



School of Management
and Labor Relations

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
RESEARCH CENTER

Filling the Cracks:

Understanding Noncredit Program Instructional Characteristics and the State-Level Infrastructure

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Noncredit Education

Relevance

- More than 2/3 of adults considering further education prefer a nondegree option, up from about 1/2 before the pandemic (Strada, 2020).
- Among “great resigners” completing training, 72% enrolled in courses not longer than 6 months (Cengage, 2022).
- 72% of community college noncredit enrollees are 25+ (Jacoby, 2021)

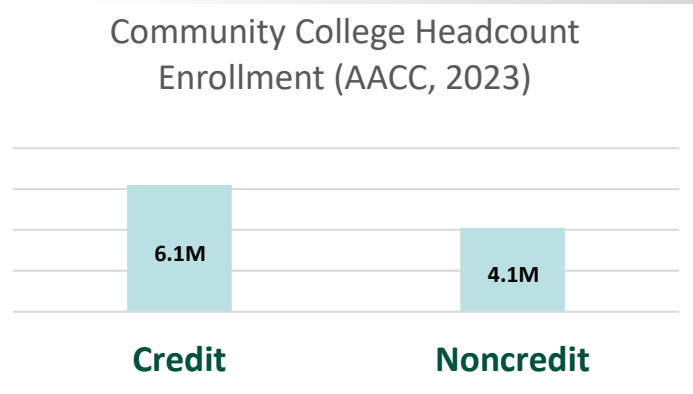
Despite relevance, noncredit education is often referred to as the “hidden college” (Voorhees & Milam, 2005).

State-Level Noncredit Data Reporting

- 53% of state systems responding captured noncredit data (Milam, 2005)
- 38 states mandated some noncredit data reporting (Van Noy et al., 2008)
- Study of 29 states with data systems—23 document enrollment, 9 demographics, 19 on workforce preparation courses (US DOE, OCTAE, 2014)
- 34 of 47 surveyed states indicated some state-level data reporting (D'Amico et al., 2017)

Why Collect Noncredit Data?

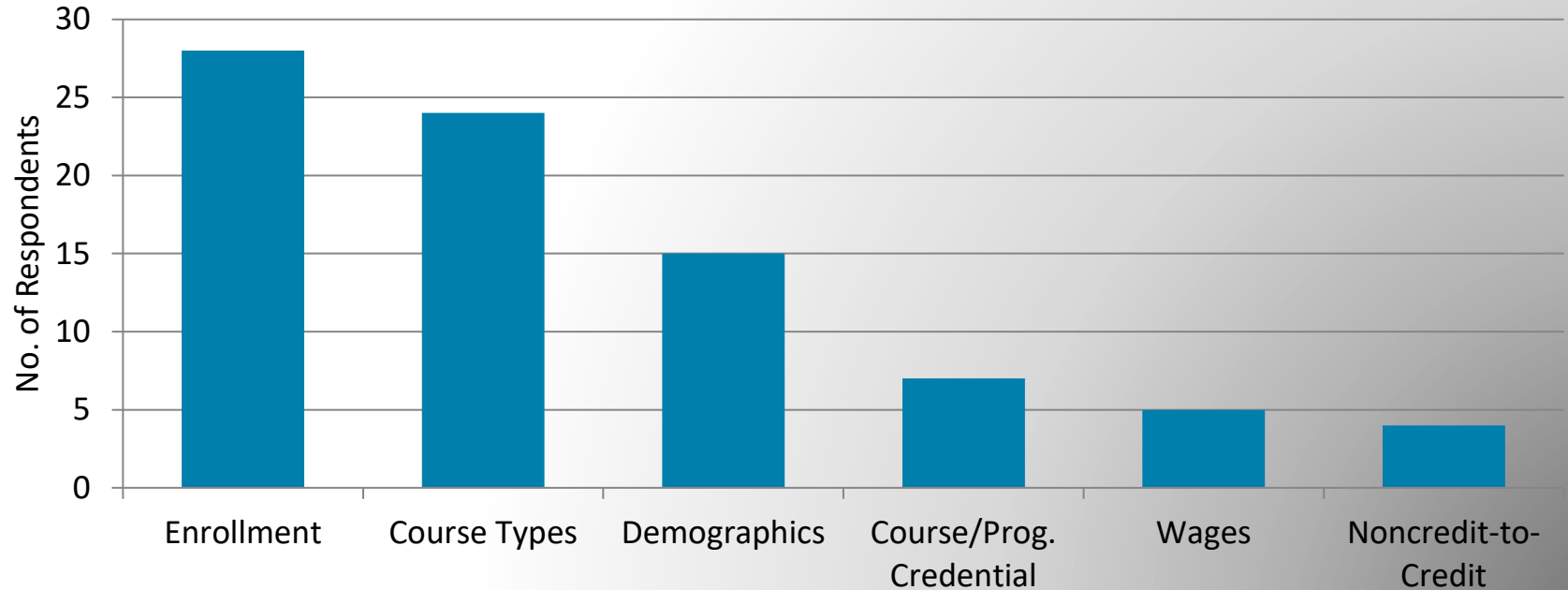
- **Capture the more complete mission** of community colleges (Van Noy et al., 2008; D'Amico et al., 2019)
- **Prevalence of noncredit headcount enrollments** even if low FTEs as compared with credit (e.g., AACC, 2023; Erwin, 2019; Jacoby, 2021; Voorhees & Milam, 2005, Xu & Ran, 2015)



Why Collect Noncredit Data?

- **Lack of consistent definitions** across states in both practice and research (Van Noy et al., 2008; D'Amico et al., 2014; D'Amico, 2017)
- **Inconsistent data collection** at the state level and limited data on outcomes (D'Amico et al., 2017; Van Noy et al., 2008)
- **Data quality issues and addressing measurement error** when calculating financial and human resource/staff indicators by FTE with IPEDS data (Erwin, 2019; Romano & D'Amico, 2021a,b,c)
- **Facilitate opportunities** for students such as noncredit-to-credit articulation (D'Amico et al., 2019; Jacoby, 2021; Xu & Ran, 2015), though few make the transition (Bailey & Belfield, 2017)
- **Explain sources of funding** for noncredit (D'Amico et al., 2017; Jacoby, 2021)
- **Data collection on outcomes** is important when making the case for state/federal funding (e.g., Short Term Pell)

Types of State-Level Noncredit Data Reported (2015; n=30)



Current Effort to Collect Noncredit Data

Exploring the Noncredit Data Infrastructure

- With support from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center is partnering with states to examine their state-level noncredit data.
- Phase 1: Iowa, Louisiana, Virginia
 - Noncredit data inventory
 - Capturing course/program level data
 - Develop noncredit data taxonomy across states
- Phase 2: Expand to other states through three roles
 - Established state research partners similar to IA, LA, VA
 - Emerging state research partners
 - Learning community members
- Phase 3: National scan of state noncredit data and policy
- Future phases: Student-level analyses, student experiences, quality



Exploring the Noncredit Data Infrastructure

Courses/Programs

- Field of Study (name, CIP, SOC, Career Cluster)
- Type (occupational, sponsored, pre-college, personal interest)

Outcomes

- Non-degree Credentials (industry certification, occupational license, college-issued certificate, micro-credential, apprenticeship)
- Noncredit-to-credit articulation
- Student Outcomes (continue to credit, completion, employment, salary/wages)

Instructional Characteristics

- Length (number of classes for program, contact hours)
- Admission Requirements (prerequisites, tests, age)
- Delivery (F2F, location, online, blended, competency-based)
- Work-based learning requirement
- Faculty (FT credit/noncredit, FT noncredit, PT/adjunct, external/contract)

Finance

- Tuition
- Government Funding (state reimbursement, WIOA eligible, econ development incentive, other federal and state grants)

Enrollment

- Headcount
- Demographics (race/ethnicity, age, sex/gender)
- Prior Educational Attainment

Student Services

- Academic Advising
- Career Advising
- Nonacademic Support

Identifiers

- ID types (SS#, institutional ID, consistent ID, student names, birth dates)



Noncredit Data Drivers

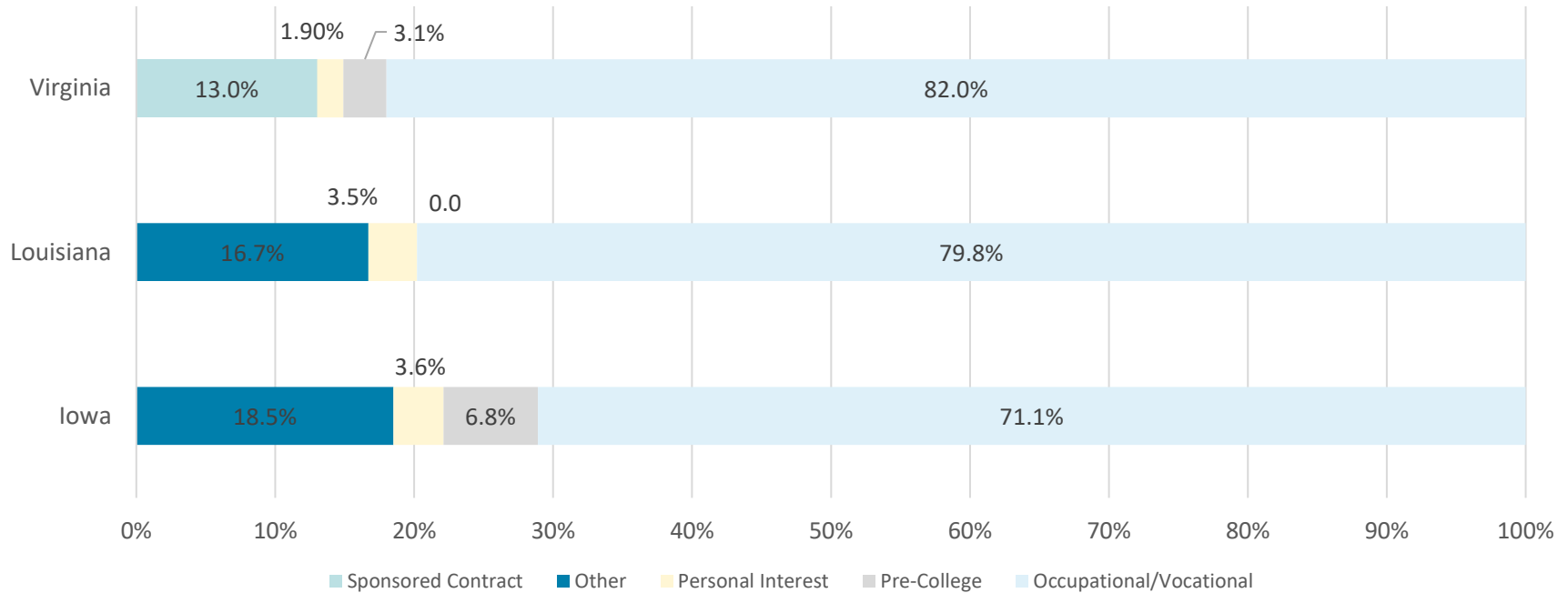
- Required reporting due to state funding
- Needed enrollment justifications
- Engagement in partnerships to measure outcomes
- Making the case for noncredit support
- AACCC's Voluntary Framework for Accountability
- Striving to better understand noncredit outcomes and improve data



Noncredit Types

Noncredit Types (D'Amico et al., 2014)	Description (D'Amico et al., 2017)
Occupational Training	“geared toward individuals seeking to gain or improve job skills leading to initial or better employment ...most often available through an open registration process, do not follow a typical semester schedule, and are paid for by individuals through either their own resources or through third-party funding for which they are eligible” (p. 59)
Sponsored Occupational (Contract) Training	“similar to occupational training ... arranged by special contract with organizations ... can be specific training developed for an organization, or it can lead to some particular industry-based standard ... delivered in a way most convenient for the contracting organization ... responds directly to local area needs” (p. 61)
Personal Interest	“common examples include ballroom dancing, cake decorating, and the like ... are demand driven, because students likely self-pay, and often reflect the needs, interests, and priorities of local communities” (pp. 61-62)
Pre-College Remediation	“primary programs delivered include ABE, ESL instruction, GED preparation, and even some aspects of developmental studies. These are typically offered at no charge to the student other than testing fees, supplies, etc.” (p. 62)

Percent of Noncredit Offerings by Type



Instructional Characteristics/Credentials by Noncredit Type

Noncredit Type	N	Contact Hours		Delivery			Associated Credential			
		Median	Mean	% F2F	% Hybrid	% Online	N for College Cert.	College Awarded Certificate	N for Industry Cert.	Industry Awarded Cert.
Occupational Training										
Iowa	657	26	51	75%	7%	46%	280	80%	280	54%
Louisiana**	316	40	114	97%	6%	33%	364	75%	233	93%
Virginia										
FastForward	2,006	100	112	92%	5%	3%	2006	NA	2006	100%
Non-FastForward	2,952	15	35	61%	4%	35%	2952	NA	2952	0%
Pre-College*										
Iowa	63	97	114	89%	13%	30%	3	33%	3	0%
Virginia	187	50	87	96%	0%	4%	187	NA	187	0%
Personal Interest										
Iowa	33	11	16	73%	0%	61%	4	100%	4	75%
Louisiana	14	30	29	100%	0%	29%	364	56%	233	89%
Virginia	117	6	9	65%	1%	34%	117	NA	117	0%

*The Pre-College category is Not Applicable for Louisiana

**Data for Louisiana is 8 out of 12 colleges.

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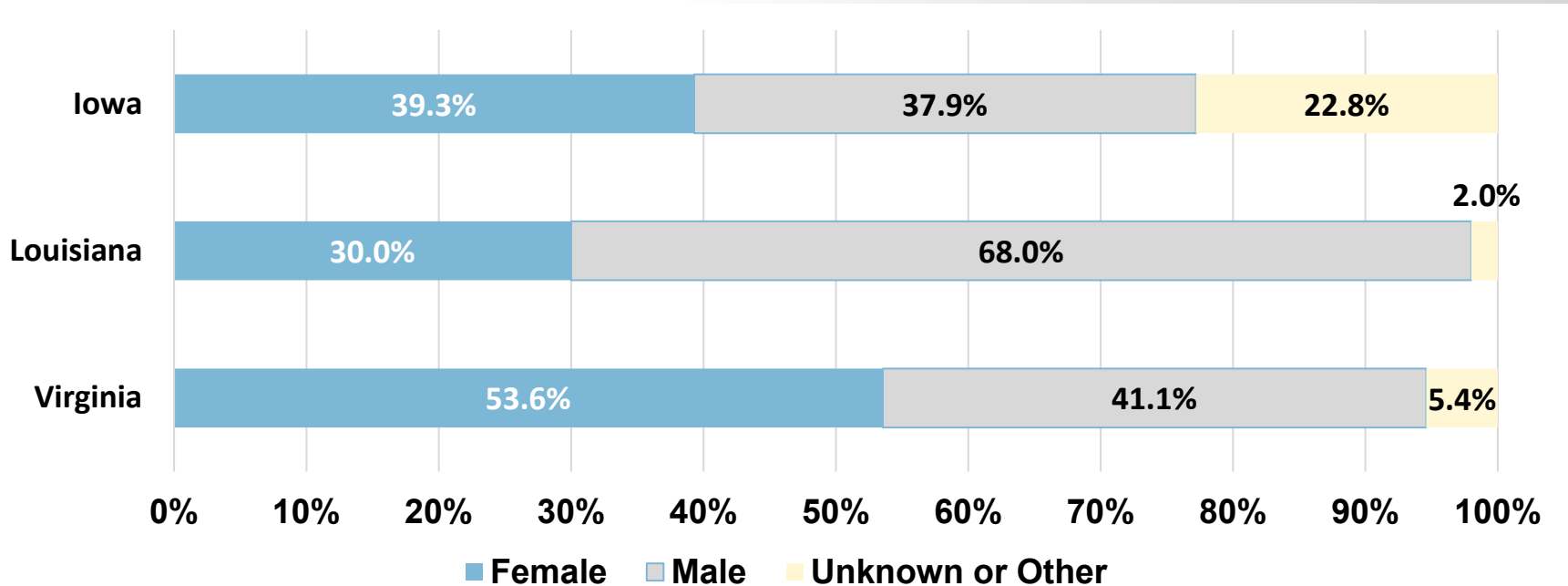
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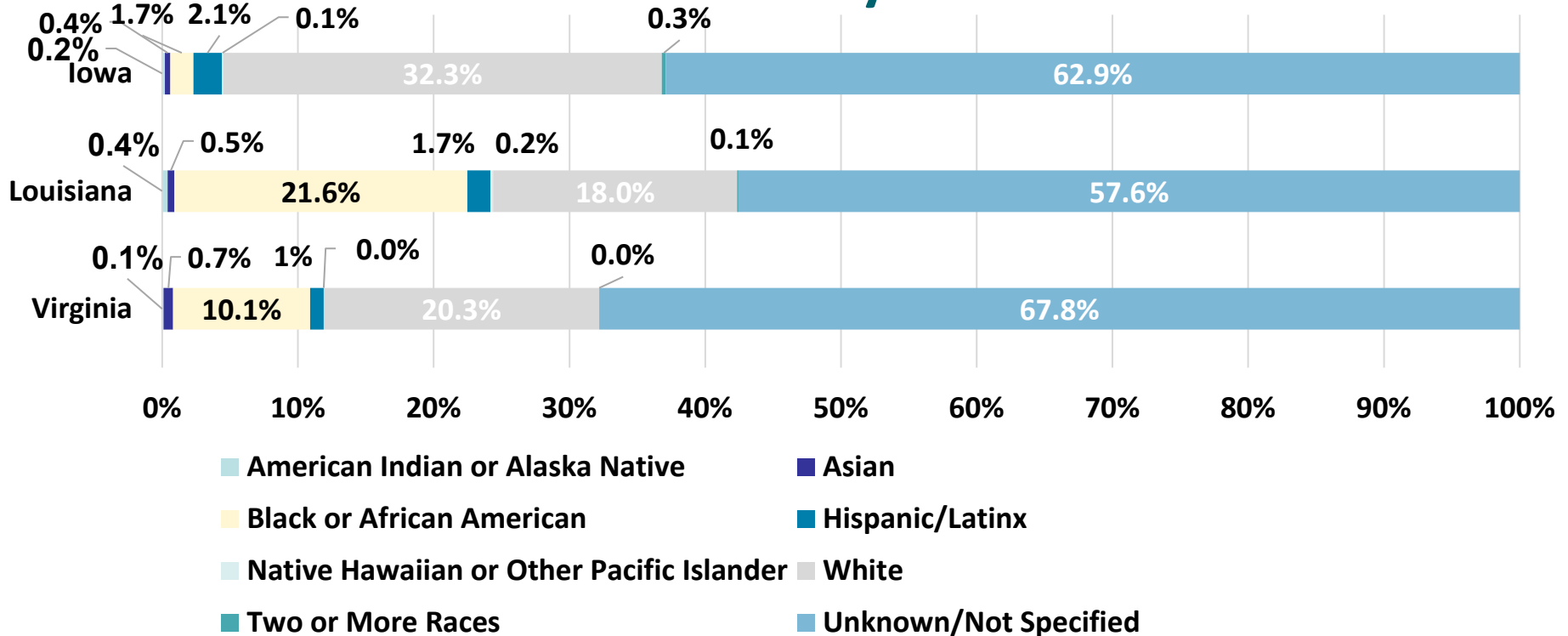
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Percent Enrollment in Occupational/Vocational Noncredit by Sex



Percent Enrollment in Occupational/Vocational Noncredit by Race



Lessons Learned from Exemplar States

- Courses vs. programs vs. offerings
- Variation among states AND program types in terms of what is collected
- Using data to “make the case”
- The data infrastructure builds over time
- Programming and funding tied to economic development and state initiatives
- Without standard definitions, interpretation is necessary
- Credentials of quality drive funding and structure
- State-level verification helps ensure quality data



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Questions and Discussion on Noncredit

- Where are you with noncredit data in your state and institution? (data systems? connected to credit? type of programs? outcomes?)
- What are 1-2 data issues you are working through?
- What noncredit data collection practices have worked well at your college?
- Do you have any recommendations for other colleges looking to improve their noncredit data collection?