

Workforce Learning Summit Innovation/Best Practice**Montgomery Community College*****Apprenticeship Montgomery***

Montgomery Community College is partnering with Montgomery County Schools, Montgomery Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Montgomery Career Center, NC Dept. of Commerce (Apprenticeship and Training), and local employers to build an apprenticeship program to meet the workforce needs in the county. The College was able to create a pre-apprenticeship program to begin meeting the critical need for maintenance technicians. However, to meet the long-term need, Apprenticeship Montgomery was developed.

Apprenticeship Montgomery targets high school students in their junior and senior years, enrolled in Career and Technical Education pathways, and places them in college level courses while they complete their high school requirements. At the same time, these individuals are placed with employers in job shadowing positions until they are eligible to work as operators. At the end of this five year program, the apprentice will have earned a high school diploma, a NC Career Readiness Certificate, a college level certificate in Electrical Systems Technology, designation as a Certified Production Technician, a journeyman (apprenticeship) credential, an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Industrial Systems Technology, and will have gained five years' experience in the workplace.

DETAILS**Opportunity Identified:**

In early 2012 the College and five local employers identified a need for maintenance technicians. Although the college offered Continuing Education courses to train individuals in maintenance skills, the classes would cancel due to low or no enrollment. With a critical shortage still evident, the group felt that an apprenticeship program would be the answer. One local employer had some success in 2000 with an apprenticeship program and wanted to revisit that idea in an attempt to solve the need.

The NC Dept. of Labor was consulted, skills were identified... and the apprenticeship program stalled due to staff turnover at both the local and State level. Simultaneously, there were major changes happening which caused a ripple effect within the NC Departments of Commerce and Labor. Finally, the group reconvened with a new member representing the NC Department of Commerce- Division of Workforce Solutions (Apprenticeship and Training Bureau), a new member from the Montgomery Career Center, an additional employer, and a new member from the College. The College applied for NC Back-to-Work funding in July 2013 as a way to fund the pre-apprenticeship piece to begin meeting the critical need.

While the College has played a leading role, Apprenticeship Montgomery is being driven by the local employers. All the partners are working together to make sure that Apprenticeship Montgomery is successful by communicating needs, addressing those needs, and acting on each partner's strengths. It is open communication and commitment to this project that keeps it moving forward.

Partner Roles:

1. Employers identified the need and are committing resources by paying wages and applicable taxes for apprentices, participating in the interview/screening process to identify apprentices, and paying costs associated with the college level training.
2. NC Dept. of Commerce, Div. of Workforce Solutions-Apprenticeship representative attends each Leadership Team Meeting, has guided and assisted the group in the writing of the pre-apprenticeship application and the registering of employer apprenticeship applications, and advised the group on every aspect of the project.
3. Montgomery County Economic Dev. Corporation Director serves as a Leadership Team member and promotes Apprenticeship Montgomery to other employers and county leaders.
4. Montgomery Career Center representatives serve on the Leadership Team and assist in identifying resources available through their respective program areas: Workforce Investment Act funding, OJT (On-the-Job Training) opportunities, workforce and labor market statistics.
5. Montgomery Community College and Montgomery County Schools are working collaboratively to coordinate training programs such as Career and College Promise pathways and Continuing Education programs as needed to ensure resources are maximized.

Strategies:

While the strategies listed below are general in nature, at this point in the project they must be. Apprenticeship Montgomery begins this June with its first applicants. As the project gets underway, other strategies will emerge.

1. Collaborative process: no decision is made without the input from the Leadership Team.
2. Open Communication: maintain open lines of communication among partners.
3. Maintain regular meeting times with Leadership Team to make changes as needed.
4. Recruiting: Career and Technical Education students in high school are identified by their instructors as possible candidates for the program. Information sheets are sent to the parents to ensure their buy-in. Applicants interview with the employers for eligible spaces. Parents are invited to a Parents' Night to ensure that they understand the program.

Implementation began in January 2014.

Partner Type(s):

- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development Board/One-Stop
- Public Schools

Impact/Outcomes

Apprenticeship Montgomery begins in June 2014 with its first applicants, so there are no data or outcomes to report as this summary is written.

We can share some information regarding the pre-apprenticeship program that was started with NC Back-to-Work funds. In the pre-apprenticeship program, 7 individuals have enrolled in the Certified Production Technician (CPT) course. So far 4 individuals have received their CPT certification designation by passing all four exams. Of the remaining three students, two students have successfully completed three of the four sections and one has completed two of the four exams. All seven students have received the NC Career Readiness Certification.

Montgomery's pre-apprenticeship program includes the Certified Production Technician and Introduction to Welding courses offered through the Continuing Education Department. Its apprenticeship program includes the Curriculum courses and On-the-Job Training, provides a path toward a national journeyman (Registered Apprenticeship) credential issued by the U.S. Dept. of Labor, and requires employers to pay apprentices more as they pass training/learning milestones.

Funding Sources

For the apprenticeship program, four employers have agreed to sponsor seven high school students each year. The estimated cost to the employer is nearly \$60,000 per student sponsored. This amount includes all registration fees for Continuing Education courses, assessment fees for certifications, supply and equipment costs, tuition costs for the courses in the AAS degree program, books, and wages spread out over the five year duration. It is anticipated that some of the employer costs will be defrayed through Career and College Promise, federal Pell grants, and Workforce Investment Act youth program participation where applicable.

REFLECTIONS

Innovation or Best Practice

We feel that this is a best practice in that it incorporates several community organizations to meet the identified needs of local industry. This best practice also shows the willingness of local business and industry to invest in the local community to assist in solving workforce needs.

Lessons Learned

As mentioned previously, the program begins its first year in June 2014. Lessons learned are few. Montgomery County has a total population of approximately 27,000 people. Being a small, rural county, the apprenticeship program provides a strategy to grow our own workforce in an occupation needed by several employers.

Scalability

By bringing together local employers, community agencies, and local educators, Montgomery County is hoping to provide a means to fill a workforce need. At the same time, we are able to provide a means for our Career and Technical Education students to gain a career while learning a skill. This is a strategy that can be replicated in any community, large or small.

RESOURCES

Workforce Learning Summit Presenters

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For Further Information

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