Chapter 4
Community College Partnerships and Training

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ABSTRACT

As the Permian Basin area of West Texas experiences economic growth and employees are in high demand, specialized training is required in high-demand fields. Community colleges can develop and respond quickly to local workforce needs and create credit and non-credit programs. Community colleges provide opportunities through a variety of short programs and flexible schedules at low costs. Taking advantage of local partnerships to train students allows job training experience with the possibility of seamless placement after training. The community college acts as a pathway to provide comprehensive and relevant training that is streamlined to lead to current job placement in the community. This chapter explores this phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

The Permian Basin area is in dire need for a trained workforce and workers are looking for well-paying jobs. Potential employees are embarking on the area from across states and even other countries to seek high-paying employment. Business and industry in the area are paying a premium for skilled workers. A major problem is most of the skilled and trained employees with oilfield experience are already hired and businesses still need more workers. New employees from other areas either do not have prior oilfield experience or

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are not familiar with the West Texas oilfield and requires skills training – this is where the community college and partnerships enter the equation. Community colleges have a history of embracing change utilizing the ability to provide needed training within an area rapidly. This includes providing weekend, night, certificate, specialization and credit courses and classes. The colleges create welding, safety, technical, computer, chemical, linemen, and many other specific tailored training to fit the needs of the community. To achieve relevant training business and industry partner with local colleges providing, instructors, facilities, equipment and funding to enable colleges to adapt and provide germane training.

The Permian Basin oilfield is not the only entity utilizing the training of community colleges – major corporations also solicit colleges for specific skill training. This enhances the possibility of future employment for all types of potential employees. The benefits of community college is they can train employees in any area for needed and in-demand specific skill sets within a quick time-period utilizing the aid of locals joining together to form mutually beneficial partnerships. Community college training is an investment in an individual’s future. Whether the training is sought by the employee or employer, specific skill set training benefits communities.

WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The community college provides training for students in specialized areas of the workforce to support business and industry demands. This practice dates back to 1957, as junior colleges identified the vocational-technical needs to fulfill society’s workforce shortages (Cohen et al., 2014). As society demands specialized skills and knowledge for employees seeking jobs, community colleges are adapting to changing demands of the workforce and providing a range of diverse programs (Cohen et al., 2014). Many of these positions are high paying, resulting in higher personal income of the country’s citizens, contributing to the overall good of the economy (Cohen et al., 2014).

Workforce development focuses on economic development to boost a region’s economic stability and prosperity focusing on individuals. It is also described as the ability to sustain a workforce that can support current and future business and industry. Workforce and technical programs provide training in specialized fields to educate and prepare students to enter the workforce (Hodges, 2012). Keeping in mind, business and industry require trained employees, and employees need business and industry to create a
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