

Executive Summary

Parkland College is a fully accredited, public comprehensive community college established to serve the needs of District 505, the fourth largest community college district in Illinois. Parkland's facilities include more than 85 classrooms, 60 specialized labs, and a library collection of over 120,000 volumes. Parkland serves over 10,000 students each semester.

Parkland College proposes to pilot an accelerated program for adult learners that will allow adult students to earn an associate's degree in two years through intensive evening courses. The pilot will be offered in fall 2004 and spring 2005 to enable the college to evaluate the viability of such a program in terms of student demand and program quality. A rigorous academic assessment plan will include assessment tools already used to evaluate outcomes in traditional offerings as well as newly devised tools. Results from these assessments, as well as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), will be used to compare the outcomes of the accelerated pilot with those of traditional offerings. In addition, the evaluation plan will ~~aim to~~ identify particular curricular elements and student support practices that can improve the overall program.

Parkland College also proposes to develop full, accelerated programs to enhance access to higher education for adult learners. Based on the results from the pilot evaluation, these will be implemented seamlessly as a continuation of the pilot offerings in summer 2005.

Project Description

In 2002, a team of Parkland College faculty, staff, and administrators, along with a visiting scholar from the University of Texas, began studying the issue of providing more options for adult students. The study concluded by recommending that Parkland:

- Identify the special needs of adult students.
- Design and implement new instructional delivery for Parkland's adult students.
- Provide degree completion opportunities to time- or place-bound adults with previous college credits.
- Provide increased flexibility in course options and entry points.

Based on the above objectives, the team recommended that an accelerated program for adult learners be fully investigated to accommodate the needs of adults who lead busy lives but are seriously committed to continuing their education. Given the demands of their jobs and families, these students require programs that are time efficient and responsive to their needs and lifestyles. Adults who wish to complete degrees in traditional programs often face up to eight years of evening classes to finish a two-year associate's degree. Accelerated programs can be designed to help adult learners complete programs in time frames similar to full-time students.

Parkland is proposing a program in which students earn college credits by attending two courses one night a week for four hours over a 24-month period. The program will be intensive and rigorous with successive seven- to eight-week sessions. Students will be selectively admitted and will have access to dedicated support services. In addition, the curriculum will be designed using well-documented andragogical

strategies, such as self-directed learning activities and the use of prior knowledge to augment learning activities. Finally, the entire program will be evaluated to ensure that Parkland's high quality educational standards are maintained.

A. Description of the Organization

Parkland College is a comprehensive community college in Illinois dedicated to providing programs and services of high quality to its students and committed to continuous improvement, to academic achievement and its documentation, and to the concept of shared governance. Parkland has delivered vocational-technical and academic instruction to more than 200,000 people since its classes began in 1967. In fall 2003, Parkland served over 11,000 credit and non-credit students (6,272 FTE). Parkland has become a center for educational opportunity and community enrichment in east central Illinois and has earned a national reputation for its excellent academic standards, innovative programs, and quality instruction.

B. Project Description

The accelerated program is an option allowing adult students to earn an associate's degree within a two-year time frame through intensive evening courses. Students accepted into the program earn semester credits by attending class one night a week (two courses each night) for four hours over a 24-month period. A cohort-based accelerated format will be the preferred learning environment to increase enrollment, promote retention, and encourage student success without lowering academic standards.

Parkland College will provide a cohort-based accelerated program, which will provide the opportunity for the adult student to complete an associate's degree in two years. The program will be limited to adult students (age 24+) who have earned 15 or fewer semester hours from an accredited institution and who have three years or more of full-time work experience. To meet the goal of developing a fast-track program by fall 2006, Parkland's strategy will be to pilot two semesters of the program in fall 2004 and

spring 2005. During each semester, four core courses, Speech 101, English 101, History 105, and Psychology 101, will be taught on an interdisciplinary basis. Table One summarizes the campus resources, components, and outcomes for the project.

Measurable outcomes-

- The number of students registering for the pilot and persisting into subsequent semesters will be sufficient to ensure program viability.
- The number of adult students who have participated in accelerated programs that complete their associate's degree through the fast-track program in two years
- Student achievement and retention per course
- Survey of students' perceptions of their overall experience as participants in the fast-track program as it relates to their program needs and expectations)
- Learning outcomes that compare favorably with the same courses offered traditionally

Table One

Adult Accelerated Program Components

Mission: To provide an accelerated associate’s degree for adult students.

Inputs/Resources	Program Components or Activities	Short Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long Term Outcomes
<u>Staff</u> *Dean of Academic Services *Dean of Career Programs *Adult Degree Completion Advisor <u>Advisory Committee</u> * Executive Team * Instructional Council * Fast-track Team *Dept. Chairs * Student Support Group * Teaching Group Office of Marketing and Creative Services Community Businesses	Conduct Informational sessions Student registration process Student assessment and placement Financial aid package Marketing, publications, & communications Provide student support services Monitor student success Faculty development Curriculum Offer linked courses	Increase in students’ satisfaction. Students will acquire skills and knowledge that are relevant to their personal/work world. Students will continue on with sequence of courses. Greater student involvement in self-directed learning activities. Increased recruitment and retention of qualified and diverse students to Parkland College	Assuming delivery of full programs: increase number of adult students earning their associate degree in two years Increase students’ ability to earn bachelor’s degree Enhancement of students’ achievement and retention per course (performance) Increase students’ marketability in the job market Increase access for adult students to higher education.	To explore new instructional delivery models and expand the number of learning options for busy adult students.

C. Program Evaluation

Program evaluation will be twofold: formative evaluation for program improvement and summative evaluation to aid in the decision whether to commit to a

permanent adult accelerated program. Since the goal of accelerated programs is to provide outcomes that compare favorably with traditional programs, the pilot will be evaluated on the basis of its ability to fulfill the College mission, meet student needs and demand, provide comparable learning outcomes, and support students through services. Through formative evaluation, the following questions will be addressed continuously throughout the semester: What is working? What is not working? What needs to be modified or revised in order to improve program effectiveness? The summative evaluation, to be conducted at the end of each semester, will focus on knowledge learned, program satisfaction, and skill acquisition. Table Two summarizes the evaluation plan for this project. By monitoring the pilot project activities, Parkland will be able to detect and correct problems before they become widely apparent and costly. During and after each session, evaluations will be conducted to determine program viability and improvement.

Table Two

Adult Accelerated Associate’s Degree Program Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Issue: Effectiveness of Accelerated Degree Program						
Who Will Use the Evaluation? How? When?	Questions	Information Sources	Qualitative and Quantitative Evaluation Methods	Who Will Conduct and Manage the Evaluation?	Date (Start & Finish)	Cost
<p>Program administrator & faculty to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make decisions for changes in procedures of the program. -Assess the predictability of student success in the program. -Programmatic changes based on student and faculty feedback. 	<p>Are students in accelerated programs performing as the program or faculty hopes?</p> <p>What are students’ strengths and weaknesses?</p> <p>What is the relationship between the quality of student performance and other factors, such as students’ backgrounds or the program curriculum?</p> <p>How can faculty and programs use the findings on student performance and the relationship between performance and other factors to improve student performance in accelerated learning?</p>	<p>Students’ Academic Records</p> <p>Advisor & Student Services rep</p> <p>Students in the accelerated program</p> <p>Full-time faculty involved in the accelerated program</p> <p>Institutional research</p>	<p>Analysis of student records</p> <p>Focus groups with students enrolled in the program</p> <p>Interview with faculty</p> <p>Semester satisfaction survey of the program students</p> <p>CCSSE survey results</p>	<p>Program administrator and Director of Institutional Research</p> <p>Managed internally by:</p> <p>S. Kristovich T. Treat</p>	<p>Fall 2004 & Spring 2005</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>

The Higher Learning Commission lauded Parkland’s exceptional academic assessment and institutional effectiveness processes during the college’s reaccreditation in 2003.

Prior assessment results will be used as benchmarks and existing assessment instruments will be used to compare the accelerated program with traditional programs.

Furthermore, Parkland has participated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and has obtained permission to use this instrument as part of the evaluation for the accelerated program. The survey gathers information on student engagement in academic and non-academic activities. National, state, and institutional comparisons of engagement can be made to the cohort. Also, the relationship between engagement and educational outcomes with the cohort can be explored. Table Three summarizes the proposed indicators for the project.

Table Three

Adult Accelerated Associate’s Degree Program: Outcomes and Indicators

Short-term Outcomes	Potential Indicators	Data Collection Methods
1. Increase in student’s satisfaction of academic needs.	1. Number of satisfied students at the end of each session.	End of semester course evaluations will be compared to benchmarked results from traditional offerings by the same instructors.
2. Student will acquire skills and knowledge that is relevant to their personal/work world.	1. Student use of knowledge at home or work.	Academic assessment instruments already in place for traditional offerings of the same course will be used to measure acquisition of knowledge and skills.
3. Student will continue on with sequence of courses.	1. Number of students registering for other courses. 2. Number of students completing course work. 3. Number of applications for and attendance in accelerated courses. 4. Number of students withdrawn or dropped from course work.	Institutional research will obtain this data using institutional databases.
4. Greater student engagement in self-directed learning activities.	1. Number of students using support features, such as the library. 2. Number of students participating in group activities. 3. Number of students attending study sessions.	CCSSE instrument will be used to compare engagement results of project students to non-project participants. Also, national and state comparisons can be made.
5. Increased recruitment and retention of qualified and diverse students to Parkland College.	1. Demographic data	Institutional data
6. Increased partnering and collaboration between academic and student services departments in the development and delivery of accelerated programs.	1. Extent of awareness of accelerated programs and activities by faculty and staff in academic and student affairs units and by academic advisors. 2. Number of faculty, academic advisors, academic professionals, and others informing students of	Focus groups involving participating faculty and staff will be used to determine extent of departmental awareness and other factors.

	<p>opportunities and benefits.</p> <p>3. Number of faculty, academic advisors, academic professionals, and others involved in the planning, design, and delivery of accelerated programs</p> <p>4. Number of faculty registering to participate/teach accelerated courses.</p> <p>5. Extent of awareness of accelerated programs by faculty and staff in academic and student affairs units and by academic advisors.</p>	
Intermediate Outcomes	Potential Indicators	Data Collection Methods
1. Assuming that full accelerated programs are offered at Parkland, increase number of adult students earning their associate's degree in two years.	<p>1. Number of students completing degree in two years</p> <p>2. Number of students completing course work.</p>	Institutional data
2. Increase student ability to earn bachelor's degree.	1. Number of students expressing interest in bachelor's degree.	Institutional data
3. Increase student marketability in the job market.	<p>1. Extent that businesses recognize that a student has demonstrated the knowledge and skills.</p> <p>2. Extent that others (e.g., faculty, supervisors, peers) recognize that a student has demonstrated the acquisition of leadership knowledge and skills</p>	Employer survey data after the students are advised.
4. Enhancement of student's performance.	1. Number of successful students that met requirement and objectives of course work.	Academic assessment
5. Increase access for adult students to higher education.	1. Demographic data (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, etc.)	Institutional data
Ultimate Outcomes	Potential Indicators	Data Collection Methods
1. To explore new instructional delivery models and expand the number of learning options for busy adult students.	1. Offering of a variety of options with concomitant quality assurance measures.	

D. Project Management and Staffing

- a) Management: We consider the following criteria critical to the success and sustainability of these programs
- *Quality assurance.* Because of their shorter time frame, accelerated degree programs are usually under intense scrutiny for academic quality. Accelerated degree programs must show evidence of an appropriate level of rigor and course content commensurate with the expectations of the academy for the subject matter covered. Standards and criteria must be set to determine whether program goals are being met and academic quality is maintained. This concern for quality means that reviews and evaluations should include student perceptions, objective assessment instruments, and outcomes research.
 - *Excellent customer service.* In serving adult students today, both high-quality instruction and superior customer services are required. When adult students' service needs are not being adequately met, they migrate to institutions of learning where they will be better served and better supported. The goal of quality customer services is to serve the customer in a competent, efficient, and convenient manner.
 - *Congruence with the college's mission.* The long-term viability of accelerated degree programs requires a sustained commitment on behalf of the senior leadership. If the purpose of offering programs for learners is not consistent with the institutional mission, the programs will fail.
 - *Program curricular design.* At the heart of the accelerated model is the centralized approach to curriculum development, student cohorts, and

program management. The curriculum will be developed by experienced faculty in the disciplines under the direction of the dean of academic services and the dean of career programs. Faculty will be chosen based on the needs of the learners, the curriculum, and their expertise in the subject matter. These judgments are based on their credentials, expertise of practice, experience in the workplace, and other considerations, including accreditation guidelines.

- *Marketing considerations.* Older adults are looking for quality, value, access, and convenience. The focus of adult student advisors/counselors is convincing qualified adult student prospects that the program will match their needs for continuing education.
- *Information sessions.* These sessions/seminars will present an overview of the processes necessary to complete one of the accelerated programs at Parkland College and to suggest why the institution and its adult degree program will be the right choice for the participants. The goal of the information seminar is to encourage prospective students who are eligible to apply to the program.

b) Staffing:

- Vice President of Academic Services
 - Overall decision-making authority
- Dean of Academic Services
 - Oversight of curriculum design, assessment, and logistics
- Adult Degree Completion Advisor
 - Primary support of students, maintenance of student records, admissions, information sessions

- Director of Institutional Research and Evaluation
 - Oversight of program evaluation
- Director of College Development
 - Oversight of grant development and grant budgets
- Dean of Career Programs
 - Oversight of AAS degree program development in consultation with department chairs

E. Learning from the Project

Currently, many of the studies done on accelerated programs have mainly involved four-year schools. To many working adult students, the attractiveness of the bachelor's degree represents the passageway to greater personal and career opportunities. It is our hope that the offering of accelerated associate's degrees at Parkland College will serve as a model for researchers and interested individuals to extend their studies of this nature to a wider sample of colleges and regions so that they may identify and build the structures within colleges that increase adults' access and their chances for degree completion at the community college level. Widening the study will help community colleges better define the paths that adults follow to persist and succeed in college. Also, the pathway definitions can help community colleges create systems and programs that do more to foster student and college success.

What we hope to learn more about:

- Adult learners experiences with accelerated programs
- Learning outcomes in an accelerated program versus traditional program

- Adult learner's demographic characteristics
- How adult students' individual characteristics and experiences influence their academic success and achievement
- Cohort model effectiveness for adult students

Appendix A

Accelerated Programs-Parkland College

Proposed Pilot Model (Fall 04)

Tentative Schedule day/time:

Tuesdays 6:00pm-10:00pm (4 hrs)

Session	Date	<u>Linked Courses</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>
1 st 8wks	Fall 1 / 04	ENG 101: Composition I	3
1 st 8wks	Fall 1 / 04	SPE 101: Introductory Speech Communication	3
2 nd 8wks	Fall 2 / 04	HIS 105: History of the U.S. , 1865 to Present	3
2 nd 8wks	Fall 2 / 04	PSY 101: Introductory to Psychology	3
	Total		12

Proposed Pilot Model (Spring 05)

Tentative Schedule day/time:

Tuesdays 6:00pm-10:00pm

<u>Session</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Linked Courses</u>	<u>Credit Hour</u>
1 st 8wks	Spring 1 / 05	ENG 102: Composition II	3
1 st 8wks	Spring 1 / 05	BIO 104: Environmental Biology	4
2 nd 8wks	Spring 2 / 05	SOC/HUM	3
2 nd 8wks	Spring 2 / 05	CIS 101: Introduction to Computers	3
Total			13

Appendix B

Biographies of project principals (PI/Co-PI) and program administrators

Rich Lake

Mr. Lake has overseen career programs at Parkland College since 1997. Prior to Parkland College, Mr. Lake served in a similar capacity at Hawkeye Community, Waterloo, IA (1994-97), and Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, IA (1985-1994). He has been active in professional organizations, serving on the National Board of Trustees of the American Technical Education Association (1999-present, current President), as well as membership in the Association for Career & Technical Education. Mr. Lake is a member of the Epsilon Pi Tau Honor Society for Professions in Technology. Mr. Lake has also been an active volunteer in the Boy Scouts of America, his local church, and Rotary International.

Tod Treat

Mr. Treat is Dean of Academic Services at Parkland College. In his current capacity, Mr. Treat is responsible for a variety of administrative initiatives, including the accelerated program described herein. Prior to accepting the position of Dean, Mr. Treat taught chemistry for nine years (Parkland College, University of Colorado), during which he developed and taught two new courses (Chemistry 104-Chemistry of Everyday Life, Chemistry 108-Essentials of Forensic Science). In addition, he has been extremely active in both Internet course development and development of an in-house academic portal prototype that has been incorporated into the Parkland Connection, which allows students individualized access to both administrative and academic functions. Mr. Treat serves on the Illinois Board of Higher Education Faculty Advisory Council (2001-present). In

addition, he has served as PCA Senate President (2001-2002), Assistant to the Chair, Dept. of Natural Sciences, (1997-1999), and many Parkland Committees.

Greg Square

Mr. Square is the coordinator of the Adult Degree Re-entry Center at Parkland College. He has worked in the community college system for over eleven years and has work with both traditional and non-traditional students. Mr. Square is currently a doctoral student at the University of Illinois, where his main focus of study is the Adult Learner. Mr. Square's responsibilities on the grant project will include monitoring, advising, and helping develop selection criteria for the students entering the program. He will provide student's in the program with their support needs, including advising and referral to Parkland's many student support units.

Dr. Sharon A. R. Kristovich

Dr. Kristovich is well qualified to carry out the research outlined in this proposal. As Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation at Parkland College, Dr. Kristovich is responsible for the development and maintenance of institutional research databases, the provision of research support for the entire campus, and serving as the Illinois Community College Board's Management Information System liaison. Dr. Kristovich has nearly two decades of research experience, including private computer and statistical consulting for various clients in scientific and educational disciplines and statistical support and data set management for university research projects at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, and AT&T Bell Laboratories. She has experience conducting and teaching quantitative and qualitative research, including interviews, protocol analysis and focus

groups, and employing parametric and non-parametric methods in the analyses. Dr. Kristovich has shared the results of her research through papers and presentations, and has won several awards for her research.

Section III: Attachments

Letter from President Harris

Organizational Chart

Budget

-fiscal

-narrative

Parkland Audited Financial Statement

Board of Trustees