



ACHIEVE COLLEGE EDUCATION (ACE) THROUGH COMMUNITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

I-LEAD enrolls adult working learners in an accredited Associate's Degree program delivered onsite in their neighborhood (school, church, library, housing development, community based organization) during evening hours, in an accelerated cohort-based format, with a real-world curriculum that complements rather than conflicts with the competing demands of work and family.

I-LEAD designed ACE to address the primary barriers adults face when pursuing a college degree: time, cost, skills and culture. I-LEAD coordinates a collaborative of twelve community-based organizations across the SEPA region to deliver the program. As of fall 2013, 300 adult learners have earned their Associate's Degrees through ACE and over five hundred are currently pursuing their degree with graduation rates equaling 70%.

The program's unique ingredients of success include:

- *Convenience of Time and Location.* Classes take place at the same time and place two evenings per week throughout the program close to where students live in an accelerated format of four eight-week mini semesters per academic year.
- *Maximum financial aid.* Students achieve full-time status and low-income students generally can fund 95% of tuition (priced substantially below average market costs) through financial aid.
- *Financial sustainability.* Bringing college directly into the neighborhood removes transportation and campus expenses, and leverages underutilized assets of neighborhood institutions. In the ACE business model, tuition revenue is shared with community partners, generating income and scaling resources with program growth.
- *Relevant Curriculum.* Curriculum content relevant to work and life operationalizes the 21st century skill set sought by employers: oral and written communication, information technology, analytical skills, team building and leadership, and is delivered through a classroom culture and teaching style targeted to adults. Non-credit remedial courses are taken alongside credit-bearing courses to efficiently develop college skills.
- *Size of Community Higher Education Schools.* Limiting the student body per site to 100-150 students facilitates a personalized learning community.
- *Cohort-based model.* Students provide peer support demonstrated critical to success as they journey through the program together in learning cohorts.
- *Student Success Services.* A single point of contact at the community institution delivers academic and non-academic support services to help students navigate the higher education system and overcome barriers.



PARTNER ROLES

- **I-LEAD** serves as facilitator, forming the partnerships, coordinating operations, providing technical assistance, and sourcing and training faculty in adult learning pedagogy and Leadership curriculum content.
- **COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS** leverage existing educational facilities and community relationships to host classes, recruit students, and provide success services that increase retention and graduation rates.
- **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS** provide Middle States accreditation and financial aid processing, application, matriculation and graduation procedures, hire faculty, and maintain a suite of degree offerings.

I-LEAD welcomes your interest in and support for ACE; please contact us for further information:

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DEGREES OFFERED

- Associate's Degree in Leadership Studies
- Associate's Degree Human Services
- Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education
- Associate's Degree in Law and Justice
- Articulation agreements with four year colleges and universities for transition to Bachelor's Degree

STUDENT BASE

ACE consortium students are members of underrepresented groups in higher education, ages 20 to 40, many of whom are first generation college students or returning to college after sending their own children to school. Student cohorts reflect the demographic diversity of urban core neighborhoods where the program takes place: 70% African American, 25% Latino, and 5% White. The majority of students are employed, but cannot advance or compete for higher paying jobs without a degree. The college attainment rate of working adults in ACE neighborhoods is 0-7%, compared to the Pennsylvania state average of 27%. Education deficits create the dramatic difference between poverty levels in these neighborhoods (50-70%) compared to the poverty level of the state as a whole (19%).

HISTORY OF ACE ASSOCIATES DEGREE PROGRAM

- I. Alongside neighborhood leaders, the co-founders of I-LEAD, former D.A. Lynne Abraham and Assistant D.A. David Castro, worked in some of the city's most distressed neighborhoods to resolve community problems. This productive collaboration led to a recognition that the key to changing a community's prospects lay in cultivating the leadership skills and leadership capacities from within that particular place.
- II. I-LEAD was formed in 1995 to promote these grassroots community leadership efforts by delivering leadership training and technical assistance in 16 cities across the Commonwealth in partnership with the Pennsylvania Weed and Seed program.
- III. At the behest of adult trainees seeking college credit for their coursework, I-LEAD translated its leadership training into an accredited two year college program 2005 in collaboration with Harcum College. Graduates now gain not only leadership skills to apply in their communities, but a valuable credential in the workplace. ACE was piloted at the Chester Education Foundation in Chester, PA and now operates cohorts in Philadelphia, Upper Darby, Coatesville, and Reading, PA with large social service agencies: Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Chester Education Foundation; faith based institutions: Calvary Baptist Church, Deliverance Evangelistic Church, Life Transforming Ministries, Lombard Presbyterian, Upper Darby Community Outreach; and secondary schools: I-LEAD Charter School, One Bright Ray, Universal Audenried Charter High School.
- IV. The ACE model is replicable in neighborhoods across the nation and can become a key strategy to achieve President Obama's goal to restore the United States position as the global leader in college educated citizens. In recognition of the innovation and success of the model, I-LEAD received a multi-year investment from the Knight Foundation in 2008 and founder David Castro was named an Ashoka Fellow in 2009.

I-LEAD VISION AND MISSION

To liberate human potential in challenged communities, I-LEAD strengthens leadership and creates breakthrough learning via innovative curriculum, access to higher education and charter schools.