**WorkforceGPS**

**Webinar**

**Resources for Developmental Education Using Competency-Based Education**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Cheryl Martin, program manager at U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Cheryl.

CHERYL MARTIN: Thanks, John. Hi, this is Cheryl Martin. Glad that all of you could join us today. I wanted to start out briefly by explaining one of the pieces of the alphabet soup that you'll encounter in this webinar today and then I'm going to turn it over to Erin to give a brief introduction, Erin Berg from Department of Education and then we'll get going.

So in my title, you see the word "TAACCCT." The subject that we're talking about today or the folks that are here today are here, because they were part of the TAACCCT grant program. And TAACCCT is a $2 billion grant that is wrapping up here at the Department of Education, wrapping up around September, 2018.

Funds from that grant went to community colleges for capacity building purposes, so not to pay for training, but for community colleges to build the capacity to support adult learners and make it easier for them to attain industry-recognized credentials at community colleges.

As part of the process of the grant, TAACCCT grantees have developed 2,678 programs of study, new or revised, along with implementing many other strategies and you'll be hearing about some of those strategies today.

But for those 2,678 programs of study, many of the products from those are at a website called SkillsCommons.org. You'll hear more about that today during the webinar, but if you decide that that is the best thing since sliced bread, that SkillsCommons might be useful to you or your colleagues, you can find a flyer in the FileShare box that you can download and share with your colleagues or of course, you can just send them the link.

Anyway, those are just a couple of brief introductions about TAACCCT and SkillsCommons. Let me turn it over to Erin to introduce herself and then we'll get going.

The reason why Erin and I are doing this together is because DOL worked very closely with Department of Ed on the TAACCCT Grant. Erin.

ERIN BERG: Hey, thanks, Cheryl. Like Cheryl said, my name is Erin Berg and I'm a community college program specialist with the Department of Education's office of career, technical and adult education. And in that role, it's my pleasure to serve as a liaison to all of the community colleges in the United States.

So if you are doing anything really great at a community college, please get in touch with me, because that's my job to spread the word of all the excellent innovations that are going on at our two-year institutions.

But since the inception of the TAACCCT program, as Cheryl mentioned, the departments of labor and education have been working to support TAACCCT applicants, grantees and then now through SkillsCommons the greater workforce development community.

And so like I said, in my role, I'm able to hear about a lot of the successes and innovations at community colleges, but I'm also asked about what kind of resources might be available for colleges that are facing challenges or for those that are looking to improve or update their curriculum and instruction methods.

And so today's webinar is really exciting to me, because it's addressing, in a really unique way, one of the challenges that I hear a lot about, which is development education redesign using prior learning assessments and competency-based education.

I think a lot of colleges are really starting to investigate how they can improve outcomes in their dev ed classes using CBE and PLA, as we'll hear about shortly. There's also the resources that we'll talk specifically about today, but also in the TAACCCT repository SkillsCommons.org.

There's a whole wealth of information about CBE and those assessments as well as apprenticeship and instructional learning technology and curriculum and very specific industry sectors. So if you haven't gone into SkillsCommons.org, I really suggest that you take a look there.

But I just want to thank our colleagues from the Lord Fairfax Community College who updated their completion strategies using their TAACCCT funding in the CBE and PLA area. And so Cheryl can maybe talk a little bit more about what SkillsCommons has to offer and we'll learn exactly what Lord Fairfax Community College did and we're just really excited to be a part of this webinar series.

We have a couple more opportunities to hear about some of the things in SkillsCommons, some of the best resources that they have to offer. And so thank you, again, to my colleagues at Department of Labor and Lord Fairfax Community College for partnering with us today.

MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Erin. So let's move forward. This webinar today, as you saw in the description and therefore, you signed up, so hopefully you will get what you're here for, is to learn about use of open educational resources, and we'll go through these alphabet soups in just a little bit, for competency-based education in a development education context.

So one of the things we're going to do is hear a little bit about some other research on developmental ed and then we're going to come back to – and that will be from Joe Deegan at Jobs for the Future.

And then we're going to come back to John Milam at Lord Fairfax Community College to show us this portal that they built that is funded by TAACCCT and that uses a lot of these concepts.

This webinar is part of a series of webinars that we're doing, Labor and Ed together, to showcase the strategies and the resources that came out of TAACCCT and that would be a broad interest to educational institutions and others, training providers and so forth that are engaged in career-focused education and training.

So as you can see, we're on the third one of the series today, the March 28th. The first two are available – if you click on those links, you can go back and get the recordings and the transcripts from the handouts and so forth if you wish to. And the other three that are coming up are ones that you can still register for.

So let's switch to the polling questions here for a minute and we'll pull those up and see what – see who we've got on here with us today. So in terms of who's here, it looks like about half of you are instructors, school administrators or curriculum designers, that kind of thing, which is great, because I think you'll find this really helpful.

And then another half of you are other. So not quite sure what that other is, but hopefully this will be helpful to you as well. Let's go to the next poll. This one is with the answer – or the questions have to do with competency-based education. While we're taking a look at that poll, I see there's a lot of people there that are answering what's CBE. So Joe, can you give us a quick introduction to what that's all about?

MR. DEEGAN: Absolutely. So for those of – those who are new to CBE or maybe just need a refresher, CBE models are a kind of program of study that's flexible – flexibly paced and customized to individual needs. So CBE programs measure progress – (inaudible) – degree by what students demonstrate they know and they're able to do. That's spelled out in competencies, which are sort of very specifically defined and that differs from a traditional time-bound course where making progress requires a student to complete work and then complete a time-bound semester.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you, Joe. And we'll be talking more about that and happy to answer more questions in the context of this as well. The third poll that we had had to do with another piece of the alphabet soup, OER.

So while we're looking at the polling results there, because it looks like there are a number of folks who chose our option, yeah, so what is OER, online – sorry, not online, that is actually a common mistake. It's not online educational resources, although, many of them are, but it's Open Educational Resources. So Open is like open source and the key word to relate to that is usually free.

So Open Educational Resources are resources that – it's not like you buy them from somebody and then they say, you can't use my stuff unless you bought it from me. Open Educational Resources, in the case of SkillsCommons, everything on SkillsCommons is an Open Educational Resource.

It's all licensed under a Creative Commons license, which means a CC by, they call it and that means that if you find anything on that website that would be useful to you, you can just use it. You can take it, you can remake it, you can put your colors and name on it, you can change it a lot, you can change it a little, you can change it not at all, but you can take it and use it.

Just give attribution to whoever you got it from, give them credit, drop your hat and go on your way and use it. So we'll be talking about some of those resources on our call today and throughout this whole webinar series.

Today we are going to – like I said, we're going to look at the research a little bit about CBE in the dev ed context and we're going to explore how one college did that, which is Lord Fairfax and then we're going to show you some other resources that are available to you. So without talking about it anymore, let's jump into that and do it.

As I mentioned, Joe Deegan, the program manager for building economic opportunities at Jobs for the Future will be kicking us off and then we will be turning to John Milam at Lord Fairfax Community College. So Joe, take it away.

MR. DEEGAN: Great. Thanks so much and thanks to those who are tuning in for this webinar today and also my colleagues who are inviting me to share some of the research that we've been doing at JFF on this topic. Getting ahead of myself here with the slides. So basically, before we dive into the details on our research, I just wanted to set some of the context for this research project and also, what brings us to our conversation today. How does TAACCCT relate to development education, relate to competency-based education?

So as we know, TAACCCT really helped strengthen innovations that were already underway at the nation's community colleges. These included capacity building efforts to accelerate learning, including strategies, like prior learning assessments that folks may be familiar with, competency-based education designs, the topic of today's conversation and online hybrid models. TAACCCT projects also increase capacity in strategies designed to help adult learners complete in greater numbers as well, including redesigning developmental education.

So helping learners who maybe came to college without college-ready skills, going to gain those in a timely fashion, increasing the level of student supports that are available to learners, including things like coaching and college success programs and finally, also making revisions to scheduling to accommodate the schedules of adult learners.

This next slide actually comes from the TAACCCT National Evaluation and you can see on your screen the colored bands actually indicate, for each round of TAACCCT, how many grantees suggested program features that corresponded to these categories that run down the left side of the graph.

So as you may be able to see from this chart, several of the elements that we are discussing today are really prevalent in the TAACCCT community. TAACCCT enables an investment in capacity building and developmental education, which you can see at the bottom of this chart, competency-based education that's just slightly over the middle point as well as related items, like industry-driven competencies, open educational resources, etc. So really, this is a great opportunity to discuss how all of these new innovations in the community college space can come together.

However, looking at the field, JFF noticed that even though TAACCCT was accelerating the pace of change with regard to development education redesign on one side and on the other side, competency-based designs never between shall meet as far as we could tell at first. So most developmental education was still course-based and timed to the credit hours sort of in a traditional format, despite community colleges having success and generating evidence about developmental education and CBE sort of separately.

So we set out on a project to kind of look out at the field, look at leading practitioners in the community college competency-based education space as well as experts at developmental education to try to determine what would a competency-based design of developmental education really look like and how could it be successful in the context of developmental learning.

The paper series itself actually explores this topic in five different buckets. The first is just an overarching concept paper. Links will be available, by the way, to all of these throughout the presentation and then afterwards.

The second paper discusses innovations and intake and placement processes, how those could really align to set up success for developmental learners who maybe encountered a competency-based model.

In the third paper, we do a scan of development education redesign efforts, including things like modularization, acceleration and conclude that a corequisite model that is really quite compatible with CBE. Corequisite, for those who may not be familiar, is a model – (inaudible) – in which students begin college-level courses immediately while receiving supplemental remedial education on the side.

Additionally, we explored student supports. So as we know, student supports in developmental education are really integral and there's a large evidence base about the success of providing those supports to students. So exploring what are the known best practices in dev ed and how would that change in a competency-based design. And finally, the final paper, which will be coming out in a month or so, explores these key elements of instruction, including what does flexible pacing look like, how do you build curriculum and what does assessment look like in this model.

Throughout the paper series, we returned to four themes – four benefits that we think competency-based education can lend to development at redesign efforts.

First, competency-based education is inherently flexible. So that means the pacing can either speed up if the learner has already mastered some content or slow down to allow them to focus on something that may be more challenging. It's also flexible in terms of complicated life circumstances that may be going on for the learner so they can kind of slow down to take care of personal emergencies and then catch up again when those are over.

Secondly, it's highly customized. So each individual learner will only focus on the competencies they need to learn.

It's based on mastery, which becomes the new minimum for developmental education in a CBE model.

Learners have to demonstrate a firm grasp of material, but they can make multiple attempts rather than allowing a strong performance in one area to compensate for a lower performance in another.

Finally, CBE is inherently transparent. Learners understand exactly why they need any given developmental competency and how each competency builds toward their ultimate educational goal, which has a psychosocial and motivational benefit.

Some additional questions from the field, including interrogating where are gaps in the evidence, CBE is an emerging model, how might it align with what we know works in dev ed redesign are also present throughout the paper series.

But one I really want to focus on for the next few slides is what we can learn from existing pockets of innovation that has elements of CBE designs that serve developmental learners, but may not be a full competency-based education model of development ed, but sort of make us optimistic that this idea could work.

One example from a TAACCCT grantee is at Salt Lake Community College where they operate a college academic readiness program. This program is lab-based, it has open entry and open exit. So learners can decide when to begin their skills remediation and how much time they believe they'll need to do the remediation.

Faculty assists learners in interpreting assessment results, in this case, a test of reading and math and coming up with a plan to build their basic skills before moving on to the curriculum. So this one is prerequisite in nature.

This design has the elements of customization and flexibility that we really like and we think will lend great benefits to developmental learners. Another great example is that SUNY Empire State, which has built the global learning qualifications framework, it's really comprehensive as a PLA strategy, allows learners to undergo a really great process to demonstrate their prior learning and then build customized academic plans to fill in the gaps with their credential.

Again, faculty serve a really strong role in this design, even going so far as to help students customize independent study courses that fill in gaps and allow them to progress quickly enough where the normal course catalog may not help them.

And so this demonstrates the success of sort of the customization that CBE could bring to developmental education. Finally, one question that we're still left with at the end of this research process are sort of related to existing national frameworks.

At JFF, we know that there are really strong frameworks for college and career-readiness competencies in the K-12 states where the evidence base is quite robust and we all know as well that on the workforce side, there are really strong competency models and the competency model clearinghouse at the occupation and industry level.

However, what seems missing right now from the picture are development education competencies. So there's a real need for further research to define exactly what national competency frameworks for developmental education would look like. This is important for a few reasons.

One of them, as John will mention, I think, in his piece of this presentation today, is that a known best practice in competency-based education is to always be doing program design based on really thoroughly vetted high-quality national frameworks. The greater extender could be alignment with those existing frameworks the more successful the program can be in imparting critical competencies.

And so right now it looks like even from the poll results, there may be some folks who are successfully implementing elements of a competency-based design in developmental education. Having a really strong national framework of competencies for dev ed would allow us to bring a competency-based dev ed to scale in a way that we haven't seen in the past.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Go ahead, Joe. You want to – did you have more?

MR. DEEGAN: Yeah. I'm ready for questions.

MS. MARTIN: OK. I don't know that we actually have gotten questions that relate specifically to that at this point. If we have and I've missed them, we'll go back and grab them and we will come back and ask Joe for those questions later.

So I think what we're going to do is move forward and go into John's part, description of the Knowledge to Work portal and some other things that they're doing at Lord Fairfax. And then if there are questions for Joe coming back in terms of what he's talked about here, we'll catch those at the end. So John, you are up next. How do dev ed and competency-based education play out at Lord Fairfax?

He gave us two examples from Salt Lake City and from SUNY. But how are you doing this at Lord Fairfax?

JOHN MILAM: Thank you very much, Cheryl. And we're very grateful to be here and to be part of the Department of Labor and Department of Education efforts on TAACCCT, because they really encouraged us to have a much larger vision, a new paradigm, as it were, that focused on showing that people can get jobs and jump through far less hoops and hurdles to be encountered to show that they have attained competencies, needed to get that job, regardless of how they learned it.

And that's really that big word, direct assessment, tied to CBE is it doesn't matter how you got the learning, where you got it, if you learned it on your smartphone or you taught yourself or you went to college, the point is verifying that learning so that you don't have to pay over again for it and that you can just jump right into completing credentials and getting the next job.

And there really are a great number of savings in costs and time and reducing those hurdles. The visions of TAACCCT has taken PAR learning assessment and credit for PAR learning really to the next level and we've also been really encouraged by movements that have looked at personalized ways to do competency-based ed.

So one person may have already attained a large number of the things that are under traditional programs, but they maybe missed something at the beginning or at the end. So they can personalize their work through them.

The other is the recognition that we are learning very differently than a traditional college often presents and that is we're learning on our smartphones, we're learning digitally, we're watching YouTube videos, we're taking online MOOCs, and Saylor Academy courses, and using open education resources in new and different ways, and we talk about flipping the classroom.

So all that gets into a model of competency-based education using open educational resources and we've been very fortunate to be part of the Competency-Based Education Network, which over the last several years, has developed a series of quality standards and one of them, like Joe mentioned, is alignment and use of national competency frameworks.

The interesting thing is a direct assessment, as kind of a holy grail, isn't really course-based. In fact, it doesn't count courses or credits, although, you have to have course equivalencies and with the U.S. Department of Education experimental sites and the regulations around this, Title IV financial aid is not allowed for PAR learning assessment or for direct assessment that's focused on dev ed.

So as we planned our TAACCCT work, we kind of had to take a hybrid approach and leveraging a variety of things. We did envision and implement direct assessment competency-based education in seven programs in high-wage, high-growth industries and those were related to ID, health information management, administrative support technologies and really use those.

But in the quest of doing that, we were kind of disappointed in some of our enrollments. We built a lot of software for personalized learning, but we found that we needed to think differently and with the help of some friends, and I'll shout out to Jenny Bolte and others at New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board and their America's Promise Grant called Pathways to the American Dream, we were forced to look at what we were doing. We did sustainability exercises and realized that we need to do a much better job reaching out to job seekers and to employers.

Part of that is the recognition that we need to meet a continuum of learning and in some cases, that is very much adult basic ed, basic skills, it's developmental education and that continuum needs to address needs.

So they might – (inaudible) – some competencies have to work on that are basic math skills, yet at the same time, they need to not encounter a whole bunch of hurdles and barriers to get them to the completion of a credential. So we want to move them forward and be working. At the same time, we contextualized resources that are directly related to their career of interest.

And we've been fortunate with C-BEN, we've also, because health information management is one of our areas, worked with a partner, American Health Information Management Association, and we've kind of blurred all that together in one new model for IT and healthcare with a new national competency framework and with a new national certification exam.

We've benefited a lot from round two TAACCCT grant and work done throughout the state of Virginia for a PluggedInVA model, or PIVA, which has been a great success story for adult basic ed, has some specialized curriculum that's very career-focused, incorporates coaching, collaborative learning, focuses on digital literacy skills, work with people's GED, working on the basics, but at the same time, embedding them into college work.

So just like we're part of a system, we're not doing any of this in a vacuum. We've learned a lot from the Virginia Community College system and their redesign of developmental ed. We're all reading the Community College Research Center and others that are doing that and that's helped us as a system and as a college to look at our multiple measures, such as a placement test and other ways to know whether people are ready so we don't create barriers.

And then we can focus on kind of modular pieces of courses that work just on those core competencies that people need to work on based on their current skill level from the placement test and what works with their goals for the credential and their contextualized career path.

That has, as Joe mentioned, leveraged the work on co-requisite models, contextualized math, and then just keeping track of – with lessons like out of achieving the dream with key gateway courses, and how to track students through them, and to make sure that our faculty, and our student services staff are attuned to the needs of adult learners, and wherever possible, flipping the classroom.

We've encouraged people to use creative commons, open source, OERS wherever possible and then like many of you have paid attention to the ways to ensure success by paying attention to early alerts and taking a case management approach.

So what we did was, in our programs and in our larger portals, to identify OER with faculty, map competencies for direct personalized learning, and then what we've done is create our own open source software, and then we took all of that that we worked with the campus, and we moved it to the web with a free portal at Knowledgetowork.com using those competency frameworks, linking to 20,000-plus OERs.

We've created a Spanish version and then we've learned so much from MERLOT and the work with SkillsCommons, but also, U.S. Department of Education's learning registry and the work of OER commons and many others, such as the Community College Consortium and open educational resources.

Our portal, as you see here, is now, with some of the lessons we've learned, focused on different audiences. Sometimes it's learners, but oftentimes, learners are a little taken aback with words about competencies and they don't understand curriculum structures, but that resonates very well with job seekers and especially while we've learned with employers who want to ensure that they can meet the skills maps and that potential job seekers are prepared for the jobs they're walking into. So as you can see, you can go in and for free, you can use a search engine that has about 21,000 different resources.

We kind of call this Amazon meets Google in a mashup for online learning. We have a lot of different types of educational resources you can get to, but there's really no search engines for learning and tied to the learning needs. At the same time, this is very much career focused. So tying it to a job – Department of Labor has done a great job of making the CareerOneStop resources available, my NextJob website and others about finding jobs, fitting into different occupation structures.

So we don't want to wait, we want people to help find their jobs. It's free to sign up and enroll with a quick and easy profile. And then essentially, you get a personalized learning plan, much as we so with our campus programs, that allows you to create a dashboard to track your progress over time on working with mastery of competencies.

And in some ways, we learn a learning management approach to that that is really basic to kind of manage your own competencies, your own project goals. We load all the competency frameworks that we develop for our programs or some others, such as certified administrative professional and we're loading more of those from U.S. Department of Labor's ONET, occupational competencies and also from the competency model clearinghouse from Department of Labor.

When you view that, you can see the competencies that are embedded in a particular type of program. You can click on them, and automatically get taken to a search, and you can see the types of resources that are available, and you may want to choose English or Spanish or other language.

You may want to learn by video and you can move forward with that. At the same time, just like we've addressed that continuum of learning, we've put up special collections and we have one for developmental education.

We don't, as Joe mentioned, have a national competency framework for dev ed that we rally around, but as we walk through our own list of resources, we've found that there are a number of them clustered around study skills, around college readiness, reading comprehension, math, computer skills and writing.

And we're adding more of those with the work of digital librarians and faculty. This is an example of what you get when you see a resource in the portal. You can see where the resources come from, you can get a direct link. This is different from SkillsCommons.

There are two parallel synergetic kind of visions, but essentially, ours is directly taking the learner, the job seeker or the employer right to the resource where many of the SkillsCommons are focused on the need to help implement a new instructional model or new design.

At that point, Cheryl, I think I'm going to – I've talked a lot about SkillsCommons too, turn it over to you for that part of it.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you, John. So as John was saying, there's a lot of resources on Lord Fairfax's website, Knowledge to Work. We're going to pivot a little bit to a higher level and look at many of the dev ed resources that are available on SkillsCommons.org. Remember I said that all of TAACCCT grantees that spent all that money developing programs of study put all of their resources as open educational resources on SkillsCommons.org.

So there are three kinds of resources there. One is these kind of development ed resources, one is occupation-specific resources, which we're not going to go into today, but just so that you know that they're also there, things like mechatronics or welding or whatever, those kinds of things and then a third kind of resource is more program management resources that you can use, but today we're going to focus on the dev ed resources.

So as you can see here, we have a special industry collection for the dev ed resources and I'm going to jump ahead to the next slide for a minute and show you that if you go onto SkillsCommons.org and at the top, on your navigation bar, there's a window called showcases. And if you go in there, you can find various different – like we sort of prepackaged some things to make it easy for you to find some examples of what's there and one of those is open courseware and developmental education open courseware.

So John just mentioned the six kinds of categories of things that you typically find developmental ed in, and here are some categories that I think probably match that, and one of them is digital literacy, and then there's the math, and the reading, and so forth.

So if we come back here, these are the kinds of – we have resources on study skills, college readiness, reading, a lot of math, a lot on basic computer – or a few on basic computer skills, a lot on writing, reading and writing. I know that I've had some interesting conversations with grantees over the months of this about some very interesting writing programs that they did where they embedded writing into communication skills into like nursing programs and things like that.

So it was – so there's some very creative things that are going on there, on SkillsCommons. So anyway, just to give you a sense for that. If you, like I said, go onto SkillsCommons, my recommendation, when you go on the website, is check out those showcases first thing, because they will give you some good examples of what's on there.

And then as you're looking for something, you can say, I wonder if they have something like this, and of course, you can always just try the search box and try that yourself or try the advanced search, but if you're having trouble finding it, go up under support, and there's a contact there, and there's support@skillscommons.org, and you can type your question in, and somebody will help you find – you know, give you some help to see if we can find what you're looking for.

Just as one example, if you were to go to one of these resources that's on SkillsCommons, this is what you might see. Here's something from the Adult Learning Academy, integrated reading and writing, reading instruction materials. So you see there's four files there that you can click on.

You can get some metadata information about it below that blue line there, and you can click on those, and check it out, and see if it's useful to you. And if it is, like I said, it's open, it's free for you to use. Because we get happy about our resources, I'm not going to go into these in detail, but there's also some other examples here of places that you can go for information that relates to what we're talking about today.

So the ETA competency model clearinghouse has a whole number of – this is not on the SkillsCommons site, it's a different ETA resource, but it has a whole bunch of different competency models for all kinds of different industries and you'll find that the bottom levels of all of those have to do with these developmental ed or soft skill kinds of things that everybody needs to know to go into that.

And there's even a competency model builder on there that you can take and build your own if you want to, but if you want to start with one that's already there, you can start with that as well.

Some of these resources that John mentioned, the Competency-Based Education Network is there, the C-BEN quality standards, they're having a conference, you can go to Disney World, it looks like, more links on CBE and then Joe talked about this JFF paper series at the beginning that had five papers out, I think, now and a sixth one coming, if I've got the numbers right there.

There's a link for that there as well. So lots of good resources around all of this. I am going to move now to questions and we're going to combine the questions for Joe and John and we'll go back to those that you've typed in.

We've got three or four of them here. So we're going to go through those, but if you have other questions, please type them into the chat box and we will answer as many of those as we have time for and we have a good amount of time for questions right now. So the first question that we're going to take I'm going to ask John.

It's not actually really a question, but somebody made the comment, "This will help incumbent workers wanting to obtain apprenticeship credentials get credit for RTI through testing on competencies," and that is a really good point.

At Department of Labor here these days, there's a lot of emphasis on apprenticeship and you're exactly right that this is something that can be useful from that.

John, can you talk a little bit about maybe how you have observed that happening, either at your college or elsewhere?

MR. MILAM: Yes. Thank you, Cheryl. And we have focused, as part of our partnership with AHIMA, on health information management on four apprenticeships that they have as part of a U.S. Department of Labor grant and we've identified those four roles and then our digital librarians work with the faculty and they have a competency framework of competencies related to each of those four roles and then we've worked to find OERs and other learning materials tied to those specific competencies.

So that's an example kind of on a small scale to something much bigger is that whether it's an apprenticeship or even if it's a specific type of job role, if we can clarify and kind of verify that national framework, then digital librarians, all of you who are creating resources can help blend OERs and other learning objects that we can tie to those competencies so that people can learn them on their own pace, at their own time and with the instructional choices that makes sense to them.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. There's a related question here. "Would an employer identify what competencies they want their employees to master?" How does that work, John?

MR. MILAM: Yes. And I think part of the benefit we've had from working with the Pathways to the American Dream project, the America's Promise Grant to New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board is they really wanted to expand to work with employers. So we have employers creating work profiles of their organizations and in many ways, looking at how their occupations translate into job roles and where they are leveraging and wanting to use competency frameworks.

As you know very well, Department of Labor is an excellent resource through ONET for all kinds of language and documentation about the knowledge, skills, abilities and the work statements or competencies tied to specific occupations, and our next vision for the portal is moving forward with documenting those, but then potentially allowing employers to treat that and see which ones make sense to them and to customize as it were just like we can customize a personalized learning plan, customize the types of resources.

Now, the competency model clearinghouse does an excellent job of helping an employer or an industry professional look at the building blocks, but they're not yet 1,000s of models, there's maybe 28 or so or 30 and they're a great way to start and to build those blocks and ask those key questions about what is necessary for competencies. And in other parts of the DOL sites at CareerOneStop really do help with is looking at skills gap.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you, John. I wasn't trying to interrupt you there, we were just trying to figure out the questions.

MR. MILAM: No. Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. So Joe, I'm going to ask you a question next, but I wanted to ask first if you had anything to add to what John said there.

MR. DEEGAN: No. I think John covered that really well.

MS. MARTIN: OK. So let's move to the question that is, "Does the implementation of CBE impact enrollment at the institution or credit hours earned per semester?" And Joe, I'll let you take that on and John, if you had anything to add specifically from your experience at Lord Fairfax, we can do it that way.

MR. DEEGAN: Great. So yeah, I can speak to this sort of through the literature that we know, which is emerging about CBE that's happening sort of on a national scale in the field and I'll take those two pieces of the question separately.

So starting with the enrollment question, I haven't seen any data or studies that show or have measured the impact on overall enrollment numbers, but the advantage of CBE as a model is that it does allow for flexible enrollment. So a student can begin and end a semester really at almost any time, depending on the way the institution is able to accommodate that.

So there are CBE designs that literally have enrollments happening every single week. So to me, that says that this increases the likelihood that a student will find something that works for his or her schedule, it won't be deterred by waiting for another semester potentially and would be a better fit for their schedule in theory.

And again, I'm not aware of data about enrollment levels in practice. The second piece of that question is also really interesting about credits earned per semester and early studies of CBE are showing that students almost self-sort into different learning profiles.

So some students are more like sprinters. There's an AIR study that's come up with this little sort of explanatory mechanism, but sprinters and then flexors. So the sprinters take an all-you-can-eat approach at CBE when they can flexibly get through lots of material at once and they'll do that and they'll accelerate, earn a lot more credits per semester and continue a lot faster whereas flexors kind of really appreciate CBE for the amount of time that they can build into their schedules within reason. So they'll actually kind of take their time earning credits throughout a semester and may actually have a lower credit attainment rate per semester than a sprinter.

So it remains to be seen whether or not we can do some interventions maybe and help folks with their met academics to get them to be more aware of their pacing and kind of encourage more sprinting behavior, but in the time being, it seems that CBE, as a model, allows for both more and less credit attainment per semester.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. John, did you want to add anything to that?

MR. MILAM: I was going to mention that one of the things we did was to reach out to other TAACCCT recipients doing CBE, such as those at Sinclair Community College and there's a three – cluster of three community colleges doing a lot of work, including Austin and Broward.

And one of our fears, it was just going to cannibalize our students, and that got raised internally, but what we found is that if people really focus on the end goal, which is creating more credentials, decreasing barriers, lowering costs and increasing retention and completion, and this is not so much an issue, is – (inaudible) – focus on what the enrollments are for CBE nationally, we don't really know that.

Then part of the Competency-Based Education Network and server on their board, Lumina Foundation, American Institutes for Research, Joe mentioned they're studying, has got a research project doing a national survey of CBE that's going to be piloting very soon and part of that work is how many programs – so we think there's 600 programs, but when we looked at the enrollments to see if people were having the same problems we were, many of them were focused on employers from the early models thing, Southern New Hampshire, Brandman, Capella – not Capella, but some of the others were focused on – Anthem, Jet Blue, Boeing and others.

And they had a very different model of serving employers versus learners. So I think that there's been a conversation about how to engage and tell the story about CBE and TAACCCT has worked with us on storytelling exercises to do that, but it's not about taking – rob students from one pot and into another, it's about new demographics, meeting more adult learner needs, reaching out to employers, meet their competency needs.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. So let's move to a ball-of-worms (sic) kind of question and we won't promise to unravel all those worms, but just in general, who validates – how do you address this issue of who validates the competencies and/or who insures those competencies are up to date? I think John, yeah.

MR. MILAM: Yeah. And I think, Cheryl, yeah, I'll take a start at that too.

And I think that's one of the important questions and fortunately, the Competency-Based Ed. Network, with its quality standards, has focused on the involvement as to the regional creditors in the Department of Education on faculty and the discipline being involved. And the creation of OERs, the mapping of those to competency frameworks is done by faculty in the discipline and the creation of assessment mechanisms that can verify the attainment of competencies has to be done with subject matter expertise within the discipline.

You can outsource different roles and play with the – (inaudible) – of faculty roles in ways that we know – (inaudible) – governors and others have done that have some concerns about how they're perceived under old legislation, but the real issue is the integrity of the process to ensure the quality that the artifacts that are created are being used with rubrics that are measuring what they think they're measuring, their authentic assessments and we're really benefiting from a lot of really good research that's out there by Rick Voorhees, by the Competency-Based Ed.

Network, by AIR, Jobs for the Future, especially and others, AEI, that have looked at the emerging world of competency use and how we can verify their attainment.

It's very hard to track those assessment mechanisms, because they are often thought of as badgers and badgers that are warded by institutions and they're within the learning management systems of schools or they're by third-party credentials, such as a CompTIA doing that or a HIMA.

So we can promote the promotion of learning resources and OERs, we can promote linking them to credentials, but we're still working on ways to increase the transparency and leverage all the resources that are out there for assessment, but the quality standards are pretty clear about needing to have faculty in the discipline and tied to the national frameworks, authentic assessments, use of artifacts, clear transparency about the rubrics that are used.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. We're getting a lot of questions in, this is great. We appreciate the questions and it tells us that you're engaged and we will try to answer as many of them as we can yet.

There was another question about, "Are there any resources that have instruments that measure competency attainment?" I know that on SkillsCommons, there are definitely assessment instruments that are there as part of some of those programs of study that we've posted. John, what about on Knowledge to Work?

MR. MILAM: More focus has been on tying to instructional material content, open educational resources tied to that. That is not yet part of what Knowledge to Work is about in terms of that.

Now, our own college programs do that and we have course-based competency-based ed. So that work is done by faculty in the discipline and we have a sequence of courses where people can challenge exams and other tests and other models in ways to document that, but right now it's not part of the vision of the portal. I think that's a pretty broad task.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. It absolutely is. Another quick question that fortunately, we have a quick answer to. The question was, "Is anyone checking the materials for acceptability?" And I'm going to answer this one with respect to SkillsCommons and the answer is yes.

The grantees were required to make them 508-compliant when they posted them. I will say that that's done to varying degrees by different grantees, but there was a lot of instruction to them about how to do that.

And if, by the way, you want to access some good information about how to make your resources 508-compliant or universally accessible, SkillsCommons.org under support, there's some really good information on that that was developed by TAACCCT, which is an organization that exists solely to do that.

And so if you're not familiar with them or those materials, please go find them there. They're also all free and can be used and downloaded for whatever purpose you might need to use that for. So then we also have a question about, can students earn a degree through OER programs?

And I'm going to say that a beginning answer to that is that OER – whether something is OER or not can be sort of invisible to the students; right? So they come to a class, and the professor has developed a program, and the curriculum, and all of that good stuff, and the students come, and they don't actually know where it came from necessarily.

So they get a degree through whatever program your community college offers. Some of that may have been OER, some of it may not have been, but in terms of SkillsCommons, all of the programs of study that TAACCCT grantees have to develop all had to result in an industry-recognized credential.

Now, that could be a degree, it could also, and many – and most of them were credentials that were less than one year, but they all had to lead to something like that. And so sometimes it was a very common industry-recognized credential, like Cplusplus or something and sometimes it was a more – you know, it was an AA degree at XYZ community college.

So that is my general answer to that. I don't know, John; do you want to add anything to that?

MR. MILAM: The community college system of Virginia has done a good job of promoting Z degree, which they have zero textbook costs using OERs and leveraging those and great efforts, such as OpenStacks and Lumens and others that are trying to promote them.

So I think there's a great interest in decreasing textbook costs, lowering – you know, increasing affordability through whole programs that are using OERs and those do exist in Virginia. I know we've tried to piece some together. Northern Virginia has some, Tidewater Community College has some and I think that's where we're all trying to go so we leverage state-of-the-art digital learning objects with CC by-licensing and then flip the classroom and really help increase retention.

MS. MARTIN: OK. Thank you. So we're going to turn to a slightly different kind of question. Joe, I'm going to throw this one to you. "How are the competencies tracked once they are mastered?"

MR. DEEGAN: This is a great question and I'm going to use it to kind of explore two different aspects of CDE.

One, in a practical way, I know a lot of CBE programs use a learning management system to track competency attainment and communicate the results to all the stakeholders in the process or the instructor, if there's an assessment faculty member and also, the learner herself so she can actually see exactly where she stands in the pathway.

More importantly and a related issue, that this also illustrates how CBE really fits well with other strategies that are becoming important in the postsecondary education field, like badging, for example, and micro-credentials, because a learning management system is compatible with the idea that you can then kind of communicate your mastery of competencies to other audiences even beyond the institution and that's something that a lot of innovators in the CBE space are excited about.

So the short answer is they used – a lot of institutions are using LMS to do that, but it opens up some options for other exciting features.

MS. MARTIN: OK. So we're going to try to squeeze in two more questions in our last two minutes here. One of them is, is there – I guess, "When you do one of these competency-based programs, what do you get? Do you get a certificate, an email, a ticker tape parade?"

I love that. You know, who gets that information? Is it the participant only or the employers also? And I think this might be specific to the Knowledge to Work website, because for CBE in general, it would just depend on what your college is doing. So John, do you want to answer that question with respect to the Knowledge to Work portal?

MR. MILAM: Sure. And at this time, we are not an institution with the Knowledge to Work portal giving a credential, we are promoting those and tie them to OERs and trying to improve use of competencies to get jobs and meet employer needs. However, within our old programs and – (inaudible) – to work IMS Global to Acro, there is movement toward an extended transcript and a comprehensive learner record that are all about documenting, just like we do courses, the competencies that are attained.

And whether it's a course-based model or it's a direct assessment model, the requirements of regional creditors and of Department of Education for stewardship of scarce financial aid resources are that we document those credentials.

If you've ever looked at a WGU transcript, you have a much larger conversation with employer about what the learner can do than just a set of courses whose titles don't mean anything. So the portal is less so, but very much so all the CBE programs and C-BEN and those other efforts have helped a lot to get there.

MS. MARTIN: OK. So there's one last question that I'll put up here and I'm going to tell you that the answer is yes. It says, one of the employer criticisms of certificates is that they appear to reflect seat time rather than skill attainments. It seems to me that CBE answers that criticism. Do you plan to build on that and selling the benefit to CBE outcomes for employers? And John, do you want to add anything to that?

MR. MILAM: I think absolutely, that's the point is that it focuses on documenting what has been attained and can be demonstrated with authentic assessments and it's not about courses, it's not really about credits or seat time, it's about learning.

MS. MARTIN: Yes indeed. So that is part of the message here today. We have run out of time, but thank you so much for all your questions. Thank you, Joe and John and Erin for being here with us today in the presenter and moderator mode and thanks to each of you for joining us for this webinar. Just a reminder that there are others that you can sign up for. You can click on these links and go straight there to do that.

And now I am going to turn it over back to you, Jon Vehlow.

MR. VEHLOW: All right. Thank you, Cheryl.

(END)