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**What does completion have to do
with it?**

The anecdote

- “I have lots of students who take a couple of courses and then they go and get a job before they complete the program. How can they be failures?”
- “Sure students complete. They just complete someone else’s credential.”

Session outcomes

- Understand current research efforts to document outcomes for students who don't complete a community college credential or transfer
- Evaluate implications of research for community college policy and practice

Where did your research start?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey	Peter Bahr's Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Filed driven by CTE Deans• “Scaled up” to statewide survey, with nearly a third of California Community Colleges participating• Goal: obtain data and information not available elsewhere primarily to answer these questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Are students finding jobs, and in the fields for which they trained?Do they see a wage increase?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The goal was to understand what students actually do in community colleges, by examining course-taking patterns, course-success, and completion of credentials or transfer.

How did you gather this information?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey

- Surveys conducted through email, US mail, and by phone.
- Responses paired with student information available through a statewide system database

Peter Bahr's Research

- Using the Chancellor's Office statewide database, Bahr conducted a **cluster analysis of course-taking behaviors**, with the surprise finding that a large number of students were taking only one or two courses, succeeding in these classes, but not getting a credential or transferring.
- Further analysis refined a skills-builder cohort for further study, **mapped common course topics, and linked course-taking with wage data** from the state unemployment database.

What types of students were included in the research?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey	Peter Bahr's Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate/vocational degree earners• Students who completed 9 or more CTE units and did not enroll in the following year• 35 colleges participated; 47,436 students were surveyed, 24% (11,595) responded• “Skills Builders” are a sub-set, defined as non-completers who did not transfer to a 4-year institution	<p>The second phase research on programs of study and wage gains for short-term course-takers included 174,864 students who met the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• first-time students• between the age of 18 and 50• took six or fewer credits• achieving a unit success rate of at least 70%• did not secure a community college credential or transfer to a four-year college

What timeframe does your research cover?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey

- Research was conducted in the first half of 2013, for students who met the criteria during the 2010-2011 school year.

Peter Bahr's Research

- Course-taking behavior and academic outcomes were observed for six years, covering students who began taking courses between fall 2002 and summer 2006 .
- Wage data tracked students from eight quarters prior to their college entry through the fourth quarter of 2012.

What were the skills-builders like?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey

SUCCESSFUL:

- 27% have earned a BA/BS or higher
- 11% self-employed
- 31% obtained industry certification/licensure
- Posted higher pre-and post-wages compared to other groups in the survey

UNIQUE:

- 26% had ed goal of update job skills/renew license or permit
- 13% had ed goal of self-enrichment

NON-TRADITIONAL: 37 years old

Peter Bahr's Research

FAST: Three-fifths stayed just one semester, and most left after two terms

EFFECTIVE: Skills-builders are extremely successful in their coursework

- unit success rate of 98%
- 71% earning a GPA of 3.0 or higher (compared to 28%)

NON-TRADITIONAL: 37 years old, 51% male, 47% white, 33% Latino, 7% African American, and 7% Asian American

What did they study?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey	Peter Bahr's Research
<p>Unknown, as they did not complete a program of study</p>	<p>About three-fifths (58%) of skills-builder students enrolled initially in CTE fields such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• engineering and industrial technologies• business and management• public and protective services• family and consumer sciences• information technology

Did they make more money?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey

YES:

- 22% increase in hourly wages from prior to coursework/training to approximately 1.5 years post coursework/training

Peter Bahr's Research

16 of the 24 non-completing course clusters yielded significant earnings gains for students, usually in the **5-10% range for just six credits:**

- administration of justice – 9% earnings gain
- electronics and electric technology – 8% earnings gain
- computer infrastructure and support – 5% earnings gain
- child development & early care education – 3% earnings gain

The **more credits** non-completers took, the **more their wages increased.**

Did they get other benefits?

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey	Peter Bahr's Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 16.3% report they learned skills to stay in their current job• 31% obtained an industry certification/licensure• 45% report their current job is "very close" to their field of study• 22% report their current job is "close" to their field of study	<p>The unemployment insurance data doesn't tell us</p>

Has anyone else documented this?

In addition to the studies described here, research by the California Community College Chancellor's Office found:

- Positive wage gains for non-completing students who listed “improving skills” as their college goal
- Similar demographics (including a high rate of returning students)
- Similar course-taking patterns

Key messages

- Skills-builder students are not just anecdotes.
- These students appear to upgrading work-related competencies, not taking personal enrichment classes, and securing significant wage gains.
- Common success metrics count these students as failures.
- Few colleges have access to employment, wage, and external certification data needed to demonstrate their successes.

Implications

- 1) Metrics are needed to capture community college workforce development goals. Some measures that may prove helpful include:
 - Course success
 - Employment
 - Job retention
 - Wage gain
 - Industry certifications and state licenses

Implications

- 2) Looking at employment outcomes can help colleges determine whether they are offering students a fair return on investment and a chance at a family-sustaining wage.

Implications

3) Colleges could leverage information on skills-builder students to inform program improvement efforts.

What are some of the ways that you think this information would be useful at your own institution?

Find out more

CTE Employment Outcomes Survey: [URL]

Peter Bahr's Research on Skills-builders, plus practitioner-friends guides to support conversations on the research:

www.wested.org/project/quantifying-non-completion-pathways-to-success

Contact us!

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