degrees

tailored support for next steps...
Shifting Immigration Trends

- 17.3% Massachusetts population foreign-born in 2019
- 2000-2019 immigrant population grew 54%; native population grew 2.3%
- Dramatic shift in education levels

Migration Policy Institute, State Demographic Profiles. [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/MA](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/MA)

Workforce Mismatch

- 24% immigrants with college degree from their country of origin were unemployed or in low-skill jobs (2014)

Migration Policy Institute, Brain Waste in the Massachusetts Workforce, [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/MPI_BrainWaste_MA-FINAL.pdf](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/MPI_BrainWaste_MA-FINAL.pdf)
Who do we serve?

Funder Priorities

- Un- or Underemployed
- English learner or lacking high school diploma
- Needs support to address barriers to career readiness

Our population characteristics (FY23)

- 52% unemployed
- 72% came to the US in the last 5 years, with 42% arriving in 2022
- 74% women
- 47% are in their 30s (average age 37)
- Originally from 27 countries

Many of these students would not be eligible for WIOA Title II (Adult Education services).

“Despite most ESOL participants being of working age, only 7 percent of ESOL programs are vocational, suggesting a large misalignment of the types of services offered and the demands of LEP individuals.” (The ROI of ESOL, 2019, p. 6, The Boston Foundation)

Pay for Performance model: flexibility, quality, bridging gap
“The future is already here. It’s just not evenly distributed yet.” (attributed to William Gibson)

Equity principles underlying ACE design:

Student-Centered:
The people doing the “heavy lifting” do the learning!

Personalized & Flexible:
What is your best-fit pathway?

Asset-Based:
Students’ skills, prior experiences, cultures and identities, and thinking all support future success!

All students deserve access to the highest quality teaching and advising.
## Curriculum Outline & Key Assignments

### Welcome & Technology
- "Future Me" email
- Bio Statement
- Self-exploration & classroom community
- Transferable skills
- Digital skills & key course tools – Google Classroom/Suite, EnGen

### Diversity & Teamwork
- Diversity Reflection
- Teamwork Group Presentation
- Sociocultural identity
- Racism, xenophobia, your rights
- Diverse teams = creative, resilient, powerful teams!
- Knowing myself as team-member

### Professionalism in US Context
- Resume
- Digital Storytelling Project
- MassHire OSCC system, MassCIS Profiles & Inventories
- SMART goals
- Entrepreneurial thinking
- Soft-skills & “EQ” (emotional intelligence)
**Curriculum Outline & Key Assignments**

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**Dear future me**

I hope everything is well with you and your family. The reason I sent you this letter is to inform you that I'm working on myself every day to make my dream come true by creating a better future for myself, family and friends. As you know already I'm very passionate about the well-being of people. Coming to the USA is a stepping stone towards my dream. Since I came here I have been working in the medical field as a direct care worker and finding stability with it. Education is the key to success. Currently I'm working at Children's services of Roxbury and was encouraged by a coworker to enroll in the ACE program at Holyoke community college to improve my English skills and prepare myself for the next steps in my career. **My main goal is to be a nurse. Have faith and stay focused.**

Good luck
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Diversity in the Workplace reflection

“...my former church didn’t have a diverse staff until I came in. I consider that diversity in church staff is critical, especially in a world that is becoming increasingly diverse.”

“A diverse staff can bring different perspectives, experiences, and strengths to the table, which can help to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone.”

“Diversity can also help to break down stereotypes and biases, as people from different backgrounds and cultures work together towards a common goal.”
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Networking
- Cover letter
- ACE Action Plan
  - Networking platforms
  - Career research & portfolio

Applying for Jobs
- Interview Practice
  - Mock interviews
  - Interview session with community, college, and employer partners

Workplace Success
- Email models
  - Mock Meeting & Time Management projects
  - Concrete models and tasks, relevant communication
  - Problem-solving and initiative
  - Workplace cultures

Celebration & Closing
- Capstone Presentations
  - Portfolios as summative assessments (synthesis for learning!) and personal organizational strategy

Mock interview partners
- MassHire Springfield & Holyoke Career Centers
- Baystate Health HR and workforce development team
- Springfield Public Schools
- Program staff from “next steps”
- Internal college partners:
  - HCC Career Services
  - HCC faculty and academic program staff
  - HCC student support staff
  - Advisors from other ESOL and workforce development programs
  - HCC HR and Affirmative Action offices
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Career Specific Documents

Resume

Cover Letter

Post-Interview Thank You Notes

Course Specific Materials

World Cup Teams

All problems are universal and should be visualized

All solutions are universal
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ACE Extension aka “Part 2”

Individually-driven, tailored
On-going opt-in classes, according to student interests and goals. Examples:
- Exam prep, especially TOEFL
- English skills
- Opportunities for discipline-specific Advising and job placement support

New opportunities:
- Alumni Leadership
- Networking opportunities, social connection
Scholarships

What were scholarships used for?

- Provided 25 scholarships to date (3 fiscal years) for total $17,004
- 72% of students completed, 20% in progress, 8% unable to complete

Examples:
- Paralegal Studies certificate (Boston University)
- Certified Java Developer (Teach Me Skills)
- Clinical Trial Monitoring certificate (TRA Institute)
- Medical Coding certification & national exam (AAPC)
- Accounting I & II, Bookkeeping (HCC)
- Masters of Education (Mt. Holyoke)
- Cosmetology & Nail Tech (HCC)
- Non-profit Management (HCC)
- Exam Prep & Fees: ASVAB, IELTS, TOEFL, CPA, NCLEX, MTEL, ServSafe
- Getting driver’s license

What have scholarships led to?

# Loop CO2, Inc. is a U.S. Department of Energy Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Grant Awardee

“The scholarship helps me to learn more about strategy execution from the Harvard online program. It did help me to get through the uncertain time. I really appreciate all your team’s effort.”

Start-up turning CO₂ into plastics

Learn more: https://loopco2.com/
What have scholarships led to?

“I'm thinking about the help you and your team provide to me every day. Also, I am keeping recommend to new arrived Ukrainians to consider your program. **My full time job is Accounts Receivable. It was my main goal to jumping into Accounting field as soon as possible.**”

What have scholarships led to?

Employment as:
- Solutions engineer
- Human Resources for the US Air Force
- Clinical coordinator
- Refugee resettlement caseworker
- Insurance agent
- Career Development Counselor
- Bookkeeper

...and more

Funding source & structure matters.
Overall Outcomes (FY21-22)

During Program
- 75% completion rate for intensive course (92/122 over 11 cohorts)
- Program sustainability: revenue in excess of expenses

Post-Exit
- 77% employment, training, or college for program completers
- 42 credentials earned (Administration, Customer Service, Education, Healthcare, IT)

Future Opportunities
- **ACE as a laboratory:**
  - contextualized curriculum, project-based learning
  - proactive job-placement
  - specialized career pathways partnerships: expertise in recredentialing and building on prior professional experience
- **Targeted cohorts** as bridge to particular sector, workforce development, or college program
- **Student leadership** and networking as driver of ACE
- **Strong outcomes → sustainability** (full-time coordinator)
Which values guide your program design and implementation?

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