



Unleashing the Power of the 21st Century Community College

Maximizing Labor Market Responsiveness



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UNLEASHING THE POWER OF THE 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Maximizing Labor Market Responsiveness

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Preface

The nation's network of nearly 1,200 community, junior, and technical colleges provides access to higher education and training opportunities that enable more than 11 million students annually to lead more productive lives. For the past century, communities throughout the United States have depended upon their local community colleges to provide open access for students to earn an associate's degree and to prepare for transfer to four-year colleges, to provide opportunities for adult members of the community to pursue continuing education and avocations, and to offer new and incumbent workers vocational training in the form of certification and specialized programs. More recently, community colleges increasingly have been granting high school diplomas and equivalencies in response to today's labor market requirements. In short, we have come to expect the community college system to remain flexible and to respond quickly to the education and training needs of our citizens.

Today, more than ever, community colleges are in the forefront of helping the nation remain productive and competitive through innovation and responsiveness to changing labor market needs. The shift towards a knowledge economy, global competition, and newly emerging and rapidly developing technologies have converged to increase significantly the demand for technical, analytical, and interpersonal skills. As a result, community colleges must be more responsive, indeed, more anticipatory than ever before. College leaders will need new strategies and approaches to remain effective providers of education and training.

The AED National Institute for Work and Learning appreciates the challenge facing the 21st century community college. Throughout our 30-year history, we have been leaders in assisting educational institutions to prepare the developing workforce to meet the demands of the labor market. We have provided guidance to scores of programs and institutions with the goal of ensuring lifelong learning and productive work for all Americans. Our objective has been to build bridges between education and employer communities. We believe that the time is now for community colleges to step up to meet the demands of a 21st century economy.

It is our hope that the products emerging from the Community College Labor Market Responsiveness Initiative will stimulate and support a continuing dialog between community college leaders and employers. This overview provides an introduction to the guidebook stemming from that initiative—*The 21st Century Community College: A Strategic Guide to Maximizing Labor Market Responsiveness*—which provides critical information and models that every community college should examine in its efforts to sustain and increase the economic vitality and health of its community.

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The Community College Labor Market Responsiveness Initiative

To help all community colleges unleash their potential for workforce and economic development, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education sponsored the Community College Labor Market Responsiveness (CCLMR) Initiative. This project sought to develop and disseminate information and tools enabling colleges to keep pace with the needs of a diverse student body and a dynamic labor market. In partnership with Westat, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) undertook this initiative in 2002.

Our main goals were to: 1) determine the characteristics of a “market responsive” community college and identify the indicators and measures by which market responsiveness can be judged; 2) identify the policies and practices community colleges have put in place to facilitate and support labor market responsiveness; 3) pinpoint the steps colleges can take to improve labor market responsiveness and the quality of customized programs they offer to students; and 4) disseminate that knowledge to the field.

The conclusions and recommendations drawn rely heavily upon case study analysis of more than 30

colleges in 10 diverse labor markets, especially hundreds of interviews and discussions conducted with college leaders, employers, and economic development professionals. The participating colleges, organized by labor market area, are presented in the appendix. The colleges in the study sample vary with respect to size, geographic location, overall budget, student populations, funding stream, and other variables reflecting the full range of community colleges in the U.S. To augment the case studies, we collected standardized data across all colleges using surveys and document review, conducted statistical analyses, reviewed the relevant literature, and consulted with experts.

From the data collected, the Department of Education asked AED and Westat to develop a guidebook that college administrators could use to maximize their responsiveness to dynamic labor market conditions. Its main purpose is to identify ways college leaders can improve those programs and services that most directly affect the ability of citizens to succeed in today’s demanding skill-based labor market and the ability of employers to compete in today’s challenging global market.

Titled ***The 21st Century Community College: A Strategic Guide to Maximizing Labor Market Responsiveness***, the guidebook is designed to accomplish three major goals:

- share up-to-date information on labor market responsiveness;
- offer practical guidance to college administrators seeking to take actions which will allow them to maximize their labor market responsiveness; and
- encourage community college administrators to engage in a critical self-assessment process.

This document offers an introduction to the guidebook and distills its main findings. We urge you to access the three-volume guidebook and the other practical products that were developed as part of this initiative. These are available as free downloads at:
www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/factsh/cclmri.html

- *The 21st Century Community College: A Strategic Guidebook for Maximizing Labor Market Responsiveness* (AED, 2004)

- *Volume I: Unleashing the Power of the Community College*
Defines what labor market responsiveness is, explains why community colleges need to be intentional in their responsiveness to labor market conditions, and shows how responsive colleges can more effectively contribute to the economic development of their communities.

- *Volume II: Promising Practices and Lessons Learned from the Field*
Presents seven modules exploring unique facets of the community college that contribute to labor market responsiveness and function as practical guides that can be referenced time and again in the processes of self-reflection and strategic planning.

- *Volume III: Self-Assessment Tools and Resources*
Offers practical tools to guide your team through a self- and community assessment process and additional resources including an annotated bibliography and listing of organizations and projects that may be of assistance.

- Research appendices to *The 21st Century Community College* (Westat, 2004)

- Cross College and Area Analysis
- Summary Profiles of Each College
- Measures of Market Responsiveness

- *Documented Characteristics of Labor Market Responsive Community Colleges and a Review of Supporting Literature* (Westat and AED, 2003)

The Time is Now

The story is told of a Midwestern community college located in a town that was facing a major economic downturn. Historically productive plants were soon to be shut down, as the existing technology was becoming obsolete and production was slated to be moved elsewhere. Everyone saw that the writing was on the wall. Eventually, the plants closed, jobs were lost, and the entire town suffered, just as predicted. Looking back, a staff member of the community college said, “The saddest thing is, we saw this thing coming. We talked about it a lot, but we never took action.” Ten years later, faced with another economic shift, the community college was at the forefront of envisioning the area’s economic future, recruiting new industry, and retraining dislocated workers for the new opportunities under development. Community members recognized the economic development resource they had in their community college, and the transition was markedly less painful. Clearly, community colleges have a vital role to play in ensuring that their communities effectively anticipate and respond to the economic challenges and opportunities they face.

Many believe that as community colleges enter their second century of service, their role as engines of economic development will come to the fore. Twenty-first century community colleges will be characterized

by their pivotal role in a seamless system of education, workforce development, and economic development.

Now more than ever, it is vital that all community colleges realize their potential to strengthen the U.S. economy by meeting the workforce development needs of its citizens and employers.

The need for 21st century community colleges to become flexible, market responsive providers of postsecondary education, worker retraining and certification, and continuing education stems from a workplace that demands rapidly changing job skills. Global competition contributes to increased pressure on business and industry to be more productive. The demand for skilled labor grows. As a result, the training needs of employers have expanded and accelerated. Communities that prosper are ever more dependent on employers that need skilled labor.

Health care, manufacturing, and information technology-based companies spend more dollars every year on training to upgrade the skills of their workforce. This demand has created a market for contract training and curriculum development that community colleges are uniquely qualified to meet. At the same time, with the increase in training budgets, competition for this market has expanded both from private vendors and

“The ability of a company to be competitive in this new economic environment requires a capacity to improve productivity, to innovate, and to push innovations to market faster than competitors. None of this can be accomplished without a skilled frontline workforce that can harness the tools of technology and quickly adapt to changes in a global economy.”

*- Bob Templin,
Northern Virginia Community College¹*

from within the companies themselves. Although many community colleges have become more market responsive, securing such training contracts, others have been less successful.

Workforce development is almost universally accepted as a key component of economic development. The time is right for community colleges to embrace and achieve their full potential as engines for economic development. With a network of 1,600 community college campuses and countless on-site training facilities, this potential is vast. At their best, community colleges work closely with business and industry to offer a continuum of training—from students without workforce experience to veteran employees upgrading their skills to advance in their jobs or make career transitions.

Effective labor market responsiveness opens up exciting possibilities for community colleges. The college is positioned for new relationships and partnerships while opening the door to new resources. The college discovers and seizes upon new opportunities to be of public service, reinforcing its leadership in the community, state, and beyond. The college better serves a more diverse group of students and provides all who come to its doors with preparation more likely to lead to real professional growth and higher wages.

While recognizing the potential of community colleges to promote economic development, it is important to remember that their missions are multifaceted.

Community colleges provide opportunities for students to earn an associate’s degree and to prepare for transfer to four-year colleges, for adult members of the community to pursue continuing education and avocations, and for new and incumbent workers to obtain vocational training in the form of certification and specialized programs. As our nation undergoes economic transition, the importance of the workforce development mission rises to the fore. At many community colleges, this will require significant institutional change before the potential for meeting local labor market needs is fully realized. How effectively community colleges transform themselves into market responsive institutions determines how effectively they will support the economic development of their communities.

Market responsive community colleges with high quality career-oriented programs are able to anticipate local community needs, secure contracts to custom-build programs for employers, deliver courses and credentials that align with current and future workplace needs, and accurately evaluate training outcomes. Over the course of their one-hundred year history, a growing number of America’s community colleges have become highly responsive to labor market conditions.

Yet, not all community colleges fully recognize their potential in meeting these goals, nor are they equally capable in providing career-oriented training. In his landmark 1994 study, *The Contradictory College*, Kevin Dougherty found most community colleges to be “much less responsive to the demands of the labor market” than many observers contend, stating that the typical community college “dances to the music of the labor market but does so only clumsily.”²

Nevertheless, as local economies and employment outlooks change, some community colleges are able to respond. Some even anticipate these changes. Looking to serve their students and employer partners better, these colleges have become more aggressive in outreach to their communities. Leadership at these colleges tends to assume an anticipatory stance. College presidents and boards of trustees have



gathered adequate information to point the institution towards the most promising set of economic and workforce opportunities. Leaders have improved internal responses to these opportunities by confronting the institution's structural and cultural weaknesses. And these institutions have developed strong relationships and partnerships and committed adequate resources to overcome obstacles.

Colleges vary with respect to the economic conditions in which they operate, the dynamism of their leadership, the resources allotted by state and local funding sources to the vocational training mission, the nature of local training needs and interests, and the extent to which they must compete with other providers of vocational training in their area. Therefore, the specific strategies employed by market responsive

“Community colleges, for many reasons, are moving to the forefront of workforce and economic development.... Today’s community colleges offer far more than the traditional vocational and general education programs of the recent past, yet many still need to adopt a more market-driven approach to workforce and economic development programming.”

*- Richard Drury,
Challenging Management Development, Inc.³*

community colleges are not identical. Although any college can serve economic and workforce needs, these needs vary according to the local economy, the size and strength of the business community, the types of industries that dominate, the level of demand for specific skill sets, and the changing demographics of the community. Therefore, there is no “one size fits all” approach to labor market responsiveness.

Yet, market driven community colleges tend to share fundamental characteristics. The literature on market responsive community colleges, developed over the last 10 years, suggests that they share the following important traits:⁴

- Leadership committed to the goal of making the college market responsive;
- Internal response mechanisms that address campus organizational structure and culture;
- Conscious and deliberate efforts to nurture business and other partnerships; and
- Thoughtful and strategic approaches to building stronger connections to the local economy.



A Closer Look at Labor Market Responsiveness

By now, most policy makers recognize that their community colleges can play important roles in workforce and economic development—hosting small business incubators, offering entrepreneurship development, partnering in business recruitment, conducting applied research, and establishing technology parks, for example. Their view of the college’s mission, however, remains centered on education and training. The college’s attention to the labor market is commonly viewed as the province of one division or as a special initiative, segregated from the main purpose and activity of the institution.

To expand the traditional view of the community college’s role in workforce and economic development into a broader vision of labor market responsiveness, we propose the following definition:

A labor market responsive community college delivers programs and services that align with and seek to anticipate the changing dynamics of the labor market it serves. These programs and services address the educational and workforce development needs of both employers and students as part of the college’s overall contribution to the social and economic vitality of its community.

This definition highlights several important facets of market responsiveness:

- First, it distinguishes programs, such as courses or certificate programs, from services, such as small business development, industry recruitment, and corporate consulting, while identifying both as equally important.
- Second, this definition indicates that to be responsive means to be anticipatory. Even the most nimble community colleges, which can develop new courses of study in a matter of months, must constantly look ahead to ensure that new programs are in place by the time business and industry need them.
- Third, this definition draws attention to the importance of aligning these programs and services with local conditions and recognizes the fact that local conditions are constantly changing. In other words, one size does not fit all, and what worked yesterday may not work tomorrow.

- Fourth, a college's service area is not restricted to its locality. More and more colleges are responding to markets that extend far beyond county, state, or even national borders. Economies and markets do not recognize political or geographic boundaries.
- Fifth, this definition incorporates academic education as well as vocational education and workforce development. The traditional hard lines—between academic education and vocational training, between credit and noncredit courses—are increasingly blurred.
- Sixth, it recognizes that constituencies who benefit from market responsiveness include students, employers, the community as a whole, and the college itself. Responsiveness enables the college to serve all of its customers better.

- Lastly, the definition asserts that the community's economic vitality, and by extension the region's, depends upon meeting the mutually reinforcing needs of students and employers. By addressing the supply side and the demand side, and by aligning the educational and training needs dictated by each, the community college enhances the overall well being of the community in which it is located.

What does this definition mean in practice? For most community colleges, it means a fundamental reordering of institutional priorities and mission, of organizational structure and culture. It means, over time, a process of organizational change that transforms the college from an exclusive focus on the traditional purposes and values of higher education to a focus that is aligned with and seeks to anticipate the changing dynamics of the labor market. **Such a process can unleash the potential of the college and its staff in new and unexpected ways.**



Seven Dimensions of Labor Market Responsiveness

Through interviews with more than 200 individuals at more than 30 community colleges, we acquired a comprehensive view of economic and workforce development strategies. We then determined to account for the fact that some colleges enacted these strategies more effectively than others, independent of the influence of economic context.

Our guiding research question was, “What specifically do effective colleges do that enables them to be more market responsive?” We focused on factors over which community college leaders have the most control, and we found that the answers to the question we had posed could be organized into seven dimensions. It is these dimensions that college leaders must address in order to maximize labor market responsiveness:

- Leadership and governance
- Organizational structure and staffing
- Organizational culture
- Resources and funding
- Information and data
- Relationship building
- Partnerships

Although we have separated these seven dimensions for the purposes of discussion, in practice they are integrated and mutually reinforcing. Addressing any one in isolation is unlikely to result in the intended outcome. In and of themselves, these dimensions do not equal labor market responsiveness. Instead, they represent dimensions of college practice that leaders successfully manage on the path towards market responsiveness. We also note that when we refer to “the labor market responsive college” or “the responsive college” we are describing an ideal toward which a college may aspire rather than any actual institution. Colleges profiled in *The 21st Century Community College: A Strategic Guide to Labor Market Responsiveness* point the way by employing noteworthy practices that illustrate key principles.

What follows is a brief introduction to those seven dimensions which provides only a glimpse of the information included in the in-depth discussion of each in Volume II of *The 21st Century Community College*. Here we offer a number of lessons learned, highlight several themes explored, and give a preview of the instructive examples and thought-provoking questions found in the guide.



Leadership and Governance

It is no coincidence that our in-depth exploration of the seven dimensions of market responsiveness begins with leadership. Leadership is critical to all aspects of a college's success, but none more so than shaping the college's mission and creating a shared understanding of what it means to be labor market responsive. The top college officials—president, board of trustees, vice presidents, and deans—make market responsiveness a college priority and communicate this mission internally and externally.

LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

THE LOCUS OF LEADERSHIP

A growing number of community college presidents envision a more significant role for their college in their own community and beyond. Having recognized the value of labor market responsiveness, they educate themselves about the national and regional labor market in order to envision how the college could address those needs. Knowledge translates into a commitment to making labor market responsiveness a college priority and to embracing that commitment publicly.

Lessons Learned

- The president and board are key figures in setting the college's direction.
- Leaders are visionary and communicate that vision broadly, on and off campus.
- Leaders maintain a regional, national, or even international vision that extends beyond the college's traditional service area.
- Leaders refer to and take seriously the college mission and strategic plan.
- Leaders inform themselves about economic and workforce trends and bring that knowledge back to campus, using it to inform strategic thinking and planning.
- Leaders are visible off campus as partners in economic development, building relationships with powerful people and in the process often acquiring the resources needed to start new, large-scale programs.
- Leaders are entrepreneurial, proactive, anticipatory, and innovative.

Leadership that nurtures labor market responsiveness also resides with the board of trustees. Such boards actively set the mission and priorities and support the president in leading the institution. Boards allocate resources to workforce development. And since an important role of the board is to select new presidents, their interest in workforce development will influence their choice of a new CEO who shares that commitment.

Presidents are the face of the college, and people on and off campus learn about the college's priorities and culture by observing the president. Presidents share this public relations role with their board members. College leaders network with leaders from other arenas—corporate, political, government, sports, and media—to make connections that will further the college's mission. They find ways, on campus and off, to showcase the college's mission and accomplishments and reward friends of the institution.

President as Public Relations Vehicle

"I am the cheerleader," the president of **Malcolm X College** in Chicago said, "the major public relations vehicle." She is not only visible in the local community and active in encouraging its residents but is also energetic and effective in bringing powerful players to the campus. The president holds a gala in the atrium of the main campus building each February, primarily for corporate leaders. Her breakfast for legislators brings city and state politicians to campus, "to see what we've accomplished and what we need." The Jazz Café, also held in the atrium, is free to the community but strategically draws people from business and industry. She ensures that graduations are opportunities for awards to powerful friends of the campus "to showcase those who've been responsive to us." All of these campus events become opportunities to showcase the mission and accomplishments of Malcolm X College.

At the most responsive colleges, presidents and board members participate in high-level networking, a role that appears particularly significant in securing large grants and other resources for substantial new programs. Presidents may act as the key contact with important partners in order to demonstrate the commitment that the college is making.

But although the president is the college's primary leader, he or she cannot lead in isolation. Senior administrators who participate in decision making and program management play important roles as part of the leadership team. Leadership must also be diffused throughout the organization and staff rewarded for vision and risk taking. Faculty members may assume leadership roles and be empowered to take initiative.

ADOPTING A BROAD AND ANTICIPATORY OUTLOOK

Colleges cannot prepare workers adequately by limiting their gaze to local employment trends. Responsive community colleges recognize that regional, national, and global economies profoundly influence local labor markets. Many staff members emphasized the importance of going national, having found that national visibility and connections helped them politically, strategically, and financially.

Effective leaders are well informed on local, regional, and national labor market trends. Presidents and other administrators consult a great range of articles, reports, and data sources. They observe what other community colleges are doing and use them as benchmarks for their own progress. This investment of time gathers the information with which to construct plans that anticipate the future and position the college to begin preparing a place for itself in that future.

*Does your outlook extend
beyond your college's
traditional service area?*



Organizational Structure and Staffing

Community colleges pursue multiple missions that compete for priority and resources. Historically, workforce development and continuing education divisions have often held second-class status relative to academic, transfer, and credit divisions. The leaders of a labor market responsive college will usually rethink the stature and structure of its workforce and business development services and continuing education programs. They identify ways that organizational structure and staffing limit institutional capacity for economic and workforce development and then remove these barriers.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE HIGHLIGHTS

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AS EQUALIZER

One way to bring the status of academic and workforce development divisions into parity is through the reporting structure or organizational chart.

Administrators have employed various approaches to elevating the status of workforce development and easing the credit/noncredit divide. One college created two vice presidents who report directly to the president, one for academics and one for workforce development/continuing education. Another created a senior

Lessons Learned

- The labor market responsive college creates an organizational structure that places workforce development on an equal footing with academic programs.
- Credit/noncredit divisions share resources and complement each other's strengths.
- Colleges improve efficiency and customer service by consolidating workforce and economic development.
- The college needs a structure that accommodates both large-scale market initiatives and the daily work of managing and improving existing programs.
- Colleges that make program development and outreach to employers everyone's job invest in professional development to ensure that staff succeed in these roles.

Does your college's organizational chart reflect the equal importance of credit and noncredit programs?

vice president for academic affairs to whom several deans report, each responsible for an area such as workforce development, liberal arts, and career programs. At another, the heads of workforce divisions were promoted from "director" to dean or vice president. Consistent across these examples is the parity given to traditional academic functions and workforce development, underscoring the college's new stance that workforce and economic development are central to its mission, not marginal.

BRIDGING THE CREDIT/NONCREDIT DIVIDE

Traditionally, the credit and noncredit sides of the community college were sharply divided and the noncredit side marginalized as a result of state funding formulas. However, the credit and noncredit sides offer complementary strengths and resources that make collaboration across the divide especially important. The flexibility of noncredit allows colleges to create new courses quickly in response to immediate needs. New noncredit offerings may influence the content of credit courses or be harbingers for new credit programs. Noncredit offerings increase enrollment and often reach new students.

Responsive colleges remove bureaucratic hindrances to collaboration and try to make the credit/noncredit distinction invisible to students and employers. Faculty members and administrators engage in partnerships across credit/noncredit lines. Credit faculty members teach noncredit courses or act as corporate trainers and may receive extra pay or stipends for noncredit program management. Faculty in credit courses use equipment purchased through partnerships on the noncredit side. Administrators seek to develop avenues that will allow noncredit courses to transfer to credit programs. Both credit and noncredit sides pursue off-campus partnerships. Community outreach becomes a barometer of credit/noncredit integration.

The institute model is one structure that blurs the lines between credit and noncredit. Responsive colleges have established institutes for information technology, healthcare, technical careers, manufacturing, business management, or construction. An institute brings together faculty, staff, resources, equipment, and facilities to focus on the same field or subject matter, housing credit as well as noncredit coursework and short-term corporate and customized training services, enabling the college to serve students and business clients through a single point of contact.

The Institute as an Integration Model

The Homer S. Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education at **Montgomery College** (MD) offers credit and noncredit courses, programs, and certifications, in addition to customized training. Prior to developing the institute, college staff had difficulty responding effectively to client requests, redirecting them to multiple programs managed by different units of the college. Moreover, there were variations in quality and curriculum across programs that affected the reputation of the institution as a whole. Housed in its own building, the 10-year-old institute operates on a single-point-of-contact model in which a prospective student or client can be connected to the right offering through one conversation. Once enrolled, credit and noncredit students sit in some of the same classes. Positive outcomes include a 15-fold increase in contract training over the last 10 years and 55 percent growth in total enrollments. With the success of the model established, the IT Institute was created in 1998. A new facility, under construction, will accommodate the Health Sciences Institute.

Organizational Culture

Changing the college's organizational structure may elevate the stature of workforce education, but a corresponding shift in values, expectations, incentives, and attitudes must occur as well. Within community colleges primarily focused on their transfer mission, faculty members and administrators embrace traditional academic values likely to elevate excellence in specific disciplines and time-honored course sequences. At colleges that embrace labor market responsiveness, new values, attitudes, and orientations prevail. Staff members value academic excellence, but the culture that emerges is also entrepreneurial, flexible, open-minded, innovative, risk-taking, empowering, and collaborative. Collaboration is a hallmark—across internal divisions and with external organizations. College personnel exercise their networking skills and build relationships on and off campus. They engage business and industry partners in program, course, and curriculum development. They constantly seek ways to improve. Such orientations become internalized by faculty and staff.

Lessons Learned

- Cultural beliefs, values, and expectations on campus determine the relative priority assigned to the various missions and the degree to which they are accomplished.
- Colleges with a workforce development mission create a culture that values the personal traits of entrepreneurship, innovation, flexibility, and risk-taking.
- Colleges that successfully engage faculty in the process of market responsiveness accomplish a cultural shift as well as structural change.
- The leadership empowers staff with the freedom to explore partnerships and take risks, maximizes their flexibility, offers appropriate incentives, and recognizes and rewards work related to workforce development.
- Language helps create and change cultural orientations in conversation and in widely disseminated documents, helping instill strongly held common values and beliefs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR CULTURAL CHANGE

Traditional academic views of workforce development activity must change if a community college is to embrace the mission of labor market responsiveness. Cultural change is a gradual process that only occurs if supported by organizational restructuring and nurtured by leadership's visible and ongoing commitment. Campus leaders promote cultural change through new language, which in its simplest form can be a motto or mantra that concisely signals what the leadership values and expects of staff. Beyond the mantra, conversations and institutional documents on these campuses are peppered with phrases and words that describe and signal the existence of an organizational culture that embraces certain values and attitudes.

Mottos Reflect College Values

At **Central Piedmont Community College** in North Carolina, the president consistently asks staff to consider two simple questions to guide program development: "Is this good for our students? Is this good for our community?" As the questions imply, what is good for students and the community is good for the college, thereby establishing one of the core cultural values of the college.

The **Anne Arundel Community College** (MD) mantra, "Learning is learning is learning," is frequently heard on campus and emphasizes the cultural shift toward a "one-college model" in which academics, career-oriented courses, and corporate training are all given equal priority.

REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Effective leaders also promote cultural change by taking concrete steps that actively reward and recognize faculty and staff who engage in workforce development and otherwise commit themselves to responsive practices. These leaders remove the obstacles so common in a large organization which can easily interfere with creative efforts to operate partnerships

Are staff encouraged, supported, and rewarded to expand their roles?

and new programs successfully. These include scheduling, compensation, competition, and "good old-fashioned bureaucracy," to name a few. Leaders ensure, from initial hiring through employee orientation, training, and subsequent performance evaluations, that they seek and reward initiative for activities that lead to productive partnerships. They hire people with the right attitudes as well as the right experience and skills.

Colleges that seek to become labor market responsive have devised a number of ways to encourage staff to embrace their new roles and reward those who do. Staff members may receive stipends beyond their regular salaries to manage or teach in new programs. Colleges may sponsor staff recognition programs that showcase and reward faculty members and administrators—at all levels—who assume leadership in partnering activities.

Because collaboration requires faculty and staff to play expanded parts, the responsive college invests in professional development to help everyone succeed in these new roles. The college may underwrite training for staff members to enable them to lead the college's advance into new or rapidly changing fields such as information technology. Professional development programs may place credit faculty in contact with industry, to study the business milieu and revise curricula to reflect what they learn. As staff behaviors change, so too does their cultural orientation towards responsiveness.

Resources and Funding

It is difficult to be a truly labor market responsive institution while relying on traditional sources of community college funding. Historically, community colleges have acquired most of their funding through state formulas based either on student enrollment or apportionment. State funding formulas favor credit programs; fewer than half fund the noncredit coursework more typical of workforce development, and only three fund credit and noncredit students equally. A few state systems do provide workforce development monies to colleges to address specific industry needs.

This means that community colleges committed to labor market responsiveness must look to new sources of funds and resources. Staff dedicated to seeking new funding sources and writing proposals are essential, as are the fundraising efforts of the president and trustees. Many colleges capitalize on the partnerships that their boards and foundations have with business and the community. They are creative and entrepreneurial in fundraising, building new facilities, securing new funds through legislation, or providing fee-for-service programs, for example.

Lessons Learned

- Creativity and breadth are demanded of the fundraising strategies of responsive institutions. Traditional state funding is rarely adequate or sufficiently flexible.
- Such colleges tap county or bond initiatives, leverage public/private partnerships, and reach beyond their communities to regional, state, and federal resources.
- Committing to labor market responsiveness requires more financial and human resources but may yield more resources as well.
- The college president and board are especially key in developing resources for large-scale workforce initiatives and partnerships.

RESOURCES AND FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

LOOKING BEYOND THE STATE

Tapping new resources requires the college to invest in human resources to scan the horizon for funding, write proposals, and build relationships with funders and partners.

Grants. Workforce investment boards, corporate foundations, unions and professional associations, community-based organizations, states, and federal government agencies like the National Science Foundation all provide grants to colleges.

Partnerships. Partnerships with employers and industry can bring in donations, contracts, and equipment. Start-up funds, donations of equipment or machinery, investment in new facilities, and space for clinical experiences are common benefits.

Colleges as Corporate Training Departments

Okuma America, a leading machine tool manufacturer with its Western hemisphere headquarters in Charlotte, NC, outsourced its training division to **York Technical College's** Institute for Manufacturing Productivity (SC). The company provides new equipment for the facility on the college's campus, and its trainers are now college employees.

Federal-Mogul Sealing Systems, a manufacturing company with 1,600 employees, outsourced all employee training to **Oakton Community College** near Chicago, most of which is conducted on company property, and provides office space at the company for a training manager and an assistant.

In-kind donations. Colleges tap their partners to obtain costly equipment and the up-to-date technology essential to train a skilled workforce.

Federal and state initiatives. Federal initiatives that provide funds directly to community colleges include Developing Hispanic Institutions grants, Preparing

Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology, and Tech-Prep Demonstration Grants. State initiatives include training for specific industries or companies, grants, and other allocations.

Contract training. Contract training can become profit making if enough businesses employ a college on a fee-for-service basis.

CREATIVITY IN GENERATING NEW RESOURCES

Responsive colleges go beyond ensuring that they access a variety of time-tested revenue sources. Their leaders encourage staff members to think outside of the box in seeking new ways to raise resources, including entrepreneurial enterprises and legislative efforts.

Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial efforts—marketing college services and expertise on a fee-for-service or consulting basis—are a source of new funds for responsive campuses. Other colleges contract out their institutional research services, marketing and learner services departments, or curriculum development and educational technology expertise.

Legislation. Responsive colleges secure funds through partnerships that successfully press for legislation to support new workforce or economic development activity.

Other examples of creative funding include: actively pursuing large donations through naming opportunities for buildings; selecting business leaders to become "President's Associates," donating \$5,000 per year and acting as an advisory board; and creating a venture capital model in which program start-up funds are a loan, based on a solid business plan and expected to generate long-term revenue.

Have you developed innovative methods to raise funds for high-demand programs?



Information and Data

Leaders of community colleges that engage in economic and workforce development have many questions to which they need answers. To respond to the labor market, they must understand local, regional, and national economies, including occupational, employment, and other market trends. Secondly, they need to know how well their programs prepare students and the wage and career progression their graduates achieve. Thirdly, they need to assess the match between their occupational training, its cost effectiveness, and labor market trends. Finally, they need to evaluate the college's services to businesses and other organizations, in terms of outcomes as well as customer satisfaction.

Community colleges use information and data from partners, published sources, and their own studies to inform and guide their response to the labor market. This process nurtures a culture of continuous improvement that drives strategic planning and decision making.

Lessons Learned

- Labor market responsive colleges use information and data to understand their environment, drawing upon personal contacts, published data, and their own studies.
- Personal contacts are an irreplaceable source of up-to-the-minute data.
- Published data as well as surveys of employers provide useful information about labor market trends.
- Student enrollment is not an adequate measure of employer or occupational demand.
- Colleges improve by evaluating their services to employers, their impact, and client satisfaction.
- Colleges consider the extent to which coursework helps students get hired and perform well on the job—a primary measure of their labor market responsiveness.
- Strategic planning is driven by information and data in which the college invests resources to collect and analyze.

INFORMATION AND DATA HIGHLIGHTS

PERSONAL CONTACT AS INFORMATION SOURCE

Insider information is one of the fruits of direct personal contact with employers and community leaders. Access to networks of well-positioned people supplies information that enables a college to anticipate labor market conditions. Insider information is likely to be available in advance, before the most insightful published reports. It is likely to be richer and more informative with respect to a particular company or industry or location. Having insider information enables a college to sharpen its responsiveness and step up quickly to address new developments.

By virtue of their ability to open doors, senior administrators are key gatherers of insider information. They enter and move as peers in influential circles in business, education, government, community life, and the media. When the leadership knows its institution's strategic priorities, its workforce and community activity, it is alert to what is most promising about the intelligence gathered in these circles.

Presidential Information Gathering

The president of **Bellevue Community College** (WA) is intensely involved in finding out what the college can do to respond to the business community. As often as she can, the president conducts what she calls a "CEO tour," during which she visits CEOs and business leaders in the region to find out what their needs are. She then brings her findings back to the college, where a rapid response team quickly assembles to address the needs. The president notes that the CEO tour produces candid, one-on-one conversations with employers, which yield information that might not be shared at an open meeting and enable her to truly understand needs to which the college can respond.

Beyond the leadership, opportunities for direct and personal contact occur at many levels within a complex institution like the community college. College staff who interact with advisory committees, business, or clinical sites all have personal contacts who can be tapped for information about occupations, industries, and training trends. College students who work in local companies and clinical placements observe needs first hand. Faculty members, simply keeping current in their fields, identify emerging growth areas.

INTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW

Periodic program reviews by faculty members and administrators are the tool used by most community colleges to assess their labor market responsiveness. Advisory committees are also key players in program reviews, which usually occur at least once every five years. (More frequent attention is given to programs where student or employer demand is notably high or low.) Market responsive colleges also evaluate the operations of their occupational and workforce programs from an institutional point of view, in terms of efficiency, productivity, and cost effectiveness.

Enrollments often serve as a proxy for the needs of the market and employers. A hallmark of market responsive colleges, however, is their refusal to cut course offerings automatically when faced with low student interest. Instead, they proactively cultivate student interest in high-wage occupations in high demand from employers.

How does your college assess the range and value of its programming and services?

Relationship Building

Relationship building is the tool that positions a forward looking community college to become a leader in economic and workforce development. Colleges that pursue labor market responsiveness invest substantial human and financial resources into relationship building, which they recognize as a continual process. Without relationships—in the community, region, and state—college leaders severely limit their knowledge of market needs, challenges, and opportunities. Without relationships, they have no basis for building formal partnerships and strategic alliances through which to realize major labor market initiatives.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING HIGHLIGHTS

EXPANDED CIRCLES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Most community colleges have relationships in their communities—with chambers of commerce, workforce development, social service, civic, or educational groups. The hallmark of market responsive colleges is the expanded circles with which they build relationships and the mission focus of their relationship building.

Lessons Learned

- Responsive colleges develop and deepen relationships with economic and workforce development groups, business and industry, community leaders, community-based organizations, other education and training providers, powerful figures, and diverse constituencies.
- Relationship building is everyone’s job. The board, president, and workforce development division may take the lead, but staff and faculty members across the organization accept responsibility for building relationships.
- The college’s formal statements of purpose (vision, mission, strategic plan) are core vehicles for communicating the college’s mission of market responsiveness.
- The messages communicated emphasize not only the excellence of the college’s services but its proactivity and flexibility in problem solving.

New Relationships Enhance College's Reach

Green River Community College (WA) has built upon its relationship with the Auburn Chamber of Commerce to enhance the college's access to city resources. The two collaborated to open the Regional Enterprise Center in downtown Auburn, a one-stop provider for economic development, community resources, and educational services. Housed in the center are the chamber of commerce and the college's Small Business Assistance Center, as well as a visitor's center, economic development and business leadership programs, and meeting space for community events. The college also recently collaborated with the city of Kent on Kent Station, a \$100 million, 470,000 square-foot retail, education, entertainment, and residential project set to open in 2005. Green River plans to move its SkillStream continuing education and business training services into the center.

For a college to become a vibrant actor in economic and workforce development requires that its leadership and staff become engaged with others in those circles. Responsive colleges are active in tech councils, chambers of commerce, Rotary clubs, and community and regional development councils as well as other planning, economic, and workforce development organizations. Major corporate headquarters and small business networks represent important allies as well.

Every locale has groups and networks oriented toward other community concerns such as ethnic organizations, labor unions, and nonprofit organizations. Colleges that have targeted an underserved population seek out promising entrees to that population. A hallmark of a responsive college is its willingness to adapt to demographic changes in its community, creating better ways to serve immigrant and other nontraditional populations.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IS EVERYONE'S JOB

The president and other senior administrators set the example for creative pursuit of relationships, welcoming and seeking out appointments to boards and councils

and pursuing avenues into networks of power and influence that will strategically position the college to achieve its priorities and goals. The president's presence in circles of influence is itself a message. Public appearances—where he or she appears and with whom—communicate as powerfully as words the college's mission and its interest in engaging in partnerships. College leaders who succeed in proactive relationship building literally integrate themselves into the economic aspects of the community in ways not typical of a previous generation of college leaders.

The specialized college division dedicated to economic and workforce development manages programs and services but also plays a key role in building relationships. The division staff may engage in direct marketing, offering presentations or informal talks to the chamber of commerce or other corporate gatherings. Some responsive colleges retain sales or marketing employees whose sole responsibility is to bring in new business and sustain existing relationships. Staff members develop relationships through which they gather information about industry trends, monitor client satisfaction, and function as living "advertisements" of the quality of the division's "customer service."

The more labor market responsive the community college, the more likely that the entire staff will assume responsibility for relationship building. New expectations of staff, indeed new organizational cultures, are in place or evolving. Such a fundamental shift only occurs if upper management unequivocally communicates these new expectations.

Do faculty and staff understand marketing the college's workforce mission to be a campuswide responsibility?



Partnerships

Through relationship building, community colleges open doors to new connections and opportunities to demonstrate their expertise and leadership. Relationships build upon each other, bringing together groups and individuals with overlapping goals and different mixes of resources and need. Out of these networks, colleges form one, two, or many partnerships. Presidents and boards play key roles in connecting with leaders and initiating partnerships. Entrepreneurial staff members transform these relationships into effective partnerships.

PARTNERSHIPS HIGHLIGHTS

SETTING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering is strategic, based on real relationships and information gathered about employers, community needs, and economic trends. Senior officials often observe that “thoughtful and intentional partnership” is the best route to labor market responsiveness.

All colleges must set strategic priorities. Where are the college’s strengths, and where are the opportunities in the community? Which industries and companies

Lessons Learned

- The labor market responsive college pursues partnerships strategically and only after thoughtful assessment and research.
- College staff members take an entrepreneurial, proactive, and creative stance towards partnerships.
- College leaders assess the value of partnerships not simply by the bottom line, but instead by long-term opportunities for leverage and community benefit.
- Labor market responsive colleges embrace continuous improvement and convey that philosophy to partners and to the community.
- Enlightened self-interest is the heart of successful partnerships—the ideal is win-win-win arrangements that benefit students, businesses, the college, and the community at large.

Do the partnerships in which your college takes part anticipate local economic development and growth?

are most important economically? Are there other employers, such as government agencies or school systems, with which the college could partner? The processes of institutional self-assessment and community assessment, the matching of strengths with opportunities, lead to reasoned decisions by college leaders as to where to focus their efforts. These processes provide a sound basis upon which to target particular industries or occupations, or identify and pursue specific companies and people with whom to partner.

Setting strategic priorities also means revisiting the meaning of “community.” Today’s economic and labor market concerns almost always play themselves out on a regional level, reaching beyond the concerns of local employers. Through strategic partnerships, community colleges contribute to the demand side of the labor market by developing new business and industry. In this way colleges help address the loss of manufacturing jobs, economic downturns, and the dislocation of workers. Indeed, the global economy has implications for even the most geographically isolated colleges, information technology offering only one example of a growth industry not tied to geographic location. The search for strategic partners should not be limited to the usual suspects within the bounds of a local community or county. Many responsive colleges establish partnerships with companies and other employers on a regional basis, sometimes crossing state lines.

PARTNERING WITH LEADERS

Leaders reflecting on successful partnerships advise that colleges partner with major employers and innovative industries on the one hand, and with those undergoing dramatic change, growth, or retrenchment on the other. The more substantial the business or industry, the greater the need for many well trained

workers. The more successful the enterprise, the more likely the leadership is to be interested in growth and expansion. The more visionary the leadership, the more likely the firm is to be enthusiastic and willing to take risks in the interest of creating new enterprises and partnerships. Partnering with national or international corporations, professional associations, or unions is likely to provide more resources and greater recognition for the college. Regional or national connections are a good leverage point for future partnerships.

On the other hand, firms undergoing dramatic change are likely to be in the most need of retooling and retraining. Employees are more likely to seek additional training to stay competitive, and dislocated employees will need retraining.

Successful Partnerships Lead to New Ones

Kirkwood Community College in Iowa partners with Aegon USA, one of the largest insurance companies in the world, with operations in Cedar Rapids. In 1998, Aegon built its corporate data center on the college’s campus and in exchange built the college an information technology center. As a result of this creative partnership, Diamond Mills, a feed additive company, approached the college about its need for a nutrition research center. Since the college needed a new veterinary technology facility, the two partnered to build a facility that would address both their needs. Diamond Mills paid about 75 percent of the cost in exchange for the college maintaining the grounds and parking lots. The college has a similar partnership with Ruffalo Cody and Associates, a fundraising enterprise. Ruffalo Cody is building its facility on the college campus and hires students. In addition, Ruffalo Cody will do market research for the college.

Conclusion: Strategic Planning for Change

The value of being a labor market responsive college extends well beyond the college itself, beyond its students, beyond its public and private sector partners. Many responsive community colleges have demonstrated that by developing programs to address employer and industry needs and continually seeking ways to engage in the region's economic development, they improve not only the employment prospects of their students but the economic outlook for their communities and regions as well.

Whatever a community college's circumstances, impediments to labor market responsiveness can be overcome. As one economic developer observed, "No matter where you are or what obstacles you face, you can do more." The journey to labor market responsiveness requires thoughtful self-reflection and strategic planning. Self-assessment and strategic planning enable a college to recognize environmental assets and liabilities and, as many have demonstrated, to work within and even build upon what once appeared to be constraints. Our findings suggest that whether a college is small or large, rural or urban or suburban, financially comfortable or facing lean times, receiving more state support or less, it is possible to do more to realize the potential of the institution and its staff through labor market responsiveness.

ACTION STEPS YOUR COLLEGE CAN TAKE NOW

1) Prioritize labor market responsive goals. The first step in the process of increasing labor market responsiveness is to make it a campus priority. This requires educating all involved, building consensus around labor market responsive goals, and promoting any necessary attitudinal change to the broadened mission of the college. *The 21st Century Community College: A Strategic Guide to Maximizing Labor Market Responsiveness* is an excellent resource for this education and consensus process. Volume I explains what is meant by labor market responsiveness, delineates factors associated with becoming more responsive, and clarifies why labor market responsiveness is so important to community colleges in the 21st century.

2) Plan strategically. The strategic planning process will require time, much deliberation, and widespread campus involvement. The precise design of the strategic planning process should be left to those who know the campus best but at a minimum should include these elements:

- **Institutional Self-Assessment.** The first step is of course self-assessment of the institution's position in terms of labor market responsiveness. A self-assessment questionnaire is provided in Volume III of *The 21st Century Community College* which focuses attention on the seven internal dimensions of a community college highlighted previously. It enables college leadership to assess current practices, structures, and activities. College leadership may wish to use the questionnaire or the guiding questions that follow as the basis for reflection and discussion. We recommend that multiple respondents complete the questionnaire and compare answers. For example, the leadership could establish subcommittees to assess the college's standing on each dimension and create benchmarks for strengthening that aspect of its performance.

- **Community Assessment.** Being responsive requires assessing the economic, workforce, and other needs of the community, as well as current college responses to these needs. Colleges have used various tools for community assessment, including review of published materials, surveys, and direct interviews with leaders. (One advantage of the latter approach is that it allows the college to introduce or reintroduce itself and its capabilities to key players.) For your convenience, a community-assessment tool is also provided in Volume III of *The 21st Century Community College*. As noted above, "community" no longer means simply the local service area of a community college. The process of community assessment should begin with at least a regional focus and ultimately expand to the state and beyond.

- **Collaboration and Communication.** One advantage of engaging many faculty and administrative staff in the processes of self-assessment and community assessment is that doing so allows people to study, reflect, worry, and problem solve over time around what for many is a new concept. Further, labor market responsiveness is not a one-size-fits-all proposition and must be allowed to evolve in a form appropriate for each institution and its context.

When labor market responsiveness is on the table during the information-gathering, self-assessment, and goal-setting processes that underlie mission building and strategic planning, it is more likely to take root as an idea and a purpose. Staff members have the opportunity to explore the concept and its implications for the college, and to air concerns and even fears. Widespread commitment to the new purpose is more likely to result from a process that allows staff members to voice their apprehension about the ramifications of what is a profound cultural shift from the academic purposes of a traditional college.

3) Intentionally pursue institutional change and program development.

Maximizing a college's responsiveness is a function of effectively managing the seven dimensions discussed in this overview. A focus on any one or two dimensions is not sufficient. Volume II of *The 21st Century Community College* provides in-depth discussion, practical examples, and guiding questions for each of these seven dimensions as well as new ideas for tackling each of these areas. Guided by visionary leadership and governance, built on an appropriate organizational structure, staffed by empowered professionals, nurtured by a conducive organizational culture, supported through adequate resources and funding, informed by solid data and current information, inspired by strategic relationship building, and delivered through innovative partnerships, the community college of the 21st century can realize its full potential as an engine of economic development.

These three steps constitute a process that acts as a lever for structural and cultural change on campus. The priorities developed and the information and data gathered will provide the foundation for a new vision, mission, and strategic plan directed toward maximizing labor market responsiveness.



Notes

1. Bob Templin, "The Calm Before the Surge," *Community College Journal* (June/July 2002).
2. Kevin J. Dougherty, *The Contradictory College: The Conflicting Origins, Impacts, and Futures of the Community College* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).
3. Richard L. Drury, "The Entrepreneurial Community College: Bringing Workforce, Economic and Community Development to Virginia Communities," Virginia Community College System, *Inquiry* 6 (Spring 2001).
4. See Robert Harmon and Keith MacAllum, *Documented Characteristics of Labor Market-Responsive Community Colleges and a Review of Supporting Literature* (Westat and AED, 2003) available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/index.html>.



Appendix

Colleges in Labor Market Responsiveness Study Sample*

As part of the Community College Labor Market Responsiveness Initiative, case studies of over 30 community colleges in 10 diverse labor market areas were conducted. These colleges provided the basis for the instructive examples and practices found in *The 21st Century Community College* guidebook. The colleges are listed here by labor market.

Labor Market	Colleges		
Charlotte, NC	Central Piedmont	Gaston	York Tech, SC
Chicago, IL	Moraine Valley	Malcolm X	Oakton
Metro DC	Anne Arundel, MD	Montgomery, MD	Northern Virginia
Greater Orlando	Valencia	Seminole	Indian River
Quad Cities, IA / IL	Kirkwood, IA	Black Hawk, IL	Scott, IA
Springfield, MA	Springfield Tech	Holyoke	Asnuntuck, CT
Seattle, WA	Bellevue	Shoreline	Green River
Rural Colleges	South Piedmont, NC	Mountain Empire, VA	Walla Walla, WA
San Diego, CA	San Diego District: Mesa Mirimar San Diego City		Palomar
Dallas, TX	Dallas County District: Richland Mountain View North Lake Brookhaven Eastfield Cedar Valley El Centro		

* In Dallas, all of the colleges were part of a single community college district. In San Diego, the colleges were in two community college districts. In those cases, we examined the organizational structures at the district level and drew examples from among the colleges in those districts. Because rural colleges each serve a unique labor market but share similar characteristics, we selected three rural colleges in different states to constitute one case study.



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Keith MacAllum is a senior study director at the AED National Institute for Work and Learning where he is responsible for research, evaluation, and programs related to the education and preparation of youth and young adults for productive work and learning futures. He is the project director for formative and summative evaluations, including the Career and Technical Education Transition Study, the Central Educational Center Dissemination Project, and the Johnson & Johnson Bridge to Employment Initiative. Dr. MacAllum provides technical assistance to government agencies, employers, schools, colleges, and community-based organizations to improve the design and delivery of education, training, and human development services. His numerous presentations and publications address a broad array of educational issues, including school-to-career transitions, school organization, and school-business partnerships. Dr. MacAllum has 15 years of experience in educational research and consulting and holds a Ph.D. in the sociology of education from Princeton University.

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