

## Berkeley City College, East Bay Region: Public and Human Services CAA

*With its intimate urban campus, Berkeley City College has long fostered interdisciplinary and collaborative methods; this has provided a platform for the successful launch of its Public and Human Services CAA and bodes well for program sustainability.*

Located in the heart of downtown Berkeley, just two blocks from UC Berkeley, Berkeley City College (BCC) is a one-building urban campus that serves over 7,500 students. From the first year of its founding in 1974, the college has focused on increasing access to educational opportunities for students with unmet learning needs. Having started as a college committed to adult education and “non-traditional” study, it has maintained its focus on serving the needs of these students even after broadening its degree and certificate offerings. Following the economic downturn, BCC developed the Public and Human Services (P&HS) program to provide pathways for students interested in entering this high-demand field.

### Overview/Context

In response to a desire to offer more programs that support direct services for underserved populations in the region, BCC created the P&HS program in 2004 by clustering existing courses into three different AA degrees: social services paraprofessional, community health worker, and community and public service. Through advocacy efforts from a long-time administrator and instructor, and support from the individual who is now the college president, the P&HS degrees received official recognition from the chancellor’s office in December 2011. Each major in the P&HS program has a 31-33 unit path of major courses, which culminate in a Certificate of Achievement. A student can add 27-29 units of general education courses and electives to receive an AA degree in their respective major (60 units).

### The Program at a Glance:

- **Curriculum:** The 2011 CAA grant enabled BCC to create two certificates of proficiency specifically for CAA students, which ‘stack’ into the P&HS certificate pathways, as on-ramps to the AA degrees. The Certificate of Proficiency I is 12 units and includes a 1.5 unit foundations class that is adapted from the American College of Education (ACE) curriculum (a program that develops professional skills for students and teachers), a contextualized English course, and a counseling course that helps students explore career interests. The Certificate of Proficiency II is a 15-unit continuation of the first certificate and delves deeper into foundational skills necessary for those working in the P&HS field. The CAA curriculum is delivered through block scheduling, which allows students to take fewer courses that run for longer periods of time. Its certificates are recognized by the California community college system but are not state recognized.
- **Enrollment:** Although there is high demand for the program, cohort size, on average, is about 20 students. These smaller cohorts help foster peer relationships and allow for greater individualized staff and faculty attention.
- **Faculty, Staff and Supports:** Dedicated part-time faculty members provide instruction, completed by a range of supports that include a dedicated academic counselor, general counselor, and job developer for P&HS students. During orientation, a counselor meets with students individually to help them enroll and apply for a Board of Governors waiver (if applicable). Upon program entry, students may be connected to college support programs such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and CalWorks. Where appropriate, students may also be referred to local community-based organizations that provide

wrap-around support services for high-need individuals. CAA students receive a registration form that streamlines class selection and locks registration for necessary classes.

- **Recruitment:** Recruitment efforts target municipal agencies such as public works and behavioral health departments, youth programs, charter and high schools, other BCC students, and community events. Word of mouth, both through staff/faculty and alumni, draws many students. Additionally, there is a pathway from Berkeley High School to BCC that includes concurrent enrollment. Both the P&HS coordinator and the job developer interview each prospective student to ascertain background and goals.
- **Community Engagement:** At brown-bag lunches guest speakers discuss professional development topics with students. Although optional, these events are well attended as students value the opportunity to learn from and connect with field practitioners. There is also an alumni network and an informal mentoring program. Further engagement of community partners comes in their critical role as employers of program graduates and as consultants on curriculum development.

### Observations on Sustainability:

By intentional design, BCC has functioned as a small, tightly-knit community since its inception in 1974. Until recently, one building comprised the entire college campus (joined by a smaller ancillary building a few years ago). The idea of a community of practice, engrained into the culture of the college early on, has only grown stronger over time. Most staff, faculty, and administrators work in the same building—a campus layout that facilitates frequent discussion and idea sharing. The college’s long-time commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative methods has facilitated CAA implementation and accelerated steps toward program sustainability.

**OBSERVATION #1: Program Buy-In:** The CAA and P&HS programs have substantial buy-in at all levels – from leadership, administrators, faculty instructors, and community partners – in large part through sustained and regular communication, case-making, and relationship management. Passionate and dedicated champions who have catalyzed the growth and development of the P&HS program include: the program coordinator, an expert on day-to-day operational issues; the college’s director of special programs, who serves as a liaison between the program and the college; and Alameda County Behavioral Health, a municipal agency whose supports to the program include writing curriculum materials and aiding in outreach. Additionally, CAA staff members regularly attend academic department, curriculum committee, and student services and counseling staff meetings and meet individually with all department chairs connected with P&HS. Although this connectivity—developed by core staff “from the ground up”—requires a substantial time commitment, it keeps parties across campus engaged and informed about P&HS and helps cultivate and sustain high-level program support. Core staff members also maintain good relationships with the college’s public information officer, who disseminates news about the program through the college-wide newsletter and marketing materials.

At the same, the program receives support from the highest administrative levels, with leadership articulating a commitment to continuing P&HS when grant funding ends. At the outset of the CAA grant at BCC, a vice president of the college spearheaded the initiative. This high-level commitment continues and is reflected in leadership efforts to incorporate CAA elements into the college’s formal strategic plan. The college is additionally exploring thoughtful and intentional growth strategies for its P&HS program, such as developing and piloting a new CAA program (health navigator).

**OBSERVATION #2: The Critical Role of the Job Developer:** Somewhat unique among CAAs, BCC’s program has a dedicated job developer on staff; her tireless efforts have created robust employment opportunities for CAA participants. Her responsibilities include: cultivating relationships between P&HS and employers;

assessing students' interests, goals, and strengths; and matching students with employers for internships and jobs. Starting largely from scratch, the job developer generated a list of employers in the area and cold called them. While it was initially slow going, as P&HS gained reputation and respect in the local field based on student on-the-job performance, the outreach process started to reverse: now, new employers contact P&HS with internship and job opportunities, eager to connect with the program. As a result, there are now more job and internship opportunities available than there are students. In the job developer's words, "where relationships exist, the work will come." This evolution in program-employer relations is a sign that the program is sustainable, since employers respect the program and demonstrate a readiness to hire its graduates. Despite these successes, the job developer's position is at risk, as it is grant-funded; program staff and leadership recognize her crucial role and are working to allocate resources to retain her; efforts include connecting her position to funding from a new grant in the short-term.

**OBSERVATION #3: Staff Continuity and Support:** Somewhat surprisingly, the P&HS program has experienced no staff turnover; core staff and faculty have been at BCC since program inception. This staff continuity has great benefits for students—including the opportunity to engage with program personnel who possess deep knowledge of the program and its processes. Likewise, staff can draw on lessons learned from past cohorts to improve programs rather than directing valuable time resources toward the orientation of new staff. P&HS has been very fortunate to benefit from this faculty and staff longevity—a testament to the passion staff have for the program and the support that the college provides. High faculty retention rates also likely derive from the small and intimate nature of the college, with its one-building campus that serves less than 8,000 students. However, staff and faculty recognize that departures are inevitable. Planning for the future, and the sustainability of the program, BBC staff members have begun to develop process documentation to standardize forms, while examining ways to ease the transition of new teachers and staff into the program.

Providing adequate compensation to staff for planning time is another issue that will need to be addressed going forward. All program faculty members have part-time status; those who teach at least six units per semester receive compensation for one office hour per week—hardly adequate to cover what is required and what faculty regularly provide. Many CAAs at other schools compensate faculty, at least in part, to coordinate courses and conduct informal case management. Similarly, compensation to the program coordinator for administrative duties (set at three hours per week), falls far short of what is appropriate and necessary.

**OBSERVATION #4: CAA's Generative Capacity:** BCC staff and leadership view CAA as a "mother grant" with generative capacity to inform new initiatives and grants. Best practices learned from the CAA provide a framework as BCC applies for other grants and initiatives, such as AB86, the Student Support Services Program (SSSP), and the Career Pathways Trust. Using CAA experience as a springboard for these other initiatives provides BCC with a method both to sustain key elements from CAA and to address the challenge of maintaining critical staff members who have been partially or fully funded through the CAA grant.

In another extension of CAA work, BBC, in partnership with Berkeley High School (BHS), is piloting a concurrent enrollment program with six BHS seniors. The students take a half-day of classes at BHS and a half-day of classes at BCC, which also includes study sessions and supports for the students. Concurrent enrollment is very difficult to implement due to the need to coordinate administrative processes at both a high school and a community college, but BCC and BHS's long-term relationship has facilitated this pilot. This collaboration includes the cohort model and student supports that are a part of CAA, and serves as a recruitment pipeline between the two institutions. This pilot work is helpful for AB86 in particular, as AB86 aims to expand educational and career pathways by requiring collaboration among high schools, adult schools, and community colleges. In addition, BCC received funding to

support two 10-hour/week counselor positions for supporting developmental education students. These counselors will be funded through BCC but will work with local high schools.

**OBSERVATION #5: Additional Supports for Students:** Despite the supports that the college provides, many students are high-need and would benefit from more wrap-around supports. Some of the main challenges that students face include finding childcare, affording transportation to classes, and being hungry. Staff and faculty have substantial face-to-face contact with students and know that for some students, the lunch provided at brown-bag seminars is the only food they eat for the day. They have expressed a desire to partner with a community-based organization to provide food that would be regularly available for students. Staff members do what they can, including always having baked goods for student visitors, but this is done out of the passion and at the expense of individual staff members, who are only able to provide so much.

**OBSERVATION #6: Managing Growth:** The school is getting larger, and may face some challenges in scaling the program. Cognizant of challenges faced when a program grows too quickly, BCC is being deliberate and cautious with its growth. The college often utilizes piloting and prototyping to test growth opportunities, a strategy that innovation literature has shown to be effective. BCC may be funded by the Bay Area Workforce Collaborative to support scaling the CAA model. Currently, BCC is piloting the addition of 20 students to CAA programs.

### **Looking Ahead:**

BCC's commitment to sustaining the work of its Public and Human Services (P&HS) CAA is strong and deeply rooted in the college's cultural DNA. P&HS is one of nine learning communities on campus, all of which have similar core components: cohorts, faculty collaboration, interdisciplinary curriculum, learning community counselors, and service learning. Well positioned to tap into new funding initiatives, BCC still faces financial challenges. Grant-funded courses don't count toward productivity funding provided by the state on an enrollment-per-course basis. As a result, it becomes difficult to sustain CAA classes financially after moving off of grant funding, since these courses tend to be more expensive and have lower enrollments than the norm. Moving forward, BCC plans to identify strategies to overcome these challenges; in the past, this has included attaching courses to different grant funds.