PACE CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM PROFILE:

Instituto del Progreso Latino, *Carreras en Salud*

March 2014

OPRE

PACE
Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education

This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary. Suggested citation: Copson, Elizabeth, Martinson, Karin and Karen Gardiner. (2014). Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education Career Pathways Program Profile: Instituto del Progreso Latino's Carreras en Salud Program. OPRE Report # 2014-20, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Submitted to:
Brendan Kelly, Co-Project Officer
Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Contract Number: HHSP23320072913YC

Project Director:
Karen Gardiner
Abt Associates, Inc.
4550 Montgomery Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20814

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This report and other reports sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation are available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/pathways-for-advancing-careers-and-education.

Introduction

A substantial gap exists between the skills of the labor force and the needs of employers in many high-growth industries, including health care, technology, and manufacturing. This gap results in unemployment while well-paying jobs go unfilled. At the same time, many low-skilled adults persist in low-wage work with little opportunity for advancement.[1] Career pathways programs aim to address the economy's vital need for skilled workers while offering low-wage workers the opportunity to obtain education and training and advance into the middle class.

To achieve their goals, career pathways programs offer low-skilled adults well-articulated training and employment steps targeted to locally in-demand jobs combined with promising instructional approaches and supportive services. Policy makers and practitioners show great interest in career pathways programs as education and training approaches for low-skilled individuals. The *Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE)* study is using an experimental design to assess the effectiveness of nine career pathways programs across the country (See **Box 1** at the conclusion of this profile).

An experimental evaluation design assigns individuals eligible for a program via lottery to a treatment group that can participate in the program or a control group that cannot participate but can access other services in the community. Because the assignment process is random, there are no systematic differences between the treatment and control groups at the time they enter the study. Thus, any differences detected during the follow-up period can be attributed to the program. Random assignment is considered the gold standard of program evaluation.

This profile provides an overview of one career pathways program, *Carreras en Salud (Carreras)*, designed and operated by Instituto del Progreso Latino (Instituto), a nonprofit organization located in Chicago, Illinois.[2] *Carreras* was established to help low-skilled Latinos gain the necessary skills to move into Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) positions. Through a series of courses that include both basic skills instruction geared specifically for those interested in nursing occupations as well as health care training, *Carreras* is designed to provide participants with a clearly articulated pathway to progressively more skilled and higher paying jobs in the nursing field. The program also provides an array of services to support students while they attend classes, including academic advising; assistance with tuition, child care, and transportation; support to address nonacademic issues; and assistance in finding employment when they complete the program.

This profile first explains discusses the career pathways framework used in the PACE evaluation, which provides a common approach for explaining and assessing career pathways programs. It then describes Instituto's program and how it fits within the career pathways framework.[3]

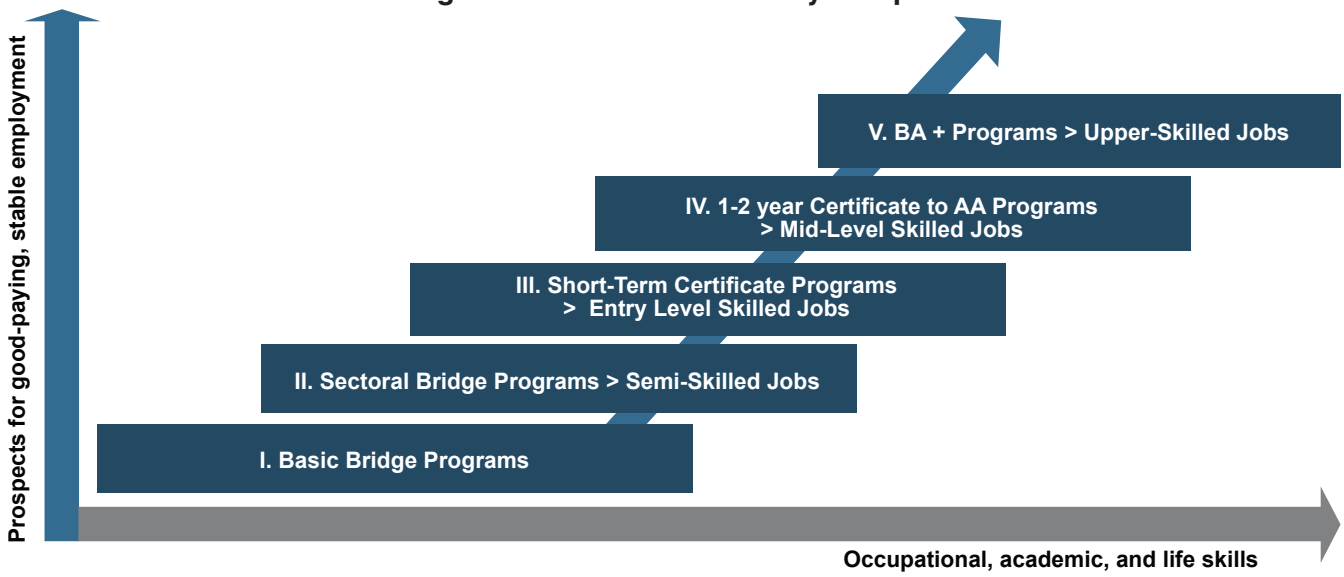
The PACE Career Pathways Framework

The career pathways approach presupposes that postsecondary education and training should be organized as a series of manageable steps leading to successively better credentials and employment opportunities in growing occupations. Each step is designed to prepare participants for the next level of employment and education and also provide a credential with labor market value. To effectively engage, retain, and facilitate learning, programs integrate four core elements: (1) comprehensive assessment, (2) promising approaches to basic and occupational skills, (3) academic and nonacademic supports, and (4) strategies for connecting participants to employers. Individual programs vary in terms of the emphasis placed on each core component, although all are comprehensive in nature in order to address the learning and life challenges facing adult participants. Career pathways programs typically include partnerships with multiple providers, including community-based organizations, community and technical colleges, human services and workforce agencies, and employers and their representatives.

Although steps in career pathways programs vary with their target populations, focal occupations, and service strategies, the broad training and employment levels shown in **Figure 1** provide a basis for classifying programs.

The first two steps (I and II) represent "on ramp" programs designed to prepare low-skilled participants for college-level training and lower-skilled jobs with a career focus. The next two steps (III and IV) provide college-level training for "middle skills"

Figure 1: The Career Pathways Steps



employment—jobs requiring some college but less than a bachelor's degree (e.g., an associate's degree or shorter certificate program). The final step (V) includes interventions to promote completion of a bachelor's degree and more advanced credentials. Career pathways are designed to allow entries, exits, and re-entries at each stage—depending on skill levels and prior training, employment prospects, and changing personal situations. Programs vary in terms of entry and exit points as well as steps incorporated.

Instituto's *Carreras en Salud* Program

Carreras en Salud brings together several key components of the career pathways framework. First, it offers training as a series of **well-articulated steps for individuals to increase their basic skill levels and receive certification in the nursing field**. The program serves Latinos with basic skills levels ranging from fourth through twelfth grade. The program entry point depends on skill level. Second, the program provides a **range of support services,** including academic advising, assistance with nonacademic issues, and tuition assistance. Finally, the program provides **employment assistance** through a job readiness class and employment specialists who maintain relationships with employers and connect students to job openings.

Program Goals, Target Population, and Structure

Established in 1977, Instituto del Progreso Latino provides a range of education, training, and support services for Latino individuals and their families. Located in the Pilsen neighborhood in southwest Chicago, a low-income, predominately Latino community, Instituto serves over 14,000 individuals annually through services that include English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), and General Educational Development (GED) courses for adults, a training program in manufacturing, employment and financial services, a charter high school, and preparation for the citizenship exam.

Instituto developed *Carreras en Salud* in 2005 to address the shortage of Latinos in the health care field

and to help low-income Latinos improve their basic skills and enroll in training for nursing occupations. Each instructional level is designed as a "bridge" to the next. This allows students to raise their skills to the level required to enroll in the next training step in the nursing field. The program starts with a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) bridge to prepare individuals for the CNA level and moves to a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) level and potentially to an advanced nursing degree. As students move through the program and complete higher levels of training, they have the opportunity to obtain employment that could increase their wages significantly.

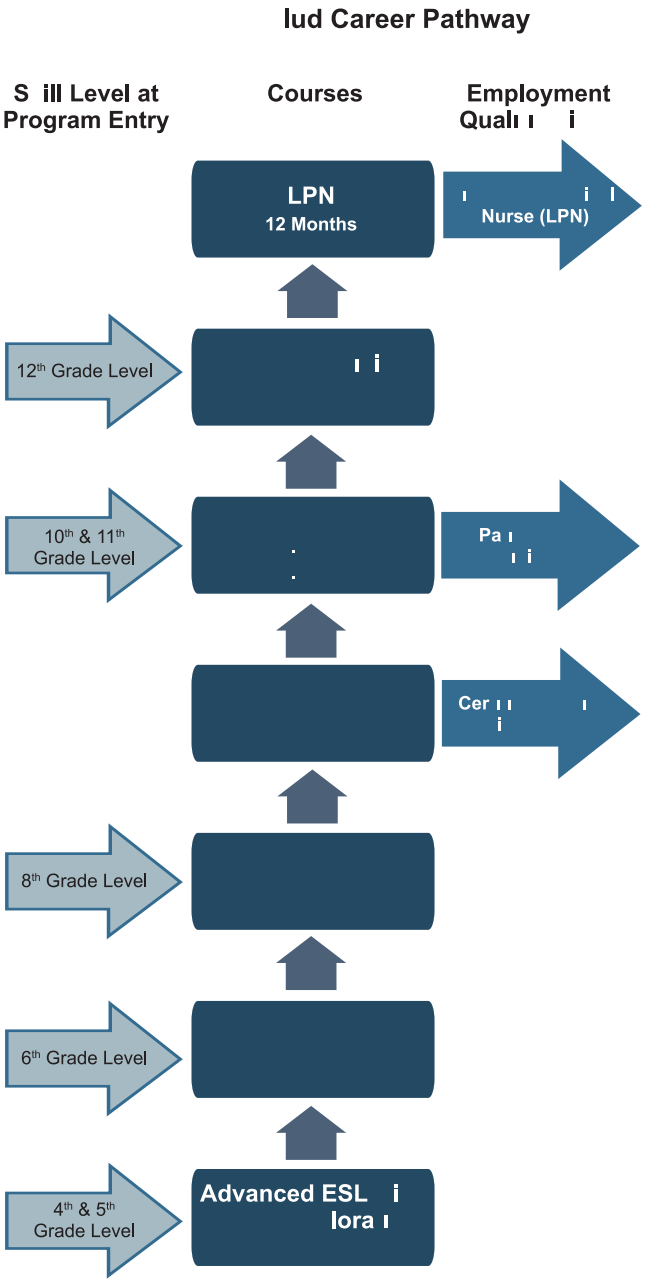
Carreras targets adult Latinos in the Chicago metropolitan area who have low- or pre-college basic skills levels and are interested in nursing. To be eligible, individuals must have an annual family income of less than $35,000 and English literacy skills at the fourth grade level or above.

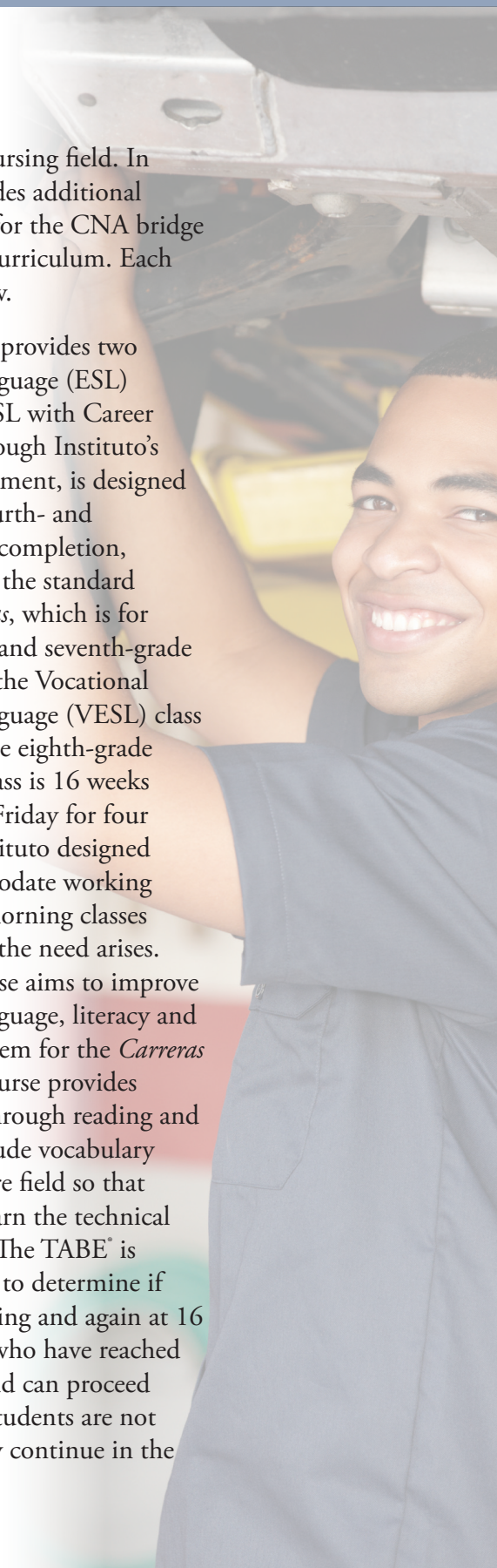
Within the PACE career pathways model, the *Carreras* program helps individuals move through all five steps—from the basic bridge program (Step I in **Figure 1**) to a bachelor's level program (Step V). **Figure 2** depicts the full sequence of courses that make up the *Carreras* pathway, as well as the basic skill levels required to qualify for entry into each level. The figure also shows the nursing professions that participants would be qualified for after completing levels along the pathway.

Career Pathways Components

Carreras incorporates key components of the career pathways approach including **academic and nonacademic assessments**, **a well-articulated path** to higher levels of training that **includes basic skills and occupational instruction**, **academic and nonacademic support**, and **connections to employment**. This section describes each component.

Figure 2: *Carreras en Salud* Career Pathway





Comprehensive Assessment

Carreras staff administer the TABE® Locator to individuals interested in applying to the program. The TABE® Locator results indicate academic skill level and guide staff in identifying which formal assessment applicants should complete. Those who score lower on the TABE® Locator take the full TABE® to determine whether they should enter at the Advanced ESL with Career Exploration, ESL or VESL level. Those with higher TABE® Locator scores take the COMPASS®, which determines placement for CNA, the Pre-LPN bridge, and the LPN Prerequisites level.

Carreras also asks applicants to complete a self-administered questionnaire about their barriers to career advancement and service needs. Once students enroll in the program, staff use this assessment to create a support service plan (discussed further below).

Basic and Occupational Skills Training

Carreras' well-articulated, educational steps provide a clear and structured path to jobs that require certificates and degrees from accredited institutions. *Carreras* students in the CNA, LPN Prerequisites, and LPN program levels take classes at Chicago City Colleges, which use their own instructors and standard curricula. Students in Advanced ESL, ESL, VESL, and Pre-LPN take classes at Instituto. These classes use *Carreras* instructors and specially designed curricula targeted to the needs of the low-skilled Latino population and designed to increase basic skill levels within the context of health care and the nursing field. In addition, *Carreras* provides additional (noncredit) instruction for the CNA bridge program using its own curriculum. Each bridge is described below.

Bridge to CNA. Carreras provides two English as a Second Language (ESL) class levels. Advanced ESL with Career Exploration, offered through Instituto's Adult Education Department, is designed for individuals at the fourth- and fifth-grade levels. Upon completion, participants continue to the standard ESL class within *Carreras*, which is for individuals at the sixth- and seventh-grade levels. ESL ladders into the Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) class (individuals testing at the eighth-grade level start here). Each class is 16 weeks long, Monday through Friday for four hours each evening. Instituto designed the schedule to accommodate working students, and at times morning classes have been offered when the need arises. The Advanced ESL course aims to improve participants' English language, literacy and math skills to prepare them for the *Carreras* ESL course. The ESL course provides instruction in English through reading and writing lessons that include vocabulary tailored to the health care field so that students can begin to learn the technical vocabulary for nursing. The TABE® is administered midcourse to determine if participants are progressing and again at 16 weeks to identify those who have reached the eighth-grade level and can proceed to the VESL course. If students are not yet ready for VESL, they continue in the

ESL program and work with an academic advisor to identify if tutoring or other resources could help them advance. The VESL course continues to build English proficiency and introduces participants to the vocabulary and skills needed to become a CNA. Lessons feature material that individuals will likely encounter on the state CNA certification exam. The TABE® is again administered at the midway and final points of the course and those who test at the tenth-grade level can transition to the CNA program.

CNA Program. The Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center reserves spaces in its CNA courses for *Carreras* participants. For these 10- to 12-week courses, classroom instruction is coupled with clinical hours to provide hands-on experience applicable to the role of a CNA. At the conclusion of the course, participants take the state exam to become CNAs. At this point, *Carreras* participants can choose to seek a CNA position or continue with their training, or do both.

Pre-LPN Bridge Program. This bridge advances participants' reading and math skills while integrating the biology, anatomy, physiology, and psychology instruction that is required for subsequent LPN training. This bridge is divided into two 16-week modules: the first prepares students to advance from a tenth to an eleventh-grade-equivalent level in reading and math; the second prepares those at the eleventh-grade level to pass the COMPASS® exam, which is required by the City Colleges of Chicago for entry into their programs. Both are held at Instituto and taught by *Carreras* instructors. A customized GED program is available to students who lack a high school diploma, which is needed for entry into the college-level courses. The bridge program also provides electrocardiogram (EKG) training and instruction in phlebotomy, which enable individuals who complete the second module to qualify as a Patient Care Technician (PCT).

LPN Prerequisites. Before entering the LPN training program, individuals must first complete college prerequisite courses in math, English, biology, physiology, and psychology. Instituto's college partners provide instruction for these courses. It generally takes students two or three semesters to complete them. Individuals testing at the eleventh or twelfth grade level on the COMPASS can start at this bridge level.

LPN Program. Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center reserves places in its LPN program for *Carreras* participants. On average, it takes students one year to complete the LPN program, after which they may sit for the National Council Licensure Exam-Practical Nurse (NCLEX-PN) exam in order to become certified as an LPN.

Academic and Nonacademic Supports

Carreras includes an array of support services to encourage successful completion of the courses. Students in the Advanced ESL, ESL, VESL, and Pre-LPN levels have a case manager and an academic advisor. Case managers work individually with participants to identify and arrange for necessary support services, such as child care and transportation. Academic advisors assist students in completing their coursework and provide academic support. Students in the CNA, LPN Prerequisites, and LPN levels have an academic advisor only, as program administrators found these students needed less nonacademic support. If these individuals have nonacademic challenges, the academic advisor refers them to a case manager. Each month, case managers, academic advisors, and employment specialists (see below) meet to discuss participants' progress and coordinate support.

Academic advising. The academic advisors help students set academic goals, monitoring their

progress and arranging tutoring for those needing additional instructional support. Students first meet with their academic advisor to finalize their class schedule. Once classes start, advisors work with students to develop an academic plan that specifies academic and career goals as well as the sequence of courses required to reach those goals. During this meeting, academic advisors also discuss the wages and duties associated with various nursing jobs, so that students understand the types of work responsibilities associated with their career goals. Academic advisors then meet with students in person at Instituto at least once a month, although telephone conversations and email correspondence may occur more frequently. During the in-person meetings, academic advisors discuss class performance, grades, tutoring needs, and preparation for future placement tests.

The *Carreras* program provides tutoring to students at all levels. Students can request tutoring or instructors can recommend it. Staff estimate that by the end of each academic semester almost all participants, regardless of level, use tutoring services at least once. Additionally, CNA and LPN students can attend weekly tutoring sessions to prepare for their state certification exams.

Nonacademic supports. Case managers are responsible for addressing students' supportive service needs and identifying nonacademic barriers to academic progress. Advanced ESL, ESL, VESL and Pre-LPN students are required to meet with their case manager in-person once a month. During the first meeting, generally held within the first two weeks of class, case managers review the participants' self-administered questionnaire and work with them to identify and document needs in a support services plan. Case managers also help students apply for social service or public benefits programs or to access services beyond what Instituto provides. The case managers monitor class attendance daily and follow up with students who are not attending. Case managers notify academic advisors about attendance or other academic issues.

Case managers work with participants to arrange the support they need to attend and complete classes. These include:

- *Child care.* Instituto provides in-house child care during the workday for children ages 3 to 8. Instituto also runs an after school program from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. for 7- to 15-year olds. Staff also arranged for the local YMCA to offer an evening program from 4 to 10 p.m. each week night that serves 9- to 14-year-olds. *Carreras* also helps participants apply for child care assistance through Illinois Action for Children.[4]
- *Transportation.* The program provides transportation assistance in the form of bus cards and vouchers for participants who use public transit.
- *Other community resources.* Case managers refer students to other resources in the community as needed. For instance, Latinos en Acción provides support in cases of domestic violence and the Resurrection Project provides financial coaching and legal assistance.

Financial assistance. Instituto fully funds the Advanced ESL, ESL, VESL and Pre-LPN programs through private grants and federal grants such as the Health Profession Opportunity Grant.[5] Participants pay nothing out of pocket. Participants in the CNA, LPN Prerequisite and LPN programs pay for courses through standard financial aid, such as Pell Grants or Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding. *Carreras* staff assist them in identifying the resources for which they are eligible and in completing and submitting the applications.

Connecting Participants to Employers

The *Carreras* program uses a range of strategies for connecting students with jobs. Students work with employment specialists after completing their training programs. Employment specialists also help students find jobs while they are in training if they need income.

The employment specialists hold a job-readiness class that *Carreras* participants at all levels are strongly encouraged to attend upon completion of a training program. The week-long class is offered once a month and meets for two hours every evening for five days. The class has an interactive format that includes videos and activities, such as mock interviews. Each day of class addresses a different topic and skill (e.g., filling out job applications, resume writing, interviewing, labor market and expected wages, time management and finances, and professional attire). After completing the class, individuals can meet one-on-one with an employment specialist to work on resume writing. Job specialists follow up with employed students monthly for at least one year.

Students in the CNA and LPN levels also receive direct employment experience through internships. College programs have agreements with hospitals and other health care facilities to provide practical training.

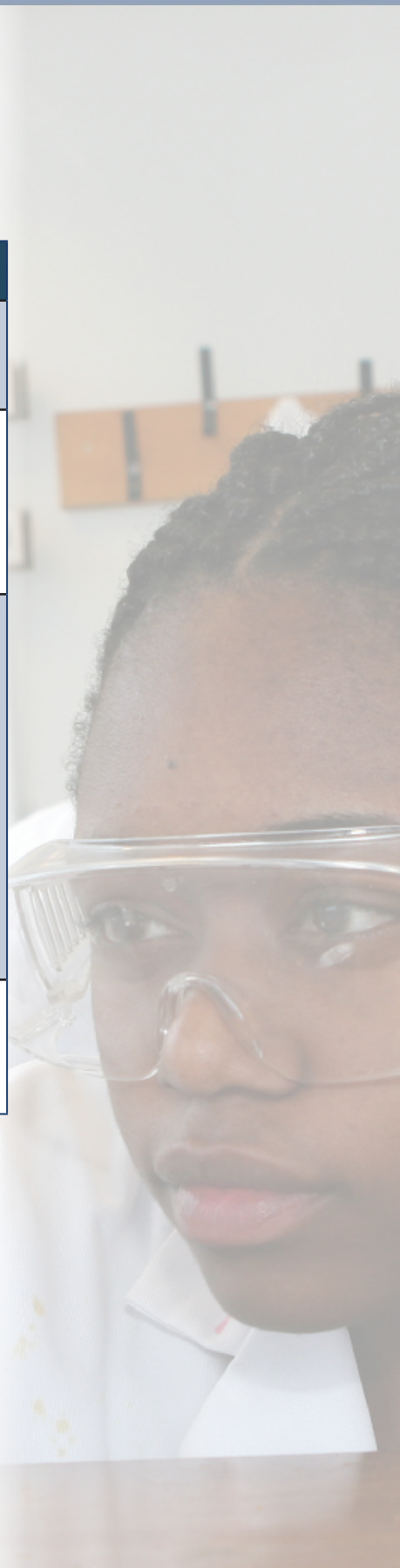
Additionally, *Carreras* has a health care advisory council that includes local employers. The council meets semiannually to discuss what employers seek in job candidates and potential curriculum changes. Additional connections to local employers are fostered through *Carreras*' employment specialists, who are responsible for building and maintaining relationships with local health care employers, referring *Carreras* students to specific job openings, and ensuring that employment sites are in neighborhoods easily accessible to *Carreras* students.

Comparison to Other Offerings

In the absence of *Carrera,* individuals would likely access other services available at Instituto, such as ESL and GED classes; citizenship preparation classes; a manufacturing training program; and *Mujer Avanzando,* a leadership development and financial literacy program targeted at single mothers. While the Chicago metropolitan area offers a diverse range of training options outside of Instituto, the general pathway for low-skilled students who cannot enter directly into CNA or LPN training is to enroll in a standard, stand-alone ESL course or in basic skills courses, which are not likely to provide the contextualized instruction or strong support that *Carreras* provides. Similarly, students who qualify for CNA, LPN Prerequisites, or LPN programs will not receive the range of academic and nonacademic support and employment assistance provided by Instituto. **Figure 3** below illustrates the different career pathways services available to *Carreras* students and to those who access other services.

Figure 3: Comparison of Career Pathways Components Available Through Carreras and in the Community

Career Pathway Component	Carreras en Salud	Standard Community Offerings
Assessment	• COMPASS or TABE • Nonacademic assessment to identify barriers to participation and to create a supportive services plan	• COMPASS or TABE
Curriculum	• Basic skills instruction contextualized for nursing field • Well-articulated path linking basic skills instruction and a progression of nursing credentials • Occupational training at community colleges	• Standard, stand-alone ESL and basic skills classes • Occupational training at community colleges or other institutions
Supports	• Structured academic advising and tutoring • Assistance with nonacademic issues and supports • Tutoring • No out-of-pocket expenses for tuition for Advanced ESL, ESL, VESL, and Pre-LPN programs • Assistance attaining financial aid for college classes • On-site child care provided free of charge • Transportation assistance • Referrals to community resources as needed	• Standard financial aid assistance • Standard academic advising services provided by community colleges or other training providers
Employment Connections	• Job readiness class • Individualized job search assistance • Clinical internships for CNA and LPN students	• Job search assistance through community One-Stop Career Centers • Clinical internships for CNA and LPN students



Summary

Instituto developed the *Carreras en Salud* program to help low-income Latinos improve their basic skills and enroll in training for nursing occupations. *Carreras* offers a sequence of well-articulated steps that allows students to begin the program with an academic skill level as low as sixth grade. The career pathways components include:

- Academic and nonacademic assessments.
- Basic skills and health care training.
- Strong support through academic advising, financial assistance, and child care and transportation assistance.
- Services to help students prepare for and secure employment.

For more information about *Carreras*, go to http://www.idpl.org/idpl_*Carreras*_en_salud.html.

Notes

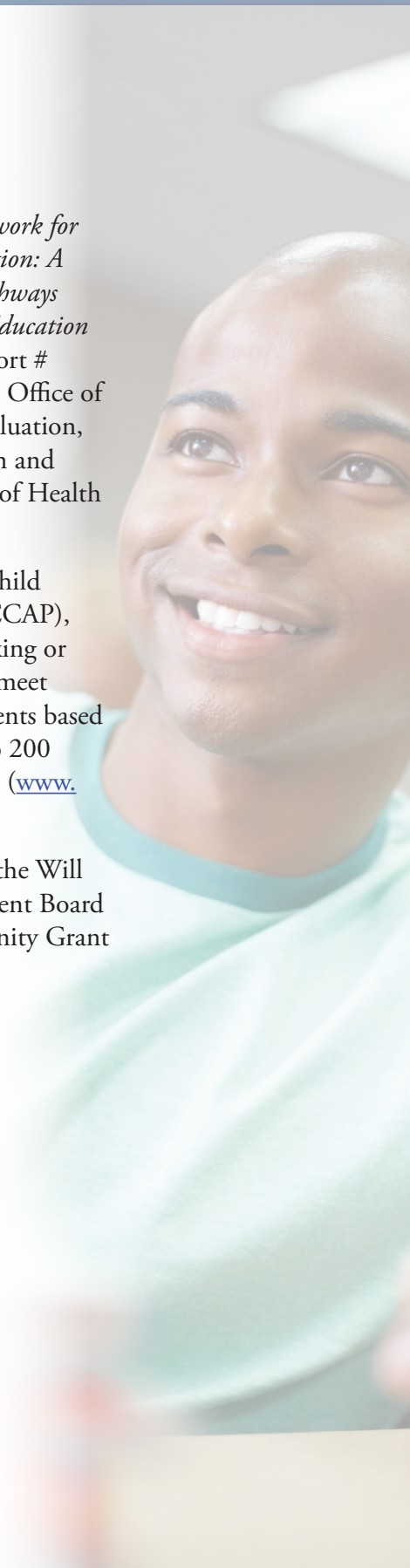
1. Carnevale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*. Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Retrieved from https://cew.georgetown.edu/report/help-wanted/.

2. *Carreras en Salud* receives support from the Open Society Foundations, the Joyce Foundation, the Administration for Children and Families' Health Professions Opportunity Grant program. The evaluation of *Carreras* through PACE is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

3. For more information on the PACE framework, see www.career-pathways.org: Fein, David J. (2012). *Career Pathways as a Framework for Program Design and Evaluation: A Working Paper From the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) Project.* OPRE Report # 2012-30, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

4. To qualify for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), parents must be either working or attending school and must meet income eligibility requirements based on family size that are set to 200 percent of the poverty level. (www.actforchildren.org)

5. Instituto is a subgrantee of the Will County Workforce Investment Board Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG).



Overview of the PACE Evaluation

The Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) evaluation, a 10-year effort funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and led by Abt Associates Inc., is a random assignment evaluation of nine promising career pathways programs that aim to improve employment and self-sufficiency outcomes for low-income, low-skilled individuals. The goal is to produce methodologically rigorous evidence of the effectiveness of career pathways approaches that will address issues of interest to federal, state, and local policy makers and practitioners and have significant influence on policy and practice. PACE will include implementation, impact, and cost-benefit studies. Key study questions include

- What is the impact of each program on higher levels and quicker achievement of certificates and degrees? On earnings?
- What are the impacts of each program on individual and family well-being?
- Do impacts vary by subgroups, and, if so, which characteristics are associated with larger or smaller effects?

PACE was launched in late 2007 and began with intensive outreach to solicit the views of policy makers, program operators, researchers, and advocates on promising program areas to test, resulting in a focus on the career pathways approach. The evaluation team then recruited strong career pathways programs into the study. Random assignment began in November 2011 and will conclude in September 2014.

The nine PACE Partner Sites are: Instituto del Progreso Latino, Des Moines Area Community College, Madison Area Technical College, Pima Community College, San Diego Workforce Partnership, Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement, the Washington I-BEST program at Bellingham Technical College and Whatcom Community College, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, and Year Up. An important partner in the study is the Open Society Foundations (OSF), which provided resources for many of the programs in the PACE evaluation to expand their scale to meet the requirements of the evaluation, to enhance services in specific areas, or both. Support was also provided to specific sites by the Joyce Foundation and Kresge Foundation, and three PACE sites (Pima Community College, San Diego Workforce Partnership, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County) are recipients of Health Profession Opportunity Grants awarded by ACF. Data collection activities include two rounds of implementation research visits, two follow-up surveys with individuals in the study, and acquisition of site-specific and national administrative records on education and employment-related outcomes. The evaluation team will produce a series of reports including: program profiles for each of the PACE partner sites, site-specific implementation reports documenting the operation of the program, and site-specific impact reports examining the effect of the program on education, employment, and other related outcomes, including a cost-benefit analysis.

The PACE team includes:

Primary Evaluation Sponsor

The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/pathways-for-advancing-careers-and-education

Other Project Sponsors

Foundations and federal agencies that have provided generous grants to support PACE programs include:

The Open Society Foundations' Special Fund for Poverty Alleviation www.soros.org

The Joyce Foundation www.joycefdn.org

The Kresge Foundation www.kresge.org

Meadows Foundation www.mfi.org.

Hearst Foundation www.hearstfdn.org

Health Professions Opportunity Grants, Administration for Children and Families http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/programs/hpog/ograms/hpog

Lead Evaluator

Abt Associates Inc. www.abtassociates.com

Evaluation Partners

MEF Associates www.mefassociates.com

American Public Human Services Association www.aphsa.org

National Conference of State Legislatures www.ncsl.org

National Governors Association www.nga.org

PACE
Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education

OPRE