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COMMUNITY COLLEGES RESPOND TO NEEDS OF RETAIL WORKERS:

LESSONS LEARNED FROM ACHIEVING THE DREAM'S
**BUILDING STRONGER PATHWAYS TO RETAIL
CAREERS INITIATIVE**







PREFACE

Community colleges in our country serve many critical roles not only in terms of providing access to an affordable higher education experience for millions of students, but also in creating pathways to careers that will support graduates and their families. These efforts range from traditional college programs that lead to four-year degrees as well as certificates and two-year degrees that lead directly to employment opportunities. For certificate and short-term degree programs this often means working closely with employers and industry leaders to create course work and programs that will meet the needs of area businesses, but also serve as a stepping stone for students to gain upward mobility within the industry they have chosen to work.

The work that the community colleges who participated in Achieving the Dream's Building Stronger Pathways to Retail Careers Initiative took on this challenge to provide students with the skills to achieve sustainable employment in the retail sector and to start those students on educational pathways that would lead to additional career opportunities in the future. The retail sector is particularly challenging given historically low-wages and low entry requirements for employment. However, as the country continues to move more into a service economy and as the retail sector continues to transition into a more technology-based industry, skilled employees with the ability to grow and develop within a company are becoming more valued.

These developments mean that it is even more important for community colleges to engage employers in building educational pathways that will produce productive employees for the sector who can meet immediate employer needs but also help drive economic growth in the sector.

ATD wishes to thank the colleges involved in this initiative for their willingness to participate and their commitment to helping their students pursue their educational goals and seek sustainable employment. While this initiative was limited in scope, ATD believes that this brief provides useful lessons on retail pathways that will be of interest and benefit to community colleges.

Dr. Karen A. Stout, *President*
Achieving the Dream



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Creating pathways for diverse learners to enter and progress through community college and to complete industry-valued credentials with the goal of obtaining family-living wage employment is important to the economic and social well-being of citizens of the United States. Achieving the Dream (ATD) and its large network of community colleges and partners through the country is investing considerable time and effort in supporting and advising the implementation of pathway initiatives that are intended to achieve this goal.

One such pathway initiative is ATD's Building Stronger Pathways to Retail Careers Initiative. Funded by the Walmart Foundation, the initiative sought to provide clearer pathways to sustainable careers in retail for students and strengthen community college and retail employer partnerships. Four community colleges — Broward College and Tallahassee College in Florida, Durham Technical Community College in North Carolina, and Umpqua Community College in Oregon — participated in this initiative.

While each of the colleges focused on different aspect of the retail industry and employed different programmatic approaches, the initial observations from the campuses and the lessons learned that can be applied moving forward focus on a set of common themes that emerged across the initiative.

- Certificates that the retail industry would recognize and find credible were not easily identifiable, suggesting the importance of strengthening partnerships with employers and offering pathway programs that embed meaningful credentials that convey competencies to employers.
- Short-term certificates were valued at the corporate level; however, local employers did not give hiring preference to students with such certificates or give advantages to current employees for promotions.

- Collaboration between the credit and non-credit divisions is especially critical when implementing non-credit bridge programming that is intended to lead to credit retail pathways and programs of study.
- Collaboration is also needed between academic and support units that play a role in the implementation of pathways. Of particular importance is ensuring that advisors understand new pathways (and other non-credit options within pathways) and provide appropriate guidance for potential students — both credit and non-credit course-takers.

Although limited in scope, both in terms of the number of colleges participating and the duration of the pilot, the Walmart Retail Pathways Pilot project provides important lessons for colleges that plan to offer or expand retail training for students as a stepping stone to sustainable careers. The pilot colleges found there is demand for such programs, students can successfully complete their goals with the proper guidance and support, and businesses see an interest in collaborating. The retail pathways pilot laid a foundation with insights for other ATD colleges and pathways proponents to learn from and best practices to replicate.

INTRODUCTION

Over 15 million workers in the United States—just over 10 percent of the workforce—are employed in retail trade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Community colleges recognize the importance of the retail sector in their local economies, and a large number offer their students the opportunity to pursue retail pathways. These retail pathway programs lead to industry-valued credentials and seek to produce graduates ready for middle-skill employment — jobs that require more than a high school degree but less than a bachelor’s degree. Middle-skill jobs help students advance in their careers and typically pay enough to support a family.

To help colleges learn more about what it takes to create retail pathways that prepare students for middle skill retail jobs, Achieving the Dream (ATD) launched the Building Stronger Pathways to Retail Careers Initiative, a 19-month-long pilot initiative funded by the Walmart Foundation. The project helped four colleges to strengthen pathways to middle-skill retail careers and supply a skilled retail workforce to local, regional, and national employers. By studying the colleges’ experiences, ATD hoped to identify promising practices that improve program retention and completion and expand retail career opportunities.

Specifically, the retail pathways grant project worked with partner colleges to:

- Create more visible retail career options for community college students.
- Define retail career pathways, including strategies of stackable credentials, contextualized curriculum, career guidance, and so forth.
- Strengthen collaborations between community colleges and regional retail employers.

As part of the initiative, ATD surveyed its Network colleges in 2015 to learn about the existence of retail pathways, local demand for retail positions, and employer involvement. Of the 129 colleges that responded, 62 percent indicated that their college offers a retail program of study.

The retail pathway programs shared some common features that contributed to student success: the opportunity for students to earn stackable credentials with multiple educational entry and exit points branching from the next level in their careers; the provision of

comprehensive wraparound supports; and credentials based on employer-informed competencies that, thus, have market value.

The community colleges participating in the Walmart Retail Pathways Pilot project were:

- Broward College (FL)
- Durham Technical Community College (NC)
- Tallahassee College (FL)
- Umpqua Community College (OR)

Each of these colleges focused on different areas of the retail industry using different models and approaches (See Table 1).

“Most students in retail pathway programs are working while attending school and many feel like they lack the time and a plan to improve their current situation. Retail pathways programs offer an important opportunity to help students progress through college in a way that will help them earn a higher wage in the short term, but also put them on a path to a sustainable career in the long-term.”

– Dr. Karen A. Stout, *President and CEO*,
Achieving the Dream

TABLE 1: FOCUS OF RETAIL PATHWAYS INITIATIVES BY CAMPUS

ATD COLLEGES	PROJECT FOCUS	RETAIL PATHWAY INNOVATION OR IMPROVEMENT	TARGET STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
Broward College (BC)	Sales Marketing Certificate	Create credit-bearing courses focused on salesmanship, advertising, and introduction to customer service and leading to the Business Support Technical Certificate that stacks within the A.S. in Business Administration.	Current Broward College students
Durham Technical Community College (Durham Tech)	Customer Service	Develop a short-term noncredit training program called Skills, Tasks, and Results Training (START), offered by Continuing Education with a college certificate and embedded industry certificates; students can secure one college credit upon progression to the credit-bearing program of study in the pathway.	Current DTCC students and local incumbent retail workers
Tallahassee Community College (TCC)	National Retail Federation Certificates	Align noncredit courses to National Retail Federation certificates and expand retail pathway to include a business incubator model in partnership with the Tallahassee/Leon Economic Development Council, Tallahassee Downtown Improvement Authority, Florida State University, and the Florida Retail Association.	Current TCC students and recruits from community partners
Umpqua Community College (UCC)	Grocery Chain Certificates	Offer Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC) certificates within an online retail pathway program leading to the Retail Business Essentials Certificate (RBEC) en route to the Retail Management Certificate (RMC) and AAS degree.	Incumbent workers, high school students, and Adult Basic Skills Development (ABSD) students
Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (Helena-West Helena, AR)	Los Angeles Harbor College (Wilmington, CA)	Patrick Henry Community College (Martinsville, VA)	Walla Walla Community College (Walla Walla, WA)

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In just under two years, the colleges' experiences with retail pathways programs showed promising results. The initiative gained traction, engaged faculty, and students signed on and stayed with it. In all cases, the programs supported stronger collaborations between colleges and retail employers. Here is what colleges accomplished:

- **Colleges that focused their efforts on noncredit programs were able to re-structure programs to lead to credit-bearing coursework.** For example, Durham Tech's START program created a noncredit "on-ramp" program for diverse student populations who were unemployed or working in low wage and/or part-time jobs that did not provide family-sustaining wages. A key goal of the START program was for students to complete one to five short-term certificates that could serve as a bridge to the AAS degree in Business Administration.
- **Colleges identified promising new modes of delivery to reach target student population.** At Umpqua Community College, online delivery of courses leading to the retail management certificate (RMC) gave UCC a national reach and met the high level of student demand. UCC is the only college offering the RMC at a national level, enrolling students in 16 states, which was key to the college's ability to reach nearly 900 students over the course of the grant. In addition, UCC converted three of the RMC courses to use Open Educational Resource (OER) material with a printable option to reduce costs for students. Tallahassee Community College gained permission from the National Retail Federation to adapt its curriculum for online delivery of the retail certification courses and is now the only institution currently offering this curriculum online in the United States.
- **Colleges strengthened industry partnerships in their initiatives.** Each of the four pilot programs made progress in strengthening relationships with industry partners (including local employers, industry associations, and state workforce agencies). For example, Broward College faculty and staff held meaningful conversations with industry partners on and off campus, focused on building pathways and strengthening programs and curriculum development. This process revealed that

COMING OUT OF HER SHELL

With her sister hospitalized in Durham, Shontai Buchanan moved north from Sumter, South Carolina, to help with her children. Buchanan, 33, had higher education experience, but hadn't worked much and was a self-described "homebody." But after babysitting her sister's two children during the hospital stay — and watching her sister work while undergoing treatment for lupus — Buchanan said she wanted to be as committed as her sister.

Shortly after, Angela Davis, then a career navigator at Durham Technical Community College, told Buchanan about the START program at the college. The program prepares students for 12 entry-level lodging and hospitality positions. Buchanan boarded a bus for the first time and trekked across Durham for her first class at Durham Tech.

Despite being an "introvert," she said she learned how to be social to strangers. "In that class, you can't be a wallflower," Buchanan said. "I really came out of my shell." So much so that Buchanan was promptly hired following the program and is the first face many see as they approach the front desk at the Hilton Garden Inn near University Medical Center.

"It really helped me out a lot," she said of the START program. "Just being able to talk with guests and being in an industry now that I really like. Also, I can use the experiences and training from my previous college experience to help with new opportunities in this industry."



employers expect their input to inform how the college designs, implements or supplements program curriculum. For example, Broward found that employers give high priority to soft-skills and workplace/work-ready etiquette and responded to address these needs.

- **Colleges were able to use their retail pathways programs to serve primarily “nontraditional” students.** Across all four colleges, the students the colleges served under the grant were predominantly nontraditional. They were older than 24 years and students in three of the colleges (Broward College, Durham Tech, and Tallahassee) were primarily female and people of color. A sizeable number had some college education and held part- or full-time jobs at the time they enrolled in the program.
- **Student enrollments in the retail pathways exceeded expectations.** Overall, the programs enrolled twice as many students as targeted with Umpqua Community College and Broward College leading the effort to boost participation in retail pathways. UCC enrolled 878 students in the national online RMC program, a 731 percent increase over the original target enrollment of 120 students.

Broward College also exceeded its enrollment projections, enrolling 203 students in its grant-related program— a 35 percent increase over its 150- student target.

- **Early indications on completion rates show promise.** Given the short-term nature of the grant, it is too early to assess the overall completion rates in these retail pathway programs, however there are promising signs, particularly at those colleges with short-term programs that could be completed during the grant. At Tallahassee Community College which focused on short-term noncredit learning experience, all 102 students who enrolled completed. Of the 53 students enrolled in Durham Technical College’s Continuing Education customer service training program called Skills, Tasks, and Results Training (START) 81 percent of the students completed. At Broward College, approximately 70 percent of students who had sufficient time to complete a certificate program and an additional semester beyond the program did so. UCC, which enrolled the largest cohort of students, will not be able to assess completion rates until later in 2017 and 2018 for its programs.

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED

In addition to accomplishing notable results in a relatively short period of time, participating colleges came away with valuable lessons from their pilot programs. What they learned can benefit other colleges in the ATD network that are considering or are already involved in retail pathways programs. Many of these lessons apply to non-retail workforce development programs.

- **A first order of business was overcoming the negative perception of “retail” jobs as low-paying and dead-end.** Students often perceived “retail” jobs as low-wage entry positions in business such as fast-food or clothing retailers that offered little promise of a career pathway. Colleges worked to overcome these perceptions both by helping students to see the retail sector as broader than these types of positions as well as demonstrating how college certificates and degrees could position them to progress from entry-level positions to middle-skills jobs within the sector. A key strategy to addressing these negative perceptions was to bring various diverse area retail employers to campus to expose students to more visible retail career options.

- **With retail pathway programs, “retail” may be the targeted sector, but “pathways” is the key to success.** To attract students to these programs, it is critical that colleges provide stackable credentials that have immediate impact on their current employment options. At the same time, programs must keep students engaged for the long-term by establishing a well-defined pathway to continue their education and improve their economic situation while still having multiple entry and exit points along the way.

For instance, Broward College discovered that embedding short-term stackable credentials within a career pathway allowed students to experience a boost in self-confidence when they complete certificates. So the college changed its pathway map to ensure students would complete the retail certificate within their first two semesters. This also improved retention: 73 percent of the 37 students who began the program in the Spring 2016 term completed their retail credential by the end of the Fall 2016 term.

At the same time, Broward recognized the place of retail training in the larger business pathway since sales

and customer service skills are necessary in almost all industries. In short, Broward was able to apply what it learned to improve both the short-term and long-term outcomes for its students

GAINING CREDENTIALS FOR SUCCESS

After moving south from Philadelphia seven years ago, Camill Boston decided to try her hand in housekeeping jobs in Durham. With an eye out for advancement, Boston said she often called industry friends and contacts at NCWORKS for new opportunities.

One day, she learned of the START program at Durham Tech, and started soon after. “Mr. Moody was so engaging,” Boston said of her instructor. “He was open about the realness about hospitality and I was working in hospitality then, but he told us, ‘It doesn’t happen overnight. It takes hard work and dedication.’ ”

Boston said she took her new role as a student seriously and worked to learn new concepts. “Actually getting it from the books and getting it from the field, I felt like I should start with a clean slate,” she said. “And then some of the things I already knew, I just threw those in there, too.”

Boston is now a front desk agent at the Hampton Inn and Suites near Northgate Mall. She still has a passion for hospitality and she enjoys greeting new faces. “I’m an engager,” she said. “I’m always talking, smiling, and just being compassionate.” Now, she has the credentials to continue her success in the hospitality field.



STACKABLE CREDENTIALS LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT GAINS AT BROWARD COLLEGE

For the business program at Broward College in 2015, the Walmart grant to expand retail pathways to better career opportunities in South Florida could not have come at a better time. For one thing, the travel, hospitality, insurance, and retail industries were thriving, with 131,000 employed in hospitality fields alone. Regional employers told the college they were on the lookout for employees with stronger skills in marketing, sales, and customer service.

For another, Broward, like all Florida community colleges, was in the first year of responding to a new state pathways initiative aimed at boosting associate degree completion and student success rates by identifying meta-majors. The state requires colleges to strengthen advising services and steer students to enroll in one of eight meta-majors that align with their potential academic and career goals.

But Broward was drawn to another aspect of the Walmart Retail Pathway grant: It would allow the business program to test whether offering a revised stackable credential, the Business Specialist Technical Certificate (BSTC), within a career program could improve pathway processes and student retention. If so, that approach would yield valuable insights for the seven other meta-majors at the college.

To build demand for the certificate, says Dr. Angel Velez, an assistant professor of business who served as BSTC program manager, Broward first had to dispel a stigma about “retail” work. The majority of Broward’s nontraditional students work full- or part-time, and are supporting their families while attending college. To them, working in retail means flipping burgers at a fast-food restaurant or hanging garments in a discount clothing store. These are jobs paying minimum wage, requiring low-level skills, and offering few prospects for the future which doesn’t match student expectations according to Dr. Velez. Students come to college to attain higher skills and careers that pay wages sufficient to support a family.

In fact, the businesses thriving in Broward County’s retail and service industries are seeking employees with the knowledge, skills, and ability to do marketing, sales, and customer service. These are retail skills, says Dr. Velez, but are useful for any business.

After surveying students and identifying those interested in what the certificate training had to offer, Broward brought in business representatives to help tell the story of modern retail and sales. This direct exposure to area employers opened students’ eyes to new possibilities. The businesses

included two banks, a national furniture company with headquarters in Broward County, a national office supply company, and three insurance companies. Some of the companies provided excellent internships paying from \$10/hour to \$15,000 for a three-month summer stint. Others boosted their involvement with the college by serving on advisory committees and helping to shape the business and certificate curriculum to meet industry needs.

Equally important, students saw completion of the certificate program as a concrete accomplishment to add to their resumes. This built their self-confidence and provided an incentive to persist. Seeing this benefit, the college changed its pathway map so students could earn the BSTC quickly after completing 12 credits within six months or their first two semesters in the program. With this certificate, students could stack another after 24 credits, and then another after 30, building momentum towards finishing an associate of science degree in Business Administration.

Two other features proved pivotal. While Broward has robust advising for the whole college, the retail pathways initiative made it possible to expand the role of advisors and embed them directly in the business department. The advisors visited classrooms and engaged in “proactive and intrusive” advising to guide students and connect them to wraparound services.

Heightened faculty engagement was the final crucial ingredient. When faculty understood the certificate and saw what it could mean for students, they became advocates and proponents, urging students to take advantage of the embedded advisors; extra workshops on resume writing, interviewing, and points of business etiquette; business presentations; and opportunities to connect with career services. Faculty also appreciated being able to directly talk to and hear from business people, which added to their teaching.

“Faculty engagement drives student participation,” says Dr. Velez. “Faculty open the door.”

Designed to attract 150 students, the 19-month pilot actually drew 203, and achieved a 73 percent retention rate for students who began their program in the spring 2016 term. It also provided key takeaways for other pathways taking shape at the college: Bet on stackable credentials, embed proactive advisors, engage faculty, and involve businesses to keep students on the path to degrees and career success.



- **Credit and noncredit divisions must collaborate in designing retail pathways and programming that bridge the two worlds.** For instructors and faculty teaching on both sides of the credit divide, colleges need to create an environment that supports interchange. This could require more professional development or a professional facilitator to promote active and equal engagement in curriculum development. These exchanges can lead to complex and sometimes contentious conversations, but with facilitation, they can lead to organizational changes that will strengthen the institution and help more students succeed in the long-term.

For example, Durham Tech leadership quickly recognized that the retail pathways pilot program was an opportunity to strengthen connections between its Continuing Education program and the credit side of the college. It strengthened partnerships and collaboration across campus divisions by bringing together the retail pathways team of credit and noncredit instructors and advisors. They met regularly for in-service training to discuss the curriculum and/or students, the skills industry partners seek for students to be employable, and the challenges and barriers students face in crossing the divide. As a result, they were able to create a pathway for students who start in the Continuing Education program can on-ramp into a credit-bearing course of study.

- **Colleges committed to student success in pathways programs must provide support and wrap-around services that meet students where they are.** Ensuring that advisors understand new pathways (and other noncredit options within pathways) and provide appropriate guidance for potential students — both credit and noncredit course-takers—is a key step. Broward College integrates wraparound support services into the program to achieve its enrollment, retention, and completion goals. Embedding advisors within the department, understanding the services students need, and promoting them in a proactive, even intrusive, way increases the college’s ability to connect students to services. The college operates from the concept that “students don’t do optional” and did not assume students would seek out support services on their own.

Umpqua Community College has also adopted the model of “intrusive advising” as a central component of its online retail management certificate program, since RMC students are not on campus and the majority of them are working adults. Being able to quickly identify where and when students are struggling in their RMC coursework and identifying solutions through direct interventions to help those students persist has been critical.

SUCCESSFUL RETAIL PATHWAYS PROGRAMS REQUIRE EMPLOYERS AT THE TABLE

Umpqua Community College in Oregon is the only national online provider of the Western Association of Food Chain-endorsed Retail Management Certificate (RMC) programs. WAFC, a nonprofit that includes a membership of more than 30 national and regional retailers such as Albertson's, Costco, Safeway, formed in the 1950s for the express purpose of advancing the food industry through education and leadership programs.

In 2000, WAFC introduced the RMC program, which is now accredited and offered at more than 160 community colleges. The curriculum includes courses on human relations/organizational behavior, technology, business communications, management principles, marketing, human resources management, financial management and budgeting, and retail management.

Umpqua began offering the program in 2007, and, in cooperation with WAFC developed a 10-course, 26-credit program with all courses provided online. The typical

student enrolled in the program, according to Gary Gray, associate professor of business and the RMC's program advisor, is male, middle-aged with just a high school diploma, working in the food industry and has his tuition paid by his employer. He expects to work his way up in his grocery career and retire from the industry.

When Umpqua became one of the four Retail Pathway Initiative colleges, it was ready to scale up and expand the RMC program. It wanted to condense the certificate into eight courses that fit into a six-month or two-semester time period, embed a new four-course stackable certificate midway, and align the program to a retail pathway leading to an associate of applied science degree in marketing at UCC and on to a bachelor's, possibly through Western Governors University. Finally, UCC wanted to build enrollment to 120 students by expanding partnerships with businesses, marketing to recruit more students, and strengthening wraparound support services in the online arena.

Personal business relationships make the difference

A surprising aspect of UCC's recruitment challenge, says Gary Gray, was that despite the strength of the program, the ongoing input and endorsement of the WAFC, and employer-reimbursed tuition, UCC enrolled only 14 students in 2014. "We had to confront the difficult question: If this is an industry-specified program, why are we having such a problem getting students?"

One answer UCC learned in talking to employers locally was that WAFC's corporate enthusiasm was not trickling down to district and store levels. The WAFC Board of Directors set an industry goal for each of its companies to enroll 1 percent of its employees.

The grant budget allowed UCC's program advisor to travel, even on short notice, which can be an expensive undertaking when managing a national program. That increased flexibility made it possible to visit retailers when they were making up their training budgets or holding employee meetings where the advisor could describe how the program could address training needs, and leave materials with human resource personnel. UCC learned that registration for courses each term was a hassle for workers unfamiliar with college bureaucracy, so RMC

streamlined the registration process and arranged to directly bill employers who were paying the tuition.

UCC's commitment to strengthening student support led to the program adopting a more "active and intrusive" advising model because many of these students never expected to find themselves in school again. Gray made sure he had a relationship with their employers so he could ensure students knew what their bosses' expectations were and what the consequences would be if they failed to meet them.

Gray also worked as an intermediary with faculty, explaining, for example, how events happening in students' work lives (such as a holiday sale) could affect their ability to meet a deadline.

Broadly, offering programs that meet business needs and workers' realities requires institutional flexibility and a willingness to differentiate these students from regular credit students. "You have to meet students and industry where they are," says Gray.

At the end of 19 months, instead of 120 students, the program had enrolled 878, and the business school is well on its way to making the RMC part of an established pathway.



- **Colleges must couple efforts to strengthen retail pathways programs with strategies to strengthen and maintain industry partner relationships.** Retail pathways are unlike traditional academic programs, (and other workforce development programs). Colleges must invite significant input from employers and industry leaders and associations at the national and local levels to help identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies employers are seeking for both incumbent workers and new employees. This work is not only important to ensure that college programs meet employer expectations, but also because the retail industry’s culture is shifting to place more value on college credentials, whereas historically, retail workers would work their way up within a company in the retail sector with just a high school diploma. Colleges need to take advantage of this culture change to make retail pathways a normal part of employee development in the sector.

Retail pathway program leaders in the ATD initiative had to confront an essential reality about the critical need to foster ongoing relationships with local employers in addition to national industry leaders. At the corporate level, business people valued the idea of short-term certificates. Local employers, however, did not give hiring or promotion preference to students or current

employees with such certificates. Colleges need to show local business partners that students who complete certificates and continue on a pathway with additional college work not only improve their earning potential but also add value to their employers through the skills and knowledge they gain. Program managers committed to keeping up with local industry can provide topical training, hear about internship opportunities, and maintain ongoing connections with employers.

In addition, the program results suggest that identifying and targeting an audience may be the more effective approach than “casting a wide net.” The retail pathway target population is not homogenous. Therefore, it is important to align retail pathway content with regional industry needs, where appropriate.

- **Building the capacity to collect data, including enrollment, progress, completion, and employment, is critical to assessing the effectiveness of retail pathway programs.** Durham Tech did exemplary work in this area by creating a unique database to capture specific program data and using that data to support a comprehensive formative and summative evaluation for its program. It is important to note that Durham Tech soon recognized that this evaluation system could be used college-wide.



CONCLUSION

Although limited in scope, both in terms of the number of colleges participating and the duration of the pilot, the Walmart Retail Pathways Pilot project provides important lessons for colleges that plan to offer or expand retail training for students as a stepping stone to sustainable careers. The pilot colleges found there is demand for such programs, students can successfully complete their goals with the proper guidance and support, and businesses see an interest in collaborating. The retail pathways pilot laid a foundation with insights for other ATD colleges and pathways proponents to learn from and best practices to replicate.

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ABOUT ACHIEVING THE DREAM

Achieving the Dream leads a national network of more than 200 community colleges dedicated to helping their students, particularly low-income students and students of color, achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity. Achieving the Dream is working toward closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success through a change process that builds colleges' institutional capacities in seven critical areas. More than 100 coaches and advisors and 15 state policy teams are working throughout 35 states and the District of Columbia to help Achieving the Dream reach more than 4 million community college students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACHIEVING THE DREAM:

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