

Evaluation of RevUp's Workforce Navigator Initiative

I. Executive Summary

What was the initiative? As part of the \$25 million-dollar RevUp Montana initiative, RevUp sought to pilot new “Workforce Navigator” positions. While there was significant variation in how the positions were deployed, positions were designed to help bridge/align the services of Montana Department of Labor and Industry (MT DLI) Job Services and local two-year colleges. Supporting specific occupational pathways, Workforce navigators helped **recruit** appropriate students from Job Service locations, provided **proactive student supports** (or case-management) to aid in student **retention**, and actively engaged local employers to aid in student **placement**.

What were the results? Programs supported by workforce navigator's increased enrollment by 24% during a period when overall enrollment in Montana's two-year system declined by 13% overall. Workforce navigator-supported programs enjoyed a student retention rate 117% of all-other two-year programs and job placement rates of workforce navigator-supported students was roughly 80% and 66% for non-graduates (which is also seen as a positive). The enrollment-rate of Job Service clients who were referred to college training increased by a multiple of four. Conservative analysis (Appendix 1) of workforce navigators' recruitment indicates that their recruitment activities created an average of at least an additional \$130,750 in tuition, fees and full-time employee (FTE) per year per college.

What are the implications? Under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) the Department of Labor and Industry and its partners are incentivized to partner more effectively with credential-bearing training institutions.

II. Background on the Initiative

Nationally many colleges and college-systems explored the use of workforce navigator-like positions (a.k.a. Career Coaches, Coaches, Navigators, etc.). Many approaches included increasing supports to students, particularly job exploration and placement services, and some focused on improving alignment of labor and educational agency's services. In general, these positions had been demonstrated to reduce barriers to co-enrollment across agencies, help braid training-supports of different agencies and increase student success through enhanced and ongoing supports.

RevUp workforce navigators were designed to take the best attributes from these existing models. Specifically, it was recommended that the positions:

- Be viewed as joint-appointments of Job Service and the local college (the positions were officially college employees to help overcome barriers experienced by non-college personnel in other states) and should be split time between the college and the Job Service Office.
- Engage in recruitment of Job Service clients that express an interest in gaining a job in one of the high-growth, high-wage positions targeted by RevUp Montana. *Some workforce navigators extended their recruitment activities to other community organizations that serve job-seekers which became recognized as a best practice.*
- Engage in proactive (a.k.a. intrusive) case-management of students, meaning that workforce navigators engaged in ongoing contact with students to provide encouragement, provide direct problem solving and connect to resources that could help in overcoming potential obstacles to academic/career success. Specific case-management activities included career exploration, administrative assistance (e.g. enrolling, etc.), career preparation and job placement.
- Engage in employer outreach to establish a direct relationship with local businesses. The purpose of this outreach was twofold:

- Assist faculty in gaining feedback about the preparedness of graduates as they entered employment → continuous improvement opportunities for the faculty, and
 - Gain an understanding of specific hiring needs, including the timeline, competency-level and cultural/environmental expectations for new hires → an ability to match job seekers with businesses.
- Engage in and share accountability for job placement of students.

III. Initial Goals

The initial goals of the workforce navigator initiative were to assess if joint-positions would improve outcomes for Job Service, recruitment for colleges, learning outcomes (retention, completion and job placement) for students, and time-to-hire for employers sufficiently to justify their cost. In other words, is there a return-on-investment for stakeholders impacted by the new positions?

IV. Adjustments/Challenges/Road Blocks

As each institution was given leeway to emphasize the role differently – there was significant variance in how these positions manifested at different institutions. While many institutions found the positions to have significant positive impacts, few colleges maintained a meaningful presence at the Job Service locations and roughly half of the workforce navigators were responsible for creating direct relationships with businesses. This made evaluating their impacts more challenging.

The vast majority of workforce navigator duties are activities that are already being addresses, albeit at a different level of intensity, by existing personnel, typically by personnel in several different departments/divisions of agencies. This made it hard to integrate these positions (e.g. who should supervise) and avoid push-back from employees who reasonably felt that workforce navigators were complicating their jobs. For instance, there are often multiple people at both Job Services and colleges responsible for engaging employers – though typically these individuals are not engaged with students at a granular level or responsible for placing students.

Workforce navigator success can threaten an institution, despite significant evidence of their positive impact on recruitment, retention and job placement.

College	Recruitment	Retention/Case-Management	Employer Outreach	Job Placement?
Bitterroot College # *				Yes
City College #	10	30	5	Yes
Dawson Community College #	20	35	10	
Flathead Valley Community College	10	50	0	Yes
Fort Peck Community College *				
Gallatin College	5	65	15	Yes
Great Falls College MSU	20	27	13	Yes
Helena College #*	30	40	10	Yes
Highlands College	15	50	10	Yes
Little Big Horn College *				
Miles City Community College	40	40	20	Yes
Missoula College	25	25	10	Yes
Montana State University Northern	0	0	15	
Average	17.5	36.2	10.8	
Legend	Colleges considered to have maintained fidelity to positions intent			
	Colleges missing a key component or consistency of WFN position			

Bitterroot College's WFN acted much more in the capacity of a senior executive than a provider of direct services; Dawson Community College had inconsistent WFN coverage – cycling through three workforce navigators during the project; City College did not have consistent WFN services until the last year of the project, and; Helena College curtailed their WFN services in April, 2016.

*Did not respond to RTI, Inc. survey. Helena's WFN percentages have been estimated by RevUp Montana staff based upon conversations with Helena College's WFN.

V. Outcomes

Enrollment/Recruitment: Enrollment in RevUp programs rose by 24% while declining 13% over the same period of time across all two-year programs.

Retention/Completion: Programs supported by workforce navigators had a retention rate of 68.5% versus 58.3% for all two-year programs during the same time. This equates to retention of approximately 102 more students per year (1,003 total students/year * 10.2% more retention) across the system and roughly \$666,830 in tuition/fees and \$293,760 in state-allocated revenue per year. There also seemed to be significant impacts on award-rate at some institutions (please see Appendix 2 for an example where the rate of students obtaining an educational award (in 100% time) rose from 25% to 83% in one year).

Importantly, workforce navigators also seemed to have an impact on a student's time-to-completion. This equates to students spending [X] terms less in training, spending [x] less in hard/soft costs, and increasing their Return on Investment by [x] years.

Employer Engagement: Over 576 employers were engaged in the project by workforce navigators, including 213 site visits. While it is challenging to quantify the impacts of this outreach, 88% of businesses surveyed said that students were better prepared than when RevUp started. All workforce navigators said they had been contacted directly by hiring managers looking to fill positions.

Job Placement: While our data is not definitive, job placement rates for RevUp students seem to be between 70-80% for graduates and 66% for non-graduates. The average wage for graduates was [x], [x]% higher than the state average for workers with an Associate of Applied Science degree. The average wage for non-grads was [x], [x]% higher than the state average for workers with some college.

VI. Implications

The positions seemingly have positive impacts for all major stakeholders. Job Services benefit from higher enrollment rates in college programs which is more important in the WIOA funding reimbursement model. Colleges seem to benefit from revenue (\$130,570/year – not mentioning increased retention revenue) that exceeds that cost of positions (\$42,000 average salary with \$15,000 in benefits) and additional monetary rewards in their performance based funding model for increased award rates. Businesses seemingly benefit from gaining direct access to a relevant talent pool and gaining access to individuals with intimate knowledge of resources that can assist them navigate the workforce system. Despite the social and financial benefits, there is no formal plan or discussion of scaling the use of workforce navigators in the Montana workforce development system.

VII. Current Plans for Sustainability/Next Steps

While approximately ½ of the RevUp colleges have maintained the focused advising role of workforce navigators in some fashion, only one college has continued their partnership with their local Job Service. This would seemingly negate the benefits of client college-enrollment-rate increases for Job Service and revenue generated for colleges through enhanced recruitment. Further, with a few exceptions, the workforce navigators were going to curtail their business outreach activities which decreases the emphasis on job placement which could have negative impacts on obtainment of WIOA goals.

Having reviewed the impacts of workforce navigators, Montana's Commissioner of Labor and Industry, requested that RevUp staff create a workforce navigator training that could be used to train MT DLI staff in how to work collaboratively with their 2-year college partners. In response, an 8-hour interactive training was created and may be used to help train MT DLI workers in the future.

RevUp Workforce Navigator Recruitment Financial Impact

Total for Credit Recruits	248
Total Recruit FTE	693.75
Average Tuition and Fees per Semester (Based on the MUS 2013-2014 in-state amounts for full-time students)	\$ 1,612.00
Approximate Tuition and Fees Paid	\$ 1,118,325.00
Mean Terms Enrolled*	2.62
Mean FTE per Term	1.07
Average Tuition and Fees Paid per Recruit as of Fall 2015**	\$ 4,519.08

Navigators with > 0 Recruits (GFC, Helena, Highlands, Miles, Missoula)	
Total Months Worked	103
Mean Months Worked	20.6
Mean # of Recruits per Navigator per 12 months	28.9
Total Tuition and Fees Generated by 12 months of Navigator Recruiting***	\$ 130,570.72

paid by those specific students.

All Navigators with Recruiting Responsibilities (City, Dawson, FPCC, Gallatin, GFC, Helena, Highlands, LBHC, MCC, Missoula)	
Total Months Worked	145
Mean Total Months	14.5
Mean # of Recruits per 12 months	20.5
Total Tuition and Fees Generated by 12 months of Navigator Recruiting***	\$ 92,750.24

* Many recruits are still enrolled so the Mean Terms Enrolled will increase over time

** Average Tuition and Fees Paid is dependent on the Mean Terms Enrolled

*** Total Tuition and Fees Generated is dependent on the Mean Terms Enrolled

Notes from the Office of the Commission of Higher Education

49 reported recruits were not in the MUS warehouse; this could be caused by errors in intake forms or non-credit recruits

Divided the 2-yr MUS average full-time, in-state (in-district), full year tuition and fees by 2; reported on OCHE website

Total FTE multiplied by average tuition and fees

Average terms enrolled by recruits at RevUp institution (does not include transfer)

Average tuition and fees paid per student over course of enrollment; average tuition and fees * mean terms enrolled * mean FTE per term

Sum of the months worked by the 5 Navigators

Total recruits divided by total months worked (recruits per month) multiplied by 12 months

Tuition and Fees paid over course of academic career by the mean # of annual recruits

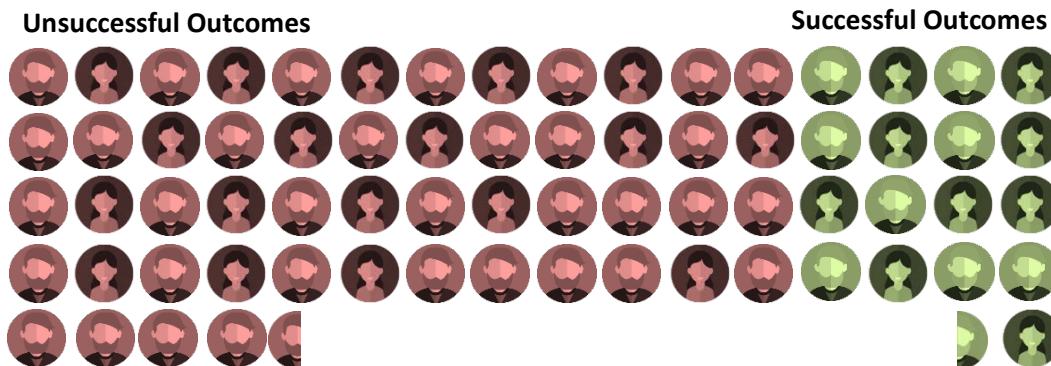
These numbers will increase over time because many students are still enrolled; as of Fall 2015, 120 of the recruits were still enrolled

DRAFT

Great Falls College Montana State University’s (GFC MSU) Proactive Approach to Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS) Awards

As part of the RevUp grant, Great Falls College Montana State University (GFC MSU) adopted a new approach to student retention and awarding of credentials. The impact has been significant. We share the story with you here in hopes that other colleges can adopt practices that serve students in similar ways.

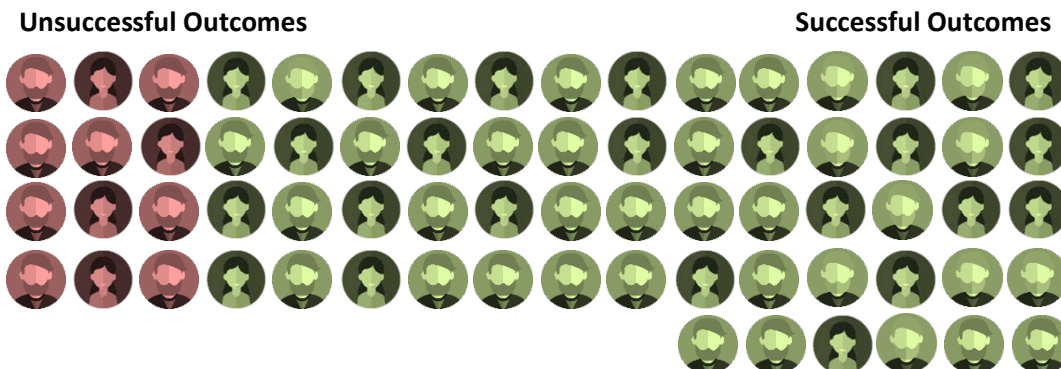
GFC MSU had 70 students enroll in their welding programs between Summer 2015 and Spring 2016. Based upon GFC MSU’s welding award rate the previous year (25%), 17.5 students would have attained an award.



To address the issue, GFC MSU took several steps to reduce the barriers to student success. These steps included:

- (1) embracing the CTS degree as a benchmark of achievement;
- (2) eliminating the graduation fee for CTS and Certificate of Applied Science (CAS) degrees, and;
- (3) proactive outreach to every “unsuccessful” student to identify steps to a more successful outcome.

These shifts allowed GFC MSU to encourage many to return to their studies and capture a significant number of students that had earned degrees that simply had not been granted for myriad reasons. As a result GFC MSU tripled the college’s award rate from the previous year to 83%.



Obtainment of CTS awards appear to be encouraging more students to complete higher-level degrees (RTI, Inc. third-party evaluation of RevUp Montana). GFC MSU placement rate of RevUp students is 95% (Unemployment insurance wage match). Four of GFC MSU’s unsuccessful students are considering returning to complete their studies.

