

Equity in Support



Adult Education and Noncredit Certificates

ISSUE

In the state of California, noncredit courses provide students with an opportunity to develop skills and competencies at no cost at a community college. While this represents an incredible resource for learners, not all noncredit is treated equally which disincentivizes community colleges from developing programs which have the potential to make substantial inroads in creating more equitable outcomes for adult learners. While some noncredit programs enjoy support in the form

of apportionment roughly on par with for-credit college classes, other noncredit categories, namely courses for persons with substantial disabilities and courses for older adults are provided with significantly less support in the form of apportionment.

REQUEST

Therefore, the Riverside Community College District is advocating for full apportionment for noncredit classes that serve people with disabilities and older adults, including support services and dedicated counselors

while also supporting higher education initiatives that offer funding to provide classes to individuals with disabilities and older adults.

BACKGROUND

Currently, funding is only available for noncredit courses in English as a Second Language, short-term vocational workforce preparation, and basic skills courses. Noncredit courses that receive enhanced funding receive 40 percent more funding in the form of apportionment than noncredit offerings for individuals



with disabilities and older adults despite the fact that these courses may require more 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 representing a missed opportunity.

One missed opportunity is that the state of California has the highest incidence rate of autism spectrum disorder in the United States. Yet despite the fact that two-thirds of those individuals with autism spectrum

disorder 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 underfunded in the

current noncredit model.

Just as California has the highest reported incidence rate of people with autism spectrum disorder, it also has the largest population of adults - aged 65 and older. Approximately 39 million older adults live throughout the state. 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.