Creating Credentialing Pathways in Behavioral Health

A Case Study about the Community College of Aurora

workcred
an affiliate of ANSI

COMMUNITY COLLEGE of AURORA

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Formed in 2014, Workcred is an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Its mission is to strengthen workforce quality by improving the credentialing system, ensuring its ongoing relevance, and preparing employers, workers, educators, and governments to use it effectively. Workcred's vision is a labor market that relies on the relevance, quality, and value of workforce credentials for opportunities, growth, and development.

Community College of Aurora
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The Community College of Aurora (CCA) is a two-year public, open access institution in Aurora, Colorado and is one of 13 community colleges in the Colorado Community College System. The school of choice for 12,111 students representing over 60 countries, CCA's service area includes nearly 690,000 residents in Arapahoe, Adams, and Denver counties, and its student population reflects the broad diversity of this area. The college offers 77 degrees and certificate programs for students seeking to enhance their current skill set, pursue employment, or transfer to a four-year college or university upon graduation.

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www.league.org

The League for Innovation in the Community College (League for Innovation) is an international nonprofit organization with a mission dedicated to cultivating innovation in the community college environment by forging strategic partnerships and empowering individuals to drive educational transformation. Founded in 1968 by B. Lamar Johnson and a dozen U.S. community and technical college presidents, the League for Innovation has proudly served community college institutions for over 50 years.

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About Certification + Degree Pathways

The practice of embedding industry credentials like certifications into degrees (C+D pathways) is common at community colleges.[1] Embedding refers to a college's alignment of its degree curriculum with an industry credential, although the approach a college may take varies as it seeks to better serve its learners and leverage its existing resources. A 2017 study among 149 U.S. colleges and four-year institutions by Lumina Foundation found that the most commonly cited benefit of C+D pathways was that it enabled students to earn valuable industry and academic credentials at the same time.[2] The study also showed that C+D pathways helped colleges and universities align their curricula with prevailing industry standards.

Certifications are distinct from other credentials because they are awarded after an individual demonstrates acquisition of a set of skills through a standardized assessment (e.g., oral, written, or performance-based). Additionally, certifications must be renewed after a designated period of time and can be revoked for incompetence or unethical behavior. Individuals must meet qualifications such as training and experience that are required prerequisites to take the certification examination. Certifications are awarded and tracked by certification bodies—typically nonprofit organizations, professional associations, industry/trade organizations, or businesses. According to Credential Engine, more than 7,000 industry-recognized certifications are offered across numerous industry sectors including healthcare, education, finance, IT, cybersecurity, manufacturing, retail, and hospitality.[3]

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1 Michael Prebil and Mary Alice McCarthy, *Building Better Degrees Using Industry Certifications Lessons from the Field* (New America, Education Policy, and Center on Education & Skills, September 17, 2018), **https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/building-better-degrees-using-industry-certifications**.

2 Holly Zanville, Kelly Porter, and Evelyn Ganzglass, *Report on Phase I Study: Embedding Industry and Professional Certifications within Higher Education* (Lumina Foundation, January 2017), **https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/report-on-phase-i-study-embedding-industry-professional-certifications-within-higher-education-january-2017.pdf**.

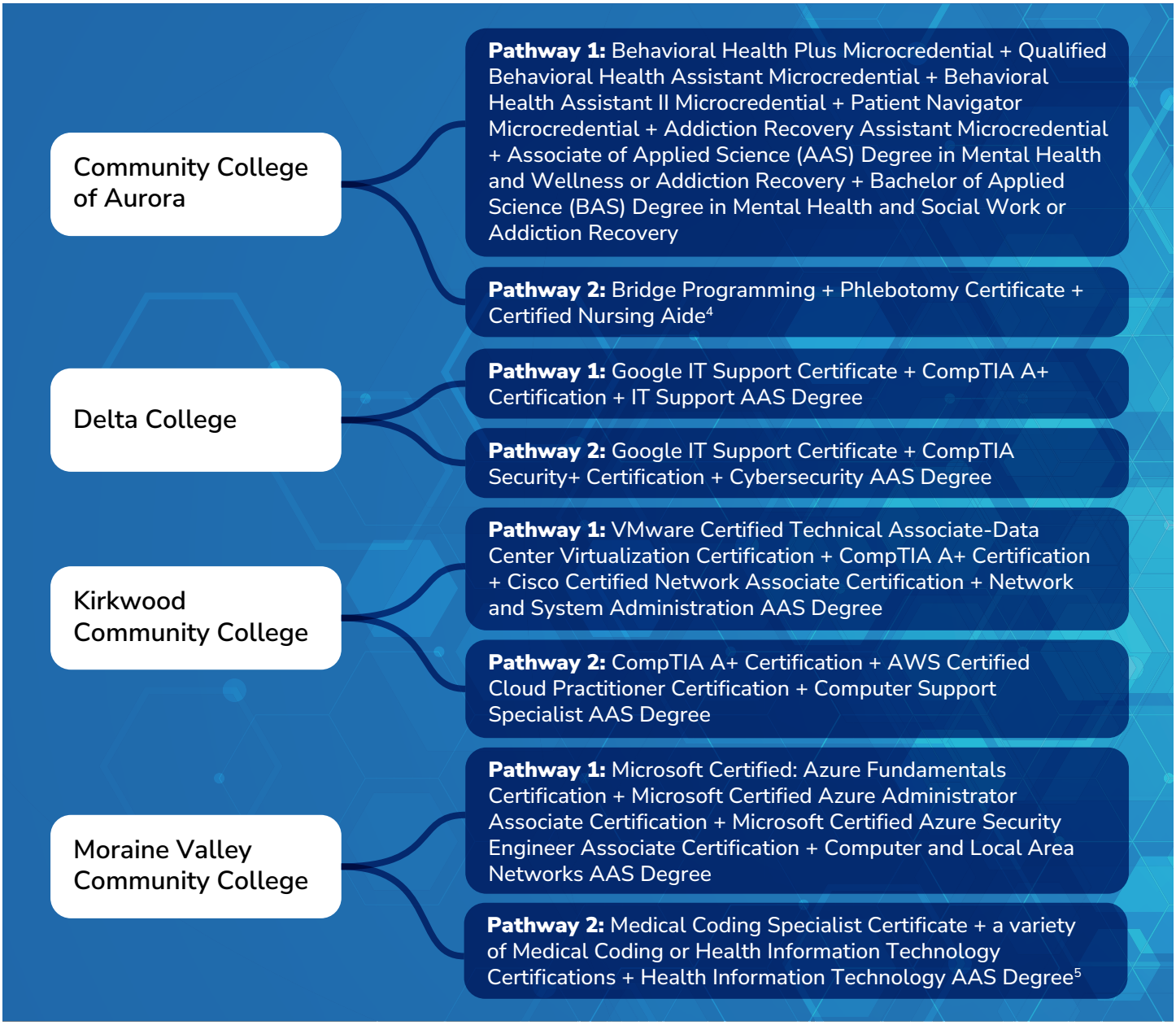
3 Counting U.S. Postsecondary and Secondary Credentials (Credential Engine, 2022), **https://credentialengine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Final-CountingCredentials_2022.pdf**.

About the Project

This project brought together a unique group of partners to explore effective ways to develop and launch new C+D pathways. Workcred, the Higher Learning Commission, and the League for Innovation in the Community College were joined in this endeavor by four community colleges—Community College of Aurora, Delta College, Kirkwood Community College, and Moraine Valley Community College.

Eight pathways, two at each institution, were developed as part of this project (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Credential Pathways for Each Institution



4 Author's note: This pathway is currently paused due to instructor availability.

5 Author's note: Although this pathway was established prior to this project, it was included to highlight the need to obtain aggregate and/or student-level certification exam data results.

This case study is part of a series of four case studies developed to highlight all or some of the C+D pathways from each of the colleges that participated in this project. While each pathway was developed independently, there are common challenges and insights that were uncovered during this project. Further details can be found in the following related publications:

- **Building Credentialing Pathways Using Credit for Prior Learning: A Case Study about Delta College**
- **Designing Credentialing Pathways in IT: A Case Study about Kirkwood Community College**
- **How Certification Bodies Can Support Colleges' Efforts to Integrate Certifications into Academic Programs**
- **Medical Coding and Health Information Technology Pathways: A Case Study about Moraine Valley Community College**
- **Playbook for Certification + Degree Pathways**
- **Promising Practices: Certification Plus Degree Pathways**

The case study that follows focuses on the lessons learned from the Community College of Aurora to develop a new and innovative behavioral health pathway, which integrates industry credentials in AAS degrees and allows learners to advance from paraprofessionals to careers that require a bachelor's degree.

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Developing Pathways in Behavioral Health

Today, Colorado is experiencing a critical need for behavioral health professionals with an expected job growth rate of 28 percent by 2032.[6] To help meet this workforce need, the Colorado state legislature passed Senate Bill 22-181 (SB-22-181), which required the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) and the State of Colorado Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to "create a new behavioral healthcare educational program that provides tiered advancement opportunities for behavioral healthcare providers at all levels, from advancement

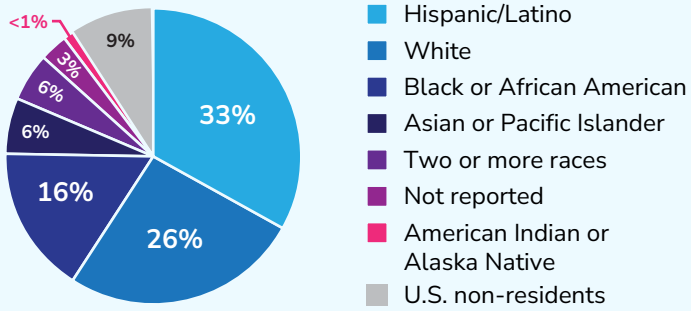
Figure 2: CCA Demographics[7]

College Demographics

COMMUNITY COLLEGE of AURORA

16000 E. CentreTech Parkway
Aurora, CO 80011

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



12,111 Total student enrollment

43% Percent of students who are Pell eligible

55% Percent of first generation learners

16% Percent of adult (age 25+) learners

"The C+D pathways initiative at the Community College of Aurora has fundamentally expanded our ability to serve learners who are seeking immediate impact in their lives and communities. By blending industry-recognized credentials with stackable degrees, we're empowering students—many of whom are first-generation or adult learners—to access meaningful employment and build long-term career pathways in healthcare and behavioral health."

– Mordecai Brownlee, Ed.D., president, Community College of Aurora

6 "Projections Central: Long-Term Occupational Projections (2022-2023)," U.S., Department of Labor, State Employment Projections, Projections Managing Partnership, accessed June 25, 2025, **https://projectionscentral.org/longterm**.

7 "Community College of Aurora: Institution Characteristics: General information: Academic year 2023-24," IPEDS-Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, accessed June 23, 2025, **https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/institution-profile/126863#**; and "Community College of Aurora: By the Numbers," Community College of Aurora, accessed June 23, 2025, **https://ccaurora.edu**.

for individuals in entry-level positions to individuals who hold a bachelor's degree."[8] The Community College of Aurora (CCA) responded to the legislation and the need for behavioral health professionals by creating pathways in behavioral health.[9]

The behavioral health pathway created by CCA consists of five microcredentials that are offered as credit-bearing certificates and stack into two AAS degrees in behavioral health—one with an emphasis on mental health and social work and the other with a focus on addictions and addiction recovery. Learners who want to pursue further education can continue to earn a BAS degree in either mental health and wellness or addiction recovery.

The pathway was designed with an intentional curricular balance of general education courses, career and technical education courses, applied learning opportunities, and third-party credentials, including certifications. Some of the certifications can be earned while completing the academic program; others have eligibility requirements that allow the learners to complete the education prerequisites during the academic program, but may need to complete additional required clinical hours and certification exams after the program.

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8 "Senate Bill 22-181" (State of Colorado, 2022), page 8, **https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2022a_181_signed.pdf**.

9 Leslie Feldman, "Unlocking Potential: Behavioral Health Micro-credential Certificates," Community College of Aurora, **https://ccaurora.edu/news-press/campus-happenings/unlocking-potential-behavioral-health-micro-credential-certificates**.

The pathway begins with five microcredentials, four of which can be earned in one semester, and lead to para-professional jobs in behavioral health, and are comprised of:

Behavioral Health Plus	Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant	Behavioral Health Assistant II	Patient Navigator	Addiction Recovery Assistant

Behavioral Health Plus Microcredential

This six-credit microcredential only requires two courses—BEH 1001: Mental Health Crisis and Intervention: Preparedness and Empathy, and PTE 1010: Intro to Behavioral Health Care and Wellness. Through these courses, learners gain foundational knowledge of behavioral health basics, and entry-level crisis management and de-escalation skills.

Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant Microcredential

In the Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant (QBHA) microcredential, learners complete four courses (see Figure 3) that focus on behavioral health and wellness, intercultural competency, therapeutic communication, case management, and crisis intervention. Upon completion of this microcredential, learners receive the title of Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant, which allows them to obtain jobs as part of a Medicaid reimbursable care team.

The QBHA microcredential is also available for individuals who are already working as behavioral health para-professionals. These workers can enroll in a self-paced, online, non-credit training bootcamp, and demonstrate their competencies through assessments without having to take these four courses. Upon completion, learners can apply to receive credit at CCA for their prior learning and are then awarded the QBHA microcredential. Going through this process provides them with the opportunity to earn academic credit and to continue their education in the behavioral health pathway. By providing multiple access points to the pathway, individuals who are new to behavioral health as well as incumbent behavioral health workers can pursue further education that leads to more career opportunities.

Figure 3: Required Courses for the QBHA Microcredential

Required Courses	Number of Credits
PTE 1010: Intro to Behavioral Health Care and Wellness	3
BEH 1001: Mental Health Crisis and Intervention: Preparedness and Empathy	3
BEH 1030: Behavioral Health Case Management and Clinical Documentation	1
BEH 2030: Applied Therapeutic Communication Skills	3

Behavioral Health Assistant II Microcredential

This microcredential builds upon the knowledge gained in the Behavioral Health Plus and QBHA microcredentials to ensure that learners have both a theoretical understanding of behavioral healthcare and the ability to apply their knowledge through experiential learning. To earn this microcredential, learners must complete six courses from the fields of behavioral health, sociology, social work, and psychiatric technician (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Required Courses for the Behavioral Health Assistant II Microcredential

Required Courses	Number of Credits
BEH 1001: Mental Health Crisis and Intervention: Preparedness and Empathy	3
PTE 1010: Intro to Behavioral Health Care and Wellness	3
BEH 1030: Behavioral Health Case Management and Clinical Documentation	1
BEH 2030: Applied Therapeutic Communication Skills	3
SOC 2018: Sociology of Diversity	3
SWK 1100: Social Welfare and Community Agencies with Service Learning	3

Patient Navigator Microcredential

Some of the critical skills that must be exhibited by behavioral health workers include empathy, cultural competency, effective and clear communication, recognizing emotional boundaries, and understanding the complexity of behavioral healthcare systems. This microcredential consists of four courses (see Figure 5) designed to help individuals develop those skills so that they can help patients in identifying behavioral health resources and navigating behavioral health services.

Figure 5: Required Courses for the Patient Navigator Microcredential

Required Courses	Number of Credits
HPR 1000: Intro to Health	3
BEH 1001: Mental Health Crisis and Intervention: Preparedness and Empathy	3
SOC 1001: Intro to Sociology I	3
BEH 2030: Applied Therapeutic Communication Skills	3

Addiction Recovery Assistant Microcredential

Learners who complete twelve required courses (see Figure 6) will earn the Addiction Recovery Assistant Microcredential, and will have also fulfilled the educational requirements for the Certified Addiction Technician certification, which is regulated by the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies. To earn the certification, learners must pass the National Certified Addiction Counselor I exam and a jurisprudence exam about the laws and regulations pertaining to mental health in Colorado, and complete 1,000 supervised clinical hours over a period greater than six months. Individuals who hold this certification can work as part of a Medicaid reimbursable care team.

Figure 6: Required Courses for the Addiction Recovery Assistant Microcredential

Required Courses	Number of Credits
PSY 1001: General Psychology I	3
BEH 1001: Mental Health Crisis and Intervention: Preparedness and Empathy	3
HPR 1000: Intro to Health	3
CSL 2046: Ethical Practice in Addiction and Treatment	1
CSL 2051: Pharmacology I for Addiction Counselors	1
CSL 2068: Addiction Counseling Skills	1.5
CSL 2061: Case Conceptualization & Documentation	1
CSL 2065: Culturally Informed Treatment	1
CSL 2050: Motivational Interviewing	1.5
CSL 2054: Trauma Informed Care	1
CSL 2069: Principles of Addiction	1.5
CSL 2058: Group Counseling Skills	1.5

Behavioral Health AAS and BAS Degree Programs and Additional Certifications

Learners who continue on this behavioral health pathway to earn an AAS degree in mental health and social work or addiction recovery at CCA can also fulfill the educational prerequisites for the Registered Behavior Technician® (RBT) and the Certified Peer and Family Support Specialist (CPFS) certifications. For learners interested in using their personal experience with addiction recovery to support individuals who are navigating those same issues, they can enroll in the elective course, BEH 1050: Peer Support Specialist Training. CCA developed this course as part of the AAS degree to provide the necessary education requirements to qualify to take the International

Certification & Reciprocity Consortium Peer Recovery exam for the CPFS. In addition to meeting the education requirements, the learner must also complete supervised clinical hours and experience requirements helping people in treatment and recovery before taking the certification exam.

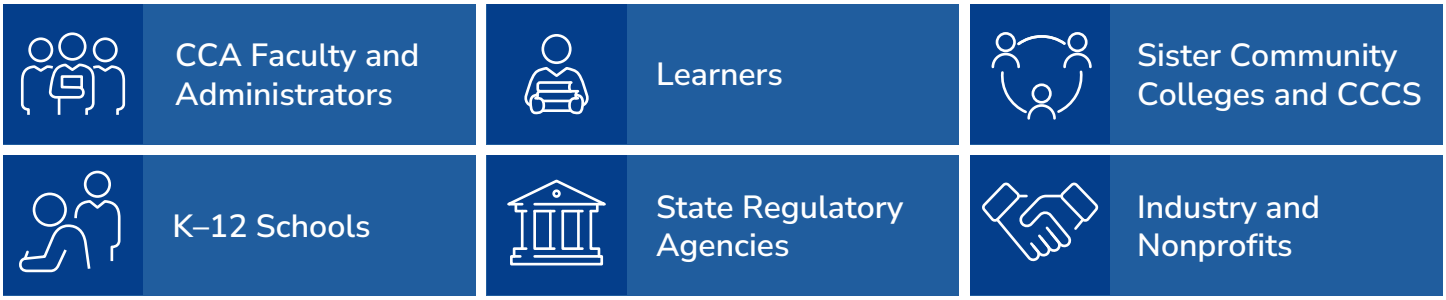
For learners interested in delivering behavior analysis services, they can pursue the RBT. Learners can complete the educational prerequisites for the certification exam by enrolling in the elective course, BEH 1060: Registered Behavioral Technician Training. CCA developed BEH 1060 because the available industry training did not align with an existing CCA course. By creating a new course, it allowed individuals to earn college credit if they already held the certification and learners who did not have the certification could take the course to fulfill the education requirements for the certification exam. In addition to meeting the educational requirements, individuals must also complete the RBT initial competency assessment in which they must demonstrate their competency on specific tasks through role play, direct work with a client, or interviews. The assessment is conducted by an assessor who provides feedback if any of the skills are demonstrated incorrectly. Once a learner meets all of the requirements and passes the certification exam, they are qualified to work under a supervisor to assist in delivering behavior-analytic services. Learners who earn either the CPFS and/or RBT certifications can work as part of a Medicaid reimbursable care team.

As learners progress in CCA pathways, they are able to gain access to a wider variety of jobs with increasing pay, which makes these pathways an opportunity for economic mobility. For learners who want to earn a BAS degree with concentrations in either mental health and wellness or addiction recovery, both of the AAS degrees stack into the BAS degree. One additional certification, the Certified Addiction Specialist (CAS), is aligned with the BAS degree. This certification also requires the completion of clinically supervised work experience in the addiction field, along with passing the National Certified Addiction Counselor II exam and jurisprudence exam.

Partners

Creating this multi-disciplinary pathway involved multiple internal and external partners. Each partner contributed to different aspects of developing the pathway.

Figure 7: Pathway Development Partners



CCA Faculty and Administrators

The dean of academic success in online and blended learning, who also oversees the behavioral health department, led the development of the behavioral health pathways at CCA. The dean's background in counseling psychology—she worked as a master's level clinician and served as a subject-matter expert for the system office on behavioral health curriculum development—and the fact that the behavioral pathways are being delivered through online and blended learning made her the right person to lead the pathways' development.

Faculty from multiple departments also contributed substantially to creating the pathways. The academic departments that most closely collaborated on the pathways were: behavioral health, behavioral sciences, and nursing and health sciences. Together, faculty were able to successfully create a new prefix for behavioral health courses, BEH; review existing curriculum; and create new curriculum. Faculty were also responsible for determining the proper organization of the microcredentials, aligning industry job positions with the credentials within the pathways, and counseling and recruiting learners to enroll in the pathways. In addition, there were strong partnerships among faculty across the state and the state-level behavioral health curriculum team, which includes master's-level clinicians who can provide both an academic and industry perspective about the pathways.

Support from other individuals and CCA departments were also instrumental. The office of workforce development ensured that the incorporated industry certifications were appropriate and valued by employers. The vice president of academic success ensured that all elements of the pathway were approved by the relevant academic committees, that the program was launched, and that it had the necessary resources. The divisions of student success and enrollment management focused on recruiting students and providing the student support services to help learners succeed. The strategic communications department developed flyers and campaigns to inform learners about the pathways. This partnership and collaboration among the faculty, staff, and administrators was critical to the development and implementation of the pathways.

Learners

Learners were also involved in the development of the pathways by offering feedback to faculty on whether the pathways were being developed to meet their career goals. Surveys and focus groups were used to gain learner input on class modality and other curricular elements. In addition, focus groups provided an opportunity to educate learners on the value of a behavioral health career and how the pathways could lead to greater social and economic mobility.

Sister Community Colleges and CCCS

CCA worked closely with its sister community colleges (Pueblo Community College, Pikes Peak State College, Red Rocks Community College, and Front Range Community College) in the development of their pathways. Faculty from these colleges provided additional curriculum expertise and subject-matter expertise to ensure that the pathways that were developed would meet workforce needs across the state.

CCA also collaborated with the CCCS office, which sets the policies for the 13 Colorado community colleges in the system. CCCS supported the work by sharing resources, hiring a behavioral health program manager to

align and standardize the behavioral health pathways across the community colleges, and ensure that academic courses were aligned with third-party credentials. In particular, the involvement of CCCS's career and technical (CTE) division was important for the pathways to be accessible as part of the K–12 CTE curriculum, getting them started in the field earlier.

K–12 Schools

CCA worked closely with Bollman Tech, Poudre School District, and Aurora Public Schools to offer the behavioral health pathways courses in high school. Colorado high school students can enroll concurrently at a community college and earn college credit hours at no tuition cost. Working closely with K–12 partners ensured alignment and allowed CCA to recruit K–12 students to enroll in the behavioral health pathways.

"In terms of the value of developing these pathways: The C+D Pathways initiative gave CCA the opportunity to truly consider its comparative advantage when it comes to industry essential workforce skills. Our expertise, combined with the needs of our community and industry partners, revealed a critical demand for building an inclusive behavioral health care workforce. By listening to the needs of industry while assessing our own unique programming, we were able to develop diverse behavioral health pathways that align traditional workforce training with the needs of both our students and regional employers."

– Bobby Pace, Ph.D., vice president of academic success, Community College of Aurora

State Regulatory Agencies

State regulatory agencies are also important partners in the development of the pathways. State agencies have worked with CCA on curriculum development and alignment, and understanding and meeting the state regulatory requirements. In one case, the agency made a policy change by developing a new Medicaid reimbursable position in behavioral health, the QBHA. This reimbursement support for a position is important for learners seeking employability as part of a care team. Involved agencies included the BHA, Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC), Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA), and the Governor's Office.

Industry and Nonprofits

Industry and nonprofit partners were active participants in the development and implementation of the pathways as well. Some of the partners included the Colorado African Chamber of Commerce, Aurora Mental Health & Recovery, Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, Driven by Our Ambitions, Firefly Autism, Medical Center of Aurora, and UCHealth. These partners worked closely with the faculty to provide input on curriculum and course content, and guidance on certifications that are valued by industry. In addition, they provide clinical sites for experiential learning hours, speak with students about the benefits of working at their organizations, conduct mock interviews, and offer feedback to learners about their performance in job interviews. Some of the hospital systems will provide healthcare career fairs geared specifically toward CCA learners.

Student Supports

Many learners in the behavioral health pathways thus far have been immigrants or refugees who have been educated in their own country, but their education is not recognized in the United States. Some of the challenges these learners face is the lack of experience in online learning, while some are unfamiliar with how higher education in the United States operates and need additional support.

CCA provides significant support to all students, including tutoring, sessions about how to navigate online courses, and information about scholarships and financial aid. These supports include professors offering live online tutoring as well as real-time interventions and support tailored to individual learners. CCA also has incorporated the addition of a new staff position, a behavioral health navigator, to help learners navigate the pathways, identify experiential learning sites, and secure employment in behavioral health upon completion.

Lessons Learned

As they developed the pathways and enrolled learners, CCA faculty, staff, and administrators gained some important insights.

Explore everything and allow space for discovery and adaptability. People involved in the development of C+D pathways need time to ask questions, conduct research, be creative, and have conversations with others. Pathway developers must be willing to think outside the box about faculty qualifications, course learning outcomes, learning modalities, student populations, scheduling options, and more. If the developers are too rigid, important details may not be considered or can be left out.

For example, CCA was planning to create a peer support microcredential, supported by local employers. However, learners and incumbent workers had a negative reaction to this proposal and thought it created an educational barrier to employment. Heeding this feedback, CCA faculty revised their plan—the new plan created a four-credit course that was aligned with an existing industry certification and allowed students to earn credit for prior learning (CPL). This course was also included as part of the behavioral health pathways, so learners interested in pursuing the pathways could use the course to continue their education.

Find a champion for the pathways. Innovation and change in higher education are not easy. Finding a faculty member or administrator who is passionate about the pathway and can serve as a champion for it is critical. Without such a backing, the pathway most likely will not succeed. Developing these pathways requires people who are willing to think differently and be open to all opportunities that are responsive to learner, industry, and community needs.

Recognize the tension between the pace of skill changes in industry and the implementation of those changes in curriculum. There is an inherent tension between how often or quickly changes occur in the skills and credentials needed in industry and the time it takes to update curriculum. Third-party certifications are continually updated to keep pace with changing industry needs, and this means that higher education institutions need to monitor these changes to ensure that the curriculum continues to be aligned with the certification. A particular challenge with healthcare certifications is that many of them have requirements to complete a set number of clinical hours over a specified time period, which does not always align with academic calendars. This needs to be kept in mind throughout the development process so that it can be incorporated and not overlooked.

"This work exemplifies how community colleges can lead the nation in workforce innovation. At CCA, we've embraced the charge to remove barriers, diversify the behavioral health workforce, and meet the urgent needs of our region. The C+D initiative isn't just a project—it's a powerful expression of our mission to elevate lives through education and economic mobility."

– Mordecai Brownlee, Ed.D., president, Community College of Aurora

Do not sacrifice quality for completion of design or implementation, even when navigating complex curriculum revisions. This is a significant challenge due to all the many moving parts, given that it is a multidisciplinary program. While CCA was able to start the pathways based on an AAS degree program at a sister institution, the microcredentials CCA developed were based on numerous industry partner conversations to ensure quality. CCA revised an AAS degree from a sister institution and added a second AAS degree. Revisions were made to the existing curriculum, the new BEH prefix was added to the state system, and eight new courses within the five microcredentials were developed. Additionally, faculty completed the work towards developing the BAS curriculum to create a full pathway through a bachelor's degree as laid out by SB-22-181.

Development and revisions of curriculum is time consuming. The revisions and creation of new curriculum is a time-consuming and on-going process, that includes four levels for curriculum approval: institutional, state, system vice presidents, and vice chancellor. A core curriculum team was formed at the state level in partnership with system support for the behavioral health pathway. Several colleges collaborated and supported the work, but without funding from SB-22-181, the development and revisions of the curriculum would have taken longer and thus been harder to achieve. This type of funding in Colorado is not common, but has been essential to the success of the pathways.

Be sure to build out processes and systems that ensure the pathways provide learners opportunities that meet the regulatory requirements. For the behavioral health pathways, several regulatory agencies (e.g., BHA, HCPF, DORA, and the Colorado Providers Association) had to be consulted with or their policies adhered to in order to ensure the pathways met behavioral health workforce requirements. Information varies from agency to agency, but this step is critical, so it has to be incorporated in the pathways' development.

Use CPL to provide college credit that is applicable to the pathways. Some pathways include both non-credit and credit courses. For the pathways to be successful, the gap between the non-credit and credit courses needs

to be addressed. The solution was to use CPL to match the competencies in the relevant industry credentials to the courses, and then grant CPL credits that could be applied to the pathways. To do this, CCA needed to develop additional courses that aligned with the certification competencies.

Evaluation

CCA is evaluating the pathways from multiple perspectives. From an academic perspective, CCA is focused on program enrollment, success, and completion. From a student success perspective, CCA is tracking pathway completion, employment, advanced credential attainment, and social and economic mobility. In addition, CCA is tracking collaborative coursework offerings and increased enrollment as an outcome. For example, the associate of arts degree in psychology now includes the QBHA courses as elective options.

CCA is also evaluating the skills alignment of the pathways and the retention and advancement opportunities of their graduates in the labor market. There is a continued focus on maintaining ongoing alignment with the needs of industry and the labor market through statewide and local behavioral health advisory committees. Employer surveys and conversations with employers will also be used to assess how learners are performing in clinical sites during and after placements.

Sustainability

After SB-22-181 funding expires in December of 2026, the pathways and their associated costs will be moved to the general college budget. The three-year timeframe of this grant has been critical to provide adequate time for pathway design and implementation, and the measurement of student success. While it is always challenging to support new programs financially, there is optimism that the pathways are filling a labor market need and the value will be shown by the performance of the graduates in their jobs and learners' social and economic mobility.

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to create new and innovative pathways that are responsive to student, industry, and community needs and blend traditional education with required workforce training. CCA developed these pathways to fill a critical labor market need by creating behavioral health pathways that provide stackable credential opportunities. Importantly, the pathways allow learners to begin a career as a paraprofessional and continue their education through a bachelor's degree. These C+D pathways demonstrate the need to incorporate earning and learning, show the relevance of higher education, recognize the need to provide social and economic mobility for learners, and provide access to a historically difficult career pathway, given its traditional graduate school requirements, cost, and timeline to earn a clinical master's degree.

Key Resources

Listed below are key resources and information about the programs at Community College of Aurora and some of the certifications that were included in this case study.

Community College of Aurora

Behavioral Health Programs: **https://ccaurora.edu/programs**

Unlocking Potential: Behavioral Health Microcredential Certificates: **https://ccaurora.edu/news-press/campus-happenings/unlocking-potential-behavioral-health-micro-credential-certificates**

Certifications

Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Registered Behavior Technician®: **https://www.bacb.com/rbt**

Certified Addiction Counselors:

- Addiction Counselor: **https://dpo.colorado.gov/AddictionCounselor/ApplicationsDocs**
- National Certified Addiction Counselor Level I: **https://www.naadac.org/ncac-i**

Colorado Peer and Family Specialist, Certification Administered by COPA: **https://coprovidersassociation.org/credentials/peer-family-specialist-credential/**

International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium: **https://internationalcredentialing.org/**