

EnGen at Community Colleges

Reimagining ESL programs so they prepare learners for high-value jobs

90%

have achieved at least one of their real-world social goals

79%

ranked their job skill improvement at a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale

73%

ranked their confidence when speaking English at a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale

31%

EnGen learners have received job offers, promotions, or pay raises

“Changing the way we view ESL programs also means changing the way we build and measure them.”

- Katie Brown, Ph.D.

“We were introduced to EnGen through Virginia’s Department of Education office. This was our first time creating a career [pathway] program for ELLs. We wanted an innovative platform to help our learners build the language skills to move into career certificate programs, which we found in EnGen.”

- Danielle Perry

Integrated Education and Training Coordinator, Peninsula Regional Education Program

COMMUNITY COLLEGES HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR ESL LEARNERS

In the U.S., more than two million immigrants are either unemployed or underemployed, often because a lack of English skills keeps them from using their training and credentials from their home countries. Community colleges hold a unique opportunity to participate in the reimagining of ESL learning. By using a competency-based instruction model, ELLs (English Language Learners) can work at their own pace to acquire the English skills they need to move into programs that offer degrees, certifications, or credentials. Community colleges can partner with local employers to help upskill their existing workforce with the English skills tied to promotions and upward mobility in critical sectors. By offering new models for immigrants, refugees, and speakers of other languages, community colleges can increase their enrollments while offering opportunity to an underserved population of learners.

COMPETENCY-BASED INSTRUCTION ADDRESSES THE MOST COMMON BARRIERS

Traditional ESL programs are often an obstacle for ELLs. In-person instruction at a one-size-fits-all pace requires a significant time commitment, financial investment, childcare, and transportation, making them outside the reach of many immigrants and refugees. However, a self-paced, competency-based model can be offered in a way to address these barriers—and demonstrate outcomes faster than traditional programs. EnGen’s customized, relevant competency-based instruction:

- Bridges the gap between these traditional methods of instruction and career-focused programs, enabling students to learn and apply specific English skills targeted to their ultimate career goals.
- Moves learners through a self-paced framework to accelerate results and achieve a degree or certification. (Every student is different, and their learning experience should reflect that.)
- Helps students retain and apply their English language skills immediately, increasing motivation and success.

A PATH TO INCREASED RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

An internal champion for the new approach can help mediate any reluctance to change within the establishment, and propel the program forward. Flexible instructional models allow institutions to recruit and retain a larger pool of immigrant and refugee learners, which requires community outreach, leveraging existing campus connections, and seeking new ways to identify and contact potential learners.

Through EnGen’s competency-based programs, technology can help institutions reach more learners who require flexible instruction to save them time and improve their outcomes. EnGen programs include digital literacy content to help learners unfamiliar with self-paced, computer mediated instruction develop the skills necessary to continue their learning without difficulty.

SUCCESSFUL LEARNER OUTCOMES CAN SUPPORT FURTHER FUNDING

EnGen’s competency-based programs lend themselves well to program evaluation because the overall goal is to keep learners moving forward in their career journey, which includes support services to ensure learners can transition smoothly between English instruction into academic or career pathways, and eventually into employment. **This success can be measured and used to support further funding, replication, and scale.**