



# 2017 PACE Study

Pathways for Academic Career Employment Best Practices

*Pathways for Academic Career and Employment (PACE), per Iowa Code 260(H), is a state program that provides funding to community colleges for the implementation of streamlined and comprehensive processes, along with customized support services, to enable eligible participants to acquire effective academic and employment training needed to secure gainful, quality, in-state employment.*

## Executive Summary

In 2017, a PACE survey was designed to gather ideas and best practices regarding efficient and effective use of PACE funds. Survey results demonstrate the importance of PACE navigators' time and financial services in providing educational, personal, and career supports for programs offered to a targeted audience. This voluntary survey, which consisted of 30 open- and closed-ended questions, was administered to each of Iowa's 15 community colleges. The survey achieved 100 percent participation, with each college responding with one collaborative answer. (For complete survey results, contact Mike Williams at [mike.williams@iowa.gov](mailto:mike.williams@iowa.gov).)

Based on the survey results, this study provides an analysis and evaluation of the current processes and methods community college navigators use to provide services for participants. The survey included a variety of questions designed to gauge how each college quantified success, along with common intake and interviewing procedures. Additionally, the survey explored the procedures and processes used by each college to provide services as well as the structure and partner agency makeup for each of the navigator teams.

Respondents were encouraged to provide full and meaningful responses to open-ended questions to provide a deeper, more robust dialogue. The survey's data and narrative provide insight into the role of "embedded community college navigators" and how they play a significant factor in driving the success for each PACE participant. In particular, the narrative responses regarding going "above and beyond," offer conclusive evidence that navigator interaction with clients considerably reduces specific barriers, ultimately leading to enhanced education and employment outcomes.



The survey responses show that use of specific PACE resources, along with the PACE navigator interaction, are strong indicators for client employment achievement.

1. A successful PACE program includes:
  - a. the development of a thorough intake and interviewing process;
  - b. establishment and continued support of career pathways and progress; and
  - c. follow-up practices and procedures that include comprehensive wrap-around services for clients as they exit the program and begin employment.
2. Three key recommendations from the survey include:
  - a. The use of navigator time and resources should remain independent, flexible, and adaptable.
  - b. An adaptive one-on-one navigator relationship approach to solving issues and removing barriers.
  - c. Funding of PACE support systems should remain flexible.

This brief summarizes the importance of PACE resources in assisting community members achieve their education and employment goals. Funds are expended for a variety of supports that address urgent needs and identify and alleviate barriers for each participant on a case-by-case basis.

## PACE Program Guidance

The Iowa Department of Education will share the results of the PACE survey during future PACE trainings to help local programs maintain compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and to assist pathway navigators establish goals for success. The intent of this report and related training is for programs to learn from one another as they develop and implement best practices and recommendations for successful PACE programs. The primary goal is to provide examples of best practices across all PACE programs. Recommendations and best practices drawn from survey respondents include:

### A. A seamless intake and interviewing process.

1. Potential participant completes an application either online or in person.
  - a. The application process can be done at specific times within the academic year to provide better program control and accounting. For example, accept applicants only in the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.
  - b. Use of shared application processes with Title I One-Stop Centers, including a comprehensive referral form, such as those listed in 4a.
  - c. During the intake process, identify the participant's needs and provide applicable agency resources, such as JobCorps, WIOA partners and resources, AIWP, Vocational Rehabilitation, Department for the Blind, DHS, SIEDA, General Assistance, food pantries, Lions Club, Veterans Affairs, TRIO, and other regional area resources.
  - d. Use of Labor Market Information and occupational reporting during initial guidance planning (this is helpful prior to doing the occupational research in step 3).
2. Administer, test, and score the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) assessment (required for Gap eligibility); use other assessments to establish a base indicator of persistence and academic skills development. Examples of possible assessments include:
  - a. ALEKS, Accuplacer;
  - b. Career interest inventories and personality assessments; and
  - c. Background checks (i.e., CNA).
3. Schedule an interview with each participant to evaluate eligibility and case management options.
  - a. If the participant is determined eligible:
    - i. Look at SNAP eligibility along with other DHS eligible services.
    - ii. Enroll the participant in the college so he or she is counted in the MIS data reporting.
    - iii. Continue onboarding processes, including documentation.
  - b. If a participant is not eligible for the PACE program, have him or her continue to work with a coach to find a program or pathway that will lead to success in completing a program, entering employment, or continuing education upon completion. Documentation continues to occur.
  - c. Continue orientation processes that include campus tours (bricks, clicks, connections):
    - i. Visit with student services.
    - ii. Introduce college life classes and discuss classroom etiquette and expectations.
    - iii. Visit IowaWorks One-Stop training centers and review workshop calendars.
4. Continue formal documentation processes, including the use of DHS release forms as guidance examples (W2115A and WO461A), and complete or collect the following:
  - a. I-Works/Geo Solutions systems entry.
  - b. WIA or WIOA application completed and signed by applicant.
  - c. Family size and residence verification.
  - d. Legal photo ID/driver's license (vehicle registration and insurance if requesting mileage reimbursement).
  - e. Social Security card or legal work permit.
  - f. Financial aid determination with college.
  - g. Financial Needs Determination Worksheet/food assistance/FIP/Medicaid.
  - h. Objective assessment/interview questions.
  - i. Proof of family income.
  - j. Food stamp card or wage records, pay stubs, or W2 forms.
  - k. Release of information sheet.
  - l. Check for outstanding bill at the college.
  - m. FAFSA results.
  - n. Student attends a career event or meets one-on-one with a coach.
  - o. Occupational research and career coaching with the navigator, including setting up company/employer sponsors for student's program of interest.



*Pathway navigators work with eligible PACE participants to identify barriers to success and help connect them to the appropriate resources to minimize those barriers.*

## **B. Establish career pathway and monitoring processes.**

A second best practice includes establishing an individualized career pathway and monitoring the student as he or she progresses through all services and resources. To avoid duplication of efforts, Greg Newton Associates, a leading workforce development consultant group, recommends good documentation along with “soft hand-offs” to ensure all steps are covered so the student does not become overwhelmed.

1. Navigators meet individually with students, review PACE career pathway plans, and sign off on forms. During this process, the student:
  - a. selects a program area of interest and signs a letter of commitment;
  - b. creates an employment plan;
  - c. reviews of all program benefits;
  - d. agrees to participation expectations;
  - e. agrees to meet one-on-one with a career coach;
  - f. attends career pathway orientation or informational meetings;
  - g. makes appointments with approved workshops;
  - h. attends bridge classes and career events;
  - i. attends the “Navigating Your Journey” prep program;
  - j. attends financial literacy classes; and
  - k. attends pathway skills workshops.
2. Students register for non-credit training or confirm enrollment for credit programs with the navigator and:
  - a. review the student’s schedule; and
  - b. review the invoice.
3. Navigators maintain communication (designated follow-up) with students throughout training or the semester while providing:
  - a. progress reporting;
  - b. ongoing personalized support;
  - c. pathway navigation throughout each student’s academic and career journey; and
  - d. personal, educational, and career support through individualized services to assist the participant in achieving set goals.
4. Navigators monitor grades and attendance of credit students and provide support where and when needed.
5. Financial status is re-evaluated each semester for credit students and costs associated with services for both credit and non-credit are reviewed.

## **C. Establish follow-up procedures for successful employment and life planning.**

A third best practice is to follow-up with students regarding their job search, possible employment options, and whether additional assistance is needed prior to exiting them from a program.

Follow-up areas include:

1. Student’s career pathway progress.
2. Resume writing and interview preparation assistance either through direct services or referrals to WIOA partners. Examples include:
  - a. Use of Business Services Representative teams (Kirkwood).
  - b. Reverse Job Fair preparation (Kirkwood and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services [IVRS]).
3. Engaging with hiring businesses through connections with WIOA, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), PACE, Gap, and other industry and regional connections.
4. Exiting the student from the program once he or she is employed.

A potential best practice involves evaluating the impact PACE enrollment has on students with language barriers and their persistence through bridge training classes.

## **Recommendations from the Survey:**

After a review of the comments provided by navigators and clients, some recommended best practices include the following:

- 1. The use of navigator time and resources should remain independent, flexible, and adaptable.**

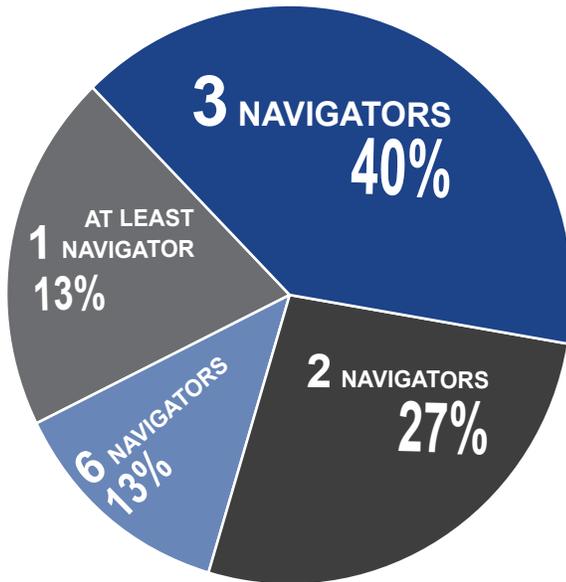
Below are a few responses regarding best practices for navigator autonomy and value. The main idea is that the navigator role be agile enough to offer a complete repertory of services reflective of students’ needs and the resources available within the service region. (See Figure 1 on the following page for the number of navigators by program.)

“We believe it’s important for each college to have control over how its PACE program operates. What works for one school may not work for another because of differences on the campuses, resources available, and the culture of each community.”

“Pathway navigators went and visited a local manufacturer who announced they were closing the local plant. The plant opened up an afternoon for a couple of hours for local workforce development staff to come and present on retraining and different career opportunities in our region. PACE, Gap, WIOA, and IWD staff connected with employees facing layoff due to plant closure. PACE staff connected with several employees and assisted them with re-training. We connected one local individual to the HiSET program where he earned his high school equivalency and then completed

a non-credit training program; and within a few months he was employed again and working in the region. Navigators meet frequently with participants to learn about progress, help identify barriers that may have come up, and help remove those barriers through referral or direct service.”

**Figure 1: Number and Percentage of Dedicated Navigators by Program**



**2. An adaptive “one-on-one” navigator relationship approach to solving issues and barrier removal.**

Many of the respondents articulated that a personal approach provides stabilization and structure for successful program completion and employment attainment. They found this approach to be an effective and efficient best practice in mitigating issues quickly and more purposefully towards successful goal completion. Some of the mitigating issues include interpersonal issues, family concerns, mental health concerns, childcare, and many other life struggles that can inhibit follow-through and completion of school and employment opportunities. Below are narrative excerpts that capture the importance of the navigator and student relationship.

“Thank you so very much for your help! I will be graduating in May, and couldn’t have done it without the emotional support from Jen and the financial help that PACE has given me. When I started my college career, Jennifer was one of the first people I met. She is not only someone who has helped me through financial tough times (thanks to PACE), but someone I come to ask for advice. My college experience would not have been the same without her in the picture. My car has

always been a huge issue for me. I’d never know if it was going to start, or if it was going to be able to get me to school or even back home. PACE paid for my car to get fixed. I am a single mother and my funds are limited. I would have never have been able to pay for it to get fixed. My son was born with Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita. He is supposed to go to the Dr’s. office every 6 months, but because we don’t have a reliable car, that hasn’t happened in over a year. Thank you so much for helping me to be able to help my son. I cannot express into words how thankful I am! Because of your generous gift I will be able to graduate and then be able to pay it forward. Your gift will never be forgotten! We all experience hard times and sometimes need a little extra help to get out of the rut; thank you so much for helping me get out of mine.”

“Coaching services have been a crucial piece to our model of serving students and providing the student with one (a single point) main point of contact for their needs, which builds trust and authenticity for our students in our staff.”

“Navigators stay late or come in early when students need assistance and can’t meet within normal business hours due to work/school schedules. Accompanied a student to a free clothes site due to concerns of finding appropriate interview clothes. Worked with student housing to advocate for a better housing solution than was given to a student. She was going to quit school and move home due to a roommate situation and wouldn’t talk to them due to anxiety. They were able to move her to an unoccupied 2 bedroom apartment and she finished 2 more semesters.”

“The subjective barriers have more to do with fear of failure, or sometimes a fear of success. Often students we work with are having to navigate a whole new set of social norms in order to go to school and try to elevate their socioeconomic status. This fear can present itself in many ways, such as ambivalence, anger, avoidance, denial, etc. We always try to foster greater self-awareness in our students and help them understand that the feelings they have are normal for someone in their situation. Oftentimes, they can experience negative pressure from their family members and peers who try to influence them to quit. In response to this, we try to connect them with new peer mentors who could provide a more relatable and positive influence for the participant.”

“One student was discouraged and ready to leave the program after his 2nd semester due to poor grades. We met and I assisted him to reconnect with disability services to use his accommodations, helped him to appeal his financial aid suspension, listened to him when he needed encouragement, worked with him and his advisor to find better course selections and reminded him his first priority was to raise his GPA rather than take a course he wanted to take. I also connected him to the right person in financial aid who could explain his award and the policies more completely to him when his disability caused him to be more impatient than normal. He said he really appreciates having me on campus to know someone is there that can help him when he is struggling with managing college. I’ve used PACE to help him with tuition and gas during the semesters he was working back toward getting financial aid reinstated. He is within 2 semesters of graduating when he originally was going to leave after that 2nd semester.”

### 3. Funding of PACE support systems should remain flexible.

PACE programs provide funding to community colleges for the development of projects that lead to gainful, quality, in-state employment for members of target populations by providing them with effective academic and employment training and customized support services. As our programs have evolved and matured, blending and braiding multiple funding streams has allowed for a more comprehensive approach to providing structure and stabilization throughout the recipient’s educational and employment progression. The following quote from one of our PACE programs captures this sentiment quite well:

“PACE funding is crucial to funding our supports for our students. Without this funding source, we would not be able to positively impact the lives of our students in the ways that we do. This funding stream provides services beyond financial supports, which are helpful, but allows us to be supportive for the student and help them be successful in reaching their goals. This funding stream allows us the opportunity to help change the direction of a student’s life, which could in turn impact the lives of their children, and potentially changing the whole trajectory of their family life, often times helping to break the cycle of poverty many of our students are stuck in.”

## Use of PACE Funds

The 2016 funding percentage breakdown from all community college PACE budgets included 77 percent for education support, 20 percent for personal support, and three percent for career support.

The survey asked for specific uses of PACE. The following tables include the most common responses.

**Table 1: Most Frequently Used Education Support Criteria Funded by PACE**

Direct Participant Support	Personal Participant Support
1. Non-credit/credit tuition	1. Navigator counseling
2. Background checks/physical & drug screenings	2. Career and personal supports
3. Testing/exam fees	3. Employment preparation/job search/resume services
4. Books	4. Referrals
5. Uniforms/personal safety gear	5. Educational guidance

**Table 2: Most Frequently Used Personal Support Criteria Funded by PACE**

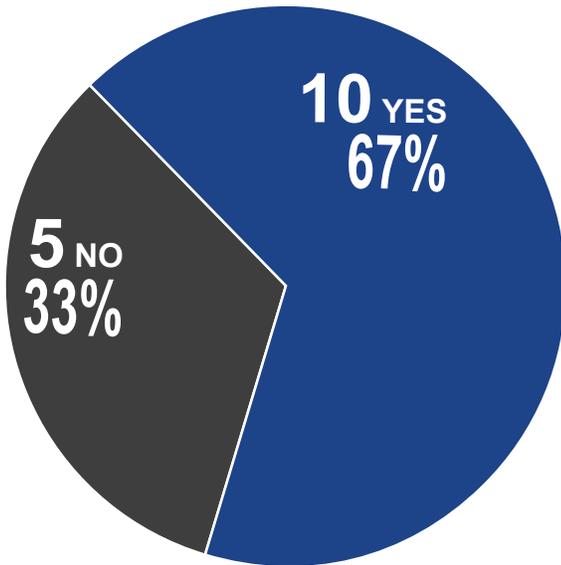
Direct Participant Support	Personal Participant Support
1. Clothing/uniforms/footwear/safety gear	1. Navigator sector embedded services and supports
2. Tools and equipment	2. Comprehensive career supports
3. Permits, licensure, certification fees	3. Support and follow-up
4. Transportation	4. Assessments
5. Field trips and workshop experiences	5. Coaching

**Table 3: Most Common Partner Agencies Sharing the Delivery of Career Support**

Most Common Partners
1. IowaWORKS
2. All WIOA core partners
3. College and Career Services staff
4. Business sponsors
5. Gap workforce consultants
6. Goodwill employment specialists
7. Shelters
8. Municipal and county staffing agencies

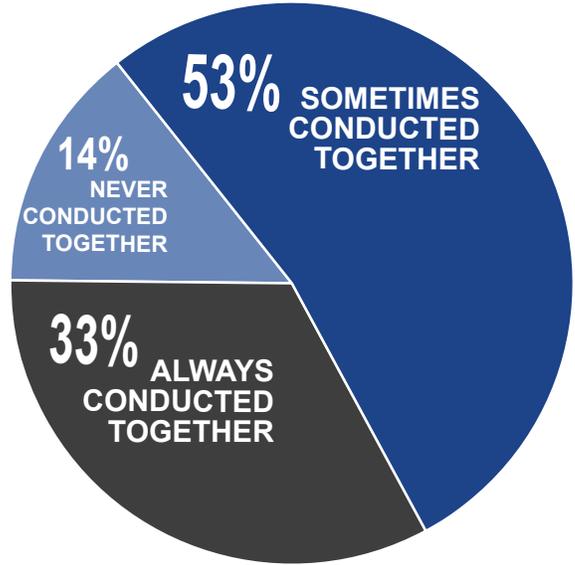
Figure 2 illustrates that most programs blend and braid their PACE and Gap funds.

**Figure 2: Multiple Sources of Funding Are Used for PACE and Gap Staff**



The following figures show how PACE services are delivered by college and by program.

**Figure 3: Percentage of PACE and Gap Programs Conducted in Tandem or Work Independently**



The following table lists the types of processes to deliver PACE supports.

**Table 4: Credit and Non-Credit Program Support Deliveries**

Credit Program Support Delivery	Non-Credit Program Support Delivery
1. Consistent application process	1. Consistent application process
2. Interview	2. Interview
3. Documentation	3. On-boarding
4. Assessment	4. Database
5. Financial needs determination	5. Use of career coaching
6. Collaboration with financial aid department and instructors	6. Collaboration with educational and workforce partners

Figure 4 shows the percentage of navigators by location at a community college, a Workforce Center (One-Stop), or co-location. The majority of PACE programs are housed at a community college.

**Figure 4: Location of Navigators by Service Provider**

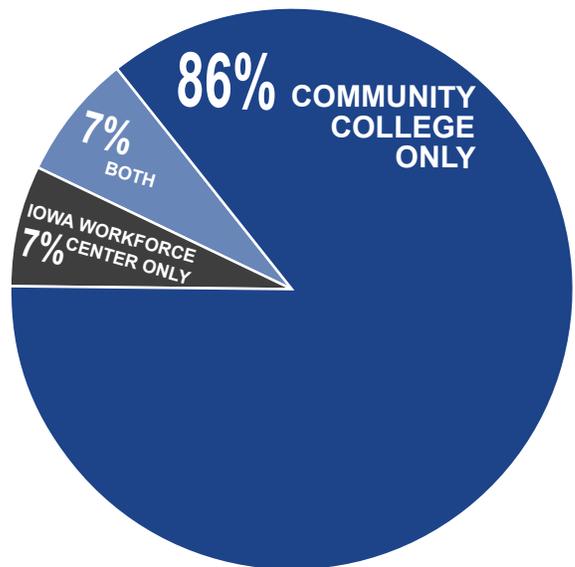


Table 5 lists the different ways that PACE programs measure student success, and figures 5 through 8 show the percentages of enrollees and supports by credit or non-credit training.

**Table 5: Metrics Used by PACE Programs to Measure Student Success**

Responses for Measuring PACE Success
1. Program progress
2. Grades-minimum academic standards
3. Attendance
4. HSED, credentialing, certificates, degree/diploma attainment
5. Assessments, NCRC, among others
6. Employment, advancement



*Iowa's PACE program serves as a model for other programs across the nation in its success helping those with significant barriers to education, skill attainment, and employment.*

**Figure 5: Percentage of PACE Credit and Non-Credit Enrollees by Community College**

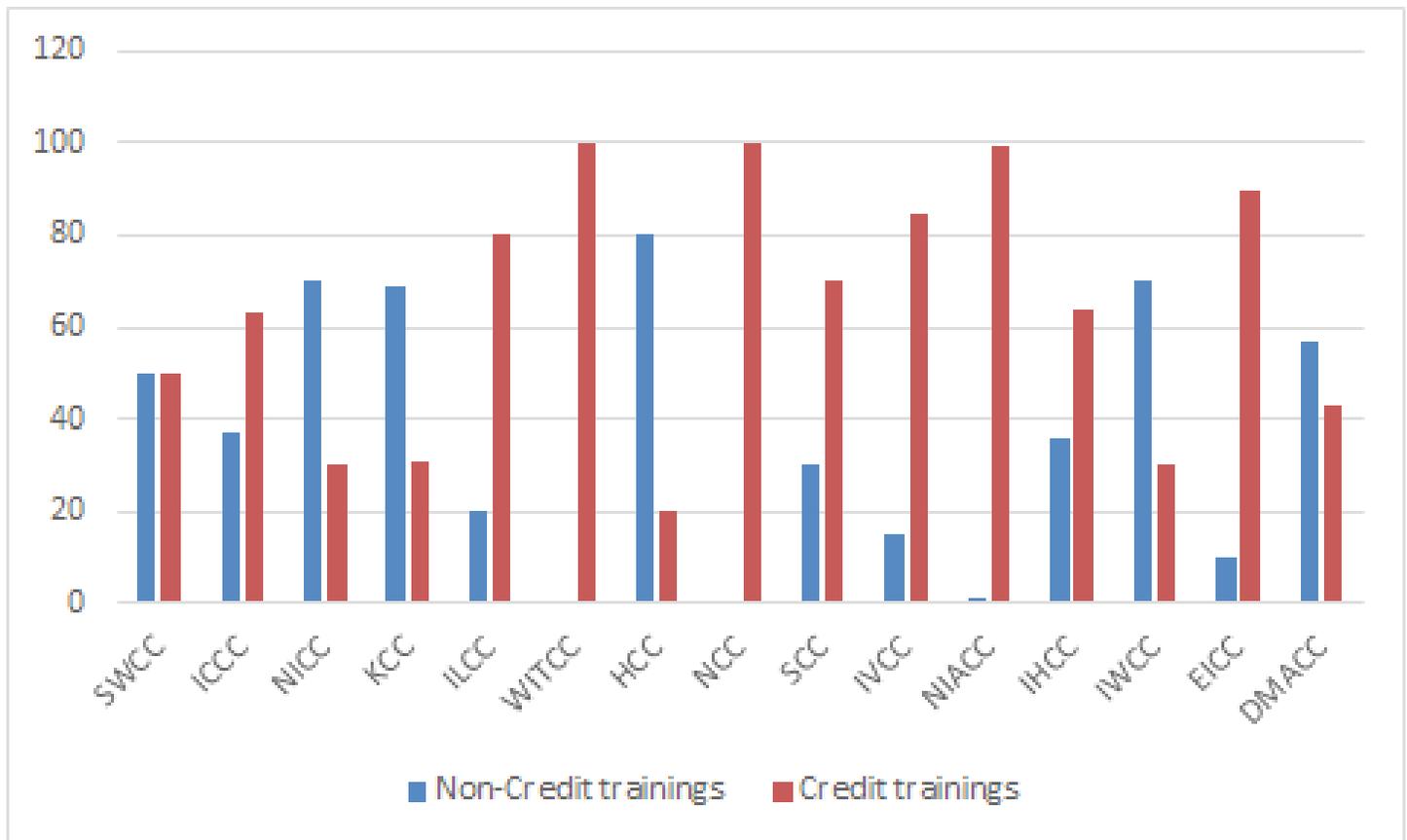


Figure 6: Percentage of Education Support for PACE Credit and Non-Credit Enrollees by Community College

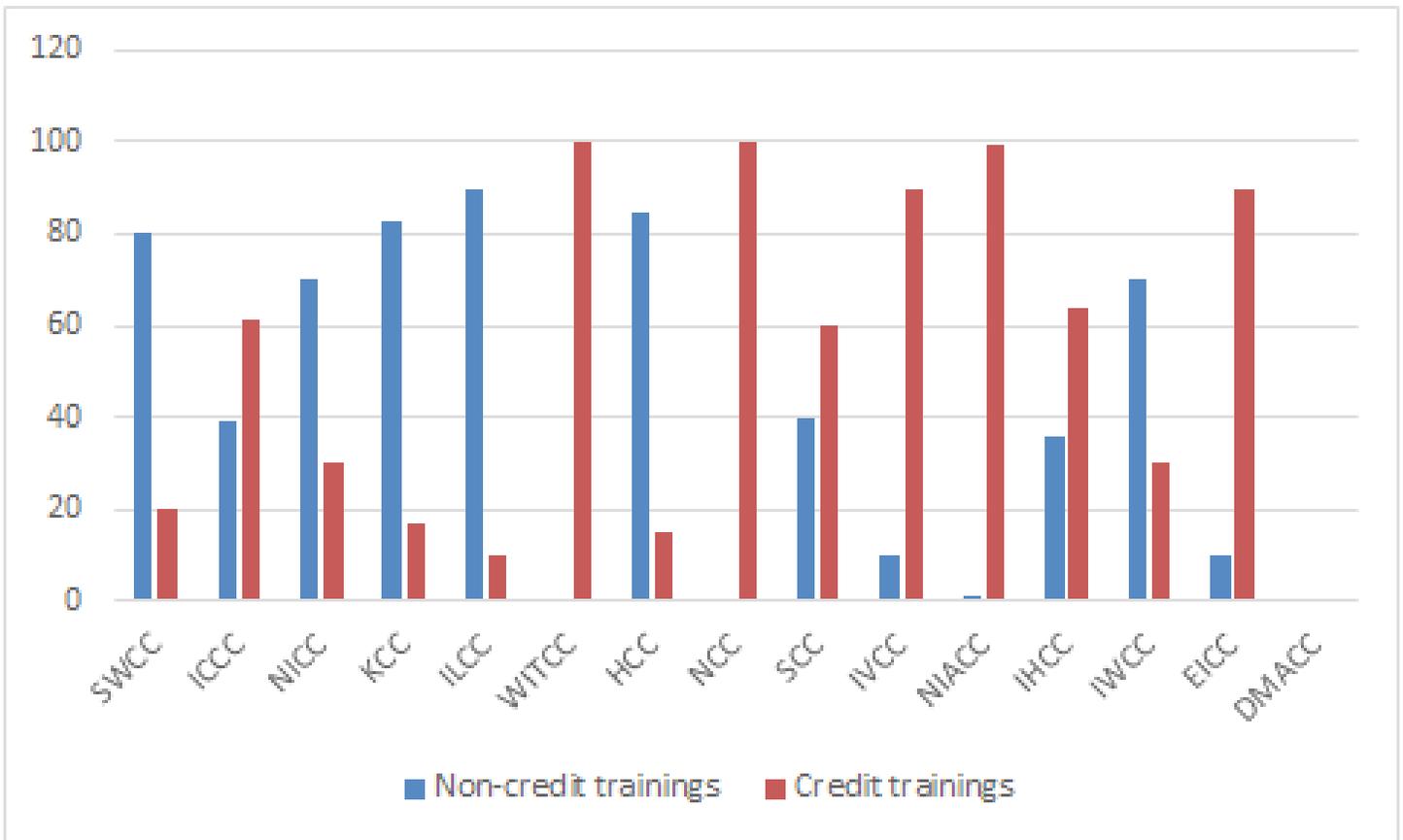
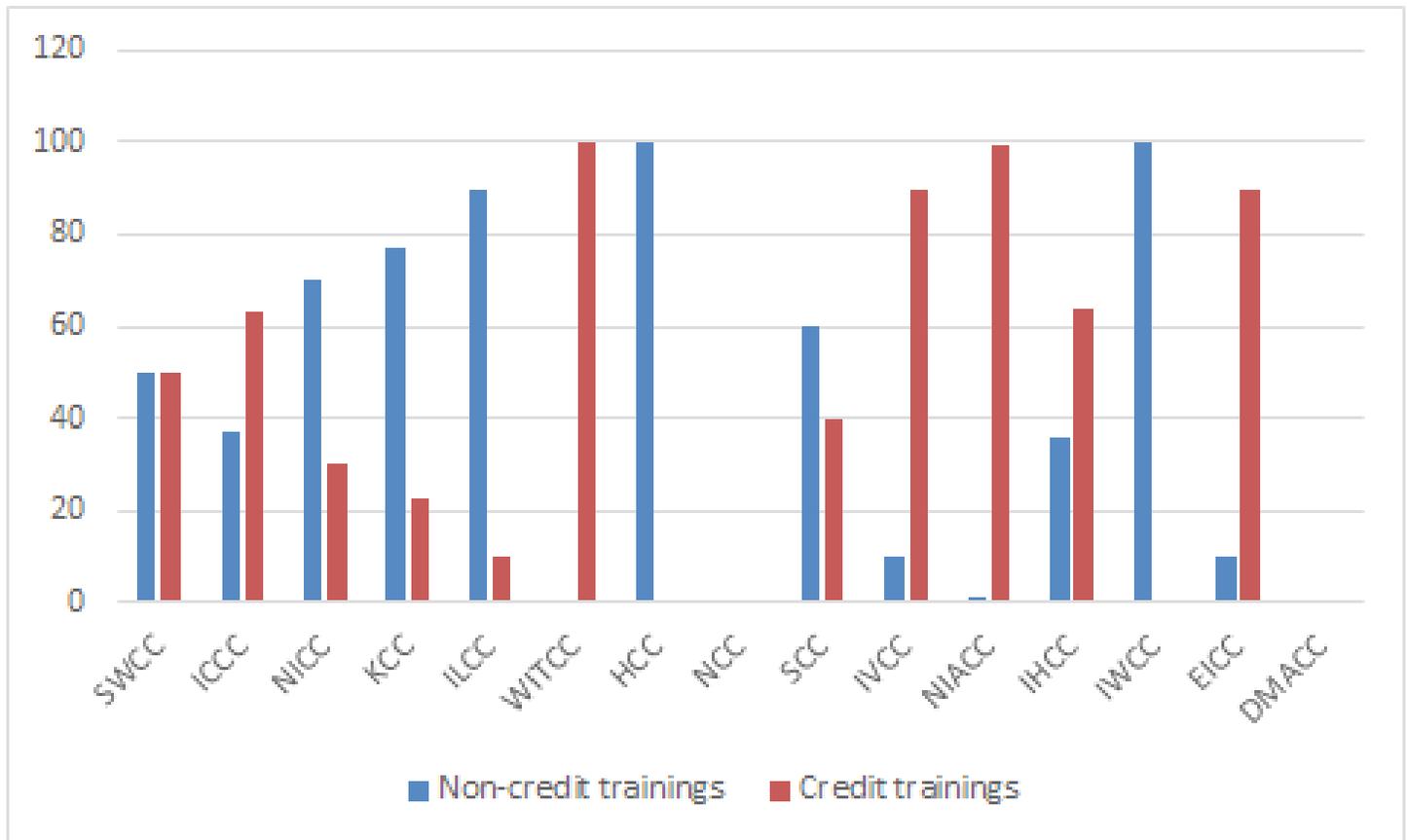


Figure 7: Percentage of Personal Support for PACE Credit and Non-Credit Enrollees by Community College



**Figure 8: Percentage of Career Support for PACE Credit and Non-Credit Enrollees by Community College**



### Study Summary

Survey respondents provided valuable insight regarding how funds and resources are managed and utilized. This study revealed that Iowa’s PACE programs provide funding, resources, and services that encompass the intent and spirit of the PACE legislation to provide services that can best structure and stabilize a population with the most unique and challenging employment and education barriers. The overarching finding for a successful PACE program is the tenacity, focus, and agility of the pathway navigator to meet those needs as they create educational balance and employment structure in their clients’ lives and within the lives of their families.

As cited in the September 2017 National Skills Coalition article, “Arkansas, North Carolina, and Iowa are examples of states that have robust programs in place to support working learners and encourage completion of a degree or certificate program.” This national acknowledgment of Iowa’s PACE programs is a testament to the community colleges’ commitment to help the state reach its Future Ready Iowa goal of 70 percent of Iowans with postsecondary credentials by 2025.

([https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Investing-in-Postsecondary-Career-Pathways\\_web.pdf](https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/Investing-in-Postsecondary-Career-Pathways_web.pdf))

*More information about the PACE program, including eligibility criteria, program components, and resources is available on the Department’s website at:*

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/adult-career-and-community-college/community-colleges/pathways-academic-career-and-employment-pace>

*Questions about the survey and the PACE program, in general, should be directed to:*

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