

Danville Area Community College – Underrepresented Groups Report 2024

Strategies in Recruiting & Retaining Underrepresented Groups on Their Pathway to Completion

Institutional Practice#1 Adult Education and Literacy Department

A. Purpose, goal or objective

The purpose of the Adult Education and Literacy Program is to provide students with a variety of educational opportunities by helping students accomplish one or more the following:

- Improve reading, writing and math skills;
- Prepare to successful State exams to earn an Illinois High School Diploma;
- Transition into a career or post-secondary pathway;
- Offer Integrated Career and Academic Preparation Systems (ICAPS) affording student to obtain an Illinois High School Diploma while simultaneously enrolling in college-level vocational programs in a high demand career field;
- Improve speaking, writing and/or other basic skills for non-native English speakers through its English as a Second Language Classes: and
- Improve job readiness and professional development skill needed in today's workforce.

All Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programming is at no cost to the student and classes are offering on the Danville Area Community College (DACC) Main campus and DACC Hoopeston Higher Learning Center in Hoopeston, IL. In person instruction, distance learning, and hybrid options are available. Classes are offered in the morning, late afternoon, and evening to meet the needs and schedules of all potential students.

The AEL Leadership recognizes that students who do not possess foundational education – a High School Diploma – enter the program with unique challenges that a traditional student would not face. The Department's mission is to focus on the whole student; offering services and resources beyond the educational realm. The team endeavors to remove those barrier that may impede their academic success. We have cultivate a strong network of community partners who are able to meet the ever-evolving needs of the student when we cannot do so within our program.

Our goal is to ensure that every student who enrolls in our program will successfully earns the Illinois High School Diploma. However, the ultimate goal is to transition

our students into traditional college students at DACC. We strongly believe that the Adult Education and Literacy program is a gateway initiative. At the onset of registration, during the intake process, all potential students set short – and long – term goals which include future academic and career endeavors. AEL team members discuss future pathways with student and how DACC and its programming can bring their goals to fruition. While in class, students are exposed to all aspects of the College, representatives from all various departments come to speak to the students, they are taken on tours of the campus/departments, and presentations are made by staff from the College’s financial divisions; – Financial Aid, the Foundation (scholarships) and Work Study.

B. Date of implementation

The Adult Education and Literacy Program is grant funded with a grant cycle of July 1 to June 30th of the particular year. Supplemental grant awards received will be implemented this year from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

C. Description of program elements or strategies that make the program successful

There are a number of contributing factors that promote the success of the Adult Education and Literacy Program. The AEL Team is comprised of highly educated and duly-qualified professionals who are staunchly committed to the success of the program and the students it serves. The Leadership team as well as the instructors and supportive staff are diverse and culturally representative of the student body and the community as a whole. The AEL Leadership embrace and promote to the tenets of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in its hiring and management practices and engagement with all students. The entire AEL team has been instrumental in curating a safe, non-judgmental environment that is conducive to the learning process and ongoing academic and vocational growth. We are an aspirational program that focuses on removing any impediments that prevent reaching prescribed SMART goals. We endeavor to meet students where they are academically by providing developmental, standard, and advanced classes. Tutoring services are available for students who may need additional concentrated instruction on a particular subject. Almost universally with AEL students, math has proven to be an area of challenge. To address this challenge, we developed a “Math Boot Camp” which is a weekly class that focuses only on mathematically concepts. The class is taught by an amazing instructor who has a Bachelor’s Degree in Mathematics and has a unique ability to relate to the students all the while ensuring a firm understanding of necessary components.

At the beginning of the Program Year through the first quarter (July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023), the State offered free GED testing to all students. This was a game changer! We witness more students in a short three month period test than we had in the previous two program years. We deduced that financial constraints were a huge barrier to more student earning their diplomas. Due to donations and unrestricted funding, the AEL program was able to cover the cost for students who were ready to test.

D. Evidence of success

Within the first two (2) quarters of the program year, enrollment numbers have doubled. We attribute these increases to the Covid restrictions lifting and students feeling more comfortable with in-person instruction as well as student's realizing that in order for their desire personal and professional dreams to come true, obtaining a high school diploma is an essential first step.

In addition to the increases in enrollment, more students earned their Illinois High School Diploma from July 2023 to December 2023 than in the previous three program years. Due to this phenomenal number of graduates, the program hosted a Winter Graduation Ceremony.

Institutional Practice#2 High School Partnerships

A. Purpose, goal or objectives:

Danville school district is comprised of 11 schools. There are six elementary schools, one upper elementary school, one middle school, an alternative school and one high school. The district is a low income district, with over 80% of the students falling into this category and over 50% of the total population being underrepresented students.

Over the past several years, the district has made advancements in the areas of academics, community, facilities and school safety. In order to increase student success, a partnership was formed between the district and Danville Area Community College to form a seamless pathway to DACC and to meet the needs of students by providing additional services directly in the high school. Additionally, the district's goal was to increase engagement with its stakeholders to assess district needs, share in its successes and encourage involvement. The district is committed to making informed decisions to prioritize the needs of their diverse student body and the partnership with DACC is embodied in their mission.

Often, due to transportation and other challenges, students are unable to travel to DACC's campus to meet one-on-one with the various offices and to meet with advisors. Also, due to their school schedule, students are not able to call to get their questions answered about college and the matriculation process. The goal was to provide access to information for all, more engagement and services to District 118 high school on a more regular basis. This would create connections and provide the students with more readily available college readiness information, specifically DACC opportunities. The recruiter visited 2 Danville high schools (Danville High School and Kenneth D. Bailey Academy) twice a week for the fall 2023 semester. In addition, the recruiter implemented Senior Blitz, which was college and career planning conversations with seniors on a one-on-one basis. The Senior Blitz allowed connections to be made and resources and information shared to underrepresented students, as well as other students, who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to have access to the information.

B. Date of implementation:

September 2023. However, the recruiter has been visiting Danville High School on a regular basis, 1x per week for more than a year.

C. Description of program elements or strategies that make the program successful:

Dedicated time is committed to meeting the needs of the high school students. Personalized and private conversations with seniors who graduate soon occur, who include the underrepresented student population, first generation and low income students. The recruiter is meeting with students and has an office in the high school, eliminating barriers and the need for travel or trying to schedule time outside of school hours. The recruiter was provided an office at both the high school and alternative school. Furthermore, she was provided a school district email, making it easier and more convenient for students and staff to make connections. High school students have the opportunity to meet with the recruiter on a regular basis and has access to information regarding other DACC resources/offices. Once the student matriculates to DACC, after graduation, they have already made a connection with the recruiter and can use her as a resource to navigate the college process. While still enrolled in high school, students also have a dedicated advisor at DACC, the Dual Enrollment Liaison, who will meet with the student, parents and the high school guidance counselor to ensure student success.

Lastly, DACC provides high school registration days named, Discover DACC Days (DDD), which is considered a college visit for students attending DACC. Prior to the DDD, the recruiter and/or DACC's Testing Center go to the high school and provide placement testing for all interested students. On their scheduled day, high school students are bussed to DACC's campus and are provided a tour, information about financial aid and other various offices, meet with faculty regarding their programs and meet with the Advisement office to create their college schedule. Additionally, students receive their student identification card

before leaving. In turn, this helps to eliminate more barriers for underrepresented and other students and helps to provide a seamless transition for all students. When students begin the semester, they have already had a tour and can easily find their classes. Also, they have already met with the advisor, so they can easily find the Advisement office if any changes need to be made to their schedule, or meet with an advisor if they have questions.

D. Evidence of success:

Every December, DACC offers a high school registration day for seniors who are graduating high school early. They receive the same college day visit as students who are traditional graduates, graduating in the spring. Although we do not have as many graduates as in the spring, every year we have enough students attending to continue offering this college visit. Much like the spring visit, underrepresented and other students take advantage of this opportunity to have guided assistance with the college matriculation process. The High School counselors help to make the connection and arrangements for students to attend.

Moreover, Danville High School is very willing to maintain a partnership with DACC and requested more of a presence from DACC staff in the high school this year. To accommodate them, DACC increased the number of days of the recruiter's visit from 1 to 2 days. Additionally, throughout the year, staff from various departments may schedule visits to offer additional information, such as information regarding Dual Enrollment/Credit.

Danville's school district now has a new alternative high school, Laura Lee, which the recruiter has visited to provide information and services. The Laura Lee Fellowship House is a multipurpose community center, serving various populations and low socioeconomic groups. Danville High School has requested for DACC offices and employees to schedule time to present information about their areas to the students at Laura Lee.

Additionally, due to the increasing need of assistance with high school families, a Dual Enrollment Liaison position was added to the advisor's job description. Currently, there is a specific advisor who processes the paperwork for Dual students, meets with students, parents and guidance counselors to ensure accuracy of pathways and success. Once the time was evaluated that was allotted to working with high school students, a change in job description was merited for that advisor. She will continue to work with all of the Dual students and families in the district, which include the underrepresented population of students.

Each year, during the spring college visit for Danville High School, many students enroll at DACC. At times, DACC has to offer more than one day to accommodate all of the high school students planning to enroll.