A Guide to Noncredit Accountability

Venette Van Duyn, Ph.D.
Research Analyst
North Orange County Community College District
School of Continuing Education
Anaheim, CA
April 2009

A Guide to Noncredit Accountability

The Community College System

- California has 109 community colleges that are governed by 22 districts and serve over 2.5 million students per year
- The **Chancellor's Office** is the state agency that guides and supports the community colleges
    - The **Management Information Systems (MIS)** unit of the Chancellor's Office collects data from each college in the system after every term and school year
    - This data, coded as "data elements" includes information about the *students, courses, and employees* at each college
- Examples of "Data Elements"

A **Student** data element looks like this:

> **SB04 STUDENT-GENDER X(01)**
> This element indicates whether the student is female or male.
> CODING MEANING
> **F** = Female
> **M** = Male
> **X** = Unknown / non-respondent
> *From: Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Unit, Data Element Dictionary*

This data element would show how many male and female students attend each college.

A **Course** data element looks like this:

> **CB08 COURSE-BASIC-SKILLS-STATUS X(01)**
> This element indicates whether the course is a basic skills course.
> CODING MEANING
> **B** = Course is a basic skills course.
> **N** = Course is not a basic skills course.
> *From: Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Unit, Data Element Dictionary*

This data element would show how many courses at a college are classified as basic skills courses

- There are *hundreds* of data elements that the MIS unit collects, and this data is typically submitted and coded by each District's Information Services Division.

Accountability Background

- Three reports relating to accountability are released yearly
    1. Focus on Results: Accountability Reporting for the California Community Colleges (ARCC) – aka the ARCC Report
    2. Career Development and College Preparation in the State: Supplement to the ARCC Report – aka the CDCP Report
    3. Basic Skills Accountability Framework for the California Community College System – aka the BSI Report
- These reports function as "report cards" evaluating the performance of each college/noncredit institution based on a variety of measures

Why Accountability?

- Three significant bills were passed recently in the California Legislature
    - Assembly Bill 1417 (2004) – authorized the Chancellor's Office to design and implement a performance measurement system for community colleges
        - This Bill led to the creation of the ARCC Report
    - Senate Bill 361 (2006) – increased funding for noncredit courses and required accountability reporting on CDCP performance
        - This Bill led to the creation of the CDCP Report
    - Assembly Bill 194 (2007) – required a framework for statewide accountability measures for basic skills courses
        - This Bill led to the creation of the BSI Report

How does Noncredit Get Funded?

- The state allocates general funds to the 72 districts through an apportionment process based on full-time equivalent students (FTES)
- Typically, every 525 hours of student class time equals 1 FTES
    - Credit receives $4367 per FTES
    - Noncredit receives $2626 per FTES – historically, noncredit has always been funded much less per student than credit
    - With the passage of Senate Bill 361, funding for certain noncredit students was increased from $2626 per FTES to $3092 per FTES – still at a rate lower than credit, but a huge improvement
        - This increase in funding applies to students enrolled in a sequence of courses leading to career development or college preparation (CDCP) certificates
- Because the state is giving noncredit more money as a result of Senate Bill 361, the state wants to ensure that noncredit also becomes accountable → noncredit is now included in the 3 Accountability Reports that are released yearly

How are these Accountability Reports Developed?

- Local college data (including noncredit) gets submitted to the Chancellor's Office MIS unit
- The California Department of Finance (DOF), Legislative Analysts Office (LAO), and the ARCC Technical Advisory Group (ARCC TAG) defines the "performance indicators" by which colleges will be evaluated
- The Research division of the Chancellor's Office compiles and analyzes all the MIS data for each college, and releases Accountability Reports illustrating how each college performs on the defined indicators.
    - Because MIS is missing some data, the Chancellor's Office Research Division also pulls data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD, which houses employment and wage data) and the National Student Clearinghouse (which tracks students' transfers).
- Now, let's review the 3 major Accountability Reports released yearly, and how noncredit fits into these reports

Accountability Report #1
Focus on Results: Accountability Reporting for the California Community Colleges, aka The ARCC Report

- Accountability reports usually include 2 types of statistics:
    - *Systemwide* statistics – this reflects the performance of community college students aggregated across the state
    - *College-level* statistics – this reflects the performance of students at individual community colleges
- This accountability report also includes enrollment and demographic information for each college – including students' age, gender, and ethnicity, and unduplicated headcount and FTES data
- This ARCC report contains 1 noncredit performance indicator, called the CDCP Progress and Achievement Rate. It is a *college-level* indicator, and for North Orange, it looks like this:

North Orange School of Continuing Education
North Orange Community College District
College Performance Indicators
ARCC 2009 Report: College Level Indicators

Table 1.6:
CDCP Progress and Achievement Rate

	2003-2004 to 2005-2006	2004-2005 to 2006-2007	2005-2006 to 2007-2008
CDCP Progress and Achievement Rate	3.3%	3.8%	4.6%

From: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Focus on Results: Accountability Reporting for the California Community Colleges, March 2009

- What does this table mean?
- This table is tracking a cohort of students attending this institution, and is tracking whether these students achieved certain outcomes – these are the *performance indicator*s
- How does the ARCC Report define the noncredit cohort? All of the following conditions must apply:
    - Students taking courses for the *first time* at any community college
    - Students *did not* enroll in any credit courses during the first term they enrolled in CDCP
    - Students must have completed *8 or more positive attendance hours in CDCP* courses within their 1st two terms of attendance
- What are the outcomes this cohort of students must have achieved?
    - Within 3 years of entry, the student must have achieved any of the following outcomes:
        - Completed at least 1 degree-applicable credit course
        - Earned a CDCP certificate
        - Achieved "transfer-directed" status – i.e. successfully completed both transfer-level math and English courses
        - Achieved "transfer-prepared" status – i.e. successfully completed 60 UC/CSU transferable units with a GPA >= 2.0
        - Earned an AA, AS, and/or credit certificate
        - Transferred to a 4-year institution
- Referring back to Table 1.6 (above), what do these percentages mean?
    - The table starts with the number of students included in the cohort – note that the ARCC report typically tracks 3 cohorts – i.e. students starting in 3 different school years
    - Calculates the percentage of that cohort that achieved any of the performance indicators
    - In the ARCC Report, noncredit institutions displayed very low percentages

- o Also note that as of the 2009 ARCC report, data on students earning a CDCP certificate (outcome #2) was not included – because the MIS Data Element has not yet been created for CDCP certificates
  - o Finally – most of these indicators reflect transfer to credit institutions. How are these tracked by the MIS Unit? Through Social Security Numbers. If a noncredit student does not supply his or her SSN, then any subsequent transfer cannot be recorded by the MIS.
- What is the *intent* of these performance indicators?
  - o To determine how many CDCP students eventually earn a CDCP certificate
  - o Heavily skewed toward determining how many CDCP students eventually transfer to the credit site, or a 4-year institution
- Do you think these are appropriate indicators for noncredit? Do all noncredit students have the goal of transferring to a community college? Do all students intend to earn a CDCP certificate? Do all noncredit students start first in noncredit? Think about this method of cohort inclusion and performance outcomes, and think through the issues as they relate to your institution.
- The ARCC report also requires a self-assessment each year, by colleges and noncredit institutions, which is a 500-word response to the college's data. This provides an opportunity for schools to explain their data and analyze the performance indicators.

Accountability Report #2

Career Development and College Preparation in the State: Supplement to the ARCC Report, aka The CDCP Report

- A little more about Senate Bill 361, aka enhanced noncredit funding, aka CDCP
  - o CDCP is defined as a sequence of courses that lead to one of the following:
    - Certificate of completion leading to improved employability or job placement
    - Certificate of competency in a recognized career field, articulated with degree-applicable coursework, completion of an associate degree, or transfer to a 4-year institution
  - o The CDCP eligible categories include: ESL/VESL, Basic Skills, short term vocational education, and workforce preparation (does NOT include older adults, parenting, fitness)
- This accountability report only includes *system-level* data – that is, data is reported for CDCP students aggregated throughout the state – there is no data from individual colleges or noncredit institutions
- This report contains 2 noncredit performance indicators, and here is an example of one of the tables:

Table 1
Percentages of CDCP Cohorts Persisting to Subsequent Term

Cohort	Cohort N	N Persisting	Percent Persisting	N Persisting to Credit	Percent persisting to credit
Fall 2004	22,065	10,238	46.4	1,127	5.1
Spring 2005	20,664	6,252	30.3	897	4.3
Fall 2005	24,273	10,730	44.2	1,163	4.8
Spring 2006	22,594	7,667	33.9	938	4.2
Fall 2006	23,741	10,316	43.5	1,238	5.2
Spring 2007	26,261	7,177	27.3	606	2.3

From: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Career Development and College Preparation in the State: Supplement to the ARCC Report, June 2008

- How does the CDCP Report define the noncredit cohort? All of the following conditions must apply:
    - Students taking courses (*CDCP only or CDCP plus other noncredit courses*) for the first time at any California Community College
    - Like the ARCC report, this excludes students who take a CDCP course subsequent to a credit course
- What are the outcomes this cohort must have achieved?
    - **Term-to-term persistence**, as reflected by the following:
        - Percentage of students returning and enrolling in courses in the subsequent term
        - Percentage of students persisting into credit courses
        - Percentage of students in each CDCP category (ESL vs. Short-Term Vocational vs. Basic Skills vs. Workforce preparation) persisting
        - Success rate of persisting students (percentage attempting/earning credit units, number of units attempts, and number of positive attendance hours)
    - **Wage trends**, as reflected by the following:
        - Percentage of CDCP students that eventually show up in wage data reported to the EDD
        - Number of students showing wage increases
        - Number of students showing wage increases by number of positive attendance hours (less than 8 vs. 8 or more) and CDCP category (ESL vs. Short-Term Vocational vs. Basic Skills vs. Workforce preparation)
        - Percentage of students moving from zero wages reported to greater than zero wages reported
- Referring back to Table 1 (above), what does the table show?
    - For each cohort year, the table shows how many students are persisting to the next term. The table shows that between 30-45% of students, across the years, enroll in courses in the next term.

- o This table also shows how many students eventually end up taking credit courses—this percentage is much lower – only around 2-5%
- What is the *intent* of these performance indicators?
    - o To discover persistence rates, to determine whether a particular CDCP category seems to lead to more persistence, and how many CDCP students eventually move on to credit
    - o To discover whether CDCP actually leads to improved employability and an increase in wages/income, to determine whether a particular CDCP category seems to lead to more employability
- What are your impressions of these indicators? Note that enhanced funding did not begin until 2007 – how much time would it take to see positive effects of this funding?
- Note that since only system-level data is reported in this accountability report, a college/noncredit institution self-assessment is not required

Accountability Report #3
Basic Skills Accountability Framework for the California Community College System, aka The BSI Report

- This report will not be released until Summer 2009 (tentatively), so everything we know now is only a preliminary draft from the Chancellor's Office
- This report will contain both *system-level* statistics and *college-level* statistics
- The BSI report will focus on Math, English, and ESL courses, and will include noncredit
- Possible performance indicators:
    - o FTES for noncredit in the basic skills courses of Math, English, ESL
    - o Percentage of students receiving matriculation services, which include assessment, orientation, counseling, and follow-up counseling
    - o Percentage of students placed into various levels of basic skills courses
    - o Percentage of students, based on the level of basic skills course they start with, that eventually
        - ▪ Complete any degree-applicable or transfer level Math/English/ESL course (in same curricular lineage)
        - ▪ Earn a degree/certificate and/or become transfer prepared or eventually transfer
- Note – for the performance indicator above – percentage of students placed into various levels of basic skills courses, this indicator relates to an MIS Data Element called CB21 – a course-level data element that looks like this:

CB21 COURSE-PRIOR-TO-COLLEGE- LEVEL X(01)
This element indicates course level status for English, writing, ESL, reading and mathematics courses.
CODING MEANING
A = English, writing, ESL, reading or mathematics course **one level below the transferable level** of a corresponding English, writing, ESL, reading or mathematics course.

B = English, writing, ESL, reading or mathematics course **2 levels below the transferable level** of a corresponding English, writing, ESL, reading or mathematics course.

C = English, writing, ESL, reading or mathematics course **3 levels below the transferable level** of a corresponding English, writing, ESL, reading or mathematics course.

Y = Not applicable. Level of course is **not one of the levels listed above**, may be above level A (transferable) or below level C (more than 3 levels below transfer level).

(Courses coded as **Y may include credit, noncredit, vocational**, transferable, basic skills more than 3 levels below the transfer level).
From: Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Unit, Data Element Dictionary

- This CB21 data element has typically only been applied to the credit side; noncredit has typically coded its basic skills courses as "Y" – not applicable; the intent of this data element is to classify, for each basic skills course, how many levels this course is below a *transferable* (i.e. transferable to CSU/UC) English, ESL, reading, or math course
- Because the BSI Report will include noncredit, is it possible that they will ask noncredit to classify its basic skills courses according to this CB21 data element? Do noncredit basic skills courses fit neatly into this coding scheme?
- What other indicators would show basic skills progress in noncredit?