THE ABC'S OF COLLEGE NAVIGATION GUIDE

SEATTLE JOBS INITIATIVE

January 2012

Seattle Jobs Initiative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

Seattle Jobs Initiative is indebted to many different individuals and organizations for helping us to develop and select the information contained in **The ABC's of College Navigation Guide** (the Guide). Each of them has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to collaborate on building the budding field of college navigation focused on helping more low-skill residents attain college credentials leading to living-wage careers.

The information contained in the Guide first began to coalesce through the efforts of the **Peer Learning Group**[1] facilitated by Seattle Jobs Initiative in 2008. This group of community-based organization and community college leaders convened regularly for three years to identify and develop best practices and tools for helping low-income residents access and persist in college. We thank the following individuals and their organizations* for contributing to the Guide through their participation in the Peer Learning Group:

AMY ARQUILLA
Hopelink

LIZA BURRELL
Bellevue College

TOM CHATRIAND
FareStart

DAVE CUNNINGHAM
Shoreline Community College

GEORGE DIGNAN
King County

MELINDA GIOVENGO
YouthCare

MATT HOUGHTON
City of Seattle Office of Economic Development

PAT MARTINEZ JOHNSON
King County

MATT KING
YWCA Seattle/King/Snohomish

MIN SONG, SEANNA RUVKUN & FRED KRUG
Seattle/King County Workforce Development Council

VICTORIA LAUBER
Shoreline Community College

BARBARA LONEY
Shoreline Community College

ALICE MADSEN
Highline Community College

GAIL MIULLI
Cascadia Community College

ANNA MOFFITT
Pacific Associates

DARLENE MOLSEN
Bellevue College

BARBARA NABORS-GLASS, Seattle Goodwill

LAUREN O'BRIEN
Seattle Goodwill

DONNA MILLER PARKER
South Seattle Community College

WENDY PRICE
South Seattle Community College

JOHN POWERS
Pioneer Human Services

MARK PUTNAM
Building Changes

ALISON STEVENS
Seattle Central Community College

CATHERINE VERRENTI
Neighborhood House

HEATHER WORTHLEY
PortJobs

*Individuals' organizational affiliations are accurate for the period of their participation in the Peer Learning Group.

Seattle Jobs Initiative wishes to additionally thank the following individuals for their work directly on **The ABC's of College Navigation Guide**, sharing their ideas for its content and reviewing and commenting on drafts at various stages of its development:

MONICA CHENG
Seattle Goodwill

CINDY HOLLAND
Neighborhood House

DAWN KINDER
Bellevue College/SkillUp Washington College for Working Adults

ALICE MADSEN
Highline Community College

GAIL MIULLI
Cascadia Community College

DARLENE MOLSEN
Bellevue College

LORI NIXON
SkillUp Washington

ANTHON SMITH
Seattle Education Access

Seattle Jobs Initiative also wishes to thank M. Colleen Clancy of PROMOTE-EDU for her important contributions to SJI in helping to develop some of the key concepts and thinking around college navigation.

And, Seattle Jobs Initiative is grateful for the editing support provided by John Osias and fellow colleague, Dave Trovato. Their careful review was instrumental to finalizing the Guide.

SUPPORTERS

Seattle Jobs Initiative is also indebted to the following for providing the funding that supported the development of **The ABC's of College Navigation Guide**:

The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
JPMorgan Chase Foundation
The Boeing Company Charitable Trust
City of Seattle – Office of Economic Development

Additional support for printing the Guide was provided by SkillUp Washington.

SkillUp WASHINGTON

Authors
Rosanna Stephens and David Kaz

Designer
Erin Kaufman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 1

Introduction 5

Who Should Use This Guide 5

How To Use This Guide 6

College Navigation – A Growing Community Focus 7

A Definition of "College Navigation" 7

The Growing Importance – and Challenge – of College Attainment 9

The Writing on the Wall: The Changing Labor Market 9

College Completion is Not Always a Given 11

SPOTLIGHT: Community College Primer – Washington State 12

What College Navigation Can Do To Help and What It Can't Do 13

RESOURCES 14

Preparation for Becoming a Successful College Student 15

Determining Readiness 15

SPOTLIGHT: Key Areas for Assessment 16

HELPFUL HINTS 18

Addressing Barriers 18

SPOTLIGHT: Stress Management 19

RESOURCES 20

Academic and Test Preparation 21

Sharpening Study Skills 21

RESOURCES 22

College Placement Tests 23

SPOTLIGHT: Community College Primer – Entrance Points for Students 24

RESOURCES 25

The CASAS Test 26

The COMPASS and Accuplacer Tests 26

RESOURCES 26

HELPFUL HINTS 27

RESOURCES 28

Selection of the Right College Program 29

Overview 29

Providing a Practical View of Job Demands and the Labor Market 31

HELPFUL HINTS 32

RESOURCES 33

Time to Completion 34
HELPFUL HINTS 35
Stackability 36
HELPFUL HINTS 36
Other Considerations 37
HELPFUL HINTS 37
RESOURCES 38

Enrollment Process – The "Dance Steps" 39
HELPFUL HINTS 40
Apply 40
Assessment 41
Advising 42
HELPFUL HINTS 42
Financial Aid 42
RESOURCES 43
HELPFUL HINTS 45
Registration 45
HELPFUL HINTS 46
RESOURCES 46

Persistence – Staying the Course 47
HELPFUL HINTS 49
RESOURCES 50

Career Readiness 51
The Importance of Performance Skills Development 51
SPOTLIGHT: What Employers Mean by Performance Skills 52
Connecting To Jobs and Employers 54
Networking 55
HELPFUL HINTS 55
Career Resources – On Campus 56
Career Resources – In the Community 57
RESOURCES 58

Conclusion 59
Student Stories 60
College Navigation in Action – A Student's Success in Her Own Words 64

End Notes 67

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **The ABC's of College Navigation Guide**. This tool is intended to put important information and resources at the fingertips of college navigators and others supporting low-income individuals in accessing and completing community college programs that lead to better career opportunities. This guide has been created by Seattle Jobs Initiative with assistance from multiple agencies committed to implementing a systems-level, data-driven approach to college navigation within our community and beyond.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

The ABC's of College Navigation Guide is written primarily for the community-based college navigator – the professional whose work is focused on helping low-income individuals chart a path to success in postsecondary education and obtain a living-wage job. College navigation is a relatively new role, and it is steadily gaining traction as a strategy to help low-income individuals access college programs and attain a credential or degree as well as a good career. While some organizations have created a new navigator role, that role is often fulfilled by the case manager or similar front-line community agency staff charged with helping clients access and succeed in college as part of a broader-based supportive role.

This guide is intended to be a valuable resource for college navigators as well as case managers and other front-line staff. It is focused on professional/technical (workforce education) college programs, though some information is also relevant to academic transfer programs.

Finally, we hope the guide can serve as a resource to support the work of community colleges by raising new partnership opportunities and presenting key challenges to college access, persistence and completion from a workforce/community perspective while setting forth some best practices and resources for addressing these challenges.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The ABC's of College Navigation Guide is organized in sections that reflect the typical steps a college navigator would take to help an individual become a successful community college student. There are four basic steps covered, and an additional section is provided on career readiness, which can occur concurrently with the four steps:

- PREPARATION – Setting expectations and readying the participant for the rigors of college and placement tests.
- PROGRAM SELECTION – Helping the participant make the best choice for a college program.
- ENROLLMENT – Helping the participant through the multi-step enrollment process.
- PERSISTENCE – Working to ensure the participant persists to credential completion and a living-wage job.
- CAREER – Helping the participant identify a career pathway and prepare for employment during and after college.

Each of the "how-to" sections of the guide will present key points up front for the reader who is mainly interested in quick access to the most important information in that section. Following these key points will be more detailed information and helpful hints.

While the guide is intended to provide an overview of important information for practitioners, its other primary purpose is to list, in a single location, those community resources that are available to help ensure the college navigator's success. A very short explanation and link to each of these resources is provided.

COLLEGE NAVIGATION – A GROWING COMMUNITY FOCUS

A DEFINITION OF "COLLEGE NAVIGATION"

KEY POINTS

- College navigation encompasses a wide variety of services that range from assessment to education and career planning, to getting into college, completing a program and job placement.
- College navigation is a longer-term strategy and its effectiveness is based on relationships with the students and the college partners.

College navigation is a set of services specifically focused on helping individuals understand and prepare for the "college-going" experience and is complementary to the services available at the college provided by workforce education and student services staff, advisors, etc. College navigators provide direct assistance to students in accessing the college and completing all the required steps that culminate in selecting a program and registering for classes: admissions/ college application, assessment, advising, financial aid and registration.

An education specialist, the navigator helps participants enter and persevere with their selected community college pathway to complete a certificate or degree. The navigator's primary responsibility is to support the participant in obtaining that credential. In the process, the navigator may also assist with other needs, such as short-term job placement and accessing a variety of support services – including transportation, childcare and housing – by referring students to other resources or providing these services directly. Advocating on behalf of students and working with them on self-advocacy is also a key element of navigation.

College navigation is not just a service; it is a long-term investment in an individual that supports credential attainment. **At the core of effective navigation is the supportive relationship between the participant and the individual navigator who will serve, at varying times, as teacher, advocate, coach and mentor.** The Peer Learning Group, a group of community-based organizations (CBO's) and community colleges convened by Seattle Jobs Initiative in 2008-09, identified the following key components of college navigation:

Developing career and education plans	• Conduct assessments of basic skills and college readiness. • Provide opportunities for career exploration based on labor market information and participant interest. • Discuss career pathways and the linkages between the steps from basic skills to developmental education to college-level training to career. • Provide industry and sector-based information and preparation, if applicable, to help participants identify an appropriate training program – generally one that is high-wage and high-demand.
Preparing participants for the college experience	• Describe how to access the college from admissions to assessment and advising to financial aid and course registration. • Set expectations about the college experience (time management and balancing work, family and school). • Work with participants to develop core competencies to succeed in college and help them learn how to self-advocate (study and test-taking skills, learning to ask questions and communication skills).
Helping participants access and persist in postsecondary education programs	• Develop partnerships within the college and with workforce education and student services staff, agree to process and define roles to help participants enter through the correct entry point that is the best match for the participant – workforce education (professional/technical), basic skills or academic transfer. • Assist participants in understanding and accessing sources of financial support for college programs (Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET), Worker Retraining, Pell Grants, and/or scholarships); collaborate with the college's workforce education staff to develop a streamlined funding plan and access these sources. • Identify and connect participants to support services available through CBOs, government agencies and those available through the college, etc.
Ongoing coaching and support	• Provide one-on-one or small group support. • Connect with participants throughout the college experience on a weekly, monthly or mid-quarterly basis, based on student need.

These elements are critical for persistence with and completion of college programs as well as for job search and job placement. In many cases, navigation will also include fundamental case management functions, particularly when conducting assessment and developing plans for providing support services and assisting individuals with barrier removal.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE – AND CHALLENGE – OF COLLEGE ATTAINMENT

KEY POINTS

- **Education beyond a high school diploma is required for the majority (67 percent) of the jobs in Washington State opening up in the next few years.**
- **Individuals who have a college credential are less likely to be unemployed and have greater earning potential than those with only a high school diploma or GED.**
- **A significant number of students enrolling in college are unprepared, making them much less likely to complete a credential.**

THE WRITING ON THE WALL: THE CHANGING LABOR MARKET

Workforce and other community agencies today are placing a greater focus than ever before on helping the low-income and low-skill residents they serve advance to college credentials. Agencies have long operated on the (accurate) premise that education and training provide pathways out of poverty, but in recent years, the changing economy has raised the bar on the skill level needed for a stable, living-wage job.

Recent research clearly demonstrates that the well-paying jobs of today and the future require education and training beyond high school. The following statistics are evidence of this new reality:

- **42 percent of new entry-level jobs that open up in the U.S. require a one- or two-year college credential (but not necessarily a four-year college degree);** [2]

- **67 percent of all jobs in Washington State will require college education by 2018;** [3]
- **77 percent of new family-supporting jobs in Washington State will require college education by 2014.** [4]

In addition, recent unemployment and wage statistics are further evidence of the value of college attainment for workers. For example, individuals with an associate's degree (or at least some college) have been experiencing about half the rate of unemployment of those with less than a high school diploma. Moreover, someone with an associate's degree today earns about 33 percent more than someone with only a high school diploma or GED.

Ensuring more residents obtain a college credential is not only a social issue, it is an economic one. In Washington State, 60 percent of employers reported struggling to find skilled workers, particularly those possessing the middle range of skills, according to the Washington State Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board.[5] These middle-skilled workers are not typically the workers who are migrating to our state – giving us both a moral and economic imperative to train our own residents for these jobs.

COLLEGE COMPLETION IS NOT ALWAYS A GIVEN

While the value of college attainment for our low-income residents is clear, the challenges they face in both accessing college and completing a college credential with labor market value are many. Recent statistics are sobering:

- **54 percent of the students entering Washington community and technical colleges directly from high school are unprepared for college-level work. The percentage of older adults enrolling who are unprepared is estimated to be even higher.[6]**
- **One-third of non-traditional community college students in Washington complete 45 credits or earn a credential within five years of enrollment.[7]**
- **13 percent of first-time college students (two- or four-year) in the U.S. who attend college part-time (typically because they must work) receive a degree within six years of enrollment.[8]**

These statistics portray just those individuals who actually made it as far as enrolling in college. How many additional low-income and low-skill individuals were convinced that they were not "college material" and never set foot on campus? How many went to a campus intending to enroll but were overwhelmed, confused by the enrollment process or discouraged by a poor placement score in reading or math and never followed through?

Community support via college navigation can be an effective strategy to address these challenges and improve outcomes for individuals interested in obtaining a college credential.

SPOTLIGHT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRIMER – WASHINGTON STATE

Washington State has 34 community and technical colleges, with eleven located in King County. There are four colleges in the Seattle Community College District: North Seattle Community College, South Seattle Community College, Seattle Central Community College and Seattle Vocational Institute.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges provides leadership and coordination for all of the colleges. Its system vision is to "build strong communities, individuals and families, and achieve greater global competitiveness and prosperity for the state and its economy by raising the knowledge and skills of the state's residents."[9]

All of the colleges operate independently of one another and have their own mission and vision statements. However, there are commonalities across the colleges. All of the colleges are open access and available to all community members with coursework offered in three main areas:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Transitional Studies
- Professional/technical (workforce education)
- Academic transfer (to a four-year institution)

In addition, all of the colleges have funding sources, through their workforce education departments, that are dedicated to low-income students.

WHAT COLLEGE NAVIGATION CAN DO TO HELP – AND WHAT IT CAN'T DO

College navigation is, at its essence, a community response on the part of workforce and community providers to the growing importance of college attainment to their clients – and to the significant challenges these individuals face to college access and completion.

College navigation is not intended to supplant the vital services available at the community colleges such as advising and tutoring. It is meant to be complementary and serve as a preparatory step to get individuals ready for the college experience so that they are: prepared to take advantage of what the college has to offer; knowledgeable about the services available on campus and where to go for help; and able to act as their own advocates.

A navigator knits together important resources available in the community and those available at the college and links students to these supports. To be effective and to address the variation that exists across campuses, navigators should develop partnerships with staff members in the workforce education offices of selected colleges so that they can collaborate on meeting student needs and ensure that students (and they themselves) understand all the testing, program and funding requirements of a particular college. These college staff members often act in advisory role and help streamline college processes for students.

In reality, college navigation is a strategy designed to support underprepared students to achieve success by combining navigational and case management (access to community-based supports and life skills coaching that facilitate success) support to "fill the gaps" for students who need additional skill building to succeed in college.

Navigators alleviate some of the impact of the fragmentation between – and inefficiencies within – the workforce development and college systems; college navigation is a response to these challenges, not an ultimate solution. Other innovative solutions[10] – now being independently explored by some colleges and community agencies – must be implemented on a system-wide level to help the greatest number of low-income and low-skill residents to access and complete college credentials as well as secure a living-wage job.

General resources on Washington State community colleges, navigation, career pathways and Seattle-area college attainment programs

Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges	www.sbctc.edu
Links to all Washington State Community and Technical Colleges	www.sbctc.ctc.edu/general/c_index.aspx
Seattle Community College District	www.seattlecolleges.com
Check Out a College	www.checkoutacollege.com
Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board	www.hecb.wa.gov/PayingForCollege www.gearup.wa.gov/ (Focused on youth/young adults)
Educational Credit Management Corporation Foundation (ECMC)	www.ecmcfoundation.org/details/persist.html
Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Free; must respond to brief questionnaire for access)	http://collegenavigation.weebly.com/index.html
Seattle Jobs Initiative's Career Pathways and Postsecondary Education Attainment Data	www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/policy/publications.documents/PSEAttainmentDataSurveyAug09Doc.pdf
Seattle Education Access (Provides navigation services)	www.seattleeducationaccess.org
College Success Foundation (Provides a host of education and career services for young people)	www.collegesuccessfoundation.org www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/page.aspx?pid=696
SkillUp Washington (Provides a host of education and career services for adults and young people)	www.skillupwa.org

PREPARATION FOR BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE STUDENT

KEY POINTS

- Assessing students and identifying their strengths, needs, skill levels, barriers and career goals is a critical first step. As part of this process, students should understand the costs and benefits of going back to school and think about the kinds of support they will need to be successful.
- Both short-term and long-term plans outlining career and education goals should be developed. These plans should address issues that could prevent students from reaching their goals and encompass education, career, family and financial planning. The planning process can be iterative and plans should be revisited on a regular basis.

DETERMINING READINESS

Conducting a thorough assessment is essential for ensuring that individuals are prepared for college and are well-positioned to identify an appropriate career goal, persist with their education, complete their program and earn a credential. The assessment process takes into

account multiple factors, including: career and educational interests, motivation, level of basic skills, employment history, transferable skills and experience, barriers and need for support services. Each of these areas can make a big impact on whether or not an individual is ready for college and will be successful in their studies. The Spotlight table below (and continued on the following page) details three key areas for assessment: basic skills, work skills and social readiness (including both personal readiness and family readiness).[11]

The assessment will form the foundation for goal-setting and the development of career and education plans. Plans should correspond to the information gathered during the assessment process and should include, at a minimum, the action items that the individual and navigator will take to address issues and to prepare for the college-going process. This plan should also include a timeline and capture all progress as it is made. Such planning can be an iterative process and should be revisited on a regular basis as individuals begin their career and education pathway.

Beyond assessment and planning, it is also important to have candid conversations about the costs and benefits of going back to school and the kind of support system the student has in place. Before heading back to the classroom, setting expectations about the rigors of school and discussing how to balance school with family and work are critical for helping students prepare to take the next step.

SPOTLIGHT

Basic Skills	• Reading • Writing • Math • English language proficiency • Cognitive (listening, application to action, following directions, common sense and decision-making)
Work Skills	• Vocations and career goals • Education and training • Job-specific skills • Competencies • Attributes • Licenses and certifications • Aptitudes • Interests • Preferences

Social Readiness	**Personal Readiness**	• Commitment and motivation • Emergency needs • Healthcare (medical, dental and optical) • Hygiene, general appearance and clothing • Appropriate social interaction • Disabilities (learning, cognitive, mental and physical) • Disability self-acceptance and management • Understanding of reasonable accommodation • Personal time awareness (body clock, cultural time definition) • Drug and alcohol • Criminal history (type of crime, current status and outstanding warrants; expand to include record beyond seven years for hospital industry requirements) • Financial management and considerations (e.g. SSI and SSDI status and impact analysis to determine baseline wage, debt, credit and budgeting skills and barriers) • Cultural competency; understanding how to integrate into the college culture • Problem-solving and critical thinking • Willingness and ability to ask for help • Understanding of self-responsibility and ability to take initiative • Positive self-concept
	Family Readiness (Family is defined in the broadest sense)	• Emergency needs • Food • Childcare (to include sick child care) • Housing • Transportation (including frequency of buses and length of commute) • Family dynamics • Legal commitments • Domestic violence • Identification of family/friend support system and/or identification of potential barriers to success

HELPFUL HINTS

- Review myths of adults returning to school. See Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Class 1), which is linked in the following Resources section.
- Encourage students to map their networks of support and identify those who could be helpful to them as well as those who may distract them from school.
- Assist students with completing an assessment of their interests and skills, which will help them explore and identify career pathways.
- Work with students to complete a time study showing how they are currently using their time and identifying the adjustments required for adding in class time and homework. Students should plan to allocate a minimum of 2 hours of study time per week for each credit of coursework for which they are enrolled (i.e. a student enrolled in a 5-credit class should plan at least 10 hours of homework time each week in addition to the 5 hours of class time). Some students returning to school after a long absence may need to set aside additional time.
- Help students identify stressors (environmental, familial, social, etc.) in their lives and work with them to develop coping mechanisms for stress.

ADDRESSING BARRIERS

Developing a plan is a vital step in making sure an individual is ready for college. Addressing barriers is part of this planning process. During assessment, barriers may be uncovered that need to be resolved before students attend college. These barriers could include transportation, childcare, housing and access to other emergency services. Other issues can also arise once students return to school such as a need for tutoring, help with stress management and job search assistance for a full-time or part-time job. Connecting the individual to community and college resources can help alleviate the many challenges that impact student success.

SPOTLIGHT

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Returning to school will add a new layer of stress to students' lives. Learning about their stressors and having an arsenal of coping strategies will be important for students as they start this new and exciting chapter of their lives. There are several areas that can cause stress for the student:

- Environmental
- Family
- Work
- School
- Social
- Health

And, there are general areas that students can control in order to manage their stress levels, including:

- Time Management
- Organization
- Attitude and Outlook
- Help-Finding Strategies
- Exercise
- Nutrition
- School-Work-Life Balance
- Know Yourself & Your Limits
- Boundary-Setting

The following resources can be helpful to you and your students in understanding and managing stressful situations.

KNOW YOURSELF - PERSONALITY AND TEMPERAMENT	
The Keirsey Temperament Sorter	http://keirsey.com/sorter/instruments2.aspx?partid=0
Human Metrics Jung Typology Test	www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes1.htm
STRESS ASSESSMENTS	
Very Short Stress Indicator – Mayo Clinic Stress Test	www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-assessment/SR00029
Three Tests re: Sources, Symptoms, How to Manage Stress – University of Wisconsin	www.healthcenter.vt.edu/resources/health-info/assessments/stress-management-assessments.htm

The following websites are resources for assessment, education and career planning, financial planning, time management and goal setting.

Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Myths and Planning)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com (Classes 1, 3, 13, 14 and 15)
Seattle Jobs Initiative	Road Map to Employment Success Sample Education Plan
Seattle Community College District: Two-day Orientation (necessary for workforce funding)	www.startnextquarter.org
Online Self-Assessment developed by Skip Downing (Downing's *On Course* is used in some student success courses at the colleges.)	http://college.hmco.com/downing_assessment/jsp/questions1-8.jsp?customizer=prewww.oncourseworkshop.com
PortJob's Financial Management Tools	www.portjobs.org/our-programs/related-programs/35-related-program-1 www.financialmentoring.net/Mentoring_Training_Guide.pdf
Free Online Financial Management and Budgeting Tool (consolidates financial information into one place for a snapshot)	www.mint.com/what-is-mint
National College Transition Network	www.collegeforadults.org
Educational Credit Management Corporation Foundation (ECMC)	www.ecmcfoundation.org/details/persist.html
Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board	www.gearup.wa.gov
Workforce Development Council of Seattle/King County: Self-Sufficiency Calculator	www.thecalculator.org
Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board	www.careerbridge.wa.gov/Page.aspx?nid=6

SHARPENING STUDY SKILLS

KEY POINTS

- There is a strong correlation between study skills and college completion. Many students served by college navigators need to sharpen their study skills.
- College navigators can help prospective students improve their study skills by conducting assessments of their learning styles, providing resources to improve their study skills and ensuring students are connected to college-based resources such as tutoring.

It is important for students to have solid study skills in order to succeed in college. For those students who have had limited success in school in the past – or who have been out of the academic environment for an extended period of time – honing these skills before or soon after enrollment in college is essential.

We intend the term "study skills" to include not only the ability to effectively study and complete homework in a timely fashion, but also in-class note-taking, reading effectively and time management.

College navigators can help participants improve their study skills in several ways. Prospective students can complete assessments, such as the VARK (Visual-Aural-Read/Write-Kinesthetic) assessment to help them discover their personal learning styles (i.e., do they learn best by seeing, hearing, reading/writing, or doing) and be provided with the most effective study tips for their style. In addition, there are many resources available in the community and online that offer detailed guidance and tips for developing effective study skills.

RESOURCES

The following websites provide information related to understanding learning styles and tips for developing strong study skills.

Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Test Taking, Learning Styles, Study Skills)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com/ (Classes 9, 12 and 13)
Other websites with learning style assessments and study skills strategies	www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks3/ict/multiple_int/index.htm www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory www.studygs.net/index.htm www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/study.html www.how-to-study.com/ www.collegetips.com/college-classes/study-tips.php www.helium.com/knowledge/185414-10-study-tips-for-college-students

Finally, college navigators should be aware – and ensure students are aware – of resources available on their community college campuses that can provide academic assistance. Every community college campus has a Student Services Department that can provide students with tutoring and study skills assistance. Many colleges have other resources available, such as Writing Centers, Educational Support and Disability Services, the latter of which can provide resources to help students with learning disabilities to succeed.

There are many resources available to students through instruction rather than student services; navigators will need to determine how students access these services on each campus.

COLLEGE PLACEMENT TESTS

KEY POINTS

- Prospective community college students must take the COMPASS or Accuplacer placement test to determine whether or not they will need to take pre-college education courses (reading, writing and math) in addition to the college-level courses of the program.
- College navigators should help prospective students achieve the best score possible on these tests, with the goal of avoiding or minimizing time spent in pre-college education (developmental education and basic skills), which can significantly increase a student's time to earn a credential and odds of dropping out.
- In addition to helping students prepare for placement tests, college navigators should be aware of the different test re-take policies at local colleges and assist students in navigating these policies to their best advantage.

One of the first steps prospective students must take upon entering a community college is to take a placement test to assess their skills in reading, writing and math. Today, most Washington State community colleges use the multiple-choice COMPASS or Accuplacer tests for placement into certificate and degree programs, though some workforce programs such as I-BEST (Integrated Basic Skills Education and Skills Training) use the CASAS test. The score that individuals achieve on this placement test – which they may not have prepared for or even heard of – can have a considerable impact on their chance of completing college credentials.

The key impact of the placement test is that it determines whether or not prospective students must take developmental education/pre-college courses (remediation in reading, writing and/or math) – as well as the number of these courses they must take – prior or in addition to the college-level courses required to complete a credential.

Depending on the college and the program, a test score that results in a student placing into developmental education/pre-college courses can equate to a year or more in additional

study at the community college, which can have a significant negative impact on a student's ability to complete and secure adequate funding for the duration of their program. Although developmental education/pre-college courses can often be taken concurrently with college-level coursework, in a number of professional/technical programs students must improve their math, reading and writing skills before they can begin their program studies. The credits students earn in developmental coursework count against their maximum financial aid award but not toward a certificate or degree.[12] Some students may need to build these skills, but others may simply need time to refresh what they know.

One key strategy for college navigators to help students avoid or minimize developmental education requirements is to assist them in making the best choice of college program, as will be discussed in the following section. But an important and complementary approach is to assist students in implementing a strategy for getting the best possible result on the COMPASS or Accuplacer test.

SPOTLIGHT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRIMER – ENTRANCE POINTS FOR STUDENTS

Students can enter college at multiple points, determined by skill level and placement test score:

- ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)/TRANSITIONAL STUDIES – Pre-college courses that help students build basic skills in reading, writing and math. The courses are non-credit. ABE programs are part of basic skills departments.
- DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION – Pre-college courses that prepare students for college-level coursework in reading, writing and math. Developmental education includes multiple levels with students progressing as skills are developed. Developmental education classes are usually at a higher academic level than ABE classes, but there can be some overlap in levels.
- I-BEST – Integrated basic education and technical skills training that is credit-bearing toward a certificate or degree.
- PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL PROGRAMS – Program coursework that combines technical and career skills with academic content to prepare students for the workplace.
- ACADEMIC TRANSFER – Program coursework that can be applied to a four-year college or university.

National research paints a grim picture for students referred to developmental education. Students facing a lengthy stay can count on increased costs, lost earnings, prolonged stress and demoralization. Studies indicate that few students referred to developmental education go on to earn a college credential.

In a recent review of more than 250,000 students three years after they entered college, 80 percent of those assigned to math remediation and 63 percent of those assigned to reading remediation had not gone on to complete the college-level math and English courses required for their degree. Completion rates were worse for students with the weakest academic skills – fewer than 10 percent of the students assigned to low-level math remediation and 24 percent of those assigned to low-level reading remediation passed a college-level course in these subjects within three years of college entry.[13]

While completion rates for students beginning at the pre-college level need improvement, these courses can be good access points and a way to ease into college for many students. Many Washington State colleges are using new approaches to developmental education to help build skills in less time and combine this skill-building with technical training.

RESOURCES

The following websites provide information about developmental education research and innovations.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION RESEARCH & INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATION	
Completion by Design	http://knowledgecenter.completionbydesign.org/phase/entry
Seattle Jobs Initiative	www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/policy/publications/documents/Supporting_DevEd_Reform_2011.pdf

THE CASAS TEST

The CASAS test (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems Test) is a multiple-choice test that assesses applied reading, math and listening in a variety of life and work situations. This test is used to get a sense of a student's basic skill level and is not generally used for placement into college-level courses.

The CASAS test is not timed, though it can generally be completed in an hour. It is often given as a pre-test to measure a student's skill level and given again as a post-test to see how skills have improved after instruction in basic skills. All basic skills students complete pre- and post-CASAS tests each quarter to determine skill level gains.

THE COMPASS & ACCUPLACER TESTS

Both COMPASS and Accuplacer are untimed, adaptive, computerized tests that help the colleges evaluate student skills and place them into appropriate courses. Both tests include reading, writing, sentence skills, math, writing essay and English as a Second Language (ESL). Students receive the test results immediately upon completion of testing.

The COMPASS and Accuplacer are not used like traditional tests, with "passing" scores. Rather, scores indicate areas in which students are strong and areas in which they may need help. Thus, these tests can identify problems in major subject areas before disrupting educational progress, giving students the opportunity to prepare more effectively for needed courses. Students and the college can use scores from these tests to prepare a course of study that will be appropriate, relevant and meaningful.

RESOURCES

The Seattle Community College District offers free COMPASS prep classes, COMPASS Prep for Student Success.

COMPASS Prep for Student Success	www.beforeyoutest.org

TEST PREPARATION

- Prospective students will have a considerable advantage if they are prepared for the COMPASS or Accuplacer test. They should be made aware of when in the enrollment process they will take the test, the purpose of the test and what academic areas will be tested.
- Taking practice tests will help prospective students know what to expect and allow them to refresh their knowledge – all helping to improve their scores. There are many websites devoted to test preparation. In addition, Seattle-area community-based organizations and the community colleges offer test preparation services.
- Preparation can help reduce the inevitable anxiety that comes with test-taking, and community college campuses offer resources such as counseling centers to help manage this stress.

RETAKING THE TEST

- Every community college in Washington State sets its own placement test re-take policy. Some colleges allow prospective students desiring improved test scores to retake the COMPASS or Accuplacer test immediately; others require students to wait from 30 to 90 days before re-taking the test.
- The college navigator should be familiar with the test re-taking policies of Seattle-area colleges and whether scores are accepted from one campus to another. If a student takes the test at one campus that has a lengthy re-take policy, it is helpful to understand whether or not that school will accept scores from a different campus.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

- Understanding where students may start their college journey helps to set the right expectations for the student and is an important element for planning. In some programs, students can take their developmental education classes while taking their program classes. It is important for navigators to prepare students to ask about this possibility with an advisor.
- Because of the added challenges students face in persisting in college if their test scores place them into developmental or pre-college education, a college navigator might also consider discussing with low-scoring participants the possibility of delaying enrollment in college and instead spending additional time on test-preparation or skill-building in order to improve their scores.
- On the balance, a higher test score resulting in reduced or eliminated developmental or pre-college education requirements could more than make up for the time spent delaying enrollment and preparing for the test.

The following websites provide information for preparing for assessment tests and the test-taking policy for seven Seattle-area colleges. Generally, on the college websites, searching for "testing" or "placement" will direct you to assessment information. Many colleges also offer one-quarter or drop-in test prep classes.

TEST PREPARATION	
Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Test Taking, Learning Styles, Study Skills)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com (Classes 7, 8, 9 and 10)
Seattle Community College District – COMPASS Prep for Student Success	www.beforeyoutest.org
Websites to help prepare for the COMPASS	www.khanacademy.com (Math instructional videos) www.testpreppractice.net/compass/free-online-compass-practice-tests.aspx (English and math) www.hostos.cuny.edu/oaa/compass/index.asp (Math) www.gsc.edu/academics/acadenrich/ls/cpe/pages/default.aspx (English-formatted as you will see on test)
TEST ANXIETY	
Websites to help deal with test anxiety	www.testanxietytips.com www.studygs.net/tstprp8.htm
ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE TEST SUPPORT	
Seattle Education Access (Services focused on young adults)	www.seattleeducationaccess.org
Seattle Goodwill (through Goodwill's College 101 Course)	www.seattlegoodwill.org/jobtraining/careerpathways
TEST-TAKING POLICY	
Websites to learn test-taking policies at Seattle-area colleges (some also include links to test prep resources)	https://northseattle.edu/testing www.southseattle.edu/sas/placement.htm www.seattlecentral.org/testing/compass.php www.shoreline.edu/testingcenter/compass.aspx http://testingcenter.highline.edu/compass.php www.rtc.edu/StudentServices/TestingCenter/ (Renton Technical College) http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/assessment/

SELECTION OF THE RIGHT COLLEGE PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

There are many factors that go into choosing the best college and program beyond the obvious one of a prospective student's general interest in a subject or career area, which is, of course, of paramount importance and the starting point for the college navigator in assisting a student to weigh his or her options. Additional factors to be considered before choosing a college and program include the following:

- JOB DEMANDS – What is it really like to work in a specific job and how well does that align with the student's interests, aptitudes and expectations? Will the student's personal background (e.g., criminal history) or characteristics make an impact on whether he or she will be hired for the job?

- LABOR MARKET DEMAND – Is the occupation and industry sector in which a student is interested and to which a particular college program leads going to grow? Is there a current or forecasted abundance of jobs available among target occupations and industries or is the opposite true?

- TIME TO COMPLETION – How long will the program take to complete, taking into account the possibility of additional time required for developmental education/pre-college courses? Typically, the longer a program

takes to complete, the more likely a student is to drop out short of a credential. And, the harder it is to pull together funding sources to cover educational costs.

- "STACKABILITY" – Keeping in mind that many students (particularly low-income and low-skill students) complete college credentials in stops and starts, does the program have intermediate steps that build toward a longer-term credential should students need to "stop out" to work or address family or personal issues? Do credits earned in the program transfer to other Seattle-area colleges should that become necessary for the student?

- OTHER FACTORS – Does the college or program have any innovative or special characteristics that would increase a student's chance of completion? For example, does it integrate developmental education into college-level courses in a way that will decrease time to completion? Are there accelerated programs at the college? Does the program qualify for more robust financial aid packages, such as Opportunity Grants? Are there additional supports offered through a particular college, e.g. educational navigation, funding or enrollment priority?

Effective college navigation involves ensuring that all of these factors are discussed with the student when choosing a college and program. Navigators should also discuss the academic rigor or difficulty of a chosen program of study as well as certain program requirements such as the application process, grade point average requirement and program start dates, which could be just once during the academic year (e.g. Fall quarter). Geographic location, class schedule (day/evening, full-time/part-time) and internship opportunities are also important considerations.

Ultimately, the individual who chooses the right program significantly increases his or her chance of both completing a college credential and securing a living-wage job as a result.

PROVIDING A PRACTICAL VIEW OF JOB DEMANDS AND THE LABOR MARKET

KEY POINTS

- **In assisting prospective students in choosing a career path and thus an appropriate college and program that will lead them where they want to go – a college navigator should not only assess their career interests and aptitudes, but provide them with a realistic understanding of:**
  - The specific demands of the jobs in which they might be interested.
  - The starting and median wages of those jobs.
  - The local labor market prospects for the jobs and industries in which they might be interested.
- **The community colleges offer some information that will help the college navigator in discussing jobs and the labor market with a student; many other resources are available in the community.**

Community colleges vary in the amount of information they provide to either their students or the community about the local labor market or the jobs connected to their programs. Most do provide some information on the types of occupations to which their programs lead. This information can be found in the program sections of individual colleges' websites, which also typically link to ONET and Workforce Explorer, where more research can be done on the wages and labor market outlook for specific occupations.

Employment outcomes for program graduates are currently limited to programs that are eligible for Workforce Investment Act funding (WIA) on the Career Bridge website (see the following Resources section), which is an important source for students to use in selecting a college. It includes program enrollment, completion, placement and salary data for eligible professional/technical programs at each college.

Beyond WIA programs, a student or college navigator cannot access information telling them how many graduates of specific college programs actually secured jobs in the field in which they

were educated, at which companies and at what starting wages. College data collection systems do not allow for such sharing at this time. **Because job and labor market information is limited and difficult for most prospective community college students to access and understand without guidance, it is important for the college navigator to serve this function.**

HELPFUL HINTS

Before students select a college program, the college navigator should work with them to provide a better understanding of several important and interrelated factors as a basis for selecting the career path they will pursue through additional education, including:

- CAREER INTERESTS AND APTITUDES – The place to start the conversation, these are often best determined using formal career assessments.
- JOB DEMANDS – What are the occupations in which students are interested really like? Do those occupations line up with their expectations and aptitudes? Are there specific personal qualifications (e.g. no criminal history, one's own transportation, a valid driver's license, certain physical capabilities) that would prevent them from securing those jobs?
- THE LOCAL LABOR MARKET – What local sectors and occupations are projected to provide ample job opportunities and which ones are not? What, specifically, are the prospects for the occupations of possible interest to the student?
- WAGES – What are the typical starting and median wages for the occupations being targeted? Do they meet the student's needs, goals and expectations?

The overall objective is to provide students with a realistic look at what occupations they might be suited for and interested in – allowing them to take into account the labor market and wage prospects for those occupations – in order to make an informed decision on a career pathway and thus an appropriate college program.

Encourage prospective students to complete exercises that can provide them a better understanding of the labor market, wages and specific occupations, and complete formal career exploration and assessment processes.

The following websites provide a sampling of interest inventories for students to use to explore various careers.

Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Test Taking, Learning Styles, Study Skills)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com (Classes 2 and 11)
Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board	www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/2010-2012CareerGuideWebview.pdf www.careerbridge.wa.gov
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges	http://checkoutacollege.com/ExploreCareers/ExploreMenu.aspx
The National College Transition Network (NCTN)	www.collegeforadults.org/career/index.html
ONET	www.mynextmove.org/ www.onetcenter.org/tools.html
Seattle Jobs Initiative's Job Trends Reports and Middle-Wage Jobs Reports	www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/policy/publications/index.html
Workforce Explorer	www.workforceexplorer.com/cgi/databrowsing/?PAGEID=157
WOIS (Need a site key to access the site; most WorkSource Centers and colleges have access)	www.wois.org
What Color is Your Parachute?	www.jobhuntersbible.com/counseling/index.php
Workforce Development Council of Seattle/King County	www.mapyourcareer.org

TIME TO COMPLETION

KEY POINTS

- **In addition to actual college-level credit requirements, the time it takes to complete a credential can be impacted by the following:**
  - Availability of and demand for required courses;
  - Waiting list or lotteries for program entry;
  - Course availability;
  - Developmental education requirements;
  - Full-time or part-time attendance; and
  - Whether students may need to stop out for a quarter or more to work and then return to school.

When thinking about going back to school, potential students will likely ask, "How long will it take?" Each program at the community colleges indicates how many quarters it will take to complete the program as well as the requisite number of credits to be earned. Factors that can affect time to completion include the need to take ABE or developmental education/pre-college courses (in reading, writing and math), the need to put a temporary pause on education for a quarter or two to work or for other reasons, or the need to shift from attending school on a full-time basis to part-time.

Students who start their educational pathway in developmental education can add up to five quarters to their training. In some programs, students may be able to take these courses concurrently with college-level coursework, which is an important question to ask college advisors when supporting students. In other programs, developmental coursework must be completed before beginning the program of study, lengthening the amount of time it will take to complete the program.

Some programs also have prerequisites – college-level courses that must be completed before taking an advanced class. Depending on the field, these courses can fill up quickly, and students could be wait-listed. Fulfilling these requirements can also add time to program completion. In addition, high demand for certain programs or limited program offerings can also impact completion time. For example, some classes may only be offered during certain quarters, such as Fall or Spring. Alternatively, classes with low enrollment could be cancelled.

Understanding program requirements can help answer the question of how much time it will take to earn a credential. Being armed with this information can help set realistic expectations for students about timing and inform the choices they make about their educational options.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Be sure to ask if developmental education/pre-college courses can be taken at the same time as program courses.
- Always check to see when classes are offered and when students can begin a program. Some programs may have a Fall Quarter only start date. And, some classes may only be offered during certain quarters.
- For high-demand programs, it is important to know if there is a lottery system or waitlist for getting in the program. Some programs may require an instructor's signature before registering for the class.
- Learn the policies and processes governing class cancellations. Ask if coursework can be taken at another college with transferable credits.

STACKABILITY

KEY POINT

- Students may not be able to commit to a long-term credential, or they may need to pause their education while they go to work or address family or emergency situations. Some credentials may be "stackable" with short-term certificates building toward a longer-term credential.

Making a long-term commitment to a college program is a daunting prospect for many students, particularly those who have limited financial resources. Given the delicate balance between family, school and work, many students may need to stop in and out of their career pathway. When choosing a program, it is important to understand whether and how short-term credentials can build or "stack" on one another and result in a longer-term credential.

HELPFUL HINTS

Important questions to ask college advisors or program staff include:

- Are credits earned in this specific shorter-term course college-level? Do they count toward a longer-term credential or degree?
- If a training program is started in one college, can it be completed at another college with the credits transferring? For example, if a student completes a General Service Technician Program at Shoreline Community College, will that certificate and those credits earned transfer to the Automotive AAS degree at South Seattle Community College? The answer will depend on the college program.
- If a student takes an I-BEST course, do those credits build toward a longer-term credential? For example, if a student completes an I-BEST Nursing Assistant Certified course and wants to pursue another credential in healthcare such as Medical Assistant or Nursing, do those I-BEST credits apply? Again, the answer will depend on the college program.
- What are the program options for students who need to stop in and out so that they can earn skills, pause for employment and then return to school for additional training?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

KEY POINT

- Colleges offer a variety of services and programs that will complement the supports the navigator provides. From student success courses to accelerated developmental approaches, colleges provide important resources to help students continue with and complete their programs of study.

Community colleges are innovative institutions, with many participating in pilot programs to test new educational approaches. Some colleges might offer accelerated developmental education courses, while others may provide condensed programs that contextualize the learning to shorten the time to completion. In addition, colleges often offer student success courses (study skills, time management, goal setting, stress management, etc.) or provide opportunities for students to participate in a learning community, which can help build a base of support.

HELPFUL HINTS

Helping students navigate the college is largely about asking questions to better understand what the college has available for students. A sampling of questions could include:

• What kinds of student support services are available (e.g. tutoring, writing center and disability services)?
• If a student needs to start in developmental education are accelerated programs available?
• Are there supportive learning communities for students?
• Are there student success classes? What is covered in these classes? Are these classes credit-bearing toward a certificate/degree?
• In addition to I-BEST, are other opportunities for contextualized learning available?

Note: because information can vary from college to college, college navigators need to have all this information for the each school they support.

Each campus provides a variety of student services. A sampling of resources at Seattle-area campuses is provided in the following websites:

Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Class 4)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com
Student Services at Seattle-area Colleges	https://northseattle.edu/services www.southseattle.edu/resources/resmain.htm www.seattlecentral.org/academic-assistance/index.php www.shoreline.edu/Steps/Succeed/centers-for-academic-excellence.aspx www.shoreline.edu/currentstudents.aspx www.highline.edu/services.php www.rtc.edu/StudentServices/ (Renton Technical College) http://bellevuecollege.edu/resources/services/

ENROLLMENT PROCESS – THE "DANCE STEPS"

KEY POINTS

- There are five key steps, identified by college staff, which Seattle Jobs Initiative refers to as the "dance steps", that are essential to getting enrolled in community college: apply, assessment, advising, financial aid and registration. Applying for financial aid is an important first step because it is time sensitive.

- Timing is critical for securing funding and registering for required classes, especially in this economic climate of high unemployment, diminished resources and increased demand for training.

While the process may have some slight variation across campuses, getting enrolled in college is made up of five steps: apply, assessment, advising, financial aid and registration.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Generally, a four- to six-week lead time is necessary for conducting the assessment, developing plans, identifying funding sources and getting enrolled in college if the student is ready.
- Schedule and attend a campus tour of potential colleges to learn about the programs and locate key offices such as Workforce Education, Financial Aid, Women's Programs, Student Services, Library, etc.
- Research program information to learn about the requirements for getting into a class. For example, is a background check needed? Do students need shots or to complete a drug screen? Are there industry-specific requirements such as a clean driver's license? What requirements are there for students who have a criminal background?
- If attending a college in the Seattle Community College District, students should attend "Start Next Quarter". For other schools, it is important to note the orientation sessions or workshops hosted by the workforce education departments to help students access funding sources.
- Some colleges waive or offer reduced application fees for income-based or dislocated worker programs. Navigators should understand each college's policy and how to access these waivers or reduced fees.

APPLY

To complete an application, students can apply in-person, online or via a paper application. The application requests general information from the student:

- **Social security number**
  (Colleges do not require a social security number for the purpose of enrolling in classes. However, a social security number is required for financial aid, clinicals and internships and job placement.)
- **Name and contact information**
- **Race/ethnicity** (optional)
- **Residency status in Washington State**

- U.S. citizenship
- Veterans information
- Dependency status with parent or legal guardian
- Military status
- Educational history
- Program of interest

If applying in-person at the college, students need to bring photo identification, their social security number and work authorization. The colleges' workforce education departments can help with the application process and can also provide assistance with the remaining steps.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the testing process that helps the college determine the best starting place for an individual. The placement test assesses reading, writing, math and English language ability. For some students, there is a need to re-learn or refresh math and English skills, and these students will start in developmental education. Other students will start at college-level. Most colleges use the COMPASS or Accuplacer tests to assess for college-level programs. Some programs such as I-BEST use the CASAS test. The particular placement test a student will take is determined by their general skill-level; for example, an individual with basic skills at the 8th grade level or below will take the CASAS.

When providing navigation services to potential students, it is essential to encourage and work with students on reviewing practice materials for these tests. Colleges offer test preparation services, and there are several online resources available as well (see the Resources and Helpful Hints sections on pages 26, 27 and 28).

ADVISING

Prior to signing up for classes, students meet with advisors to review their educational goals and to discuss the classes they need to take as well as the order they should take them to earn their credential. Navigators are encouraged to attend the initial meeting so that they know the educational pathway and requirements for the students to better tailor their support.

HELPFUL HINTS

FOR THE STUDENT: Questions to ask your advisor:

- How often do I see you?
- Do I need to make an appointment? Do you have drop-in hours?
- Who is the key contact person for my program?
- Who should I talk to if I am having trouble with my classes? What kind of support do you provide?
- Are there resources you can help me access?
- How should I sequence my classes so that I can make sure I'm not delaying a class and missing the quarter that is it offered? If I have to take developmental/pre-college math, reading or writing, can I pair these with program courses to make sure I don't end up taking them all at once?

FINANCIAL AID

There are many forms of financial assistance for students. Prior to sending students to the campus, navigators should work with students on getting forms completed and understanding the requirements and eligibility for accessing funds.

Timing is critical when accessing financial aid and workforce funding. All colleges have timelines for applying for financial aid, and there are orientations that are generally required for workforce funding. In addition, workforce funding is often available on a "first come, first serve" basis, and there is no guarantee that this funding will be available each quarter.

The major forms of grant funding are listed below (see the Seattle Goodwill College 101 flowchart on the next page for additional funding information):

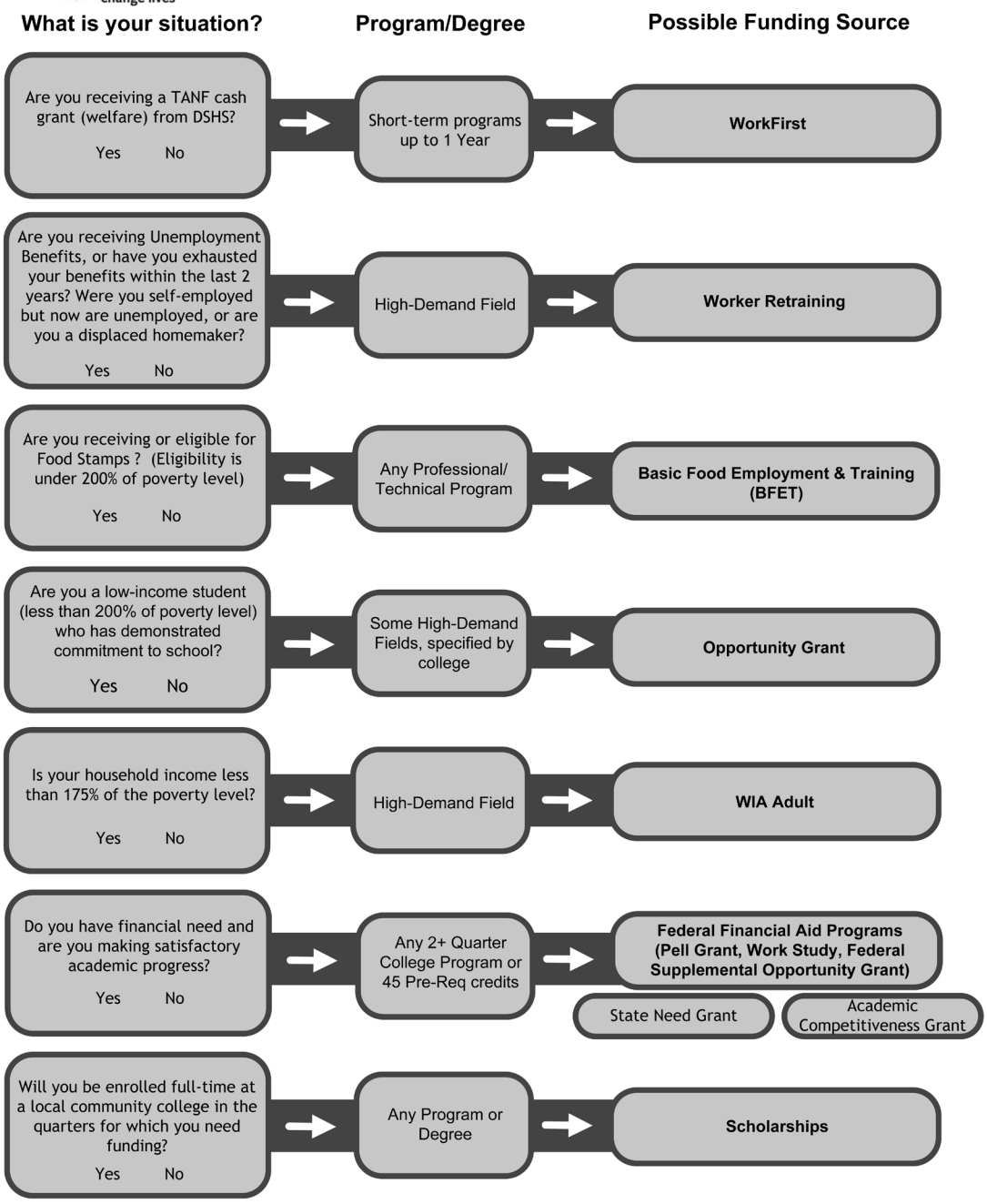
- **FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid.** It is a form that must be completed for federal and state financial aid (i.e. Pell Grants and State Need Grants).
- **Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) –** for those receiving Basic Food/ Food Stamps.
- **WorkFirst –** for parents on TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).
- **Opportunity Grant –** for low-income students in certain high-wage, high-demand programs.
- **Worker Retraining –** for certain unemployed workers.
- **WIA –** for low-income students and dislocated workers in certain programs.
- **Scholarships –** Colleges offer a variety of scholarships through their foundations to support students.

RESOURCES

Each campus has a Financial Aid office and Workforce Education department, which are important portals to funding. A sampling of online financial aid resources is provided below.

Federal Funding Sources	www.fafsa.ed.gov www.gibill.va.gov
Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Classes 5 and 6)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com
Financial Aid and Funding at Seattle-area Colleges	https://northseattle.edu/financial www.southseattle.edu/resources/resmain.htm www.seattlecentral.org/finaid/index.php www.shoreline.edu/Financial-Aid/on-campus-sources.aspx http://financialaid.highline.edu/ www.rtc.edu/studentservices/financialaid (Renton Technical College) http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/financial
Scholarships in Washington State (requires creation of a student profile)	https://fortress.wa.gov/hecb/thewashboard/Seeker/anonymous.aspx

Potential Funding Sources



This document does not guarantee assistance and is meant to help you figure out what you may be eligible for. All funding must be approved by the appropriate agency or college, depending on the type of assistance (DSHS, your selected community college, etc.). You should discuss your options with the Goodwill Navigator who can help you identify where to start. Different sources pay for different things (tuition, books, fees, transportation, etc.) so you may need multiple sources of funding.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Review the FAFSA checklist, apply for the PIN number to access the application and help students complete the FAFSA. It is also very important to review the Student Aid Report to ensure that all of the information is complete; incomplete information can lead to significant delays in getting funds. Multiple colleges can be listed on the application if students are uncertain about their choice when applying for aid.
- Encourage students to share all mail they receive from the college's financial aid office with you to make sure all required forms have been submitted. Students often receive checklists of materials that have been submitted as well as items that are missing. Financial aid applications will not be processed unless they are complete.
- Strongly encourage and/or accompany students to attend the requisite workshop or orientation for the selected college's workforce funding.
- Students may be eligible for multiple sources of funding. Try to access workforce funding first before dipping into federal financial aid. Keep in mind that most colleges require students to apply for FAFSA as the workforce funding is considered "jump start" funding.
- Ask the colleges how they allocate workforce funding sources. Specifically, are the funds available each quarter or do they typically expend all of these funds by the Winter or Spring quarters?
- Be sure to check out the scholarships that are available from the college.
- Review the budget created with the student and determine if changes need to be made. Financial literacy and ongoing budgeting is critical. Check with colleges to see what financial literacy education is offered (budgeting, debt management, etc.)

REGISTRATION

The last step is signing up for classes for the quarter. Again, timing is very important as there is increased demand for programs at the community colleges and there are also budget constraints that may limit program offerings. Students will need to register for classes each quarter.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Don't wait until the last minute! Given the increased demand for classes, it is important to know when the registration process starts and if there are specific requirements to enter a class such as an instructor's signature or the need for a physical or shots (healthcare-related programs). The registration date and time are assigned to students when they apply to the college and are typically based on the number of credits a student has already earned. Students who have more credits are able to register earlier.
- Know if there are pre-requisites to be completed prior to taking the class.
- How is registration conducted – with the advisor, online or at a specific office?

RESOURCES

The following resources provide useful information for getting enrolled and registered for classes, including a sample student checklist.

Seattle Jobs Initiative	Dance Steps Brochure (Contact SJI at 206-628-6975 for more information)
Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Class 4)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com
Getting Enrolled at Seattle-area Colleges	https://northseattle.edu/admissions/steps www.southseattle.edu/enrolling/enrmain.htm http://seattlecentral.edu/admissions/enrollment.php www.shoreline.edu/steps/apply.aspx https://admissions.highline.edu/admissions.php www.rtc.edu/StudentServices/GettingStarted (RentonTechnical College) http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/admissions
Sample Checklist	www.shoreline.edu/espeo/NewStudentChecklist.pdf

PERSISTENCE –
STAYING THE COURSE

Once students are enrolled in college, navigators will play an important role in supporting them so they may proceed with their studies and complete their programs. As part of persistence, navigators can work with students on becoming their own advocates and employing performance (soft) skills when engaging with fellow students, instructors and other college staff. Many students need to learn the "culture" of college in order to achieve success. Identifying their strengths and "re-tooling" these skills to achieve student success requires self-advocacy and good communication skills that are effective across multiple audiences.

Encouraging students to be an active part of their education is essential. Students should be reminded that education is not something that happens to them, but rather, is an undertaking that they are pursuing with purpose. Addressing issues immediately and maintaining regular contact with students is a vital part of navigation and persistence.

Students, particularly those with limited incomes, may pause their education for a variety of reasons: family or personal issues, health issues and the need for a job. For some, the pause may be one quarter; for others, it may require a longer break to get back into school. Working with students while on a pause can be a challenge as they may reduce contact with their navigator and/or lose momentum in continuing their education.

To address these issues, navigators can help students with their time management by reducing their credit loads. They can also encourage students to meet with their advisors to determine alternative ways to balance their schedules in terms of the types of courses they take. Understanding that colleges may have alternative learning opportunities such as accelerated developmental education/pre-college courses, learning communities and student success classes may help students continue with their coursework.

HELPFUL HINTS

Regular contact with students can be maintained by the navigator in multiple ways:

• Maintaining "office hours" on campus – coordinate with workforce education departments on potential space or find a place in the student center
• Using Facebook or LinkedIn
• Text or email
• Creating a learning community of enrolled students – bringing students together on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to discuss successes and challenges
• Encouraging students and providing support to form study groups
• Revisiting student goals
• Supporting students in becoming their own advocates at the college
• Encouraging students to create relationships with peers, instructors, tutors and allies in student services and workforce education
• Enrolling students in student success courses

Additionally, encourage students to seek out tutoring and mentoring services at the start of the quarter to manage any academic or study issues before it becomes too late to solve the problem. Things can and will go wrong, but, in most instances, there is a solution. Students should be encouraged to seek help as soon as possible. The sooner they access interventions, the more likely they will be successful. Typically, the first three weeks of the quarter are critical.

RESOURCES

The following resources provide useful strategies for helping students succeed and become their own advocate.

Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Class 16)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com
Sample Strategies for Retention	www.cccs.edu/docs/foundation/sun/navigator/navmanual.pdf (see Section 13)
Self-Advocacy	www.collegetransition.org/promisingpractices.research.donttakeno.html
National Research on Student Retention (Persistence)	http://knowledgecenter.completionbydesign.org/knowledge-center www.luminafoundation.org/our_work/student_success www.adultcollegecompletion.org/content/explore

CAREER READINESS

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMANCE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

KEY POINTS

- Performance (soft) skills are very important to a student's ability to become employed, with employers typically giving these skills significant weight in the hiring process.
- The good news is that because employers report having a difficult time finding workers with solid performance skills, a student who hones these skills has a meaningful advantage in the job market. The college navigator can help students to accomplish this in conjunction with their college education.

SPOTLIGHT

WHAT EMPLOYERS MEAN BY PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Exactly what constitutes performance skills? While there are multiple definitions, the following table provides a good reference:

RELIABILITY	Attendance: regular and on time Delivers: turns in work on time Communication: regarding expectations, deadlines and setbacks Dependable: does what says will do
RESPONSIVENESS	Good communication: listens actively Sets realistic goals and objectives Accurately assesses own and others' capabilities and needs Follows through Efficiently acquires and applies new information, knowledge and skills necessary for the job
COURTESY	Gets along with others Performs well in a team Behaves respectfully towards others Manages stress Positively resolves conflict in timely manner Acknowledges others in positive and appropriate manner Displays appropriate etiquette and manners in a variety of settings
COMPETENCE	Possesses adequate technical skills and knowledge necessary to perform job requirements Possesses ability to quickly acquire new skills and knowledge appropriate to changing needs of job

Chart developed by the Seattle Jobs Initiative's Performance Skills Coalition, comprised of employer partners.

Employers consistently report that performance skills are a critical factor in their hiring decisions, as well as in their employees' chances of remaining employed and advancing in their careers. Although there is always some threshold level of job-related skills and knowledge (technical skills) required for a given job opening, in many cases employers know that they can

train up a new employee – particularly an entry-level employee – to overcome deficiencies in these skills.

On the other hand, many employers have little interest in investing the time to improve a new employee's performance skills, and thus, are much less willing to take a chance on a candidate with deficiencies in this area, even if they are well-qualified for the technical aspects of the job.

Particularly for entry-level job openings, employers frequently find that a large percentage of candidates are lacking in performance skills, so that someone who has honed these skills is at a distinct advantage in the job market. Evidence of this is found in the recently released employer survey conducted by the Washington State Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board, which looked at the percentage of hiring employers reporting difficulty finding candidates with a variety of performance skills:[14]

- **Communication skills** **79%**
- **Ability to adapt to changes in duties** **76%**
- **Positive work habits and attitudes** **68%**
- **Teamwork skills** **61%**
- **Ability to accept supervision** **58%**

Because of the importance of performance skills to students' employment prospects (not to mention their prospects for completing college), they should be a focus of the college navigator's efforts. Navigators can assist students directly by making them aware of the importance of performance skills and creating or accessing exercises and activities for them to help sharpen these skills.

In addition, the navigator should become familiar with opportunities within the community and at the community colleges for their students to learn performance skills. Many community colleges offer stand-alone classes in performance skills or embed instruction on performance skills in other programs. Programs may also require internships that provide important learning opportunities.

CONNECTING TO JOBS AND EMPLOYERS

KEY POINTS

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 70 percent of job offers are the result of networking. College navigators can help students by reinforcing the importance of networking to a successful job hunt, brainstorming with them on the people that constitute their current networks and providing tips on how to expand one's network.

- Community colleges provide an array of resources students can access to connect to jobs and employers. In addition to resources available within colleges' workforce education departments (which often host WorkSource sites), professional/technical programs often include career services and internships in their curricula.

- There are many career resources available in the community of which college navigators should be certain their students are aware. WorkSource, community-based employment providers, and online resources are available to help with the job search and improve resume writing and interviewing skills. Instructors provide important contacts as well.

Ultimately, the primary objective of most students in seeking a college education is to get a good job – one that offers a living-wage, benefits and career advancement opportunities. Of course, increasing one's skills by attending college is only one key part of meeting this objective. Particularly in a competitive labor market, being qualified for a job can only get someone so far unless he or she has the ability to successfully uncover and apply for the right job opportunities. The college navigator can assist students in this regard by helping them to improve their networking skills, identify job openings and hone their abilities to apply for jobs and interview effectively. Navigators should begin working with students to build or sharpen these skills as they enter college. They can start building their network while they pursue their program. Importantly, students should be encouraged to take a continuous learning approach to their

careers. Particularly in difficult labor markets, individuals may not get the job they want (in their selected industry) right away, or they may lose a good job down the road due to circumstances beyond their control.

The effective college navigator can help students prepare for the challenge of unemployment or working a "survival job" and how to make the most of these situations. For example, students can think about how to maximize the knowledge they absorb from a survival job that can be applied to their education or the next step in their careers. Or, students can consider how to translate their college education and previous work experience to take advantage of good job opportunities that may not be directly related to their college program or past employment.

NETWORKING

Networking is considered one of the most effective ways to find jobs and internships. Among all job search strategies, it is estimated that networking results in an average of 70 percent of all job offers. Learning how to build and maintain a network is, therefore, an important skill to develop and put into practice.

HELPFUL HINTS

Networking is the process of developing a relationship with others. The goal in networking with someone is not to get a job with them but to obtain information about his or her field and gather names (and contact information) of others who might be contacted in order to expand one's network. Effective networking includes the following tactics that students can use to provide information about themselves and to learn about their field of interest:

- Sharing information about what one considers to be their strengths
- Offering specific information about background and career goals
- Communicating one's purpose in making the contact
- Looking for opportunities to add value to the networking exchange
- Asking for referrals or introductions to others who might assist
- Following-up to thank one's contacts

Often, students may hold the belief that they do not have the initial contacts that can serve as a place to start the networking process. The college navigator can help them understand that anyone they know might be a productive contact. Family, friends, faculty, internship supervisors, advisors, mentors, other students and other groups someone is already affiliated with are great sources of contacts. Instructors – particularly in a student's chosen field – are definitely great contacts, and students should be encouraged to schedule individual interviews with them. If the student is working, professional associates are also great contacts. Students should be proactive about asking questions, asking for appointments and gathering information about jobs in their chosen field throughout their educational journey.

CAREER RESOURCES – ON CAMPUS

The college navigator should encourage students to take full advantage of career resources available to them at the community colleges that can lead them to good job opportunities. Typically, the colleges' workforce education departments are the place to start.

Many colleges have affiliate WorkSource sites directly on campus that provide students with the following services for jobseekers:

- Free use of computers, copiers, phones, faxes and other career resources
- Internet access to jobs
- Job referral and placement
- Workshops on how to get and keep a job
- Information on the fastest growing jobs and wages
- Referral to training and other community services
- Access to unemployment insurance
- Translation services

Colleges provide students with resume-writing support, interview training and other career services as part of their classroom offerings. Alternatively, these services may be offered through the colleges' Career Centers. Often, these career services are built into the colleges' professional/technical programs themselves. Similarly, many professional/technical programs offered at the college include internships as part of the required curriculum. Internships provide an excellent opportunity for students not only to hone their job skills but to build their networks and acquire job leads for the future. In some cases, of course, internships can turn directly into permanent positions.

One important role college navigators can play is building their own networks with and through the colleges to develop employer contacts that can benefit their students. First, the navigator should get to know the staff at the colleges who are working to develop relationships with employers to learn more about who these employers are, what types of workers they need and which programs at the colleges link to their job opportunities.

In addition, navigators might forge their own direct relationships with local employers, particularly if they are focused on connecting their clients to college programs in a limited number of specific job sectors.

CAREER RESOURCES – IN THE COMMUNITY

There are multiple community resources to which college navigators can connect their students to help them successfully secure employment. There are many agencies in the community that focus on helping individuals – particularly low-income individuals – secure employment. WorkSource is perhaps foremost among these and provides services described in the previous section.

In addition, public libraries have resources students can access to search for and apply for jobs. Finally, the navigator should be aware of and connect students to local career fairs, as well as standard job search tools such as job search websites, classifieds and so forth. Some job search sites, as well as employment-focused community agencies, also provide tips on successful resume writing and interviewing skills.

As mentioned earlier, because of the effectiveness of personal relationships in the job search process, one important role of the navigator is to begin to forge their own relationships with local employers and human resource professionals, particularly in key sectors in which their students are receiving training.

The following resources provide useful information about career readiness and networking:

Seattle Goodwill's College 101 Curriculum (Class 2)	http://goingtocollege.weebly.com
WorkSource in Seattle/King County	www.worksourceskc.org
Career services at Seattle-area colleges	https://northseattle.edu/career-services http://careerservices.southseattle.edu/index.html http://seattlecentral.edu/career/index.php http://new.shoreline.edu/acc/careercounseling.aspx http://studentemployment.highline.edu/ www.rtc.edu/StudentServices/StudentSuccessCenter/CareerServices/students.aspx (Renton Technical College) http://bellevuecollege.edu/careers/
Resume Builder	www.nycareerzone.org/cz/resources/jobseeker/resume.jsp
NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES	
Volunteer groups and clubs	United Way: www.uwkc.org One Brick: seattle.onebrick.org
Professional networking sites	LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com
Trade Associations	
Informational interviews with:	Friends and family Professors and instructors

CONCLUSION

The purpose of **The ABC's of College Navigation Guide** is to share helpful tips and resources on easing the transition to college for low-income individuals as they pursue their education and career pathway. Navigation is not a "one size fits all" approach nor is there a set menu of options in helping students access college, attain a credential and find a better-paying job. Rather, navigation is a set of services that is tailored to meet an individual student's needs as they change over time. There are many ways to describe the navigation role – Advocate, Coach and Cheerleader. For many students, access to the support and education services provided by a navigator can make a significant difference in their lives.

The following testimonials encapsulate the vital role navigators play in a student's life. In each of these stories, the navigator is working with a student on preparing for college, accessing funding sources, creating education plans and providing encouragement.

SKILLUP WASHINGTON – A STORY OF PERSISTENCE

John* enrolled in Bellevue College's Operating Systems Support Specialist (OSSS) program in Fall 2009 at the urging of his campus-based WorkFirst advisor. Reaching that point was a huge milestone considering the fact he had to work hard to graduate from the ESL program and move into college-level English.

However, after his first week in the OSSS program, John's navigator (a college staff member who is focused on helping students in the OSSS program reach academic completion and career advancement by linking them to a host of support services) met with the program instructors to discuss John's communication and basic computer skills. The navigator created a plan to make sure John stayed on track and used the computer lab on the weekends. The navigator also helped him find additional financial resources to address personal barriers, and monitored his attendance, class participation and grades. John expressed incredible dedication and commitment to his work and talked regularly about what completing this program would mean to him and his family.

John spent almost six hours a day in the WorkFirst computer lab, regularly attended the Friday and Saturday lab hours for five hours a day (where he had access to an instructor), submitted all assignments and attended every class throughout the quarter.

At the end of the quarter, John received two B's and a C. This might not sound like an outstanding student to some, but those who know John say it was an unbelievable accomplishment. His persistence and dedication, paired with a highly trained, supportive navigator and flexible program, allowed John to succeed in a world he knew nothing about on his first day in the program.

John completed the training program in August 2010, along with an 8-week internship where he received excellent reviews. Shorty after completing the program, he got a job with Nintendo and plans to return to school to further his IT training.

Bellevue's OSSS program was part of SkillUp Washington's College for Working Adults Initiative, which includes comprehensive navigation support to help students earn a credential more quickly. With the support of program partners, including the Gates Foundation, Seattle Jobs Initiative, Pacific Associates and research by the Aspen Institute, the initiative's long term goal is to promote the use of navigation across the entire community college system.

**The student's name has been changed.*

SEATTLE GOODWILL – A STORY OF HOPE

B* and her parents moved to Seattle from Laos in 1987 to "find freedom and get education." Years later as a single parent, B turned to Goodwill for help so she could support her two children. After a lay-off, she had been unemployed for two years and, lacking technology skills, was finding it difficult to conduct a job search.

At Goodwill, B took language and computer classes for several semesters before enrolling in Goodwill's Community College 101 class. The class taught her about the admissions and enrollment process for getting into a community college, applying for financial aid and skills for being a successful student.

One of Goodwill's College Navigators worked individually with her to help her select and enroll in a training program; the navigator also supported her education throughout the length of her program. An interest in the medical field led B to a program at Clover Park Technical College where she earned a certificate as a Central Service Technician. B interned at Valley Medical Center while in school and was hired permanently in February 2011.

Today, she has a full-time job, with benefits, and is now able to support herself and her family. About the program, B states: *"Goodwill is a great place that is very generous to help people that need it. I was worried that I couldn't succeed. Goodwill helped me get the training to get a new job. Goodwill gave me a new life."*

Goodwill's Career Pathways program links students with job training programs at Seattle-area community colleges, then supports them so they can complete certificates or degrees that will lead to family-wage jobs. Students take a 16-session Community College 101 class that covers steps for enrolling in a community college, financial aid and funding sources, career exploration, and student success skills.

Students who successfully complete the class receive individual support services for their education from a College Navigator. They are also eligible for scholarships to pay for tuition, textbooks, transportation and other school-related costs. The Community College 101 class is held four times a year before each college quarter.

**The student's name has been changed*

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE – STORIES OF COURAGE AND DETERMINATION

Tigist is an older student in Neighborhood House's College Attainment program (a partnership with Seattle Jobs Initiative) who is returning to college after many years. She is from Ethiopia and is working hard to prepare for a job as a Medical Assistant. While she earned a high school diploma and attended some college, she never completed a degree. She and her sister left their family in Ethiopia four years ago to find a better life in the United States with more opportunities for education and employment.

Since then, she has been working at various full - and part-time jobs that pay only minimum wage. She rides the bus to work part-time as a server in a retirement home and she also works part-time as a caregiver in another retirement home. She is an excellent employee with compassion for her clients. She is also incredibly hard working, responsible and dependable.

Educational and financial planning has really been the key to building Tigist's self confidence in order for her be successful in college on a very limited income. She is often confused and overwhelmed with the many systems at the colleges, but she is able to follow up well once she understands what she needs to do. She described the difference that navigation has made for her: *"this program has really helped me to have the opportunity to go to college and to make a better life for myself"*.

Tigist is dedicated to mastering her classes, although she needs extra support and encouragement. She clearly understands that each step she takes will bring her closer to her long-term goal of working in the medical field. A full-time student, Tigist has succeeded in passing her developmental education classes in Reading and Writing. She is receiving financial support from Federal Financial Aid and the Washington State Opportunity Grant. Currently, Tigist is taking her final pre-requisites toward the Medical Assistant program and will enter in 2012. She will proudly graduate in 2013.

Neighborhood House is a community-based organization the mission of which is to help diverse communities of people with limited resources attain their goals for self-sufficiency, financial independence, health and community building. Neighborhood House has been an important partner in supporting SJI's effort to create opportunities for people to support themselves and their families through living-wage careers. Since July 2010, Neighborhood House has been involved in SJI's pilot to connect low-income adults to longer-term educational opportunities by providing navigation that supports students in pursuing training and careers in the healthcare field.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE – STORIES OF COURAGE AND DETERMINATION

Ubah came to the College Attainment (a partnership with Seattle Jobs Initiative) program determined to return to college after having not succeeded years before. She is a single parent with three children living in a public housing community. After arriving in Seattle from Somalia, she graduated high school and made a few unsuccessful attempts at college. At the time, she felt she was not equipped with the skills that would allow her to balance life and college. She dropped out of college and began working in her family's store, but her passion for helping others in the healthcare field was still a dream of hers. She was not sure how she could return to college given her previous experiences.

Upon receiving navigation services, Ubah expressed her passion for respiratory care because she had intimate experiences with this field of work – all three of her children were born with breathing difficulties. She saw first-hand how important this career was and she wanted to give back to families such as her own. Her determination, dedication and commitment to accomplish this goal were impressive. She is academically motivated and is realistic in the expectations of her goals. She certainly has benefited from navigation because she needs the extra support, educational planning and guidance, and financial support to be successful. Ubah described herself as "being a seed that has been planted and navigation is like watering and care to make the seed grow".

It seems that she is on the right path because she is earning "A's" in her classes, while being an exceptionally dedicated mom and fellow community member. This program has helped her to have the confidence and the support to help reach her dreams.

COLLEGE NAVIGATION IN ACTION – A STUDENT'S SUCCESS IN HER OWN WORDS

Finally, the guide ends with a powerful story from a student who overcame incredible odds with support from Seattle Education Access (SEA).

A. IS CURRENTLY A SENIOR AT TULANE UNIVERSITY.

This year is a beautiful year for me. In May I will be graduating with a Bachelor's of Science in Mathematical Economics and a minor in Mathematics. This is one of my many dreams and I am so excited to be able to reach this milestone.

School was not always an option for me. I grew up in a poverty stricken single parent home, the third child of six. I got my first job at the end of my fifth grade year. I never attended sixth, seventh, or eighth grade; instead I worked as a housemaid for a radiologist twelve hours a day. I attended school again in the ninth grade, never having the preparation of middle school, and was able to finish the ninth and tenth grades before I dropped out to work again.

The lack of family support, finances and a solid education landed me in a bad situation very early. There were only a handful of jobs I could get. My mother left me with my younger siblings to move to California. So, I became the mom in the house. I worked and I worked hard to keep a roof for my siblings, but it didn't always work out for the best. Some months, we ended up couch surfing. Some months, we didn't have electricity. The story of poverty goes on like this.

I realized that I couldn't do anything other than waitress. I had no education and no way of providing for myself. I took a leap of faith, studied for the GED, and passed it. Once I got my GED, I enrolled in classes at Seattle Central Community College. Soon after, I met two inspirational women in my English class who were students at SEA. One of them talked me into making an appointment at SEA. I had no clue why I wanted to go school. I just knew that I never had, and because of that I had no skills that employers wanted.

For my first appointment at SEA, I met with Anthon. His enthusiasm for education was contagious. It gave me a confidence to dream that I could be more than just someone working. I could enjoy my work. I could be intellectually stimulated and I could do whatever I wanted to do. No one ever told me that before. I began to meet regularly with several SEA employees to talk about my progress in classes, my living situation, goal setting, and most importantly, to find real world solutions to any obstacle blocking me from achieving my goals.

The first obstacle I had in school was hearing. I was born hard of hearing and the classroom is not the ideal situation for me. I tried my best, but not being able to hear the professor affected my ability to learn because college is lecture based. Anthon made

some calls, did some leg work, and wrote the right people. Within a few weeks, SEA had arranged for me to receive my very first hearing device that would enable me to hear during classes. I got to take notes without having to lose out on the lecture.

Other obstacles I had in school included my lack of a support system, financial assistance, and stable housing. Polly at SEA personally helped me find permanent housing. SEA provided me with a scholarship, so I was able to cut down on the number of hours I was working in order to focus on classes and my education. I still worked about 32 hours a week in addition to full-time classes, but I always had a place to sleep, I always had food, and I always had electricity.

Perhaps the most influential thing SEA provided me with was books and tutoring. When I started at community college, I had only seven years of formal education. My math skills were horrible. I didn't even know what an exponent was. SEA arranged for me to get tutoring and learn enough math in order to test into the college level.

With the help of SEA, I graduated from Seattle Central Community College with my Associates of Arts degree. I was able to become a transfer student at Tulane University, a private research university ranked by the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching in the top 2% of universities nationwide. Last year, I was accepted into their honors program, and I made dean's list for the first time there. It seems so long ago that I couldn't test into college math.

Who knew that I would eventually fall in love with mathematics when there was a time that exponents seemed like a foreign language to me? I've taken more than 12 courses in math now; I love statistics and econometrics. My GPA for my minor in mathematics at Tulane is a 4.0. I am currently working with advisors at Tulane to formulate my undergraduate research thesis as required for all honor students. I will be taking data from the New Orleans area and splitting it into income levels, using a time series regression analysis approach. For those of you that have ever studied econometrics this is the highest level econometric technique taught to undergraduates. I will be studying educational outcomes as related to income inputs and educational inputs as they relate income as an output. I am excited to see what the data tells me.

This year I have a lot of work to do. I take the GRE this month and will be applying to graduate programs, where I will continue to study economics and hopefully I will get to take more math classes. My dream school is Duke so pray that I get in to their program. I want to get my master's first as a preparatory degree for an eventual Ph.D. There is clarity of where I am going in my life now. My ultimate goal is to teach at the university level.

Looking back to my first year at Seattle Central Community College, I have no clue how I got this far, but I owe so much of it to the support I got from SEA. There is no way I would have made it this far without knowing what an exponent was. I use math every day. I can hear what my professors teach me. I have clear goals and now I know how to reach them. Even without a middle school or high school education, I compete with some of the

most brilliant minds from all over the world. I am so thankful there are organizations like SEA who help young people like me overcome adversity and poverty through education. My involvement with SEA has changed who I am and how I view the world. It has changed how the world views me. Most importantly, it has changed how I view myself.

The SEA model works. I will be able not only to support myself but to also do something I'm passionate about with my work. Thank you to all the volunteers and staff. Thank you to donors who keep the organization going. Thank you to the students who inspire other students to reach their goals.

SEA provides higher education advocacy and opportunity to people struggling to overcome poverty and adversity. Its College Success Program helps youth and young adults transition successfully to community colleges by combining financial support with social support. SEA provides non-traditional scholarships, tutoring, career counseling, computers, academic advising, books, case management and advocacy for its target population.

END NOTES

1. Peer Learning Group members included: Seattle Office of Economic Development, HopeLink, Neighborhood House, FareStart, Seattle Goodwill, YWCA of Seattle-King-Snohomish County, Pacific Associates, Pioneer Human Services, YouthCare, PortJobs, King County Work Training, Bellevue College, Cascadia Community College, Highline Community College, South Seattle Community College, Seattle Central Community College and Shoreline Community College.

2. Gordon, Edward E., *The 2010 Meltdown: Solving the Impending Jobs Crisis.* Praeger Publishers (2005).

3. Carnevale, Smith and Strohl, *Help Wanted: Projecting Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018,* Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. June 2010.

4. Washington Partnership for Learning, *Improving the Odds: Preparing Washington Students for Family-Wage Jobs,* December 2007, page 2.

5. Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's 2007 and 2010 Employer Surveys, available at http://www.wtb.wa.gov

6. Students requiring one or more developmental education courses. Research Report No. 09-5, *Role of Pre-College (Developmental and Remedial) Education for Recent High School Graduates Attending Community and Technical Colleges,* Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2009.

7. Prince and Jenkins, *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Statewide Longitudinal Tracking Study.* Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University (April 2005).

8. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01) (2002).

9. http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/general/a_vision.aspx

10. SkillUp Washington's College for Working Adults, Seattle Education Access, College Success Foundation, Seattle Goodwill's College 101, Seattle Jobs Initiative College Attainment Program, among others.

11. SJI Program Manual, Assessment Guidelines, July 2010

12. Clancy, M. Colleen. *Supporting Developmental Education Reform: Washington Works to Increase Student Success* (2010), pages 1-2.

13. Bailey, Jeong and Cho, *Referral, Enrollment and Completion in Developmental Sequences in Community Colleges*, Economics of Education Review 29 (2010), pages 255-270.

14. 2010 Washington State Employer Workforce Training Needs & Practices Survey.