

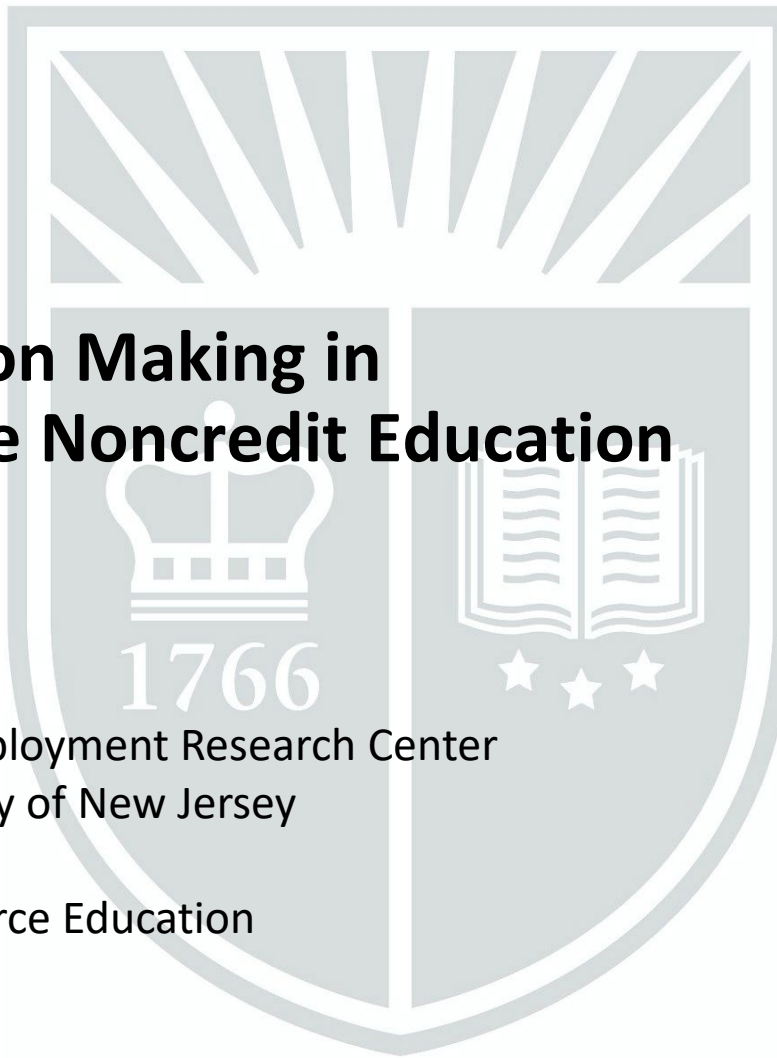
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**EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
RESEARCH CENTER**

Quality and Decision Making in Community College Noncredit Education

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Rising Interest in Noncredit & Nondegree Credentials

- Over two-thirds of adults considering education prefer a nondegree pathway, up from one-half pre-pandemic (Strada, 2020).¹
- Among “great resigners”, 72% are enrolling in programs that are 6 months or shorter (Cengage, 2022).²
- State funding of short-term workforce programs including: Get There Florida, Indiana Next Level Jobs, New Jersey Pay It Forward Program, Louisiana MJ Foster, Virginia Fast Forward, and others.

¹ <https://cci.stradaeducation.org/pv-release-september-16-2020/>

² <https://cengage.widen.net/s/78hrkqgfj7/cg-great-resigners-research-report-final>

Questions Exist about Quality and Outcomes

- Outcomes data are limited
- Early evidence from rigorous research in manufacturing shows positive returns for industry certifications (Census)
- Self-reported data from Strada (2021) surveys indicate:
 - Earnings for associate degree holders and NDC holders are similar; both are less than bachelor's holders
 - NDCs combined with degrees may have the most value
 - NDCs from CCs rated more highly than NDCs from private employers

Research Questions

- How do community college noncredit education departments ensure quality in their programs?
 - Business model for noncredit?
 - Credential design?
 - Student supports?
- How do students navigate community college noncredit offerings, and how do they fit in their pathways?

Research Methods

Interviews with 29 college leaders in 22 states

Case studies of 4 colleges including:

- Analysis of noncredit programs

- Case studies of 2 noncredit workforce programs

- Surveys of noncredit students

Case Study Colleges & Programs

Mt. San Antonio College, CA

- Electronics
- EMT

Northern Virginia Community College, VA

- CompTIA Net+ and Security+
- Medical assisting

LaGuardia Community College, NY

- Community health worker
- Medical billing

Harper College, IL

- Real estate
- Solar

Key Elements of Non-Degree Credential Quality

Credential design. This element includes numerous features, usually decided on by the credential grantor, that define what a credential represents in terms of the competencies it marks and how it seeks to do so.

Competencies. These are the skills and knowledge that the credential aims to represent.

Market Processes. This term refers to the ways that a credential comes to be recognized and have currency in the world.

Outcomes. The accumulation of competencies represented by credentials are expected to generate outcomes of value, typically in terms of the educational, employment, and social advancement of individuals, employers, and society.

Focus on Credential Design

Competency relevance

Instructional process

Assessment process – initial and ongoing

Stackability and portability

Transparency

Accessibility and affordability

Early Findings on Quality of Noncredit Programs

Labor market analysis – most commonly mentioned approach to ensure quality

Reliance on industry certifications, curriculum from industry associations

Involvement of faculty in program development

State approval processes, particularly associated with FTE funding

Student demand as an indicator

Earnings outcomes, but little data are available

Visit our project page:

<https://smlr.rutgers.edu/faculty-research-engagement/education-employment-research-center-eerc/eerc-projects/quality-and>

Download our issue brief:

A Snapshot Of The Shifting Landscape Of Noncredit Community College Workforce Education

By Michelle Van Noy & Katherine Hughes

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