

First 90 Days: College Success Coach Toolkit

Real-World Project Submitted by Shelsi Barber-Carter, CTE Special Project & JAG Coordinator
October 8, 2023



Author Note

As reviewed as a white paper, supporting literature was collected from secondary resources on the importance of developing a first-90-days college success toolkit to assist Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (JAG) college success coaches. I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this presentation of review should be addressed to Shelsi Barber-Carter.

Email: shelsi.carter@ade.arkansas.gov

Introduction

Launched in 2019, the Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (JAG) College Success Program, an affiliate of Jobs for America's Graduates, is a school-to-work program designed to assist participants from unique populations. JAG is a statewide nonprofit program that focuses on building internal and external bridges for assisting young adults in earning a living wage in a bilateral generation while closing the racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps in living wage and education attainment.

The JAG College Success Program are dedicated to supporting young people between 16 and 24 years of age in becoming successful citizens while faced with significant challenges and to overcoming major barriers that limit economic and academic success. With more than 40 years of investigated research and findings, the Jobs for Arkansas Graduates program works to improve the employability of young people by implementing a comprehensive set of services that are curated to keep young people in school through graduation, and as a result, participants are seen to improve in their success rates in education and career.

As part of the JAG College Success Program, college success coaches are put in place to serve as trained professionals to provide individual and group instruction to participants to ensure retention and completion in postsecondary and/or technical skill programs. Services provided include the following:

1. **Classroom Instruction:** A trained JAG college success coach provides instructional teachings to 35–45 participants who are carefully selected by an in-school advisory committee consisting of faculty, administrators, and counselors.
2. **Competency-Based Instruction:** The JAG College Success Program equips participants with no less than 20 competencies (see [Out-of-School Model](#))—employability skills competencies plus career exploration and developmental skills (www.jag.org).
3. **Project-Based Learning:** Project-based learning practice is designed to engage classrooms in the delivery of JAG competencies, allowing participants to participate in realistic learning experiences that resemble the workplace environment.
4. **Trauma-Informed and Caring Adults:** JAG college success coaches are responsible for providing individual attention to participants to help them overcome barriers that prevent them from taking advantage of their college education; completing requirements for a program of study and/or technical skill program; or securing employment that leads to a high-wage, high-skill, in-demand, or emerging occupation.
5. **Advice and Support:** JAG college success coaches provide advice and one-on-one support as participants make significant career and life decisions and serve as a “one-stop” bridge for participants to access personal, behavioral, and other young adult services in the community. Services are provided year round.
6. **Employer Engagement:** College success coaches are charged with engaging external employers in the classroom and professional setting to bring about exposure to participants when identifying job opportunities and career pathways in their own communities.
7. **Student-Led Leadership Development and Experience:** As a highly motivated participant-led organization, the JAG College Success Program has adopted the JAG

Career Association model that helps participants develop in civic engagement, public service, leadership development, career preparation, and social awareness.

8. Job and Further Education Placement Services: College success coaches are responsible for assisting graduates in identifying job opportunities; exploring other postsecondary education opportunities; navigating finances; and enrolling to pursue a degree program, certification, and/or industry-recognized credential.
9. 12-Month Follow-Up Services: JAG College Success Programs provide a 12-month calendar of services that focus on the completion or graduation of participants. In doing so, participants are strongly supported during their transition into employment, military services (optional), or further education.
10. Accountability: The JAG College Success Program is known to be an evidence-based organization that utilizes performance metrics to reward performance and identify best practices for continuous improvement. Thus, a national comprehensive tracking system named JAG Force is used to collect and report information in three categories The categories are students served, services delivered, and outcomes achieved.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the real-world project is to develop an inclusive yet simple step-by-step College Success Coach Toolkit (CSCT) that focuses on the JAG college success coach's first 90 days. The CSCT is designed to assist JAG college success coaches at the University of Arkansas—Pulaski Technical College (UAPTC) with providing effective customer service to participants that are currently enrolled at a postsecondary institution that has a JAG College Success Program. The guide will help coaches increase their engagement and support for underrepresented participants by utilizing a 10 Model Component tool that provide a framework for how organizations deliver services to participants. Each component consists of

specific goals or outcomes that are Model Standards, which guide program delivery. By adopting the national JAG Model, college success coaches will be able to understand their roles and expectations for services that are delivered to program participants. The toolkit will also provide coaches with a blueprint of the JAG Model and help show coaches how to incorporate each component into the College Success Program. In doing so, the coaches will be able to assist participants with identifying services that are needed to

transition into a successful future. In partnership with the Arkansas Career Coach Program, JAG college success coaches will utilize the toolkit to help provide postsecondary advice to JAG participants becoming college completers and accomplishing career goals.

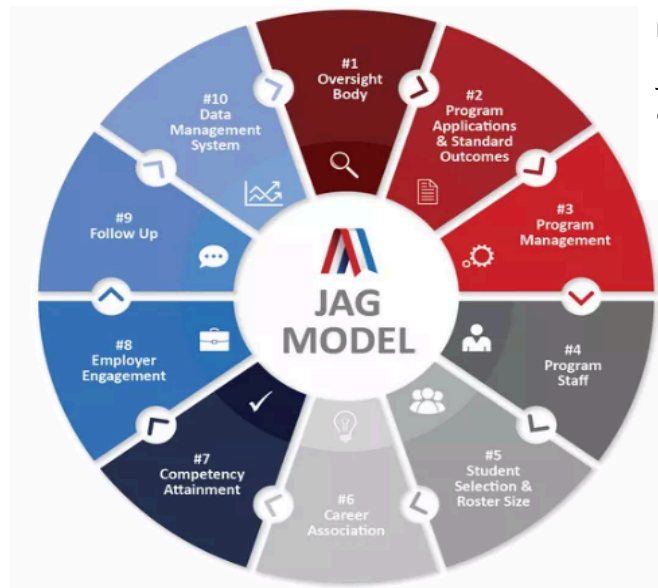


Figure 1
JAG Model 10
Components

The CSCT will also include a blend of services that strongly connects the JAG Model to 20 out-of-school competencies. With a blend of project-based learning, trauma-informed care, and employer engagement, college success coaches will help participants with personal challenges and work with employers in developing strategic frameworks that are supportive of program participants. Active services last 6 to 36 months, with follow-up at 12 months, so the total duration of services lasts from 18 to 48 months.

Project Impact. College students who are enrolled at UAPTC and are participants in the JAG College Success Program will be affected by the CSCT. This population may include students who are prior high school JAG participants, first-generation college students, English learners, single parents, students with intellectual disabilities, students who are homeless, student

who have aged out of foster care, students from low-income households, or academically disadvantaged students who are currently enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

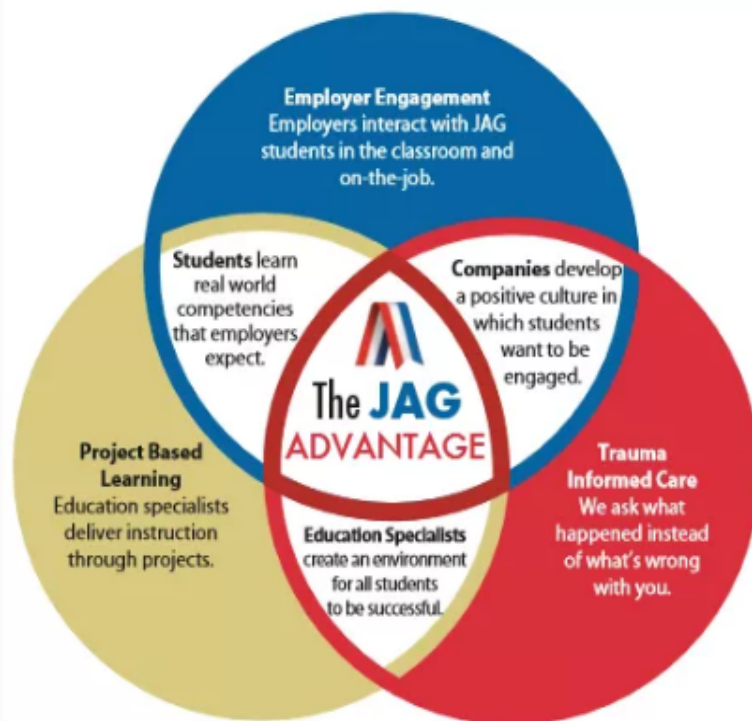


Figure 2

*The JAG
Advantage*

Historical Background

UAPTC is an established 2-year institution that began in the mid-1940s. UAPTC was initially founded in 1945 under the name Little Rock Vocational School. In 1969, the college was renamed Pulaski Vocational Technical School. In 1991, the institution's name changed to Pulaski Technical College. It was not until February 1, 2017, that the college merged with the University of Arkansas System and became the University of Arkansas—Pulaski Technical College. UAPTC is one of the largest universities in Pulaski County, with more than 1,800 degrees offered.

According to Data USA (2022), UAPTC has a surrounding population of 397,931 with a median age of 37.6, a median household income of \$55,235, a median property value of \$166,300, an employed population of 187,423, and a poverty rate of 15.8%. The five largest ethnic groups in Pulaski County are White (non-Hispanic) (51%), Black or African American (non-Hispanic) (37.1%), two or more races (non-Hispanic) (2.88%), White (Hispanic) (2.69%), and other (Hispanic) (2.42%). None of the households reported speaking a non-English language. Among residents in Pulaski County, 96.8% are U.S. citizens. In 2021, 5.28% of Pulaski County's 21,000 residents were known to be born outside of the county.

Education. UAPTC has awarded more than 6,605 degrees to date. The student population is skewed toward women with 13,208 male students and 26,064 female students among a total student enrollment of about 39,272. The largest number of students enrolled are White with 19,648 records, of which 65.3% are women and 34.7% are men. The percentage of students that did not graduate with an associated degree at UAPTC are identified as 0.862% of men over 25 years of age while 0.801% of women are known to face the same situation. The majority of the students graduating from UAPTC are White (non-Hispanic) (3,547 students or 55.6%), Black or African American (non-Hispanic) (1,947 and 30.5%) and those of two or more races (281 and 4.41%), and Hispanic or Latino (238 and 3.73%).

Findings From the Needs Assessment

With Arkansas being one of three states (along with Indiana and Iowa) to have launched a College Success Program since 2019, data and research on the effectiveness of the program services are limited. The JAG national office has provided limited resources that are specifically designed to assist college success coaches in program implementation, on-boarding processes, guidance, student retainment, reporting, and data collection. As a review of the program, three out of five college success coaches from selected colleges were interviewed to collect feedback about the College Success Programs prior to the development of the CSCT. Out of the three coaches, participant one is a program director and has served as a college success coach for 4 years. Participant two has served as a college success coach for 2 years, and participant three has served as a college success coach for 1 year. The interviewer is a newly appointed state supervisor over the secondary and postsecondary JAG programs and responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of all JAG programs across the state of Arkansas. (*See Appendix 1 College Success Coach Needs Assessment.*)

Method for Development of the CSCT

Increased attention and focus on the effectiveness of JAG college success coaches' engagement with JAG participants who are currently enrolled at UAPTC led to the development of a wide array of customer service materials with varying levels of quality and distinct pedagogical approaches. Using formative assessments such as questionnaires and hosting interviews with program supervisors and active college success coaches, the review of options to select the best and most impactful approach required great attention to the details and the structure of the

College Success Program. The selection of the CSCT materials for the college success coaches was carefully reviewed by faculty, staff, directors of the College Success Coach Program.

The CSCT materials are likely to achieve maximal success and create a long-term impact when implemented as an institutionwide approach to increase retention and completion among all college participants from unique populations. The full purpose of the development of the CSCT is to strengthen each college success coach's customer service to JAG or non-JAG participants and assist colleges with bringing forth the academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills of secondary and postsecondary education students who choose to enroll in Career Technical Education programs of study. College success coaches will also be able to use the CSCT as a guide for how to perform day-to-day responsibilities when motivating students to enroll in a College Success Program. As a result, the CSCT materials are not looked upon as an isolated and independent practice but as an integral and intertwined guide for recruiting participants and assisting them in becoming successful in completing college through obtaining a certification/credential(s) or degree or furthering educational and career opportunities.

As the UAPTC JAG College Success Program services expand and the institution begins to work closely with the college success coaches on student engagement and retention, the development and integration of the CSCT is integral to the growth of the program and institution. The knowledge, skills, and training from the CSCT are key factors to leveraging the success of the college success coaches as UAPTC works to dismantle the barriers for unique student populations in becoming successful citizens.

Rigorous evaluation of the CSCT is important to improve the toolkit and ensure that it is a valuable resource. There is a demand and need to put in place onboarding guidance and instruction on how to assist coaches on being effective in providing customer service to JAG participants. This means that other college success coaches across the state and nationally will need step-by-step guidance on how to recruit, retain, assist, and implement participants' services that are better and on what impact is to be expected.

Recommendations

The CSCT is utilized to increase satisfaction with the customer service provided to JAG participants. It is a standardized manual that college success coaches can refer to in the first 90 days of recruiting, retaining, and motivating program completion among participants. However, with limited data and resources from the JAG national office, the current effectiveness of the College Success Programs cannot be identified. There is a lack of guidance, policies, and procedures put in place to assist colleges on how to implement a robust program. It is recommended that the JAG national office develop tools and resources that are accessible to all College Success Programs. When reviewing data, it is recommended that the JAG national office develop a rigorous data dashboard that focuses on highlighting participants' success in college recruitment; enrollment; advising; retention; program completion with certification/credentials that lead to high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career pathways; graduation/completion; and further education opportunities.

Appendix 1. College Success Coach Needs Assessment

College Success Coach Needs Assessment

Questions that must be answered	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Q1. How many Postsecondary College Success Coaches are active at your institution?	There is only one active coach (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023).	One active coach (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023).	Only one in the area (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023).
Q2. Are any of the JAG College Success Coaches new to the professional Coaching or have not completed the Facilitation Career Development Training?	We have one specialist who is not new; but Facilitating Career Development training was not required for this position (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023).	I feel no training is available, at least anything to help college success coaches (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023)	No training is available. I am the only one that serves as the college success coach (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023)
Q3. Does the institution provide technical assistance on how JAG College Success Coaches should engage students in postsecondary?	Yes, Academic Advising training and Financial Aid training (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023).	No (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023)	Yes (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023)

Q4. Does the institution offer leadership training to support JAG College Success Coaches' roles?	No (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023)	No (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023)	Yes, it depends on the need (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023).
Q5. In what way would you like for the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Career and Technical Education to assist you in coaching?	Provide technical assistance for completing program applications, implementing follow-ups, developing program timeframes, developing program goals, building program success and flexibility, etc., Provide resources that aligns with the workforce demands for local and national employers., Building professional relationship through establishing partnerships with stakeholders (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12,2023).	They should offer networking opportunities and a mentor who will help guide with engaging and retaining students. They should provide technical assistance for completing program applications, implementing follow-ups, developing program timeframes and goals, and building program success and flexibility. Also, provide resources that align with the workforce demands for local and national employers. Help build professional relationships through establishing partnerships with stakeholders (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13,2023)	Provide technical assistance for completing program applications, implementing follow-ups, developing program timeframes, developing program goals, building program success and flexibility, etc. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023).
Q6. What do you find as the biggest challenge?	Strategic Management: Improving strategic decisions on making and managing difficult projects., Time Management and Productivity: Increase focus and productivity to drive maximum impact for program success, Program Influence: Increase program presence and the realm of influence throughout the institution (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023).	Program Influence: Increase program presence and the realm of influence throughout the institution (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023).	Career Development: Training students on taking ownership of their career and path or navigating through postsecondary education effectively., Strategic Management: Improving strategic decisions on making and managing difficult projects., Program Influence: Increase program presence and the realm of influence throughout the institution (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023)

Figure 3. Evaluation of the JAG College Success Coach Programs*

Q7. What do you believe is a valuable resource(s) to help JAG College Success Coaches in becoming more successful in their role?	Annual Trainings, Peer Conversations (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023).	Annual Trainings and more peer-to-peer conversations. We need to learn from others since nothing is really established for the College Success Programs (Participants 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023)	Monthly Calls and peer conversations (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023).
Q8. Are there any Comments?	Yes. We need a standard that will guide us as we implement a program that best aligns with our institution's mission and values. Each institution is unique, and what works at one may not work at another, but we need a standard that ensures we are implementing the JAG model's best practices within our institution's best interest (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023)	Yes. I think that receiving a comprehensive outline via email of the information that was discussed in training afterwards would be a great help. I know all of us take notes, but we may have missed certain components that could be vital to the program. Also, I think it would be nice to schedule (at least) bimonthly meetings if possible. I know everyone has their own agendas but being able to come together for about 30 mins to an 1hr to check-in, vent, etc. would be beneficial. There aren't many states that do this program, and there's only five of us so it can get frustrating at times (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023).	No (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023).
Q9. Are there any concerns?	Yes. Training thus far have been conversations with little to no training. During those conversations, we are told one thing, but later that is recounted and changed (i.e., the number of participants in the program. We need to be able to trust support and follow-through at the state level (Participant 1, personal communication, April 12, 2023)	Yes. Financial Support to maintain the stability of the program as it relates to staff retention and resources that are focus on meeting the needs of students in the program (Participant 2, personal communication, April 13, 2023)	No (Participant 3, personal communication, April 15, 2023).

Note: Using qualitative data, Figure 3 displays feedback provided from JAG college success coaches' personal interviews. Responses are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the College Success Programs throughout the state of Arkansas. Three out of five JAG coaches were interviewed.

References

Data USA. (2022). *Pulaski County, AR*. [Pulaski County, AR | Data USA](#)

Jobs for America's Graduates. (n.d.). <https://jag.org/>

University of Arkansas—Pulaski Technical College. (n.d.). <https://uaptc.edu/>