

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXEMPLARY PROGRAM AWARDS**

**Institution: Broward College**

**Category: Noncredit Workforce Development Program**

### **Executive Summary**

Broward College is disrupting the traditional model of higher education through Broward UP. Believing that there is Unlimited Potential (UP) in its community, Broward College has operationalized a movement aimed at changing the narrative on poverty and mobility by creating access to noncredit workforce education and good jobs. Through this innovative community-centric approach, the College launched Broward UP in 2018 in six zip codes to deliver workforce education courses and programs, along with career readiness and related support services for residents facing unemployment or underemployment. Broward UP is dedicated to changing the lives of these residents by removing barriers and offering educational opportunities, workforce training, and support services directly in these neighborhoods – so that every single resident realizes their unlimited potential regardless of their zip code.

With a large number of unemployed residents and a widening skills gap, Broward UP offers a solution to both residents and local employers by offering noncredit workforce training leading to industry certifications and short-term technical certificates to improve the resident's employability in the workforce and address the shortage of skilled workers in high demand industries. By cultivating partnerships with over 26 community organizations such as the Urban League, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and municipalities, Broward UP offers workforce training directly in the community expanding access to workforce education beyond College campuses. These partnerships also help eliminate and reduce the barriers to educational success, such as transportation, childcare, access to technology, and often the cost of training. Currently, Broward UP offers 30 noncredit, short-term training which offers over 26 unique industry-recognized certifications and/or certificates in high-demand industries such as Information Technology (IT), Advanced Manufacturing including supply chain management, healthcare, and other high demand areas. Residents are guided by a Career Pathway Navigator providing wrap-around services linking them to community resources, and one-on-one support throughout their educational program. Once residents complete the training and earn a life-changing credential, they are linked to workforce experiences and/or employment opportunities through one of 11 Broward UP's employment partners, providing immediate employment opportunities on a career ladder leading to a middle-to-high wage job. Current student outcomes include 3,241 residents receiving workforce education, and more than 2,000 residents earning workforce-ready certificates including industry-recognized certifications.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Broward College has operationalized Broward UP (UP stands for Unlimited Potential) – a new service model for workforce and postsecondary education. Broward UP is changing the narrative on poverty and mobility by creating access to workforce education and good jobs – so that every single resident in Broward County realizes their unlimited potential. Prior to the pandemic, Broward County, Florida realized a 2.8% unemployment rate, while the most economically disadvantaged zip codes in the same County experienced rates as high as 15%. Further impacting unemployment is the effect of COVID-19 on the local economy, with Broward County having some of the highest unemployment rates of any county in Florida, according to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. Already disenfranchised zip code communities were hit hardest during the pandemic, with rates soaring to almost 40-50%. Likewise, despite Broward County's 43.9% postsecondary education attainment level, many of these neighborhoods show, on average, only 27% of their residents with a postsecondary credential or degree. With 65% of today's jobs requiring education beyond high school, it has become the College's aim to reach all residents, no matter where they live, without a postsecondary credential/degree.

Although Broward College is an open-access learning institution with low-cost, workforce-ready programs, there are still many in the community who cannot access post-secondary education. With three physical campuses and six centers spread throughout Broward County, the College locations are still not accessible to some of the most vulnerable residents. Some residents have to travel over 10-20 miles to get to a campus or center that offers training or education in their area, and with no reliable transportation, this becomes a great obstacle, among many, to overcome. Therefore, the College has launched Broward UP to offer non-credit courses to residents leading to certification and certificates in the communities leveraging the facilities of community and municipal partners. These non-credit courses have been aligned to high-demand industries (such as IT, advanced manufacturing, aviation, and healthcare) and job postings within the local labor market. Because these residents come with numerous barriers to accessing and completing the certification programs, they are guided and supported by Career Pathway Navigator throughout the program helping residents as they progressively build workforce and employability skills while earning a credential for a high-wage, high-demand job. Completion of the training and industry certifications earned by residents serve as incentives to continue their education as most prepare them for certifications, licensures, and even articulate for college credits used towards stacked and latticed technical certificates and associate degrees. Broward UP also provides adult basic education, and as a 'placement' agent connecting residents with employers at the beginning of the program by offering residents priority hiring or interviews, work experiences (internships, externships, and apprenticeships) to effectively address the unemployment/underemployment of the residents and address the shortage of skilled worker in the labor market.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS:** With no additional funding from the State for new buildings or construction, Broward College had to find a viable solution. This is why – in the fall of 2018, Broward College signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 9 of the 12 cities in the Broward UP zip codes, and executed 17 additional community agency partner agreements such as with the Urban League of Broward County, Boys and Girls Club of Broward County, the Jack and Jill Children’s Center, Broward County Public Libraries, Broward County Housing Authority and more to leverage relationships and partner resources. This gave Broward College the opportunity to infiltrate the Broward UP zip codes with Broward College’s presence. These partnerships allow Broward College to leverage each partner organization’s often underutilized space at no cost under a Broward College banner. These partnerships also help eliminate and reduce the barriers to educational success, such as transportation, childcare, housing emergencies, food insecurities, access to technology, and the cost of training – as all of the training offered in the community is free to all Broward UP residents through grants and philanthropic gifts. Meeting residents where they are, physically and in terms of workforce training, is what makes Broward UP innovative and successful. In addition, the College also leverages over 11 business partnerships to develop an employee pipeline strategy, create competency maps to develop and deliver training, establish hiring preferences, and many other strategies connecting students to the workforce.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT:** The Florida TaxWatch’s report, *An Independent Assessment of the Value of Broward UP*, took a deep dive into the economic benefits of Broward UP on the individual participant as well as the community (April, 2020). The full return on investment was quantified as \$1:\$19.27 for the individual, and \$1:\$13.13 for the community economic impact based on increased employment, increased public revenues, and decreased dependency on public subsidies. Florida TaxWatch found that for every \$1 of incurred cost, participants can expect to earn \$19.27 in return over time, and the state of Florida can expect to receive \$13.13 in benefits through tax revenue, reduced public assistance, and regional employment. Florida TaxWatch President and CEO Dominic Calabro shares, “This Florida TaxWatch report finds that the approximate total of Broward UP participants’ career earnings is over \$1.3 billion, and what’s more, the program has the potential to save Florida millions of dollars in public assistance funds annually.” Broward UP was also recognized in *The Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Education and Training Beyond High School in Florida* (2022) published by Florida TaxWatch as a model for the state for postsecondary programs of greater accessibility and economic impact to create an environment conducive to developing its workforce to reach educational attainment goals. In fact, Broward UP provides an alternative entry point for students to embark on or complete their educational journey. Noncredit continuing education courses afford students the opportunity to build both competency and confidence in their desired field, as well as themselves while earning a life-changing credential.

**ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSIVITY:** Inequality, intergenerational poverty, and immobility are not just economic and social issues -they are geographic ones. We know that the location or zip code a person is born into impacts their likelihood of acquiring postsecondary education and securing a meaningful, high-wage job. Access to education, particularly higher education, has never been at a more critical stage in our society. The protests against racial injustices that occurred throughout our country in 2020 made clear the need to seriously address racial inequities in all areas, including education. These recent protests are byproducts of the anger and frustration many African Americans and others have felt about the educational and economic systems that historically and continually subjugate them to poverty and degradation. While these inequities have existed for a long time in our country, these protests have renewed the urgency to identify solutions, like Broward UP.

Through conversations with local leaders, presentations, townhall meetings and community surveys, Broward College identified the needs and the concerns the racial inequities in our Broward UP communities. Although some conversations were difficult; it was critical to the development of a workforce model that would help address the racial and economic disparities that have existed for a long time. The results of the conversations also garnered the support of our local leaders and businesses. It also helped the College to develop systems such as using case management to eliminate barriers by connecting residents to resources within the College or within their own communities, offering them workforce education training that leads to middle-to-high wage jobs, and working with employers to help train them through work experiences or apprenticeships or to just open the door to career opportunities that they would have never been qualified for.

**PROGRAM RESULTS:** Launching just over three years ago, Broward UP has already achieved successful outcomes, with 3,241 residents receiving workforce education, and more than 2,000 residents earning workforce-ready certificates including industry-recognized certifications. The College also solidified 26 MOUs with community agencies and municipal partners, as well as 11 business partners. While placement services began in late 2021, 53 residents have secured jobs in high-demand industries.

**REPLICATION:** Broward UP is seen as a state and national model for postsecondary education to address unemployment, education attainment, and generational poverty, especially in the most racially and ethnically diverse communities. In fact, on a visit to Broward College, the United States Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said “Workforce development programs such as Broward UP are worth replicating across the country”. Broward UP can be replicated by conducting an asset map, leveraging and solidifying partnerships and creating collaboration to provide workforce training in the communities and address barriers of residents, aligning noncredit programming to high-demand industries, and creating procedures and policy changes among local and regional employers. Broward College has and will serve as technical assistance to other colleges around the country that want to replicate the model.