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Help state and federal policymakers understand how community colleges are helping put Americans to work.

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

EARLY RESULTS

Community college workforce education survey

Preliminary data from a study conducted by Opportunity America and Lumina Foundation confirm that some of the most exciting innovation in higher education is taking place at community colleges – new thinking about how to prepare learners for the world of work.

These new policies and practices will be more important than ever as the nation emerges from the Covid crisis and millions of Americans need fast, job-focused upskilling to get back to work. Yet relatively little is known about the breadth and depth of community college workforce programs.

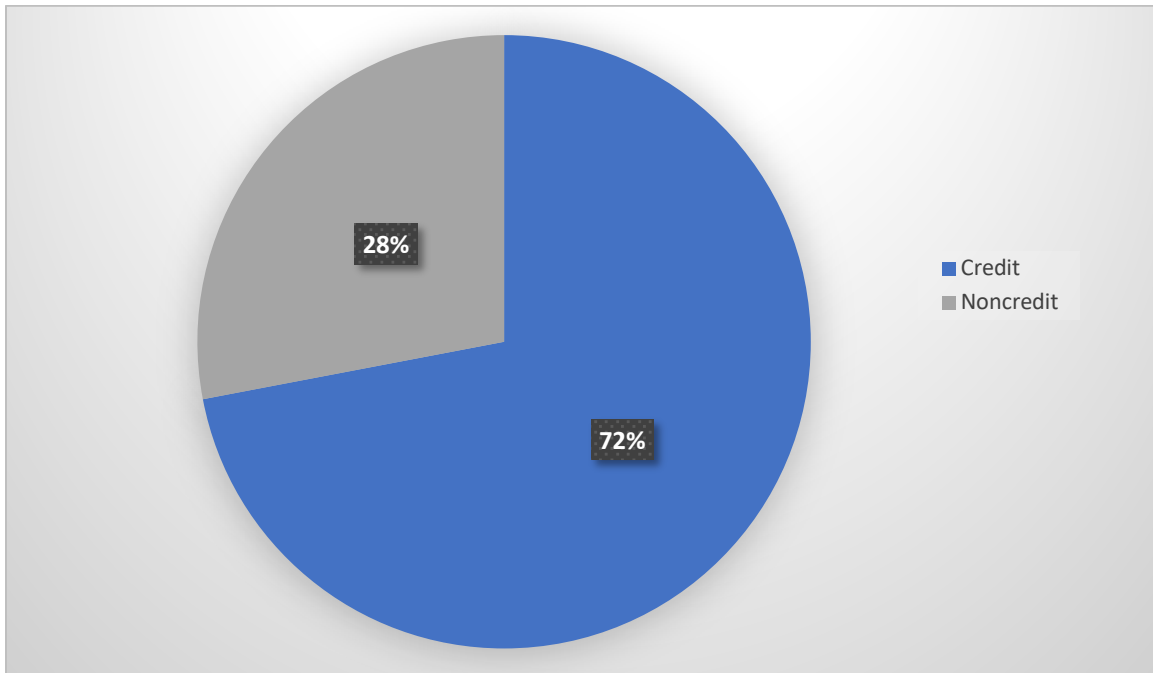
Some 1,260 publicly funded two-year colleges were invited to participate in the study, which will remain open through February 1. But education authorities in 14 states, eager to see results before their state legislatures convene in January, encouraged colleges to meet an early deadline.

The 127 institutions that met the deadline may or may not be representative, and differences in terminology from state to state can make it difficult to generalize. But these preliminary data – answers to a few of the survey's most probing questions – offer an intriguing picture of community college workforce programs and relationships with employers.

Among the most telling responses, perhaps because least is known about this realm: what colleges reported about their noncredit job-focused programs.

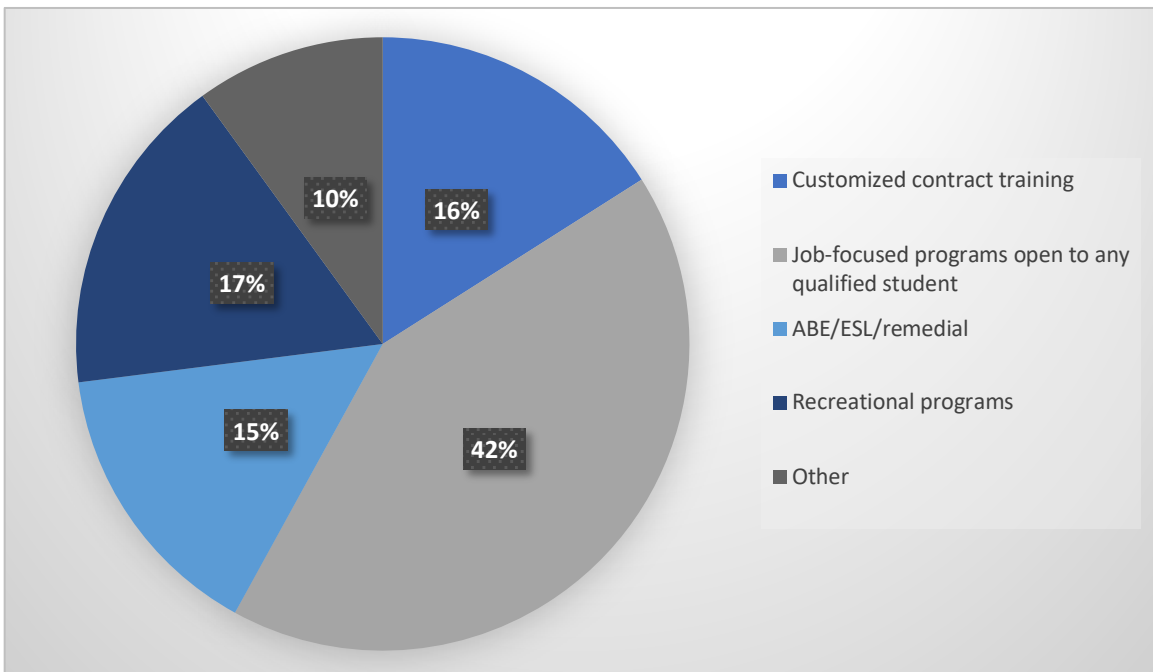
Noncredit enrollments

Data about noncredit offerings are less reliable than the information tracked and reported to IPEDS by community college credit divisions. But taken together, the 127 colleges in the early-responder sample reported that 28 percent of their FY 2019 enrollments were noncredit learners. Leaving out one state where only technical colleges responded, the noncredit share ranged from 13 percent to 51 percent.



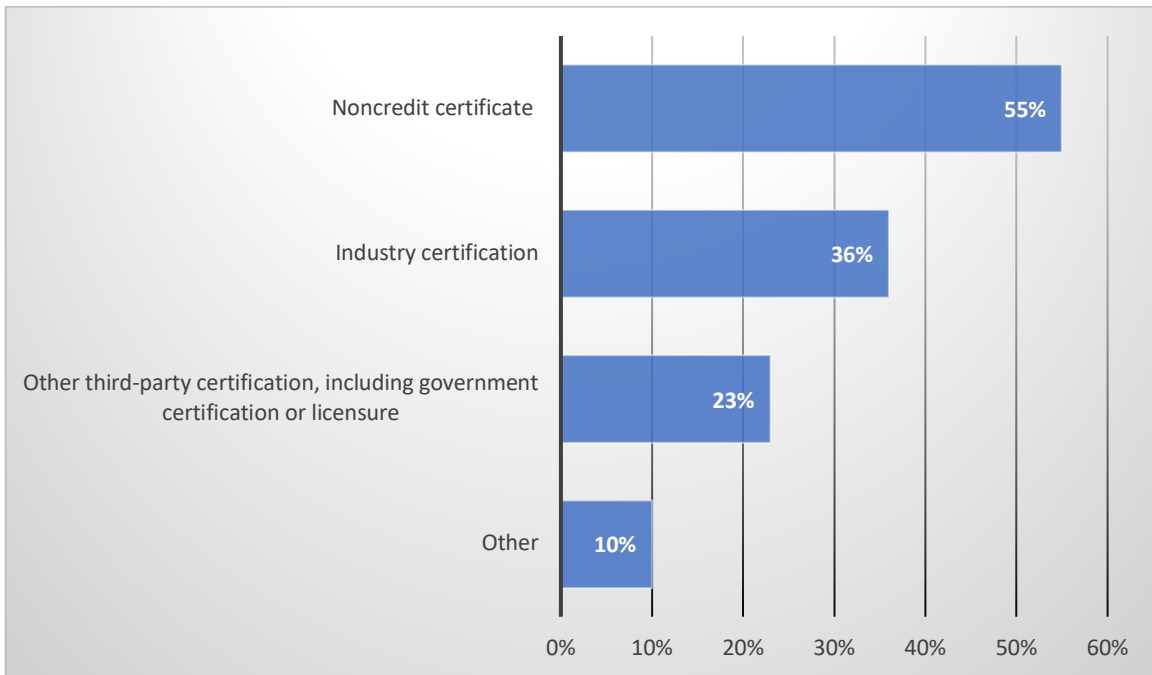
How much noncredit education is job-focused?

In FY 2019, 58 percent of community college noncredit students were enrolled in occupational programs, 16 percent of the overall total in customized contract training and 42 percent in job-focused programs open to any qualified student.



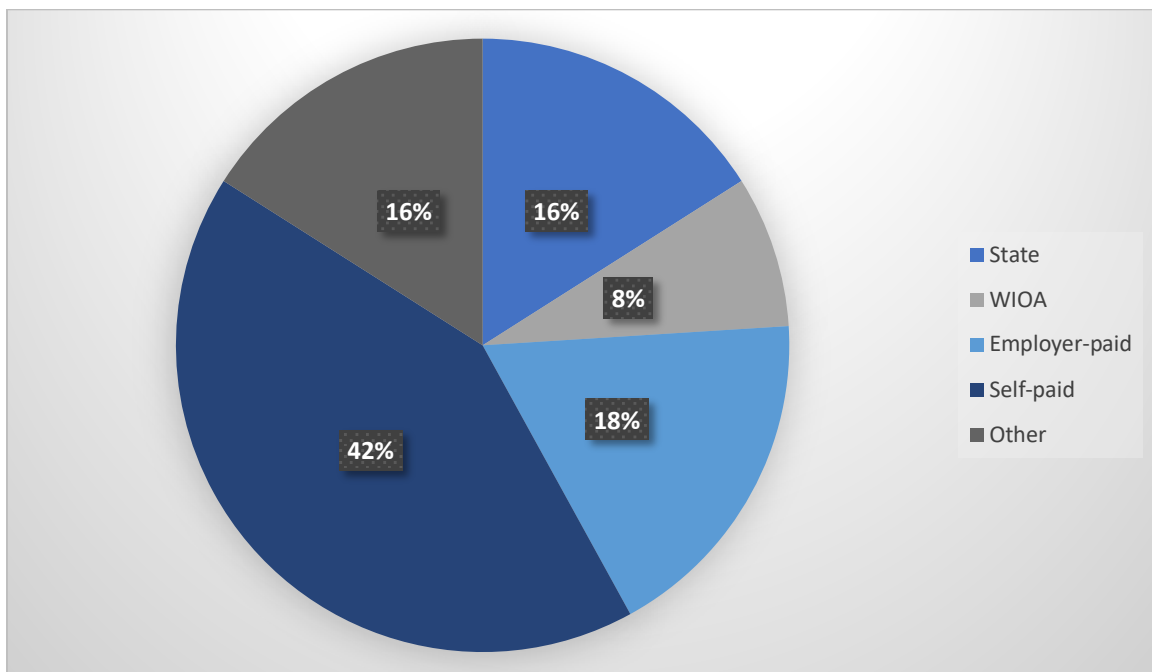
What credentials do noncredit workforce students earn?

More than one-third – 36 percent – of noncredit students enrolled in workforce education programs earn industry certifications. Another 23 percent earn other third-party certifications, including government-issued certifications and licensure. Many earn more than one type of credential.



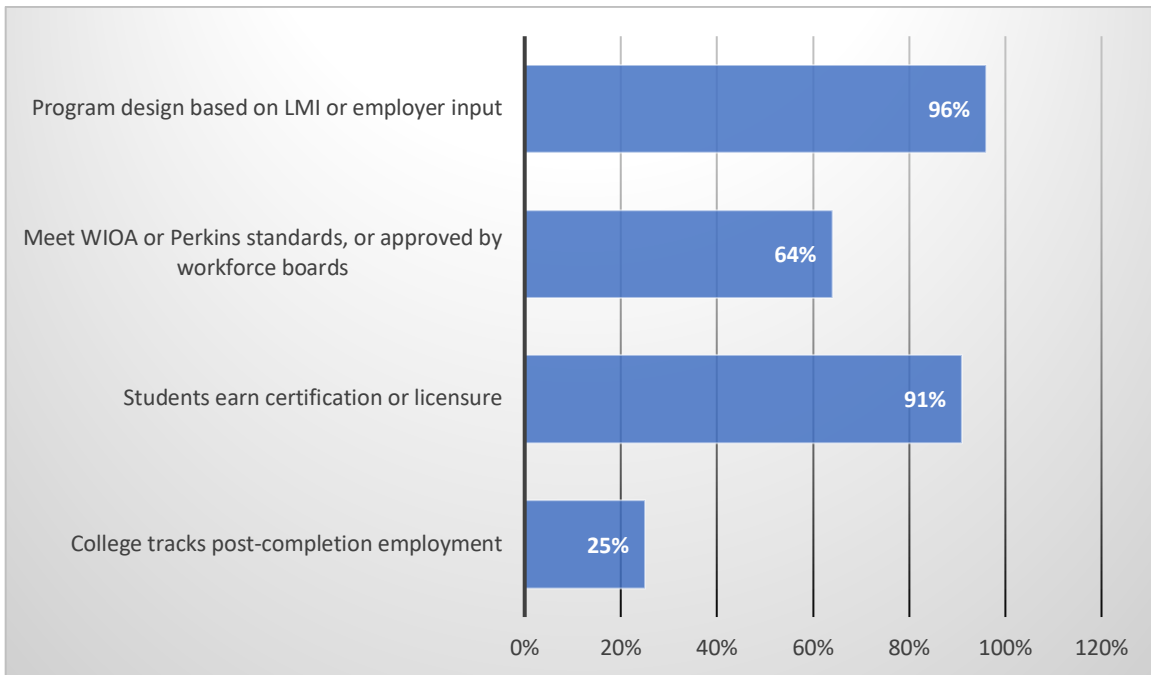
Who pays for noncredit workforce education?

State formula funding and grants cover the cost of just 16 percent of noncredit workforce programs. Military benefits, means-tested federal programs and foundation funding pay for another 16 percent. The principal source of funding – 42 percent – is students paying out of pocket. Employers pick up 18 percent of the cost



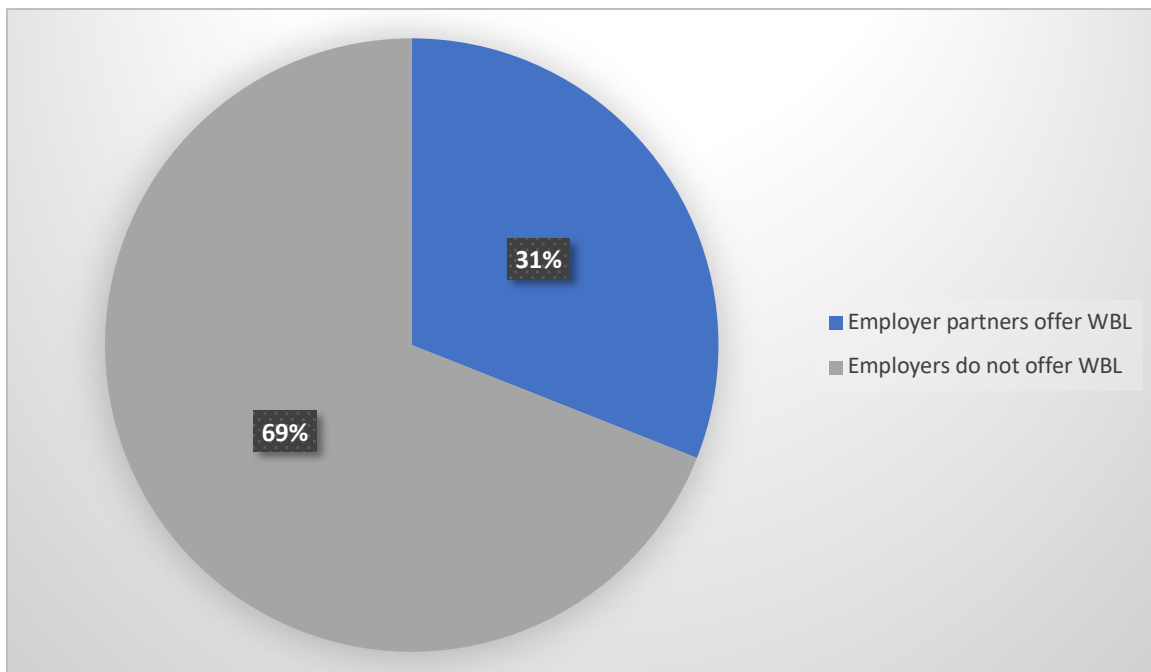
How do colleges ensure the quality of noncredit workforce programs?

Community colleges report using a number of tools to ensure the quality of their noncredit job-focused programs. The top two methods: 96 percent of institutions design programs based on labor market information or employer input, and 91 percent offer courses that lead to industry certification or licensure.



What percentage of community college employer partners offer work-based learning?

Employers collaborate with community colleges in a wide variety of ways, from offering occasional labor market advice to partnering actively to design and provide instruction. Early-responder colleges reported that on average 31 percent of employer partners provided internships, apprenticeships, co-operative education or other on-the-job work experience.



As of January 4, 31 percent of community and technical colleges across the US had completed the survey. But a significant number, many citing the Covid crisis, have requested more time, and the deadline has been extended to **February 1**.

For more information or to participate in the study, please visit <https://opportunityamericaonline.org/ccstudy/>.

Opportunity America is a Washington DC-based nonprofit promoting economic mobility – work, skills, careers, ownership and entrepreneurship for poor and working Americans. The organization’s principal activities are research, policy development, dissemination of policy ideas and working to build consensus around policy proposals.