

Equity in Success

Adult Education & Noncredit Certificates



ISSUE

In the state of California, noncredit courses provide students with an opportunity to develop skills and competencies at no cost at their local community college. While this represents an incredible value proposition and resource for local communities, not all noncredit is treated equally, which disincentivizes community colleges from developing certain programs which have the potential to make substantial inroads in creating more equitable outcomes for adult learners and older adults throughout our communities. While certain noncredit programs enjoy support in the form of apportionment roughly on par with for-credit college classes, other eligible noncredit categories, namely “Courses for Persons with Substantial Disabilities” and “Courses for Older Adults,”

which have the potential to be community mainstays and increase the utility of every community college in California, are provided with significantly less support in the form of apportionment.

REQUEST

Advocate for full apportionment for noncredit classes that serve people with disabilities and older adults. Advocate for support services and dedicated counselors for adults with disabilities. Support Higher Education initiatives that offer funding to provide classes to people with disabilities and older adults.

BACKGROUND

Currently, enhanced funding is only available for noncredit courses in English as a Second Language (ESL), short-term vocational, workforce preparation, and basic skills courses. Noncredit courses that receive enhanced funding currently receive 40% more funding in the form of apportionment than noncredit offerings for persons with disabilities and older adults despite the fact that these courses may require more, not less, in terms of expertise for their development, operation and implementation – a fact that makes them less attractive options to community colleges as they strategize future planning, and thus,

often represent a missed opportunity.

One missed opportunity is that the state of California has the highest incidence rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the United States, yet despite that two-thirds of those individuals with ASD do not have an intellectual disability, they still experience some of the lowest levels of success in higher education, something that could be remedied with thoughtful noncredit programming. Many community colleges in California have developed expansive noncredit programs for students with disabilities, supporting independent living initiatives to help people thrive in their communities, despite their personal challenges. These programs inevitably require outside resources as these courses are currently underfunded in the current noncredit model.

Just as California has the highest reported incidence rate of people with ASD, it also has the largest population of adults aged 65 and older with approximately thirty-nine million older adults living throughout the state – and like noncredit for people with disabilities, it is underfunded in the current noncredit model, despite the clear body of evidence that lifelong learning contributes to psychological wellbeing and health of older adults.