

**ADULT
CAREER PATHWAYS:
PROVIDING A SECOND
CHANCE IN PUBLIC
EDUCATION**

**Compiled and Coauthored
by Dan M. Hull and
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FOREWORD

As the chancellor of a large community college district in southern California, I take pride in the role our nation's community and technical colleges have played in providing career and technical education. For years, our institutions have led the way in helping students acquire the skills necessary to keep American employers strong and globally competitive.

Through much effort and years of experience, we have learned to meet the needs of traditional-age students. But we have yet to come up with a process that enables us to serve the adults in our communities who are capable of earning post-secondary credentials (certainly at the two-year level) but whose circumstances have thus far prevented them from doing so.

Most of these adults are where they are because—for a wide variety of reasons—they have not taken full advantage of the benefits of public education. Now they need a second chance.

That's what this book is about—providing a second chance in public education to the millions of Americans whose career options are severely limited and likely to remain so unless some outside entity intervenes. The needs of these people are many, and the barriers to their success are often complex, but they are not insurmountable. With the right leadership—and a willingness on the part of educators, employers, community leaders, and policymakers to work together—we can turn things around.

Leadership is the key. College presidents and chancellors as well as CEOs and other organizational leaders at the highest levels must lead the way. We alone have the authority, connections, and resources necessary to bring together entire communities for the shared purpose of providing the second chance that our nation's career-limited adults so desperately need. I urge my colleagues to join me in this important effort.

This book shows how it can be done. It widens the dialogue, raises the bar, and calls us to reach farther than we have reached before. It is a blueprint for success that should be read and reread from cover to cover.

—Dr. Jerome Hunter, Chancellor
North Orange County Community College District, California

INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, too many of the “Neglected Majority” are still neglected.

As the educational requirements of a rewarding career and fulfilled personal life have risen over the last 30–40 years, the achievement gap between the “haves” and “have nots” has widened. Initiatives such as Tech Prep, contextualized teaching and learning, and small communities have improved the earning and learning potential for many young people in the middle 65 percent of the educational spectrum, but huge numbers still enter adulthood without the educational credentials necessary to raise themselves and their families above the poverty level. The fault for the failures of public education lies with dysfunctional families, schools, and communities – and, yes, the individuals themselves. There’s plenty of blame to go around. But pointing fingers is futile. We have a problem on our hands, and we must find a way to fix it. With each passing day, more of our young adults become economic liabilities and, in some cases, threats to our society.

The career limitations of our young people are only one side of the coin. The other is that employers throughout our country face a diminishing pool of workers who are qualified for the critical jobs needed to keep America’s private sector competitive in today’s global economy. Many businesses are being forced to outsource jobs to workers in other countries. If that trend continues unchecked, the future of our nation is in jeopardy.

We believe that the key to providing a better life for millions of Americans, and giving our employers a strong home-grown workforce, is an educational strategy called Career Pathways. In 2005, coauthor Dan Hull and a group of twenty experts from around the country produced a thorough treatment of Career Pathways titled *Career Pathways: Education with a Purpose* (CORD). That book provides the following definition:

A Career Pathway is a coherent, articulated sequence of rigorous academic and career/technical courses, commencing in the ninth grade and leading to an associate degree, baccalaureate degree and beyond, an industry-recognized certificate, and/or licensure.

Whereas the book cited above focuses primarily on high school students on their way up, this book focuses on adults in need of a second chance. We extend the Career Pathways concept by giving it an adult focus. Our working definition is this:

An Adult Career Pathway (ACP) consists of the guidance, remediation, curricula, and other support elements required to enable career-limited adults to enter the workforce and progress in rewarding careers.

This book is a “call to action.” It challenges educators, community leaders, and businesspeople to work together in finding a solution to a problem that prevents many U.S. citizens from obtaining the education that today’s workplace demands. Current federal, state, and community programs are not solving the problem.

We propose a fresh and challenging plan with practical strategies to tackle this urgent need. Chapter 1 presents the scope and magnitude of the problem. Chapters 2 and 3 set forth a solution. Chapters 4–8 offer strategies, based on experiences and practices of community college leaders who are trying to address the problem. Chapter 9 considers the costs while Chapters 10 and 11 examine existing policies and programs at the federal and state levels.

Public resources alone will not provide enough to support ACP programs, so Chapter 12 explores the resources (both financial and “in-kind”) that must come from the private sector and from the businesses and other organizations that stand to benefit from having adequate supplies of world-class workers in their communities.

We urge community college presidents, community leaders, and CEOs to begin the dialog about Adult Career Pathways as soon as possible.

Dick Hinckley and Dan Hull
April 2007

Prologue

CAREER-LIMITED ADULTS IN THE ERA OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

Jesse struggled in school. By the time he was in the fifth grade, it was apparent to him, and everyone else, that he wasn't a "high achiever." When he entered middle school, things got worse. Math didn't make sense, he didn't like his reading assignments, and he had a hard time organizing his writing and "getting started." By the time he entered the eighth grade, Jesse was starting to question why he was still in school, why he needed to learn things that he would probably never use, and whether there wasn't something else he could be doing that he would like better than school.

But then things began to improve for Jesse. During the eighth grade Jesse learned about different jobs, discovered his career interests and abilities, and found out that he could choose school subjects that helped him explore and prepare for a future in an interesting career area. Jesse chose to enroll in an IT academy in high school. In the eleventh grade, he switched to an engineering academy. By the time he graduated from high school, he had already earned 12 hours of dual credit through a nearby college, had earned a scholarship, and was well on his way to becoming a photonics engineering technician. Jesse enjoyed the benefits of Career Pathways!

PROLOGUE: CAREER-LIMITED ADULTS IN THE ERA
OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

Karla's experience in school didn't turn out as well. As with Jesse, her low performance in academic subjects was matched by her low self-esteem. By the time she reached high school, her mind was somewhere else. Her only goal in school was just to "get out." She took the easiest path, barely graduating. Although she avoided getting into serious trouble, she left school without a plan and without much preparation for a future. She got a job waiting tables, got married within a year, gave birth to a child, and began to "grow up." Within a few years, she became a single mother and had to return home to live with her parents, because she didn't have the resources or support structures to "handle life" on her own.

Karla was 24 years old and without much of a future before her. Yes, she has made some bad choices. But she was also the failure of our public education system. She wants a second chance at education, a career, and a more rewarding life – and we have a responsibility to help her get it! ♦

These two scenarios reflect the experiences of two large groups of students in U.S. public education. Students in the group represented by Jesse have benefited from their educational experience – and so has the economic competitiveness of our nation. They will get and keep good jobs, and they're prepared for career changes and additional education and training. They're the beneficiaries of successful Career Pathways.

Students like Karla just didn't "get it" when they were in school. Whether the fault lies in a mismatch between learning and teaching styles, a lack of career awareness and career foundations, poor self-image, or just plain immaturity, the students in this group represent a failure of public education and community support – and we have a responsibility to give them a "second chance" in education. So far, this responsibility has fallen on our community and technical colleges, and those institutions should and will continue to play a huge role in "second-chance" education. But more is needed. We need a more systematic approach that involves collaboration between

business and education and helps adults balance the demands of family commitments and work as they get back on track in education and careers. The approach we envision is an extension of Career Pathways that caters specifically to the needs of adults. We call it Adult Career Pathways (ACP).¹

Every American who needs and wants a “second chance” in public education should get one. The reasons should be obvious. American businesses cannot succeed without a well-educated workforce, and our communities need responsible, contributing, financially independent citizens. But, most of all, every person in the United States of America should have the right to improve and to realize his or her dreams. And a high-quality, focused public education is still the key to ensuring that every American enjoys that right.

Over the last thirty years, our society has redefined what constitutes a high-quality, focused public education.

1. Public education should still focus on mastery of core academic subjects such as reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. But today, the academics should be *useful* – not just “math for math’s sake” or math to learn more math, but math that can be applied to the real problems that confront us in life and work. The ability to use computers and the Internet is also becoming a foundational academic requirement.
2. Public education should teach social and interpersonal skills and should give students the tools and the desire to produce high-quality work. These are not merely “life skills,” they’re essential to effectiveness in the workplace. Today’s employers value “soft skills” as much or more than career-specific technical skills.
3. Public education should provide a *career foundation* – the basic knowledge and skills that are necessary not only to get a job but also to continue to learn and advance in one’s career.

¹ For a thorough discussion of Career Pathways, see Dan Hull et al., *Career Pathways: Education with a Purpose* (CORD, 2005).

PROLOGUE: CAREER-LIMITED ADULTS IN THE ERA
OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

4. Public education at the secondary level should lead naturally and seamlessly to at least two years of postsecondary education. In most career areas, a high school education alone is not sufficient to create opportunities for high-quality life and work. Nearly all rewarding careers require some form of education beyond high school. To be in demand and upwardly mobile in the workplace, most adults will have to engage in a lifelong pursuit of education and training. *Learning to learn* is vital.

Unfortunately, many of today's young people are entering adulthood (or are well into adulthood) without this type of education. Included in this group are:

1. High school dropouts;
2. High school completers who did not pursue further education and training;
3. College noncompleters;
4. Foreign-born U.S. residents (especially recent Mexican immigrants);
5. Veterans who entered military service immediately following high school; and
6. Criminal offenders who have completed their terms of incarceration.²

For the purpose of this book, "Adult Career Pathways" (ACP) is defined as the guidance, remediation, curricula, and other support elements required to enable career-limited adults to enter the workforce and progress in rewarding careers.

² There is another category of adults who require retraining or continuing education to change careers, reenter the workforce, or advance in their present careers. In a future book we will define an educational plan for this category as "Career Pathways for Retooling Adults."

3

PUTTING THE COMPONENTS TOGETHER

Dan Hull

A SUGGESTED STRATEGY AND CURRICULUM PLAN FOR ADULT CAREER PATHWAYS

Most of the strategies currently used by colleges to serve adults who are seeking career preparation are similar to the three plans cited in the previous chapter – *test and remediate, enroll in traditional plans, or provide short-term training for entry-level jobs*. These strategies are not yielding acceptable student retention and success rates, and they are not providing employers with sufficient numbers of capable, long-term employees who can progress through career ladders within an organization.

This problem is not going away. Studies show that successful student transitions from secondary to postsecondary are only beginning to improve. Secondary-postsecondary Career Pathways (as described in Hull et al., *Career Pathways: Education with a Purpose*) will certainly improve the transition rate over the next decade, but many adults and soon-to-be adults (many of

whom are minorities and single mothers) need and deserve a realistic second-chance in education. And employers are already suffering from a lack of long-term, highly-skilled workers. Carnevale and Desrochers estimate that by 2020 baby boomers who retire will leave a void of over twelve million jobs unfilled by U.S. workers.¹

It's time to think very differently about how we reeducate and prepare these adults. Yes, colleges have been "appointed" to lead this effort, but they cannot do it alone. A realistic, effective strategy will need the support and cooperation of employers and communities.

By 2020, baby boomers who retire will leave a void of over twelve million jobs unfilled by U.S. workers (Carnevale and Desrochers, 2002).

Employer support must go beyond sitting on advisory committees and donating out-of-date equipment. Employers must be involved in making and executing plans, hiring adult students into the "corporate career ladder," and encouraging them to continue their education for several years. Community organizations, including faith-based organizations, must be willing to partner with businesses in meeting the personal needs of participating adults so that they can devote the time and concentration necessary for their "second chance" at education to succeed. Many suitable organizations already exist, but they tend to work in isolation. The time has come for a more comprehensive effort to pool resources and expertise in the accomplishment of common goals.

The following requirements are foundational to the design and delivery of the new curriculum:

1. Students must be able to commit to at least one semester or a 14–18-week period of full-time education. (For many adults, this is not realistic without financial support, for both school expenses and personal needs.)
2. Students must have access to part-time (at least half-time) jobs following the Prep Stage.

¹ A. P. Carnevale and D. M. Desrochers, *The Missing Middle: Aligning Education and the Knowledge Economy* (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

3. Employers in the same fields (e.g., telecommunication, construction, manufacturing), who might normally think of themselves as competitors, must be willing to work together in supporting the program, especially by hiring students – **part-time only** – after the Prep Stage.
4. Employers in similar fields must be willing to commit to a common “career ladder” in which each student is promoted, given a raise, and/or publicly commended each time he or she completes a stage of education/training.
5. Curriculum should integrate the essential components identified in Figure 2-1 in each 4–6-month period of the curriculum.
6. Programs must provide frequent rewards so that students can mark their progress and see “light at the end of the tunnel.”

A Ladder Curriculum that Correlates to a Career Ladder

The term “ladder curriculum” is not new. It is frequently used in healthcare programs to describe multitiered sequences of courses in which each tier, or group of tiers, correlates to a level of progression in an employment “career ladder.” In nearly all cases, a ladder curriculum and a career ladder are used where there are “job certifications,” such as in nursing and other fields within healthcare. Some apprenticeship programs also employ a modified approach to a ladder curriculum matched to a career ladder.

We are proposing that ACP programs adopt a ladder curriculum/ career ladder strategy that can be applied to almost any career field. To accomplish this will require close cooperation between colleges and employers in relevant career fields or career clusters. In a sense, the work of the college/ employer committee would be to create a series of informal job certifications that could be tied to blocks of the curriculum. A graphical representation of the ladder curriculum/ career ladder is shown in Figure 3-1.

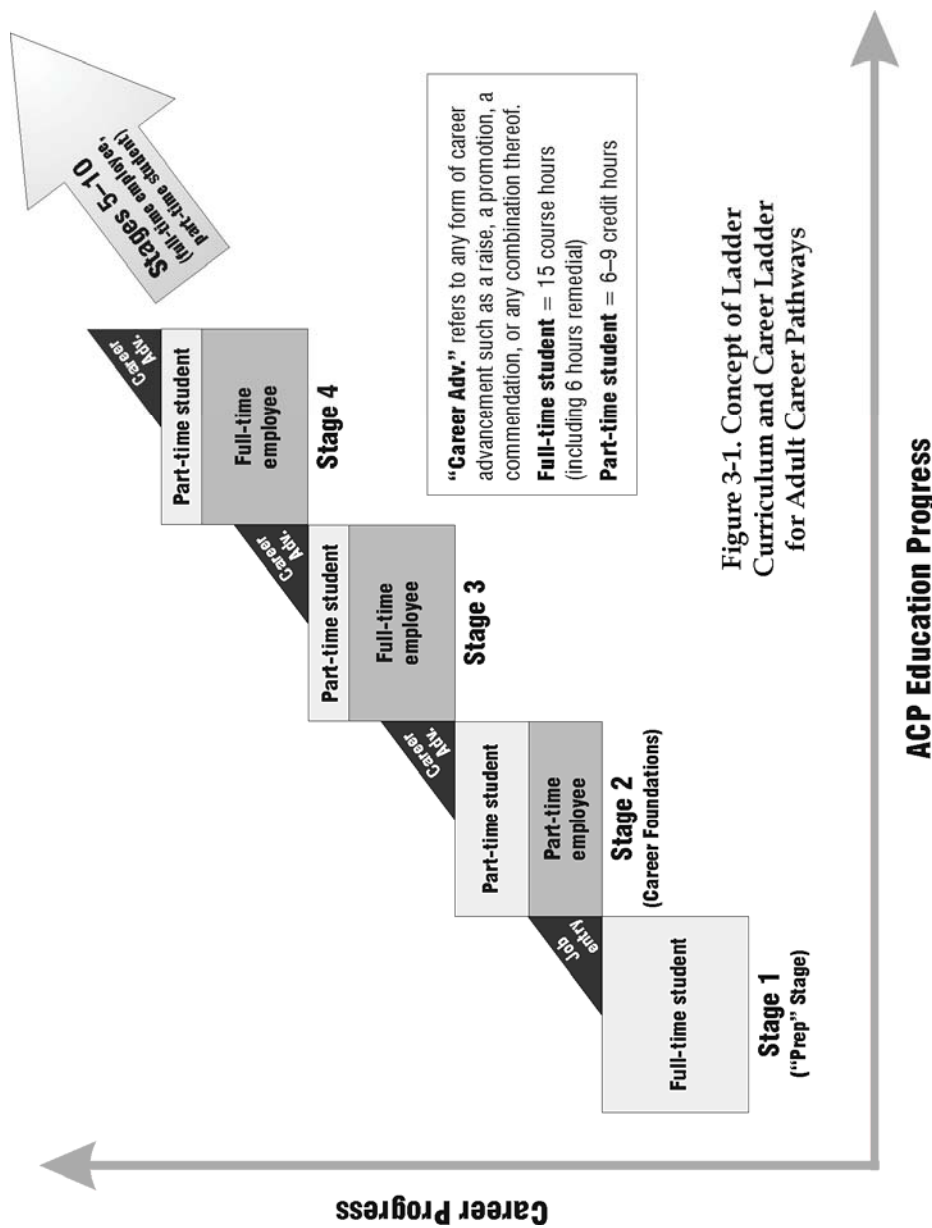


Figure 3-1. Concept of Ladder Curriculum and Career Ladder for Adult Career Pathways

Stage 1 (the Prep Stage) is typically a time when adults are given the opportunity to attend as full-time students. They will generally need parts of six of the curriculum components:

1. Personal needs
2. Academic skills (including effective remediation)
3. Career focus
4. Employability skills
5. Career and technical skills
6. Job entry skills (including basic computer and Internet skills)

Most of the first stage coursework will be recognized as “nontransferable credits.” It is a period for “repositioning” these adults to acquire the confidence, career focus, discipline, academic foundation, and employability skills that demonstrate their potential to enter higher education and long-term employment. As a decisive first step, the “prep stage” also serves as an opportunity for students to show employers that they have the interest and potential to reach long-term goals. Hopefully, at the end of this stage the students will be hired (by participating employers) at the bottom rung of a career ladder. In a typical situation, the student would work part-time (~30 hours/week) and continue his or her education in the ladder curriculum.

Employers who hire these adults are “betting on their future.” These adults are not limited to typical “job skills.” They have broad skills that, hopefully, demonstrate the potential to grow in knowledge, experience, and value to their employers.

In Stage 2, most students will need to work 20-30 hours/week to provide support for themselves and their dependents. They will continue to require some outside support for personal needs such as childcare and finances. Their course load should average nine credit hours, mostly in academics and career and technical subjects. Employers will participate in the students’ education by deliberately engaging the students in tasks that require “soft skills.” These student/employees will be assigned employee mentors, who will assist them in adjusting to the environment of the job and help them with personal and academic needs. Students who complete the second stage and

perform satisfactorily on the job will be recognized by their employers with certifications, job promotions, salary increases, and/or full-time job status.

In Stage 3, most students are full-time employees who take at least six credit hours in the ladder curriculum. Some employers may be able to provide paid leave at the end of the work day to allow the students to attend classes. Coursework will cover both academic (*in-context*) and career and technical subjects. Upon successful completion of the coursework and satisfactory performance on the job, students will again be recognized with an increase in status and/or salary or in some other form.

At about the third stage (and beyond), employers may be tempted to lure students away from school to take on full-time jobs and narrow, company-specific training. The authors see this as short-sighted and counterproductive for both the employer and the student. Employers are strongly encouraged to help students complete their programs of study and position themselves for even further education – even if, in so doing, the employers risk losing workers to competitors.

In Stage 4, coursework will almost be entirely career-related. A minimum of six credit hours should be taken. Hopefully, the employer will recognize the long-term value of the student/employee and reimburse the student/employee's educational expenses. This should reduce the amount of outside personal support required. Upon successful completion of the coursework and satisfactory work performance, students/employees are again recognized with an increase in job responsibilities and compensation.

In Stages 5 and 6, the curriculum begins to include advanced skills that are not only earning postsecondary credit but are also becoming more specific to the needs of the employer organization. Again, satisfactory work performance and completion of the assigned coursework will earn additional job credentials and compensation.

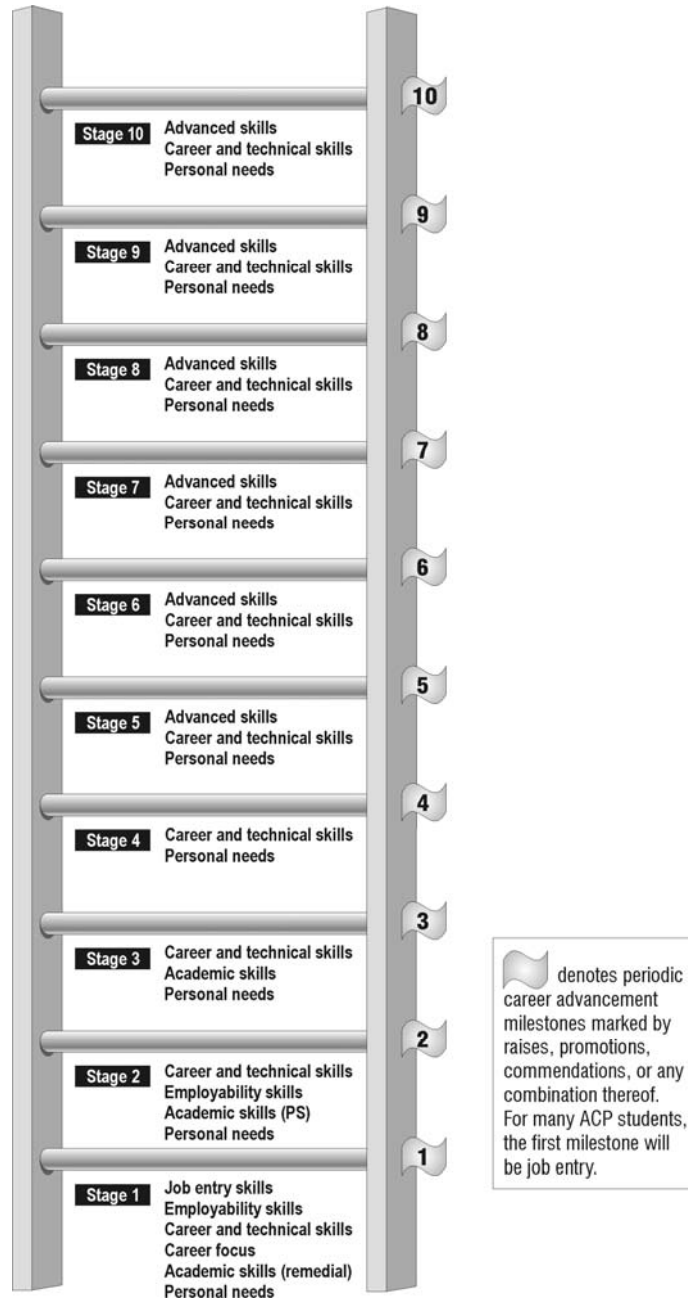


Figure 3-2. Model Ten-Stage Ladder Curriculum for Adult Career Pathways

In Stages 7–10, the student should complete the requirements for an associate degree or certificate. The course content in this stage (or stages) will be more directly job-related. Completion of this curriculum and the associated work experience will establish a foundation for a lifelong career and further education and/or training as desired or needed. This prescribed phase of an ACP will be completed, but the door to career opportunities and higher education and training is just beginning to open. The student can expect to be able to achieve a desirable lifestyle, and the employer has gained a long-term employee with the potential for future growth within the organization.

THE CHALLENGE

In the first three chapters we have provided evidence that undereducated young adults represent a significant challenge to our community colleges, our employers, and our society. But even more importantly, they represent a failure of our public education system to provide to every citizen of our country the opportunity to participate in interesting, rewarding careers. This missed opportunity also represents many jobs that our employers will have to export to other countries.

Short-term strategies to address this problem are largely ineffective because they only produce short-term results. The workplace is constantly changing. Job skills can quickly become obsolete. To survive in today's world, adults need the broad skills necessary to progress and grow throughout their working years. To be lifelong *earners*, we must all be lifelong *learners*.

Giving career-limited adults a meaningful "second chance" in education will require a new and different approach.

The ladder curriculum/career ladder strategy proposed in this book is not entirely new or untested, but its use has been limited to careers that are highly regulated and certified. We are suggesting that this strategy be adopted in the many fields that are not regulated or certified. But, to accomplish this, groups of local employers with common job needs will have to create an *informal certification process*. In the last 5–8 years, career and technical education has moved much closer to being *standards-based*. As a result, the process for designing and implementing a career ladder curriculum is fairly well understood.

Furthermore, the progress made among academic and technical educators to improve student success for these *applied learners* provides reasonable assurance that such a curriculum is achievable with these adult students.

The greatest challenge will not be the curriculum or the student achievement. It will be finding realistic answers and solutions to the following questions:

1. **Will employers be willing to make the necessary investment in human capital?** The proposed plan will require that local employers hire ACP students after they have completed the first stage of the curriculum, and support their continuing educational pursuit for three years, by providing mentoring, recognition/rewards, paid release time, and reimbursement for educational expenses. This is expensive, but the payoff for this type of investment is that the participating employers will have gained long-term employees who can grow in their organizations and help the organizations to prosper. The consequence of not making this investment is that the need for highly skilled workers will continue to grow, as

Short-term strategies to address this problem are largely ineffective because they only produce short-term results. The workplace is constantly changing. Job skills can quickly become obsolete. To survive in today's world, adults need the broad skills necessary to progress and grow throughout their working years. To be lifelong earners, we must all be lifelong learners.

will the population of underemployed (or unemployed) adults who are qualified only for low-wage jobs. For employers, it really boils down to a choice between paying now and paying later. Employer participation must be supported by commitment at the highest level in the organization.

2. **Will employers who normally would compete with one another for highly skilled workers be willing to cooperate for the sake of workforce development in their communities?** If the ACP process is to work, employers who adopt similar career ladders for their ACP students/employees must agree not to “raid” one another’s students/employees while they are in the 3-year ACP program. They must be willing to take the risk that when employees complete their ACP programs, they may elect to “jump ship” (get jobs with other employers who lure them away for a little more money). The participating employers must be willing to provide incentives that are sufficient to earn company loyalty.
3. **Will local employers, college administrators, and state and regional funding and accreditation groups agree on a common curriculum for the ACP that will match their career ladders?** If local employers insist that the advanced courses on the last four stages be specifically aligned with their companies’ peculiar needs, the credits earned for those courses might not be counted toward AS degrees or be transferable to other institutions. (That is, the pathway will be considered *terminal*.) And a college that provides courses that earn only nontransferable credits might not receive full compensation from its state funding agency. These are trade-offs that must be fully explored and agreed upon.
4. **Will there be sufficient unity, flexibility, and cooperation among colleges, employers, states, and community-based organizations to provide for the personal needs of these adult students until they can “learn enough to earn enough”?** Financial and personal aid for most of the students in ACP programs is usually

available somewhere in the community. But can it be accessed, organized, prioritized, and accumulated to adequately support these students? The supplying of personal needs for ACP students can simplistically be viewed in two phases:

- **In Stage 1**, financial assistance and educational assistance would be funneled to the student from the college (which may receive funds from state allocations, grants, and other sources). Other personal needs may be provided by the college and community/faith-based organizations.
- **In the remaining stages** (after the student is employed), most financial and educational expenses will be borne by the student and the employer. Other personal needs (such as childcare and transportation) should continue to be provided by community/faith-based organizations, until the student/employee is sufficiently independent to provide for these personally.

The leadership and vision necessary to make this plan succeed must come from employers, educators, community leaders, and policymakers at the very highest levels.

It's a huge challenge, but we think it's doable—and that it must be done.

Epilogue

HELPING KARLA SUCCEED

Dick Hinckley

In this book's prologue we introduced Karla, a 24-year-old single mother who was living with her parents. Karla knew she had made some poor choices and she wanted a second chance. In Chapter 8, we provided an update on Karla, showing how an ACP program in telecommunication was helping her to get back on the right track toward a rewarding career and a bright future.

Karla was fortunate that in the six years between her graduation from high school and the time she began her ACP program, the education and business leaders in her town had come together to improve local opportunities for young adults and, at the same time, to meet the region's need for skilled workers. Karla was also fortunate that the telecommunication company to which she applied, unsuccessfully, referred her to the local community college. That referral led her to an ACP program that provided the services she needed to succeed. She was given a second chance and she took it.

Karla had no money for tuition, and she needed help with childcare and transportation. Those needs were met through a combination of Pell Grant dollars, "in-kind" services provided by members of a local church, and a small grant from the Community Education Foundation. The college provided the encouragement and counseling that Karla needed to stay focused and on track. Even when Karla's father suffered a heart attack and was out of work for a period of time, the ACP coordinator was able to arrange for her to take time off to help her mother.

With the help of her community, Karla eliminated her academic deficiencies, significantly improved her employability and job entry skills, and (for the first time in years) began to feel good about herself. As she progressed upward along her ACP program's career ladder, her

skills steadily improved. She was acquiring attitudes that would help her to learn throughout her life.

An ACP program helped Karla transition into a rewarding career that will lead her to financial independence.

WHAT WAS GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES THAT GAVE KARLA HER SECOND CHANCE?

In our Karla scenario, we have focused mostly on *her*. But that's only one part of the story. If people in Karla's circumstances are to be given the second chance they deserve, much work has to be done behind the scenes. In a sense, that is the topic of this book—the hard work that must be done to ensure that when the Karlas across our nation begin ACP programs, everything is in place and ready to go.

Let's look at what went on behind the scenes in Karla's case.

For years, Medford High School had an excellent Tech Prep program that was articulated with Grayslake Community College. The Medford-Grayslake Tech Prep Consortium was diligently reevaluating its programs, having become convinced that Career Pathways (CP) offered the best model for involving business and industry in strengthening the employability of their students. Over time, the consortium's curriculum committee essentially rewrote the program's high school and community college curricula, using cluster-specific industry needs as a guide. While Tech Prep had been available when Karla was in school, she had not taken advantage of the program.

Meanwhile, Medford community leaders and the Rock Ridge County Economic Development Council (RRCEDC) were increasingly alarmed at the number of job openings that couldn't be filled. The shortage of well-trained workers had become so acute that several local companies were planning to leave Medford and the county. At the same time, more and more of Medford's young people were looking outside the community for their futures. These issues concerned Grayslake's president and her board members, several of whom were local business owners.

The president called a meeting at her office and invited a few business leaders, Medford's mayor, and the director of RRCEDC. Recognizing the need for a bold new approach, they formed a small working group to lay out their plans.

Using resources in the college and information provided by RRCEDC, the working group developed profiles of the region's industry sectors. The group identified healthcare, telecommunication, and financial services as the industries with the greatest potential to lead the region in an ACP effort. The following overall support structure was proposed:

Adult Career Pathways Consortium
<p>Business Task Group College Services and Instruction Task Group Community Task Group Community Education Foundation</p>

Business Task Group – With the assistance of a consulting group, the consortium convened CEOs in the three targeted industries: healthcare, telecommunication, and financial services. Mirroring the process presented in Chapter 4 (see “Convening Business Representatives”), the participants developed career ladders, designed support systems, and drew up the agreements necessary to ensure that all parties were working toward the same goals.

College Services and Instruction Task Group – While the business task group was working out the details of the business sector involvement, the college was strengthening its recruitment, advising, and counseling services so that it would be able to attract and meet the needs of ACP target populations. Campus committees took on new roles to improve their ability to work with the targeted populations.

Community Task Group – The community task group convened faith-based and community organizations to seek their assistance. Medford had a private foundation, established by a former banker, that was already engaged in support activities for the local public and private schools. Its past activities included the purchase of a bus for special education students, contributions to a health clinic for poor women, and assistance in rebuilding a historic church after it suffered fire damage. The foundation was able to provide support to the ACP program under its mission to help disadvantaged students. It set up a category of funding for ACP to provide last-resort (after state and federal assistance sources were exhausted) childcare and transportation support. Several churches were able to pledge clothing, counseling services, and food bank support.

Community Education Foundation – *The Community Education Foundation initiative was a key component. It led a capital campaign to raise funds for overall ACP operation and to guarantee every ACP program student two years of tuition, books, and fees (after all other sources of support had been exhausted) at Grayslake Community College. The foundation was able to raise \$10 million, which it used to support the new ACP management and support services needed to begin and sustain ACP operations.*

Outreach and Extension – *Since establishing the ACP program, the ACP Consortium has worked with Medford Public Schools to strengthen its CP programs and to drive the industry involvement to the middle schools with tours and other business engagement opportunities. The entire curriculum in math and science has been reevaluated and strengthened with the addition of contextual instruction, improved faculty development, and new 4+2 articulation agreements with state universities.*

A local state legislator became familiar with the program and introduced legislation to provide seed dollars to communities seeking to adopt the Medford model.

IT COULD HAPPEN

Stories like Karla's could happen all across the country, if the right leaders are willing to step forward. For the sake of the many Americans whose circumstances are similar to Karla's, and for the sake of the nation's overall economic health, that leadership is urgently needed and needed now. We have moved the conversation of reform and improvement in career and technical education to a new level, the community. Across this country, we must take charge of our future, community by community. Just as "all politics is local," education reform and business survival are local, too. It is time for action. The Adult Career Pathways concept represents the nexus where business, education, and the community can and must come together to reclaim our young adults and our collective future.