Workforce Learning Summit Innovation/Best Practice

Edgecombe Community College

Bridges to Employment

Our innovation/best practice is constantly evolving as we continue to build relationships with our industry partner, Keihin, and both Edgecombe County Public Schools and East Carolina University. The initiative has allowed each individual educational institution to help meet Keihin’s workforce needs, but it also helped develop partnerships and build bridges or pathways between the local public school, community colleges and the university. As a result of these bridges, this initiative allows students to see the numerous options to enter as a potential employee at Keihin and also what options there are related to the education requirements needed for each job. The key to the partnership is being responsive to the needs of the company.

DETAILS

It is hard to pinpoint an exact time the initiative started as it evolved over time. Keihin began operations in 1997 and we have partnered with them as they have expanded their operations several times since. We highlight our bridge program as it was created to address Keihin’s retention of production associates, technical staff and engineers.

The apprenticeship program began in 2011 and it involved Keihin, Edgecombe County Public Schools (ECPS) and Edgecombe Community College. Keihin invested both dollars and labor to upgrade the electronics program, including renovating the electronics lab to make it state of the art with new equipment, supplies and workstations at SouthWest Edgecombe High School. As part of the formalized apprenticeship program, a Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway between SWEHS and ECC was developed to allow HS students to receive dual credit for select classes while in high school. This gave students two options, the apprenticeship route or enrollment at ECC upon graduation to work toward their AAS degree. Those that complete the apprenticeship are qualified to work at Keihin as production associates. Those that go on to receive further education through AAS programs at ECC are qualified to work at Keihin in technical positions.

The Keihin/ECC Co-op program also began in 2011 as a result of a collaborative effort based on the North Carolina Advanced Manufacturing Alliance. A large piece of this project involved Co-ops/interns from our AAS degrees in Electronics and Manufacturing receiving Co-op opportunities at Keihin that were starting as technical staff employees. Keihin also assisted in the design and layout of ECC’s Advanced Manufacturing Lab.

The efforts at ECC also tied in nicely with the Keihin/ECU intern program as graduates of ECC’s AAS degrees are able to transfer to ECU to receive a BS degree. A scholarship program was set up for Edgecombe county students with ECC graduates receiving priority for these scholarships. The bridge between Keihin and ECU was to fill the gap for their engineering staff.

In an effort to retain highly skilled employees, these bridges/pathways were developed to ensure a “home grown” employee base at all three entry points. As a result it also tied the three educational institutions together as well.
Our Customized Training program is also involved in the training of production associates through a pre-hire electronics program. This program has an electronics focus as well as incorporating the Career Readiness Certificate into the training. *(The Career Readiness Certificate is emphasized throughout ECC’s programming, and in 2013, ECC received a national Career Preparedness Award from ACT, based on having 70% of graduates since 2010 earning a CRC.)*

We continue to offer Continuing Education (CE) offerings based on company need and request, including Lean Six Sigma training for Keihin (in partnership with NC State University).

Although our focus was on “Bridges to Employment” our greatest win has been the relationship building that occurred between ECC and Keihin as well as the relationship between ECC and Edgecombe County Public Schools and ECU. It is our hope that these relationships can expand to different program areas and other industry partners as well.

Implementation began in fall 2011.

**Partner Type(s):**
- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Public Schools
- Other: East Carolina University

**Impact/Outcomes**
Although these initiatives are in the infancy stage we can see where we are progressing. Keihin has two current apprentices (from SWEHS) to date, with a goal of two new apprentices a year. There is one ECC Co-op student with three additional Co-ops scheduled to begin in the fall 2014. The ECU intern program was established in 2012. There are currently six students working in that capacity. Customized Training to support job growth at Keihin has been provided for 447 individuals.

The main goal with this program was to retain employees at the three entry points. At this point it is hard to evaluate results until we are able to see if employee turnover time has been reduced. Other impacts were cost savings generated by reducing recruiting efforts to attract engineers and cost saving of the pre-hire class which eliminated a day long orientation for new employees and the training staff. Lean Six Sigma training has an estimated saving of $125,000 per year for Keihin.

**Funding Source(s)**

**Keihin funds**
1. Renovation of SWEHS electronics lab including facility and equipment as well as man hours (hard to quantify actual cost)
2. Man hours to redesign the ECC advance manufacturing lab (hard to quantify actual cost)
3. Funding of ECU controls lab ($200K total)
4. Funding of Scholarship program
5. Salaried employees to attend leadership training (hard to quantify based on number attending and length of individual classes)

**State/county funds**
1. Customized Training program
2. Occupational Extension classes
3. Administrative costs

**Federal funds**
1. Purchase manufacturing equipment (approximately 900K)
2. Project manager ($51,000 per year for four years)
3. Success manager ($38,000 per year for three years)

REFLECTIONS

Innovation or Best Practice
The initiative was designed to meet the needs of the customer (Keihin) but more importantly it focused on building relationships that we can expand to other program areas and other industry partners.

RESOURCES

Summit participants:
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