

Chapter 28

Advisory Committees: Workforce Education Programs

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ABSTRACT

The community college has transformed into a central hub in regional communities, serving a local workforce, economic development, business and industry, and the subsequent collaborative partnerships (Baber, 2011; Bray, 2011; Kress, 2012). Through a collaborative, proactive effort, business and industry are uniting with community colleges to provide and fund training opportunities to upgrade worker's skills, provide more efficient services, increase employment opportunities in local communities, reduce education program cost, and become business oriented as a community (Baber, 2011; Bray, 2011; Kress, 2012). To offset the expense associated with workforce education programs, colleges are collaborating with businesses and industries. Advisory committees serve as the heart of these partnerships, helping to combine resources, equipment, and knowledge in skilled areas (Greenstone & Looney, 2001; Holzer, 2008). In this chapter, the following issues related to community college advisory committees will be discussed: workforce programs, community college economics, vocational-technical education, current state of workforce and technical programs, statement of the problem, advisory committees, partnerships, program discussion, and future research direction.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The community college has transformed into a central hub in regional communities, serving a local workforce, economic development, business and industry, and the subsequent collaborative partnerships (Baber, 2011; Bray, 2011; Kress, 2012). Educational workforce programs provide key services in many areas including, agriculture, automotive advancement, building trades, carpentry, certified nurse's aides, computer skills, electrical, farm and ranch management, flight training, oilfield chemicals, oilfield safety, restaurant management, transportation, trucking, welding, and wind energy (Baber, 2011; Bray, 2011; Kress, 2012). Through a collaborative, proactive effort, business and industry are uniting with community colleges to provide and fund training opportunities to upgrade worker's skills, provide more efficient

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services, increase employment opportunities in local communities, reduce educational program cost, and become business oriented as a community (Baber, 2011; Bray, 2011; Kress, 2012). It is projected that these targeted careers account for 23% of all job openings between 2008-2018 (ACT, 2012).

WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

Workforce programs increase and deepen the relationships between the college and the community, while also creating a vested interest in the local citizenry (Carlson, 2011). The collaboration requires a commitment with local business and industry in the area where the college is located generating a bond with the community (Carlson, 2011). This creates a rapport with employers and prospective employees and requires a commitment with business and industry in the area (Carlson, 2011). Increasingly, community colleges are collaborating with local businesses to develop curriculum and training programs leading to potential student internships in their business and future employment (Carlson, 2011). When developing workforce education programs, including local business owners, administrators, and managers on advisory committees helps ensure potential employment for the students; resources to help run an efficient program; and guidance for the overall benefit of the program. The community college is the vital component serving as the key provider of services and negotiations in developing and implementing programs, training, and curriculum in workforce and technical areas of instruction (Hodges, 2012).

Community college workforce education programs, in collaboration with local businesses and industries, offer specific training opportunities to guide students towards a career path leading to employment. Workforce and technical programs offer easy access to programs, quick return on educational investment, and meet a variety of career and educational interests (Holzer, 2008). For low-income families who struggle to pay tuition and fees over a period of years, technical training offers alternative educational solutions (Greenstone & Looney, 2011; Holzer, 2008). By enrolling in a local community college to gain new skills or be retrained for emerging technologies, students may expedite their way to achieving their full potential as an active member of society.

Community Colleges: Economics

Community colleges offer a diverse range of programs that impact the economy by training students with specific hands-on skills to enter directly into the workforce (Hamilton, 2004; Kress, 2012). A study by the Brookings-Rockefeller Project (Kazis, 2011) discovered that community college and workforce collaborations are crucial to sustainable economic development (Kazis, 2011). In order to provide the country with a continual supply of skilled workers, community colleges, in collaboration with businesses and industries, lead to improved student success and economic progress (Kazis, 2011). Aligning the jobs with current economic workforce needs that generate significant numbers of employed workers, especially in middle skill jobs, will develop a highly qualified labor supply and help contribute to a long-term supply of workers and a strong sustainable economy (Baber, 2011; Hodges, 2012; Kazis, 2011). To accomplish this goal, regional needs are aligned with workforce needs and the program is devised for training (Hodges, 2012). The Brookings-Rockefeller Project advocates streamlining current certificate programs at community colleges to achieve stronger economic payoffs (Kazis, 2011). The restructuring would focus on more flexible modes of delivery, including: weekend courses, block courses, and online (Kazis, 2011).

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