Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
AACC Plus 50 Completion Strategy

What is this announcement about?
Plus 50 adults will be getting more help from a network of community colleges to complete degrees and certificates so they can acquire the skills they need to get hired. The help is through the support of a new grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

What will the AACC Plus 50 Completion Strategy do?
The completion strategy will build on existing approaches to enable 20 geographically dispersed community colleges to increase the number of plus 50 adults who earn credentials (degrees, certificates, not-for-credit credentials) with value in the marketplace, with a focus on those with some prior college credits.

What specific outcomes will be focused on through this program?
Key outcomes will include focusing the Strategy on certificate and degree programs in high-demand fields that meet local workforce needs and establishing institutional practices that make it easier for a target group of 9,000 plus 50 adults to navigate the community college system. Forty percent of the group will be targeted to earn credentials by 2014.

What types of careers can plus 50 students participating in this program pursue?
Occupational fields that are in high-growth, high-demand sectors in the local labor market that will increase the competitiveness of the plus 50 student.

Which colleges will participate in the Completion Strategy?
In total 20 community colleges will participate. Eleven colleges will be selected by AACC to be involved in the project within the first two years of the four-year grant program, joining these nine experienced Plus 50 colleges:
- Cape Cod Community College (West Barnstable, Mass.)
- Clover Park Technical College (Lakewood, Wash.)
- College of Central Florida (Ocala, Fla.)
- Joliet Junior College (Joliet, Ill.)
- Metropolitan Community College (Kansas City, Mo.)
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (Green Bay, Wis.)
- Pasco-Hernando Community College (New Port Richey, Fla.)
- Santa Fe College (Gainesville, Fla.)
- Wake Technical Community College (Raleigh, N.C.).

Nearly 1,200 community college are members of AACC. This grant will work with 20 colleges. How will these colleges make a difference in increasing completion rates across the community college network?
These 20 colleges will be demonstrating best practices in outreach to plus 50 adults. Innovative practices and information from these demonstration colleges will be disseminated through AACC's publications and websites to amplify the Completion Strategy's reach to other colleges.

**What statistics are available about unemployed older workers?**
According to the U. S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployed older workers were the least likely of all unemployed workers to find jobs: In 2009, only about 15 percent of them found jobs each month.

**Why is it so hard for plus 50 adults to get back to work?**
Our nation is emerging from a recession, jobs are still scarce in many areas, and there is a lot of competition for available positions. Some plus 50 adults worked for decades for a particular company, only to lose their jobs and discover that their skills were no longer current in the marketplace. Sometimes employers are unfairly biased against older workers, even though they bring leadership, decision-making skills, and a hard work ethic to prospective employers.

**Why are community colleges the best suited to help?**
Throughout their history, community colleges have been known for offering open access and opportunity for people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. With their flexible schedules, emphasis on practical job training, and affordable tuition rates, community colleges are the best suited to help plus 50 workers re-train for new careers.

**Why all the emphasis on completion rates?**
In keeping with President Barack Obama’s ambitious agenda for U.S. postsecondary education to once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, Lumina Foundation for Education established its own “Big Goal” to help increase the nation’s level of graduates with high-quality college degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. In addition, AACC and five other national organizations representing community colleges, governing boards, faculty and students pledged on April 20, 2010, to increase student completion rates by 50 percent over the next decade.

**What is the Plus 50 Initiative?**
Launched in 2008, the Plus 50 Initiative managed by the American Association of Community Colleges is a three-year pilot funded by a $3.2 million grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies. Thirteen pilot community colleges, eight affiliate colleges, and peer-to-peer outreach between 23 colleges have developed or expanded plus 50 programs over the last two years. Colleges have focused their efforts on workforce training, learning and enrichment, and volunteering and civic service. To learn more about the Plus 50 Initiative, visit [http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu](http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu).

**Is AACC the only organization working in this area?**
AACC is one of 19 organizations being funded through Lumina Foundation’s Adult Degree Completion program addressing their goal to increase the number of graduates with high-quality college degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Announcement of the grant was made by Lumina Foundation on September 30, 2010.
What is AACC?
Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the American Association of Community Colleges is the leading advocacy organization representing close to 1,200 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest sector of higher education, enrolling more than 11.8 million credit and noncredit students each year. To learn more, visit www.aacc.nche.edu.