



# **Recruiting and Retaining Students to Careers Nontraditional For Their Genders**

**2013**

**A Report Prepared For The  
New York State Education Department**

**State University of New York  
University at Albany  
Center for Women in Government &  
Civil Society  
Nontraditional Employment & Training  
Program**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

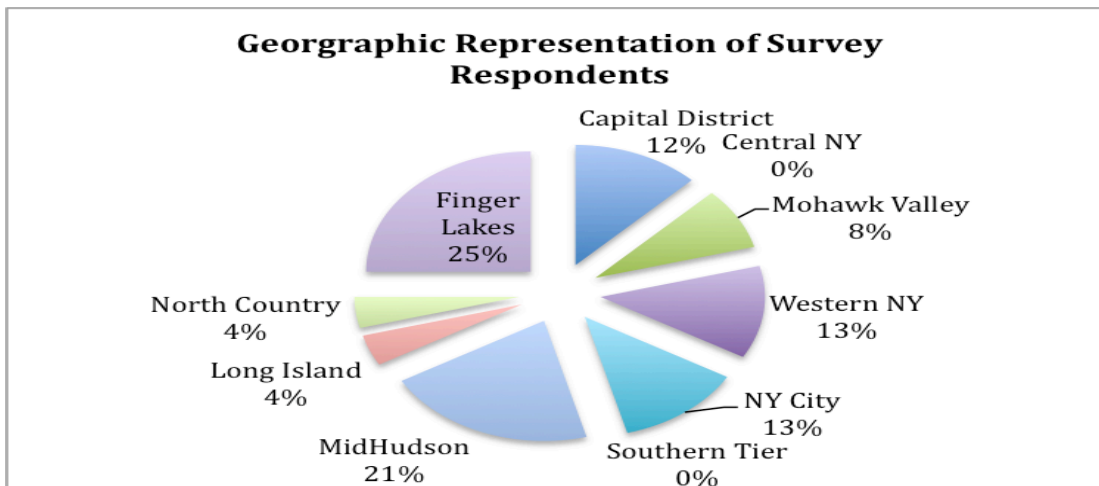
The Non-traditional Employment and Training (NET) project, funded by the Carl. D. Perkins Act and administered by the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society, University at Albany, State University of New York conducted a survey of New York State Education Department Perkins grantees. Since NET's goal is to assist grantees in strengthening their efforts in recruiting and retaining students to careers that are non-traditional for their genders, the survey asked grantees to share their technical assistance needs.

Deepening understanding of the barriers faced by Perkins grantees and their technical assistance needs is critical. In its 2013-2014 guidelines to Perkins grantees, the New York State Education Department mandated that each recipient must set aside at least 5% of grant award toward increasing participation of students in CTE programs that are nontraditional for their genders.

NET strives to become the "go-to-resource" to help CTE programs effectively achieve their grant mandates and strengthen their recruitment and retention efforts. NET project uses a number of strategies to provide up-to-date resources including a website, face-to-face workshops, virtual webinars and educational materials to assist Perkins grantees in increasing participation and completion of CTE programs by students who are pursuing careers that are nontraditional for their genders. This report provides the results and analysis of surveys completed by Perkins grantees during the Fall of 2013.

## II. PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The response rate to the survey was 40%. The survey was sent to 60 programs who are grantees, receiving Perkins funds from the New York State Education Department and 24 completed surveys were returned. Respondents' Representation by New York State Regions.



### III. RESULTS

**1. Describe the extent and nature of the barriers you face in recruiting and retaining non-traditional students in your CTE program.**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
My program faces significant barriers in recruiting non-traditional students.	4%	46%	21%	21%	8%
My program faces significant challenges in retaining non-traditional students	0%	38%	33%	29%	0%

**2. Identify the nature of the challenges you encounter in recruiting non-traditional students. Check all that applies.**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Lack of outreach tools and best practices	6	25.0%
Lack of funding to support rigorous outreach programs	11	45.8%
Lack of sufficient role models to draw New York State students to programs	5	20.8%
Persistent cultural perception and stereotypes about non-traditional careers and education	13	54.1%
Lack of tools to partner and collaborate with community-based organizations	7	29.1%
Other	4	16.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

**3. Identify the nature of the challenges you encounter in retaining non-traditional students. Check all that applies**

	<b>Number of Response(s)</b>	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Negative/hostile classroom climate	0	0.0%
Insufficient funding to provide support systems and interventions	14	70.0%
Lack of tools and best practices to help address the needs of non-traditional students	10	50.0%
Other	3	15.0%

**4. Please describe the needs of your program. What would be most helpful to you to enable your efforts to recruit and retain non-traditional students into your CTE programs? Check all that apply.**

	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Development of strategic plans to guide efforts to recruit and retain non-traditional students, (goals, measurable objectives, activities, tasks, timeline, expected outputs and expected outcomes)	9	42.8%
Development of performance metrics and evaluation plan to monitor progress, and document success	6	28.5%
Staff development activities to increase competency in gender neutral instruction	8	38.0%
Best practices in developing and sustaining partnerships and collaborations with community-based organizations	9	42.8%
Best practices in recruiting and retaining specific non-traditional student populations. Please describe	11	52.3%
Best practices in counseling, intervention and support services for non-traditional students	12	57.1%
Best practices in using information and communication technologies and social media to strengthen outreach	9	42.8%
Fact sheets documenting statistics related to high demand, high skill occupations	11	52.3%
Economic outlooks of high skill, high wage jobs	13	61.9%
Curriculum modification to increase sensitivity to non-traditional students	5	23.8%
Latest research on non-traditional students in CTE programs	12	57.1%
Gender-neutral recruitment materials and instruments	10	47.6%
Best practices in internships and job placements and for non-traditional students	8	38.0%
Other	2	9.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>

**5. Which of the following mediums do you rely on most to meet your knowledge needs? Please rank the following mediums from highest to lowest priority to you, with being 1 the highest and 5 being the lowest.**

	Most Valuable				Least Valuable
	1	2	3	4	5
Internet-based resources	11 52%	3 14%	4 19%	2 10%	1 5%
Hard copy materials	2 10%	7 33%	2 10%	4 19%	6 29%
Informal communication with colleagues	3 14%	6 29%	5 24%	5 24%	2 10%
Face-to-face trainings, conferences, forums and meetings	5 24%	5 24%	5 24%	3 14%	3 14%
Virtual meetings and peer exchanges with colleagues	0 0%	0 0%	5 24%	7 33%	9 43%

**Describe the extent and nature of the barriers you face in recruiting and retaining non-traditional students in your CTE program.**

- The rural population served here makes it difficult to develop effective and economic approaches to recruiting students of non-traditional gender to programs.
- This barriers are more related to available resources (i.e. faculty, facilities), as opposed to attracting students.
- The degree of these barriers and challenges varies by department or field of study. For example, we have a greater issue in automotive or HVAC than we do in computer/information systems technology
- We face challenges retaining ALL students.
- The biggest challenges are the very limited resources available for targeted recruiting. Community colleges are so under-resourced that we are most often only working with students who self-select for programs, with very limited opportunity for directing new students into non-traditional careers. Admissions and Advisement is where students are most likely to identify a major- we influence non-traditional changes "after" initial registration has taken place.
- In tech programs, insufficient academic preparation

**Identify the nature of the challenges you encounter in recruiting non-traditional students. Check all that applies.**

- Employer's preference for specific gender
- Lack of academic preparation, role models in Nursing

**Identify the nature of the challenges you encounter in retaining non-traditional students.**

- Resources
- Criminal Record

**Please describe the strategies you used effectively in the past to recruit and retain non-traditional students to your program - Responses**

- Insertion of the non-traditional gender in photos on web site.
- Use of nontraditional gender faculty in degree programs.
- We stress the need for males in our most of our Allied Health programs as a means to enhance future employment opportunities.
- Perkins funding used to recruit to nontraditional occupations based on gender. Funding also used to support incoming students with mentoring and advisement.
- We used former students to highlight the possibility of success. Incentives are given dependent on individual circumstances. We sell the program.
- The College has not actively recruited students in recent years. The reputation of the institution and the Nursing program bring the students to us without active recruitment.
- Held workshops throughout the year to recruit non-traditional students.
- Mentoring and advising by other non-traditional student graduates.

We are trying new initiatives this year- results are not yet apparent as these strategies were just recently implemented

- Through the Perkins grant, we have 1 non-traditional career counselor that serves students individually and in groups. We host workshops and conduct outreach to all students. We provide career exploration resources and information regarding non-traditional careers and the academic programs at Hostos that lead to non-traditional careers. Working with students individually and hosting workshops and panels explaining non-traditional careers and having mentors in the field has proven to be a highly effective strategy.
- We have not used any strategies yet but are planning to for the upcoming year. For our computer repair program, we will showcase a female and a success story.
- High school admissions events, BOCES collaborations, community agency outreach, single point of contact, classroom programming, career events, nontraditional events, employer/association partnerships
- Website profiles of successful students and alumni, student/faculty interactions
- Encourage non-traditional students to stay in program.
- Point out that non-traditional students have specific advantages to obtain employment in non-traditional areas.
- One on one recruitment and counseling. Students require intense guidance and support.
- Word of mouth has been our strongest tool for recruitment of non-traditional students. We do have women who have successfully completed and found employment in Welding and Building Trades. We have also had men successfully complete Cosmetology and Nursing Assistant. Our next step is to more aggressively market to this group, but doing so requires funds for marketing materials, placement, etc.
- Community outreach programs. Visits and use of past students to sell programs that were a success to them. Incentives in terms of books, bus pass, and other needs that challenge students to enroll as well as persist in program
- The Empowered Women effort will engage female prospective students in a number of activities focused on careers and the study of STEM, criminal justice, and business. The college will place particular emphasis on identifying and engaging role models among working professional women and the current JCC student body to share their experiences with prospective students.
- Neighborhood & Agency literature drops.
- Electronic listserv distribution of e-flyers to alumni & community
- Networking w/communities that have never hosted outreach events/encouraging them to do so.
- Attended community outreach events/setting up info tables
- Utilizing EOC website.
- Recruit eligible applicants by using various marketing and outreach strategies in multiple venues.
- Hold informational sessions to communicate expectations, demands, and benefits of the program.
- Holding interviews to determine a candidate's acceptance to the program.
- Counselor/Advisor for the specific program available to handle issues and provide support.
- In the past, EOC had a dedicated Retention Specialist staff position for coordinating early warning and intervention measures. This position aided in the timeliness of communications between students, faculty and staff that assisted in more effective intervention measures.
- If students express an interest to an advisor or faculty member, it's easy to counsel them and get them involved in activities, information, and/or advisement where they can be

attracted to non-traditional fields or where their interest in non-traditional fields can be strengthened.

- This year we are implementing a Health Care Pathways advisor to work with the significant population of our students (internally and externally) that aspire to health care careers and will provide specific encouragement to students pursuing non-traditional pathways. We hope that this strategy will help produce better results (we'll have to see).
- The best strategies are ensuring that non-traditional students who are in programs are supported so they don't leave the programs.
- Dedicated staff person
- We recruit on a national level and highlight student and faculty diversity in all publications, print and web.
- Regarding retention we have: Program specific counselors who implement early intervention approaches to retention; program specific orientations outlining expectations for the program and student responsibilities for achieving learning/program outcomes; and faculty are engaged in retention initiatives such as regular meetings student academic standing.

**Please describe the needs of your program. What would be most helpful to you to enable your efforts to recruit and retain non-traditional students into your CTE programs?**

- Resources such as faculty and facilities.
- Scholarships and other Incentives for Non-Traditional Students

**Which of the following mediums do you rely on most to meet your knowledge needs? Please rank the following mediums from highest to lowest priority to you, with being 1 the highest and 5 being the lowest. - Comments**

- I have not used virtual meetings in any manner for this purpose
- Since we recruit students and place graduates nationally, we find the Internet is the best use of outreach resources.
- Most hard copy materials are now available through the internet.

**Is there anything else you wish to tell us about your technical assistance needs that you would like us to consider as we move our 2013 - 2014 operational plan forward? -**

- Better clarity on which fields are gender-neutral.
- For instance in the Business Programs, women are non-traditional but comprise the largest portion of our student population in those programs. Also, radiologic technologists, computer graphics specialists? How do we know what comprises non-traditional? NET reports are very useful but are more job specific than field specific.
- The definition of a non-traditional is constantly changing and updated data on the percentages of females/males within each occupation will be helpful when informing students. A standard across the literature being disseminated across NY for all colleges recruiting non-traditional students.
- Given that we are required to meet this non-traditional student and certification quota and effort, it would be helpful if you provide us with the resources and TA before the new fiscal year so we can plan accordingly.
- Technical assistance is fundamental especially when dealing with the special population. In this regard the upfront cost invested returns positive Returns on investments both at the state level as well as the society as a whole.
- Perhaps what would work best is if NYS used the power of the bully pulpit AND the power of scholarships to encourage students to pursue non-traditional careers and



to ensure that there is coursework at the K-12 level to help students become better prepared.

- Right now, for example, there is no statewide push at the K-12 level to prepare students to go into any level of computing in any form or application, and computing fields are the fastest growing, most high demand, high wage positions with the greatest number of openings! Only students who self-select and learn on their own or take the one or two courses available to them in their high schools can hope to be slightly prepared to enter computing. If the state undertook a campaign matched with scholarships for high demand non-traditional fields, we could provide students with the preparatory coursework needed to enter these fields.

## **IV. ANALYSIS**

### ***Top Recruitment Barriers***

- Persistent cultural perceptions and stereotypes (54%)
- Funding support for outreach programs (46%)
- Lack of tools to partner and collaborate with community-based organizations (29%).
- Lack of outreach tools and best practices (25%)
- Insufficient role modeling (21%)

### ***Top Retention Barriers***

- Insufficient funding to provide support systems (70%)
- Lack of tools and best practices (50%)

### ***Promising Strategies***

- Workshops and panels (including high school career days) where students are exposed to career opportunities in non-traditional programs and where former non-traditional students are hosted and/or their success stories are shared.
- Creating a network between students and graduates, and publicizing the graduates' success stories on websites and flyers.
- Engaging female prospective students in a number of activities focused on non-traditional fields such as STEM, criminal justice, and business; and identifying and connecting role models to students.
- One-on-one counseling and advisement before and during the enrollment is one of the most effective strategies in recruiting and retaining students in non-traditional career education.
- Having a dedicated retention specialist and/or non-traditional career counsel on staff who provides support through timely and suitable intervention, and regular meetings.
- Faculty engagement in one-on-one mentoring and identifying early warning.
- Incentive provision such as textbooks, bus passes.

- Setting up info tables, holding informational sessions to communicate expectations, demands, and benefits of the program,
- Distributing hard and electronic copies of flyers.

***Technical Assistance Needs***

1. Economic outlooks of high skill, high wage jobs (62%).
2. Latest research on non-traditional students in CTE programs (57%)
3. Intervention and support services for non-traditional students (57%).
4. Fact sheets documenting statistics related to high demand, high skill occupations (52%),
5. Best practices in recruiting and retaining specific non-traditional student populations (52%).
6. Gender-neutral recruitment materials and instruments (48%).
7. Best practices in using information and communication technologies and social media to strengthen outreach (43%).
8. Best practices in developing and sustaining partnerships and collaborations with community-based organizations (43%).
9. Development of strategic plans to guide efforts to recruit and retain non-traditional students (goals, measurable objectives, activities, tasks, timeline, expected outputs and expected outcomes) (43%).
10. Best practices in internships and job placements and for non-traditional students (38%).
11. Staff development activities to increase competency in gender neutral instructions (38%).
12. Development of performance metrics and evaluation plan to monitor progress, and document success (29%).
13. Curriculum modification to increase sensitivity to non-traditional students (24%).

***Technical Assistance Delivery Mediums (in order of priority)***

- Internet based resources.
- Face-to-face trainings, forums, meetings.
- Informal communication with colleagues
- Hardcopy materials.
- Virtual meetings and peer exchanges with colleagues.

***Other Identified Needs***

- Institutions need a better definition on fields that are “gender-neutral”.
- Technical assistance need to be provided before the new fiscal to enable effective planning.
- There is a need for a state-wide policy to encourage students at the K-12 level to pursue non-traditional careers.
- It is critical to utilize both the power of bully pulpit and scholarships to increase students’ participation in non-traditional education.

## **Response Rates**

The response rate varies crucially across regions. The survey is distributed across 56 institutions and, in total, 70 individuals were asked to complete it. Because there are more than one contact in some institutions, both “institutional response rate” and “contacts response rate” are calculated and 10 regions of New York State are ranked accordingly.

- Finger Lakes region has the highest institutional response rate 67% which is followed by Mid-Hudson Valley (57%), Capital District (60%), Mohawk Valley (50%), Western New York (43%), Long Island (33%), North County (25%) and New York City (20%); while none of the institutions in Central New York and Southern Tier responded to the survey. The overall institutional response rate is 38%.
- In terms of contacts’ responses, the highest rate are Finger Lakes (75%), Mid-Hudson valley (56%), Capital District and Mohawk Valley (both 50%), Western New York (30%), Long Island and North County (both 25%), and New York City (17%), while none of the individual contacts in Central New York and Southern Tier responded. The overall individual contact response rate is 34%.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The survey re-affirmed what we know about barriers facing CTE Perkins-funded programs in recruiting and retaining students to careers that are non-traditional for their genders. It illuminated what NET needs to incorporate in its operational plans to meet the technical assistance needs of programs. The following are tasks that NET will accomplish on or before July 2014.

1. Conduct a study that synthesizes the research and practice literature and produce the following resources:
  - Fact Sheets documenting economic outlooks of high skill, high wage jobs and statistics related to high demand, high skill occupations.
  - Evidence-based best practices to intervene, support and ensure completion of students of their nontraditional educational journey.
  - Best practices in using information and communication technologies and social media to strengthen outreach
  - Best practices in developing and sustaining partnerships and collaborations with community-based organizations.
2. Development of workshop(s) to disseminate the results of the literature.

3. Development of workshop(s) to help grantees develop strategic plans to guide efforts to recruit and retain non-traditional students (goals, measurable objectives, activities, tasks, timeline, expected outputs and expected outcomes)
4. Enriching the website with resources that address the needs of survey respondents.