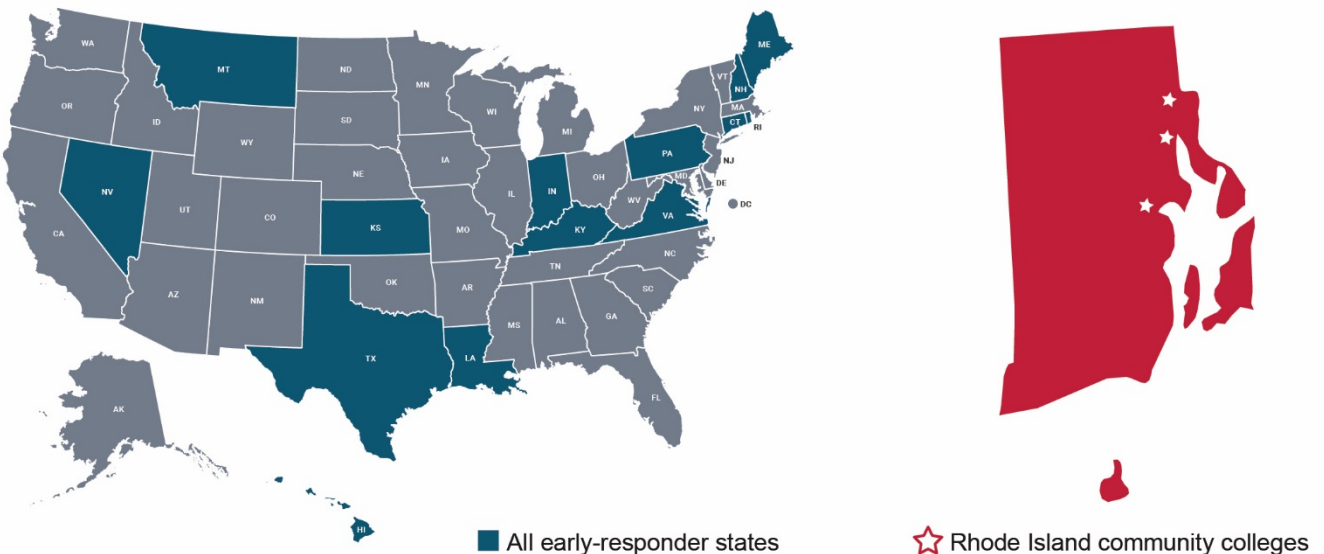


In late 2020, the Community College of Rhode Island participated in a national study of community college workforce education. Rhode Island was one of 14 states where education authorities encouraged colleges to respond early enough in 2020 to receive preliminary statewide results in January 2021. This brief compares Rhode Island to the 14 states in this early-responder group.

The goal of the study: to explore the innovation under way at community colleges across the US and highlight what these institutions are doing to put Americans to work as the nation recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

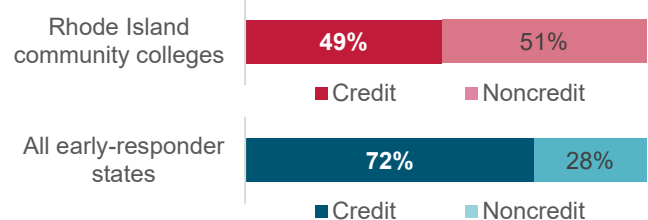
Early responders



Credit and noncredit enrollment

Community colleges report abundant information about students enrolled in credit-eligible programs. Much less is known about learners enrolled in institutions' noncredit divisions. This study begins to address that gap, with a special focus on two-year colleges' noncredit workforce education programs and relationships with employers.

Percentage of students in credit & noncredit programs



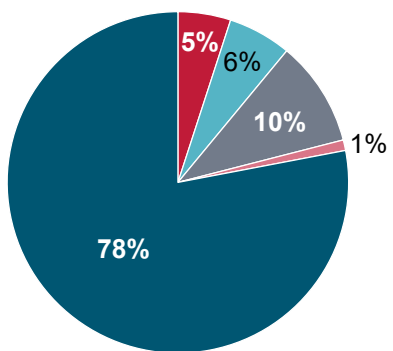
In 2019, 49 percent of Community College of Rhode Island students were enrolled in credit-eligible programs; 51 percent were enrolled in noncredit programs. This is a significantly larger share than the average across all early-responder states, where 28 percent of students were enrolled in noncredit programs.

Noncredit programs

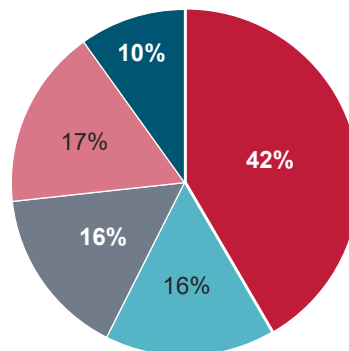
Noncredit programs may include customized contract training provided for specific employers, occupational education programs open to all qualified students, remedial education, English as a second language and personal interest courses, among other types of instruction.

In 2019, 5 percent of Community College of Rhode Island noncredit students were enrolled in occupational programs open to all qualified students – a significantly smaller share than the average among community colleges in all early-responder states.

Community College of Rhode Island



All early-responder states

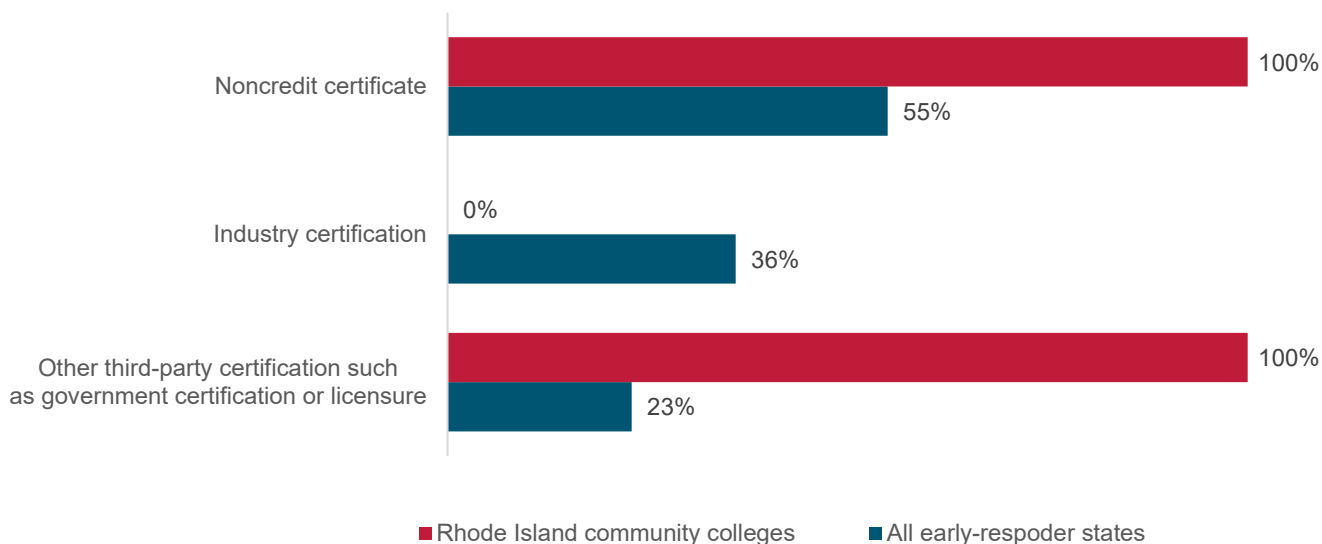


Noncredit workforce education

Credentials earned in noncredit occupational education programs

Students who complete noncredit workforce programs generally earn a credential of some kind, sometimes several credentials. The Community College of Rhode Island reported that no noncredit workforce students who completed programs earned industry certifications, but 100 percent earned other third-party certifications or licensure.

Percentage of program completers who earned credentials



Embedding industry certifications

Unlike traditional academic credentials, which signal that students have attended and completed a course of study, industry certifications signal what learners know and what job-related tasks they can perform – occupation-specific knowledge and skills measured by tests developed by industry groups.

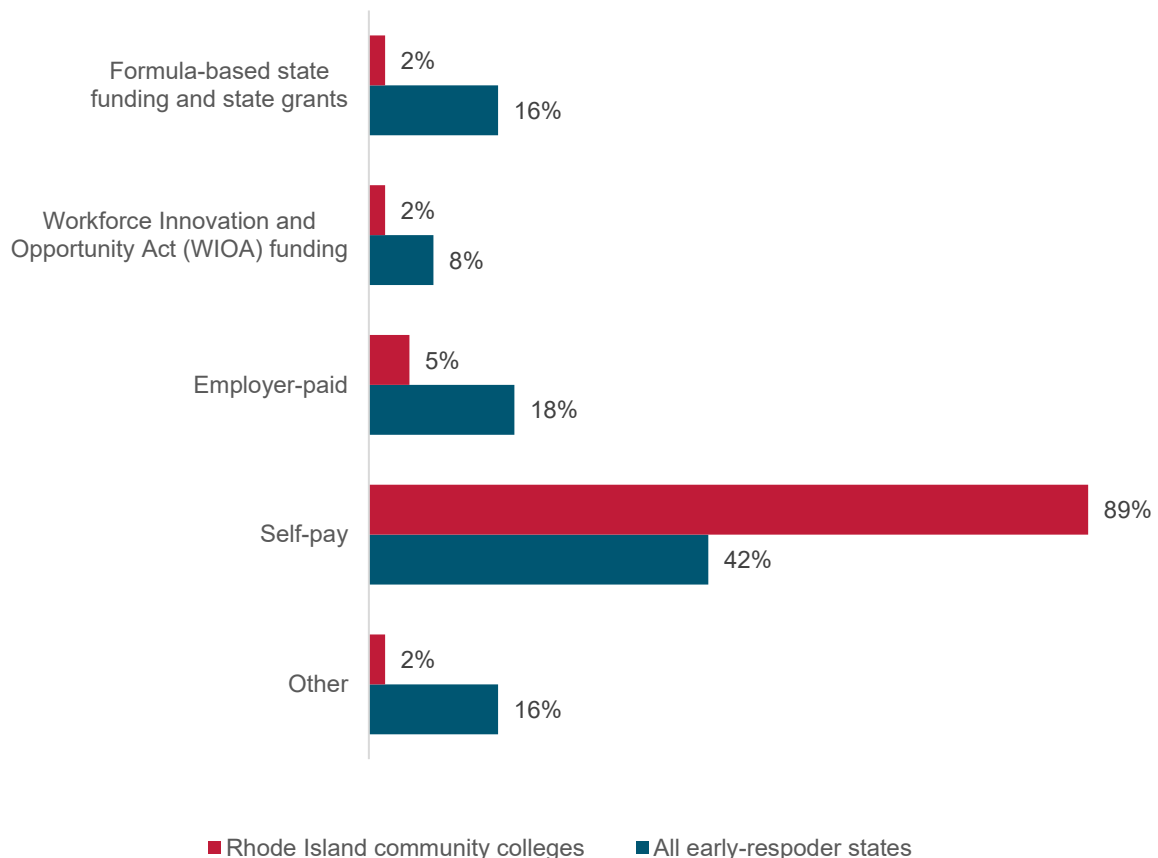
Percentage of Community College of Rhode Island programs that embed certifications in credit & noncredit programs

Programs	Requires an assessment to complete the program	Program prepares learners for the assessment but does not require it
Credit	11-30% of programs	10% or less of programs
Noncredit	10% or less of programs	11-30% of programs

Funding

The Community College of Rhode Island looks to a variety of sources to provide funding for noncredit occupational education, with 89 percent coming from students paying out of pocket.

Funding sources



Quality assurance

The Community College of Rhode Island uses a variety of strategies to ensure the quality of noncredit occupational education.

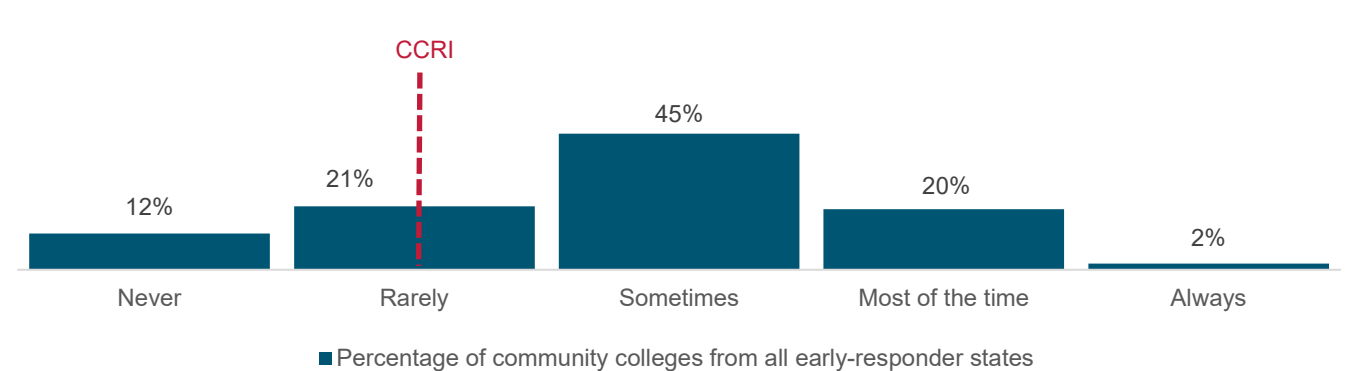
How two-year colleges ensure the quality of noncredit programs

Quality assurance	Does Community College of Rhode Island do this?	Percent of community colleges from early-responder states that do this
Programs are designed or revised regularly based on labor market information from employers	✓	96%
Students earn industry certifications or licensure	✓	91%
Programs meet WIOA or Perkins standards or are approved by the state workforce board	✗	64%
Institution tracks post-completion employment outcomes	✗	25%

Leveraging noncredit learning for college credit

The Community College of Rhode Island reported that noncredit students who later enroll in credit-eligible programs can ‘rarely’ leverage most or all of what they learned in a noncredit program for college credit– significantly less often than at many community colleges in early-responder states.

Colleges where noncredit occupational students who later enroll in credit-eligible programs can leverage what they learned for college credit



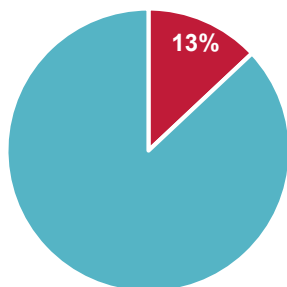
Demographics

Many community colleges do not track demographic data for noncredit workforce students. At the Community College of Rhode Island, data on race and ethnicity are available for less than one-quarter of the noncredit workforce student body. Across all 14 early-responder states, information of this kind is available for 68 percent of noncredit workforce students.

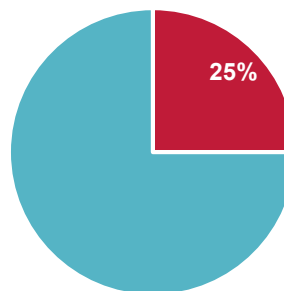
Employer engagement

Employers collaborate with community colleges in a wide variety of ways, from offering occasional labor market advice to partnering actively to design and provide instruction.

Employers offering customized contract training



Employers offering work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships and co-ops



Percentage of employer partners at Rhode Island community colleges

More about this study

The Community College of Rhode Island participated in this study in fall 2020. All questions in the survey asked about fiscal year 2019.

Community College of Rhode Island data were compared with data from 127 community colleges in 14 early-responder states. The survey is still being administered in some parts of the country.

As postsecondary workforce education evolves, so does the language used to describe it, and different educators in different states often use different terminology. The language used in this study represents an effort to find common ground but may not conform exactly with the terminology used in every state.

Participating colleges could pass over questions they were unable to answer; missing responses were excluded from calculated percentages.



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