



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 9, 2013

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Pima County/Pima Community College Workforce Development Partnership**

Pima County and Pima Community College (PCC) have a long history of working together cooperatively to improve business access to a skilled workforce.

Key Pima County workforce development staff recently met with Dr. Lee D. Lambert, a veteran community college administrator who was named Chancellor of PCC in mid-May. The meeting provided an opportunity to share some of the important points of connection that exist between the two entities.

There has been much focus throughout the community on addressing poverty in the region. It is one of the underlying goals of the County's Economic Development Action Plan and is the subject, most recently, of an ongoing series in the *Arizona Daily Star* outlining some of the challenges and solutions.

Workforce development, including especially adult basic education and career and occupational training, is one of those solutions designed to help individuals achieve self-sufficiency. It is not as flashy as announcing a new company coming to town; and because skill development and retraining is a long-term process that requires sustained effort, it sometimes does not receive the attention it deserves. It is, however, a critical piece that must be a priority at the local, state and national levels to ensure the region remains competitive and attracts and retains high-wage employers.

One of the important connections between PCC and Pima County rests with the One-Stop program, which provides two locations offering employment resources to both job seekers and companies seeking new employees or additional training for existing employees. In some cases, One-Stop works directly with employers to reduce unemployment, in part by serving as an extension of their Human Resources department by helping to recruit and train employees. While it does work with other training institutions, PCC remains a key partner because of the wealth of educational options it provides and the affordability of its programs. One-Stop has supported more than 2,900 full-time students in their PCC studies since Fiscal Year 2007/08.

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This memorandum will outline some of the joint efforts in education and training, which are vital to this region's economic growth.

Staff Liaisons

Pima County's One-Stop program utilizes the assistance of PCC staff liaisons onsite, serving to streamline college registration for job-seekers, assist with financial aid questions and accept third-party course payment when training funds are eligible. Of particular note is that these liaisons are able to monitor a participant's progress to allow for early intervention if a student begins to run into problems. In part because of these efforts, One-Stop enrollees in PCC courses had an 89 percent pass rate in spring 2013. This compares to the College's overall successful course completion rate of 66.4 percent for that same time period.

Industry Partnerships

One-Stop traditionally serves several distinct types of customers: job seekers themselves, the local employers who hire our clients, and local employers seeking to provide training for existing employees in order for the companies to qualify for contracts that require higher skill levels. Not only does One-Stop assist in terms of recruitment, it also supports training, addresses shortages and works on a variety of workforce-related issues. The following are a few most recent examples.

Machinists training. One-Stop staff heeded a warning call from the local aerospace/defense sector that Tucson had a significant shortage of highly-skilled technicians and machinists. Twenty-two companies responded to a subsequent survey from One-Stop, verifying that current technology training was not meeting their needs. The companies agreed to work together with PCC to more closely align the coursework with industry needs. The new curriculum is set to begin for the fall semester.

Additionally, Desert View High School students, with support from the Joint Technical Education District (JTED), were offered paid internships funded by workforce grants and industry donations. As a result of this work, a pipeline exists of interested and engaged high school students. Companies have a greater degree of trust in the program because they know the graduates will have the skills they need. A tighter connection exists between college faculty and the end users, which allows for more open dialogue about changing needs as the industry evolves.

Logistics. With two airports, an east/west rail that is the only rail line to Mexico in Arizona, an interstate highway, and Mexico to the south, the region is ideally situated to

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capitalize on an emerging logistics industry, which deals with managing the flow of materials and products to offices, factories, warehouses and stores.

Working with a group of companies and PCC, the County supported a brand new program that offers basic certification, as well as advanced certificates and an associate's degree in logistics and supply chain management. Previously, students interested in that degree path had to attend Arizona State University or receive training as available from employers. JTED developed matching modules for high school students, and Northern Arizona University is now offering a bachelor's of applied science degree in logistics and supply chain management with online coursework.

To date, more than 1,600 individuals have been trained in Logistics and Supply-Chain Management coursework, increasing the supply of qualified workers.

Energy. Pima County is working with a statewide partnership of community colleges and industry stakeholders to provide training for traditional energy and power generation jobs such as technicians, line workers, plant operators, skilled craftsmen and engineers.

Bridge Programs

Pima County allocated stimulus dollars to pilot promising "bridge" programs to boost college readiness for low-skilled job seekers. One-Stop and its community partners have supported "contextualized" adult education, which builds content around a specific career focus or occupational competencies.

Under that model, Pima County has worked in partnership with PCC in the Pathways to Healthcare program. Workforce funds provide tuition for low-skilled participants to provide healthcare training to bring people out of poverty. Meanwhile, PCC partnered with One-Stop to provide recruitment, case management, career counseling and industry outreach. Since the program's launch in 2010, nearly 488 people have gone into training through 16 different occupational tracks identified by Pima Community College as providing a pathway to a career. Approximately 320 have completed their coursework.

Meanwhile, Pima County provides substantial funding for workforce development in addition to that allocated to the One-Stop program. The Board of Supervisors allocated \$430,000 to JobPath, for example, which works closely with the One-Stop Center and supports training for higher-wage jobs to increase participants' earning power with much of the training coming from PCC.

The Board also allocates an annual \$250,000 to the Pima County Adult Education Program.

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Future Opportunities

There are clear benefits to collaborative partnerships in addressing the needs of the unemployed and underemployed. Leveraging these opportunities will require open and robust channels of communication. It is helpful to have an advocate and partner, as well as a single point of contact, at the leadership level to be able to plan and execute innovative models that provide real-world skills and industrial certification while engaging industry in a meaningful way.

With the new Chancellor's background in vocational programs and his solid understanding of such programs as a vehicle for people to upgrade their skills and move out of poverty, we look forward to continuing to strengthen our partnership with PCC.

CHH/mjk

c: Hank Atha, Deputy County Administrator for Community and Economic Development