



CCCIE JOINS NEW PARTNERSHIP TO INCREASE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY WITHIN THE RETAIL SECTOR

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Made Possible by a \$1.2 Million Grant from the Walmart Foundation

The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) has joined with leadership of the National Immigration Forum, Miami Dade College, and the Walmart Foundation to develop an innovative new program, *Skills and Opportunity for the New American Workforce*, to increase the English language skills among retail workers for whom English is a second language. The program is being made possible by a one-year, \$1.2 million grant from the Walmart Foundation.

Working together, the Forum, Miami Dade College and CCCIE, a national network of community colleges which is hosted and led by Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York, will design and implement a contextualized English language learning program, utilizing online and worksite training methods. The program will be piloted in Houston, Miami and the New York metro area, with a range of retail businesses. Initial business partners include retail partners of the Forum's existing program, *New American Workforce*.

The retail sector has one of the highest levels of limited-English-proficient workers, at nearly 1.5 million, approximately half of whom are women. Leaders within the retail sector are recognizing the profound impact that improved access to educational opportunities can have on advancement, retention, improved work quality, and economic success. This program creates a scalable, sector-wide contextualized English language learning program that will help retailers build stronger career pathways for their employees.

One of the first of its kind specific to the retail sector, the program is part of the Forum's *New American Workforce* initiative. The initiative works to create public-private partnerships between employers and service providers to increase employee English language proficiency, and in turn help accelerate their advancement and mobility in the retail sector.

CCCIE National Survey Cites Need for Job-Related ESL

CCCIE's involvement in the program was announced at its Washington, D.C. briefing held recently to discuss the results of CCCIE's new *National Survey for Increasing Opportunities for New Americans at Community Colleges*. A majority of the community college respondents indicated a need for strengthening their ties with employers and developing more job-related training and support for immigrants, including contextualized ESL career pathway programs.

"Employer engagement is critical to building high-quality programs that benefit immigrant workers and the businesses that employ them," said **Teresita Wisell, Executive Director of the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education and Vice President of Continuing Education and Workforce Development at Westchester Community College**. "Our partnership with the National Immigration Forum, Miami Dade College, and the Walmart Foundation truly represents a win-win opportunity to support retail employees' personal and career growth through acquisition of work-related English language skills and at the same time contribute to increased productivity and effectiveness among retailers and the sector as a whole." Miami Dade College is a CCCIE member and also participates in the Forum's *New American Workforce* initiative.

Training Will Reach 750 Retail Employees in the First Year

What sets this program apart from traditional language software or academic English programs is the fact that it integrates English language training with skills needed in the workplace such as active listening, industry-specific vocabulary and spontaneous conversation skills. Training will be focused on building the vocabulary and context employees need to be successful at their jobs, increasing customer satisfaction, improving communication with their colleagues and supervisors, and improving safety.

The program will be largely focused on non-supervisory positions, such as cashiers, stockers, greeters, etc., where Limited English Proficient individuals are most concentrated, but may include higher level (non-management) employees as appropriate. The goal in the first year is to reach 750 individuals, in preparation for potential broader scaling in the future. Corporate and managerial involvement and support in development, delivery, and assessment of training will be a key element in the program. Support from the Walmart Foundation makes it possible to provide the training to participants for free.

"Through education programs that focus on the development of tangible skill sets, we have an opportunity to set retail workers on a clear road to advancement," said **Kathleen McLaughlin, president of the Walmart Foundation and chief sustainability officer at Walmart**. "Our work with the National Immigration Forum is part of our \$100 million Opportunity initiative announced earlier this year. Working together with business, government and nonprofit partners, we can help increase the economic mobility of entry-level workers across the country."

"It is an honor to partner with such forward-thinking and compassionate organizations to make a difference in an area where so much impact can be made. As an immigrant, I know the importance of learning English in order to achieve the American Dream," said **Eduardo J. Padrón, President of Miami Dade College**.

"We are proud to continue offering real and innovative solutions to address our nation's workforce challenges."

"The Walmart Foundation's investment in this innovative project allows immigrants to increase their skills, creating new opportunities for the individual worker, their employer and the retail sector overall," said **Ali Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum**. "New Americans are crucial contributors to the retail sector, and the new *Skills and Opportunity for the New American Workforce* program helps the sector increase productivity, workforce engagement and retention, and employee skill and satisfaction."

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