

STRONGER TOGETHER

How Two Colleges Enabled Adult Learners to Get High-Demand Healthcare Jobs

THIS CASE STUDY OUTLINES HOW TWO COLLEGES:



Developed a partnership that enabled adult learners access the training and certification to help meet employer demand for Medical Assistants



Graduated 100 percent of students through a pilot program offering the flexibility and wraparound support today's adult learners need



Secured offers of Medical Assistant positions with competitive wages, benefits and regular hours for each graduate

HELPING WORKERS DISPLACED BY THE PANDEMIC FIND HIGHER-PAID, SKILLED JOBS



“I know that every single one of you all worked so hard and invested a lot of time and energy to be able to accomplish what we have all accomplished today. Some of you perhaps struggled trying to balance a family, or perhaps a job, or both. Some of you may have struggled through personal struggles or just life in general...but whatever that struggle might have been, YOU MADE IT TO THE FINISH LINE! We were resilient in the face of adversity! We FOUGHT! We STRIVED! We PUSHED THROUGH and we have earned the title of National Certified Medical Assistants.”

— Rebeka Ayala, CHCP Medical Assistant Class of 2022¹

In fall 2020 as Covid-19 surged, the City of San Antonio, Texas launched the [Train for Jobs SA](#)² (TFJSA) program, a city funded program to help the thousands of residents who were unemployed or underemployed due to the pandemic retrain for high-demand careers. Local unemployment had risen as the hospitality and leisure sectors shrank.

San Antonio is a hub for healthcare companies with thousands of unfilled Medical Assistants (MAs) positions. The MA is an entry-level healthcare position with strong long-term growth [forecasted by the BLS](#)³

ABOUT THE COLLEGES



Location: Texas

Campuses: CHCP has nine campuses at Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston - Med Center, Houston - Northwest, Houston - Southwest, McAllen, San Antonio North, and San Antonio South

Enrollment: 4,974 students total across all campuses

Student Demographics: 85 percent students of color



ALAMO
COLLEGES
DISTRICT

Location: Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Kendall, Kerr, and Wilson counties

Campuses: Alamo Colleges District comprises five community colleges: San Antonio, St. Philip's, Palo Alto, Northeast Lakeview, Northwest Vista, and seven education and training centers

Enrollment: Largest provider of higher education in South Texas with 100,000+ students

Student Demographics: 81 percent students of color

1. Rebeka Ayala, CHCP Medical Assistant Graduation Speech, Class of 2022

2. Train for Jobs SA, 2023 <https://www.sanantonio.gov/workforce/Programs/Train-for-Jobs-SA>

3. Occupational Outlook Handbook, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 25, 2022 <https://www.bls.gov/oooh/healthcare/medical-assistants.htm>



MAs carry out clinical, administrative, and procedural tasks in a variety of healthcare settings; they serve as a liaison between doctors, nurses, patients, insurance companies, and providers. The MA role is critical to the efficiency of medical units and clinics.

Alamo Colleges District (ACD)—a key partner in TFJSA—recognized that the program would result in greater demand for MA training that would exceed the seat capacity of its own MA program. As part of the TFJSA program, the ACD and The College of Health Care Professions (CHCP) developed a unique public-private partnership that saw ACD have a student cohort enroll in CHCP’s MA certificate program.

This case study highlights how higher education institutions can work together to deliver outstanding workforce development and student academic and career outcomes.



The partnership’s impact included:

- Serving students from traditional under resourced populations—first generation and students of color—who are adult learners with limited to no postsecondary education. In San Antonio, [15.7% of the population](#)⁴ 25 years of age and older do not have a high school diploma (or equivalent).
- Graduating 100% of the students in the pilot study cohort and securing MA job offers for every graduate. And doing so at zero cost for the students.
- Enabling adult learners to pursue a credential and become nationally certified through a program that is built to create success with their personal circumstances and family responsibilities.
- Boosting workforce development by creating more industry-credentialed talent for entry level healthcare positions.

4. Educational Attainment in the San Antonio Area, Texas, Statistical Atlas, <https://statisticalatlas.com/metro-area/Texas/San-Antonio/Educational-Attainment#figure/county>



BUILDING A WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP



“In San Antonio, the demand for medical assistants is only exceeded by the need for RNs. Partnering with CHCP helps us develop an ecosystem that meets the needs of adult learners, helps employers hire qualified talent, and increases the economic opportunities for community members.”⁵

— Dr. Sammi Morrill, Associate Vice Chancellor of Operations, Economic & Workforce Development, Alamo Colleges District

The Train for Jobs SA program required people to apply then placed them in short- and long-term training programs tied to marketable skills and occupations. Residents who were enrolled received a stipend for the time spent in training. [Nearly 5,000 residents⁶](#) had applied for the TFJSA program by early 2021. The number of TFJSA applicants interested in Alamo Colleges District’s MA certificate program outstripped its capacity. To help bridge this gap, Dr. Sammi Morrill, associate vice chancellor for economic and workforce development at ACD, partnered with CHCP’s MA certificate program.

Dr. Morrill was familiar with the CHCP’s track record in graduating students and placing them in jobs, and saw the partnership as a win-win for all parties:



⁵ Interview with Dr. Sammi Morrill, December 19, 2022

⁶ Dimmick, Iris. Train for Jobs SA program about halfway to target with nearly 5,000 San Antonians signed up. The San Antonio Report February 3, 2021 <https://sanantonioreport.org/train-for-jobs-sa-program-about-halfway-to-target-with-nearly-5000-san-antonians-signed-up/>



MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

A Structured but Flexible MA Program



“These are adult learners with busy complicated lives and to get them back to school requires education programs to align with their responsibilities and schedules. The MA program lets students pick their path—full time, day or evening classes, in-person or online, and two local campuses.”⁷

— Randy Bullis, San Antonio Market Campus President, CHCP

From the pool of TFJSA applicants who wanted to pursue an MA credential, Alamo Colleges District selected 13 people to apply to CHCP’s nine month MA certificate program. The program involves lectures, labs, and culminates in a 180 hour externship with a health care employer.

Ten of the applicants met the requirements and were enrolled; they are considered as CHCP students and have no formal academic relationship with ACD. The 10 students formed a cohort within the class of 41 students who started the program in late November 2021.

As can be seen from the student cohort snapshot, the 10 students were far from traditional students. Their backgrounds are typical of the new majority learner—diverse, adult learners—whose needs require flexible options from higher ed. CHCP is attuned to these learners and its program portfolio including the MA certificate provides options for modality, class times, and campus location. Giving students options on modality is not only important for access to training programs but also for motivation and retention. Recent [research from Iris Palmer and Shalin Jyotishi](#)⁸ at New America highlights this:



“It is important to understand your students. What do they need out of the program and what motivates them? It may seem that online instruction is the best way to provide program access to busy adults with caregiving responsibilities, but [research has shown](#)⁹ that many adults have a hard time staying motivated with online-only programs and that in-person, cohort-based experiences, whether on the job or in the classroom, help students stay motivated to finish their education.”

⁷ Interview with Randy Bullis, December 8, 2022

⁸ Palmer, Iris and Jyotishi, Shalin. How to Deliver High-Quality, Non-Degree Workforce Community College Programs, December 8, 2022

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/briefs/how-to-deliver-high-quality-non-degree-workforce-community-college-programs/>

⁹ Sheffer, Hadass, Palmer, Iris, and Annette B. Mattei. The Comeback Story: How Adults Return to School to Complete their Degrees September 1, 2020

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/comeback-story/>



“The boundary between traditional and nontraditional learners is eroding rapidly. Postsecondary education must serve a new majority learner—adult learners, juggling family responsibilities and busy schedules—who require innovative pathways to access education and secure jobs in higher paying occupations. The partnership in San Antonio shows how this new learner-focused ecosystem works: flexible programs and wraparound services that deliver the certification and credentials for in-demand healthcare jobs.”¹⁰

—Lisa Larson, Head of Community College Growth Engine Fund, Education Design Lab



10 STUDENTS ENROLLED

9 FEMALE STUDENTS

9 ADULT LEARNERS (AGE 25+)

8 FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

8 STUDENTS OF COLOR

The 10 students chose the evening MA certificate program with blended learning—two in-person classes weekly supplemented by two days of online instruction. They chose to take their classes at CHCP’s San Antonio North campus.

CHCP provides a suite of wraparound services for all students with the following key elements:

- Clear student support structure—the instructor acts as first point of contact for any requests for support, but students have access to the program director, assistant director of education and director of education.
- Holistic approach to services—in addition to academic and wellness support, CHCP has resources for transportation, child care, food pantry, etc.
- Attendance issues act as retention tripwire—when any student fails to attend a class without providing notice, the instructor will call the student usually within one hour to determine why and how to remediate. If the student is unresponsive, this escalates to the program director and further on until the issue is resolved.
- Retention metrics spur action—program directors review student progression and retention data daily so CHCP can intervene to help keep students enrolled and on track.

As part of the partnership with ACD, the CHCP program director held weekly calls with ACD case managers to discuss the students’ progress and performance.



“We want to see every student walk the stage at graduation and our team offers continuous support for issues in and out of the classroom. The 10 MA students didn’t get differentiated treatment—we’re here to help every student from day one.”¹¹

— Brenda Reyes, Director of Education, CHCP

10. Interview with Lisa Larsen, February 24, 2023
11. Interview with Eric Bing, February 23, 2023



DELIVERING MEANINGFUL OUTCOMES

A Successful Cohort

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“The Alamo Colleges District and CHCP are a successful example of two community organizations pooling their specialized resources to work towards solving the medical assisting labor shortage that is impacting healthcare. And helping to create lifetime change for adult learners with complicated and busy lives. It is an example that can be replicated across the nation.”¹²

— Eric Bing, Chancellor and CEO, CHCP

“There are local employers with unfilled medical assisting positions and residents seeking better jobs and financial stability. We built a partner model with CHCP to give more people more options to get the credentials and work placements that land these jobs. Our model demonstrates how working together boosts students’ career pathways, workforce development, and the local economy.”¹³

— Dr. Sammi Morrill, Associate Vice Chancellor of Operations, Economic & Workforce Development, Alamo Colleges District

At graduation in September 2022, the Alamo Colleges District and CHCP partnership delivered tangible success: all 10 students received their nationally-certified MA credential, all 10 completed an externship, and received full-time job offers from their externship companies.

Many of the graduates are making \$17 to \$18 per hour with full benefits, and steady work hours. Working as an MA represents a major change in terms of their career opportunities and economic stability. Moreover, the MAs are now working in the growing healthcare sector with significant potential for career advancement.

Completing the program and attaining their credential gives the graduates the opportunity to continue their education at CHCP and pursue an associate’s degree in as little as 8 months as they have 41 credits already.

For the City of San Antonio and the TFJSA initiative, the partnership between the two higher ed institutions delivered the desired outcomes: upskilling residents for in-demand jobs and helping local employers fill much needed MA positions.

¹². Interview with Eric Bing, February 23, 2023

¹³. Interview with Dr. Sammi Morrill, December 19, 2022



TWO COLLEGES, ONE PARTNERSHIP

Key Success Factors



“U.S. healthcare providers have many unfilled allied health positions and lots of people want credentials like the MA to get these jobs. An individual education institution can’t quickly provide the faculty, lab hours and clinical placements that these programs need to succeed. Alamo and CHCP have modeled how a partnership can achieve common goals: enroll and graduate more adult learners and place them in higher-paying jobs that local employers need to fill. This is a model that can be expanded to other fields.”¹⁴

—Jane Oates, President, WorkingNation

The CHCP and Alamo Colleges Districts partnership demonstrates how institutions can help more Americans acquire the skills and credentials to meet the demand from the U.S. healthcare sector. The two institutions worked to offer a pathway that meets the diverse needs of adult learners with support services and work-based learning. The benefits are considerable and widespread:



“Businesses are in need of skilled workers yesterday and programs that have wait lines or are otherwise at capacity are neither serving business or learners. What stands out about this partnership is: putting learners first and ensuring that they access the right program for their needs and in a timely manner. They did not approach it as a zero-sum game for who gets enrollments. And of course business gets the talent it needs faster, meaning the economy benefits. This partnership can and should be applied to other critical jobs so learners can connect to in-demand jobs faster.”¹⁵

— Jason A. Tyszko, Vice President,
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

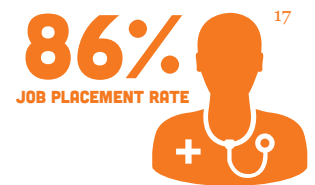
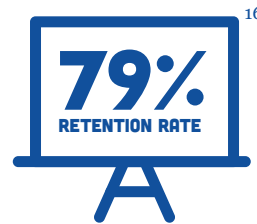
greater economic mobility for workers, a more diverse and qualified talent pool for local healthcare providers, with better healthcare and employment for San Antonio and residents. This innovative and student-centric approach provides a template for higher education institutions, workforce development boards, and employers.

The core factors underpinning the successful collaboration between CHCP and ACD includes:

- Executive leadership buy-in and support at both institutions
- The two institutions did forward planning that outlined the process and touch points to enroll and support the students across the student lifecycle.
- Transparency and continuing communication between the two institutions at multiple levels from Eric Bing and Dr Morrill to CHCP program directors and ACD case managers.
- Leveraged the core strengths of both institutions—ACD’s central role as a training partner for TFJSA and access to program applicants, and CHCP’s focus on and expertise on allied health professions and longstanding relationships with employers.

¹⁴ Interview with Jane Oates, January 24, 2023

¹⁵ Interview with Jason A. Tyszko, February 10, 2023



About The College of Health Care Professions

As a leader in healthcare education and training, The College of Health Care Professions (CHCP) helps students develop the skills they need to meet the demands of today’s healthcare industry. Founded by physicians, CHCP, institutionally accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) is focused on healthcare education and training and its accredited programs have been developing healthcare professionals for over 30 years. CHCP faculty have real-world on-the-job experience and are committed to helping students succeed. CHCP’s on-campus, blended, online and hybrid program offerings give students flexible options to learn on their schedule. CHCP also offers continuing education nationwide for medical imaging and emerging healthcare technologies through the [Medical Technology Management Institute](#). For more information, visit www.chcp.edu.

16. Retention Rate An aggregated retention rate across all CHCP programs and residential campuses for the reporting period covering July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 (the Reporting Period) using the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) calculation methodology (described at <https://www.abhes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2021-2022-Annual-Report-Guidebook.pdf>). ABHES is the institutional accreditor for CHCP and all related campuses and sets the Reporting Period as well as calculation methodology for the retention rate for each program. The ABHES Retention Rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduated during the Reporting Period, plus those who were still enrolled at the end of the Reporting Period, divided by the still enrolled students as of the beginning of the Reporting Period plus new and returning students during the Reporting Period.

17. Job Placement Rate An aggregated placement rate across all CHCP programs and campuses for students who graduated between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 (the Reporting Period) using the ABHES programmatic reporting methodology (described at <https://www.abhes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2021-2022-Annual-Report-Guidebook.pdf>). ABHES sets the Reporting Period for programmatic information and the placement rate calculation methodology. The ABHES placement rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduating students who were employed in a position wherein the majority of the graduate’s job functions require the use of skills and knowledge acquired through successful completion of the training program by the total number of students who graduated from the program, not counting those unavailable for placement due to continuing education, health-related issues (including death), military obligations and/or incarceration.