

# OPENING DOORS PROGRAM



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- LORAIN COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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- Total population of 284,664
- Located 30 miles west of Cleveland, OH
- Two urban centers: Lorain and Elyria
- 127,991 located in the two largest urban areas
- 16 % minority. Fourth largest Hispanic population in the state.



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- Historically manufacturing oriented region (auto & steel)
- High Wage Jobs with minimal skills and education
- Agriculture prevalent in outlying areas

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- Manufacturing began to decline
- Over 6,000 workers lost jobs in the past 2.5 years
- Remaining jobs in low paying service areas or require higher skills
- Significant number of high-wage workers became low-wage workers



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## Background

- Received a grant from Knowledgeworks to plan programming for low-wage workers
- Reviewed the literature
- Confirmed the need for a program at LCCC
- Studied models at LCCC, in Ohio and nationally and identified the components that were feasible and could make a difference in the target population
- Began to develop Career Pathways models for low-wage workers



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**Began Fall, 2003**

Designed to:

- Combine best features of other programs
- Address barriers as identified in the literature
- Provide support necessary for persistence and success
- Lead to certificate and/or degree



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## Target Audience:

- Economically disadvantaged as determined by FAFSA
- Between the ages of 18 and 34
- No more than 13 credit hours earned towards a degree



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## Enhanced Services

- \$ 150 cash for two semesters distributed in two payments each semester
- Dedicated Financial Aid Advisor
- Case management
- Specialized tutoring
- Customized College Experience Course
- Personalized assistance in dealing with college issues



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## Enhanced Services (Cont'd)

- Immediate access to program staff via email and phone
- Referral to community supports as needed
- Personalized advising
- Customized Career Counseling Services
- Participation in cohort activities for peer support and interpersonal development



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## Enhanced Services Implementation

- Identify staffing needs
- Develop job descriptions with unique characteristics needed for this project
- Recruit and Interview Candidates – Internal & External
- Clarify roles within existing college structure



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## Challenges:

- LCCC does not offer a College Orientation Workshop prior to the start of the semester
- Contacting and recruiting potential participants is very time consuming
- Participants face multiple barriers that escalate very quickly



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## Challenges (Cont'd):

- Students are very busy with work, school, and family this program cannot become another obligation
- It is very difficult to divide the students into the control and program groups. They all need the help
- Finding resources to continue to help the students after the first year



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## Lessons Learned

- Very difficult to contact students
- College may be losing students very early in the semester due to barriers that could be overcome with immediate intervention
- Students need additional help in planning schedules. They make decision based on factors other than what is the most appropriate course for them



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## Findings To Date

After two semesters, differences noted between Program and Control Group include:

- Program Group attempted and completed more courses
- Higher percentage of Program Group returned for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester
- Program group had higher GPA than Control Group



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## Next Steps

- Continue to actively recruit participants for next semester
- Continue mid-semester lunch 'get together'
- Document findings from the project that may effect college policies and practices
- Pursue other funding options to support services after the program ends