



Washington's Community and Technical Colleges Learning from Washington State's I-BEST Program Model Summary of Community College Research Center December 2012 Report

The December 2012 CCRC *Learning from Washington State's I-BEST Program* report is the final phase of a multi-year evaluation of the I-BEST model began in 2009 in collaboration with the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The results of the study found "... that I-BEST programs, on average, provide benefits that justify the costs of the programs." Key findings center on the following:

Program Structure:

- Highly structured I-BEST Programs focus complex decisions for students and support retention
- Clear pathways after I-BEST completions incorporating functional transitions and adequate student supports are needed
- On-ramp programs are instrumental to preparing low-level students for I-BEST

Instruction:

- The structure provided by the I-BEST instructional model is strong
- Cohort models had higher rates of performance
- Greater emphasis should be placed on incorporating contextualized basic skills instruction and integrated instruction than on team-teaching per se
- Some faculty reported more overlap in teaching was needed; others wanted more flexibility in the % of overlap. They reported the lower the overlap in teaching - the more planning time needed

Student Experience:

- Students universally responded positively to the structural components of the program design and instructional approach
- Contextualization of basic skills was beneficial because of the connection to the content area
- Students benefited from having two instructors
- Students expressed increased confidence and ability to succeed

Cost-Benefit Analysis:

The cost-benefit analysis provided information on whether I-BEST yields resource savings (expressed in money terms) that justify the cost from a social perspective. The report found that the program benefits justify the cost.

It looked closely at credits earned and found:

- On average I-BEST students earned 18 college credits
- Non-I-BEST Workforce students earned 9 college credits (ABE students who take at least one Workforce course)
- Non-I-BEST non-Workforce students earned 11 college credits (ABE students taking no Workforce courses)
 - **This difference in accumulated credits has economic value**
- There are **not extraordinary** expenses colleges/states would have to undertake to move the I-BEST initiative to scale

The benefits of I-BEST approximately equal the additional costs incurred by the program.

I-BEST requires additional resources, but society gains. While colleges incur the direct expenses, I-BEST programs provide benefits to students and society that justify the cost. Programs are sustainable because of the benefit to colleges of retaining and transitioning low-skilled students.

A CCRC Recommendation:

“Substantial improvements in completion occur only with large scale innovations and reforms to programs and policies.”

The full report can be found at: http://sbctc.edu/college/_e-ibest-resources.aspx