



The Michigan
Center for
Adult College
Success

Adult Learners Thrive Through Competency-Based Education Program



At Jackson College, under the banner of Total Commitment to Student Success (TCS²), a transformative initiative is continuing with the support of the Innovation Investment Award (IIA) from the Michigan Center for Adult College Success. These resources are being used to operationalize scalable, flexible, and industry-relevant Competency-Based Education (CBE) programs for adult learners. The mission is to redesign systems for flexible learning pathways, reduce time-to-credential, and increase workforce alignment, especially for working adults. Jamie Vandenburg, Dean of Workforce, Technical and Professional Education, has been pivotal in leading these efforts.

During the first year of the IIA, Jackson College focused on building internal systems to support full-scale CBE. Under Dean Vandenburg's guidance, a CBE Manufacturing Certificate is set to launch in January 2026, and additional certifications like Medical Insurance Coder Biller (MICB) and

Professional Medical Biller were developed. "Jackson plans to offer stackable credentials for students to continue to grow professionally once they have achieved their first credential," said MICB Program Director Mary Douglas. These efforts have improved engagement and retention among adult learners by offering flexible, personalized learning. The MICB program, operating in a competency-based format since 2019, has shown increased course success and certificate completion rates over the previously offered program.

"We're building flexible, career-aligned programs that honor the experiences of adult learners and open new doors to success."

— Jamie Vandenburg

The grants have enabled the implementation of high-impact practices, including a CBE Operational Implementation Plan, expansion of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) systems, and curriculum redesign. The IIA also supports predictive outreach tools like CollegeAPP to engage adult learners. These investments are building scalable, learner-centered systems tailored to working adults.



Through the IIA and work with the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN), Jackson College is addressing key operational challenges for scaling CBE. This includes developing a sustainable faculty staffing model and aligning policies to support flexible pacing and open-entry/open-exit models.

Feedback from MICB students has been positive, highlighting the value of flexibility and personalized coaching. One student noted that pursuing the Certified Professional Biller (CPB) certification deepened their understanding of billing processes and opened employment opportunities. Students appreciate the practical, career-aligned curriculum and the ability to complete coursework on their schedule.

The IIA has opened collaboration opportunities with other educators and institutions, expanding involvement with C-BEN and

connecting with business partners at local and regional events. These collaborations ensure the curriculum is current and aligned with workforce needs.

An inspiring success story is a MICB student who enrolled in the newly launched CPB certification course in Summer 2025, increasing their employability and confidence in job interviews. Five students also enrolled in Practicode, a non-credit option to advance their careers by removing the "A" apprentice status from their CPC credential.

At Jackson College, the commitment to adult learner success is unwavering, and the grants are vital tools in realizing this vision. With support from the Innovation Investment Award, the college is refining strategies and expanding offerings to support adult learners in their educational and professional journeys.

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About the Innovation Investment Awards

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success is supporting nine institutions through the Innovation Investment Awards to help postsecondary institutions implement best practices or pilot new ideas to better serve adult students in a way that increases completion rates.

The Center awarded \$6.4 million in Innovation Investment Awards through a competitive award process to postsecondary institutions seeking to implement innovative solutions for improving persistence and completion rates among adult learners over the age of 25. Grants of up to \$1 million were awarded to Michigan colleges and universities that show they are ready to launch effective, lasting improvements to systems that help students 25 and older obtain postsecondary credentials.