Workforce Learning Summit Innovation/Best Practice

Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College

Craft Beverage Institute of the Southeast

The Craft Beverage Institute (CBI) at A-B Tech was designed to support the rapidly growing craft beverage industry in Western North Carolina and the Southeast. The Institute provides “stackable” entry and enterprise-level training, business development, and ancillary services in the craft beverage industry sector. Related initiatives in agriculture, hospitality, sustainability, and STEM complement the applied learning and core business products of the Institute.

DETAILS

Environmental scanning drew the College’s attention to the craft beverage industry in the fall of 2011. Through outreach and collaboration with business & industry, economic developers, public officials, the NC Community College System and associations/accrediting organizations, the local, state and region-wide need was determined to support the industry. Research to determine the feasibility of a new program was conducted, including a study of the industry, literature review, and evaluation of the local, regional and national craft beverage market. No 2-year degree programs existed in the US, so college officials visited with Niagara College in Canada, the only program offered in North America at the time. During this phase, the college conducted preliminary program planning and design.

Craft beverage is a booming sector nationally, but also locally in Western North Carolina. The area boasts 14 breweries and two distilleries in Asheville alone and is poised to continue growing along with the arrival of larger anchor companies, such as New Belgium. Western North Carolina is a fertile craft beverage ecosystem with the right location, workforce, water and soil to support the industry. The Asheville area is a ‘foodtopia’ mecca and named Beer City USA multiple times. The area supports the local food movement, along with a wealth of farm-to-table initiatives. The area lacked a full-service training and business development center for the craft beverage industry. A-B Tech and its partners arrived at the conclusion that we have the expertise, motivation, and cache to establish a craft beverage center of excellence.

Implementation began in August 2013.

Partner Type(s):

- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development Board/One-Stop
Impact/Outcomes

Organizational Milestones.
- Institutional Commitment to Vision
- Director of Craft Beverage Institute Named/Brew Master Hired
- Location Selected (The BASE/Enka Campus)
- Equipment Purchased (Brewhouse, Distillation & Wine Production Systems, QC and Sensory Labs)

Education and Training Milestones.
- Continuing Education offerings have served 485 students since 2012. Projections are to serve more than 3,000 students through FY 2020.
- First cohort of 24 students in AAS Program began in Fall 2013. Projections are to serve more than 160 students through FY 2020.

Business/Industry Engagement Milestones.
- Formal Advisory Council Established
- Affiliations with Regional, State and National Associations Progressing
- Quality Control Testing Services Being Provided
- Customized Training in Design Phase with New Belgium
- Professional Studies Business Plan Being Developed

Funding Source(s)
The College designs Continuing Education courses as either state budget supported or self-supported, depending on the nature of the course. Curriculum instruction is funded through the state allocation. Approximately $600,000 of equipment funds was raised through college resources, Duke Energy and NC BioNetwork.

REFLECTIONS

Innovation or Best Practice

The program provides standards-driven training and education:
- Continuing Education – Workforce Development and Personal Enrichment
- Degree Programs
  - Brewing, Distillation & Fermentation (AAS) **
  - Craft Beverage Operations (Diploma)
  - Craft Beverage Production (Diploma)
- Cicerone & Industry-Recognized Certifications
- Enterprise Level Conferences & Retreats
- Guest Speaker/Lecture Series
- Judging Courses and Online Offerings

The program provides a one-stop for professional services:
- Customized Training for Industry
- Business/Product Development
- Product/Quality Control Testing
- Shared Manufacturing Space
- Production Assistance & Incubation
- Brew Competitions and Destination Events
The program features world class equipment and facilities, including:
- Seven-Barrel Brewhouse
- Distillation System
- Wine Production System
- Wet Lab (Quality Control Testing) and Sensory Lab
- Tasting Room & Storefront
- Business Development and Incubation Space
- Best-in-Class Conference and Classroom Space

Lessons Learned
Challenges:
- Funding
- Out-of-the-box initiatives can take time to build acceptance and support
- Finding qualified faculty, instructors and staff for niche areas
- Program planning coordination at regional and state level
- Regulatory and legal issues

Scalability
The Craft Beverage Institute model works for A-B Tech, building on the needs and strengths of our local workforce and industry. Other colleges across the state could replicate the environmental scanning and research model utilized in order to determine the best opportunity for new program development. The model is also scalable based on the variety of programming used to build the institute. Our program started with general interest courses in Continuing Education, requiring less equipment and start-up costs, and has grown over the past two years to feature a full-service degree program with quality testing and other supportive services in partnership with the NC BioNetwork and Customized Training Program.

RESOURCES

Workforce Learning Summit Presenters
Melissa Quinley, Vice President of Instruction, A-B Tech
Shelley White, Sr. Executive Director of Economic & Workforce Development/CE, A-B Tech
Mike Rangel, President, Asheville Brewing Company

Links
http://www.abtech.edu/brewing

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