

EDITOR'S NOTES

Recent developments in community college programming include international education, electronic delivery systems, workforce education, and economic development. Success in these less traditional areas often involves collaborations and partnerships with other community colleges, business, industry, and the community in general. The position of community colleges in the middle of the educational hierarchy—between K–12 and the university—enables them to move easily and comfortably along that continuum as circumstances demand, as ideas arise, and as resources shrink and expand. These institutions are conditioned to be flexible and responsive. Happily, many of them also have people who possess the ingenuity to configure the resources in unexpected, creative, and groundbreaking ways.

This volume addresses the theme of collaboration and partnership between community colleges and business and the community by focusing on credit-based examples of some of the more innovative connections. The process behind the development of the model relationships should be useful to the practitioner wanting to develop or modify a similar program in a different setting. Each chapter describes the ingenuity of individuals committed to establishing a relationship based on a recognized need or opportunity. Each chapter offers insights into how the partnership connection was made; what time, energy, and resources were needed to develop the partnership; what challenges had to be overcome on the way to success; and what type of support is necessary for their continuation. Perhaps even more significant to the discussion, however, is a consideration of the wide-ranging benefits, both intended and unexpected, that result with successful partnerships.

The Statewide Advisory Committee for Work-Based Learning and Employment Services highlighted the importance and “good sense” of building powerful partnerships with business and the community in saying: “It enriches the quality of education by adding current and relevant information and an awareness of state-of-the-art technologies and trends. It creates work-based learning opportunities such as internships and job shadowing. It provides classroom speakers and attractive jobs for students. It makes available access to a variety of needed resources” (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2001, p. 2).

This volume does not discuss K–12 partnerships or relationships with four-year institutions in order to focus on ways in which community colleges can be and ultimately are connected with their local communities for the benefit of their students.

In Chapter One, David Buettner, Michael Morrison, and Marge Wasicek describe the “seeds” of successful partnerships, providing a conceptual framework for the remaining chapters. Key elements they identify include shared mission, consolidation of redundant activities, strategic growth, expanded economic opportunity, and access to and conservation of resources. They also address the challenges of preparation, leadership support, flexibility, and reduced autonomy. A case study shows how the concepts apply to their experiences at North Iowa Area Community College. The discussion of challenges is an important reminder of the need for a realistic consideration of the partnering strategy. Their experiences with successful partnerships in health care, workforce development, manufacturing, and entrepreneurship illustrate that these types of relationships, when founded on sound principles, can transform the nature of the community college while providing access to more opportunities than increased resources alone.

In Chapter Two, Lori Sundberg from Carl Sandburg College in Illinois examines the partnership connection from the perspective of the need to create value and benefit for all the partners, especially when private business is involved. The chapter describes the gradual process through which this college established a model partnership with Maytag Galesburg-Refrigeration and addressed the inevitable bureaucratic challenges, including responsiveness issues, governance, coordination, and cost sharing, that emerged from the partnership. There was unprecedented cooperation between the business community and the college because the industry partner recognized that the college could respond to its need for a skilled workforce. A key element in the creation of the Center for Manufacturing Excellence was the college’s commitment to and involvement with the community.

Successful partnerships offer benefits on many levels. Art Tyler chronicles in Chapter Three how Los Angeles City College united with the community and captured national attention by transforming some valuable but underused property on a forty-eight-acre urban campus into a golf driving range. The chapter traces in detail how the environment enabled the partnership to flourish and the project to develop as it moved its way through a complex approval process. Although there were significant challenges, the benefits for the community outweighed them. This story illustrates how thinking creatively and being willing to chart new territory can offer many benefits.

In Chapter Four, John Allen presents in considerable detail the development of a unique partnership between Illinois Valley Community College and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. In order to overcome a series of challenges, including developing the associate degree in applied sciences in electrical construction technology, working with sister colleges to get them to agree to collaborate, receiving approval from state and local boards, and drawing up a contractual agreement, the partners

needed commitment, trust, cooperation, and vision. The curriculum, entrance requirements, and costs for the degree program are outlined. The chapter also identifies the benefits to the college and to the union and its members, especially the apprentices enrolled in the program.

In Chapter Five, Harvey S. Irlen and Frank Gulluni of Asnuntuck Community College in Connecticut describe how a partnership joining the college with the community, local chamber of commerce, and a number of private-sector manufacturers funded, marketed, and opened a manufacturing technology center to provide formal training that would benefit all the partners, both short-term and long-term. The authors recognize how critical it is in the workforce development arena for the customer and the student to be competently served. In addition to enumerating the contents of a unique four-level technology cluster, the authors identify the many positive outcomes of the partnership. Most notable is that the center has had documented success with its new program in upgrading the skills and abilities of the incumbent worker and eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds in the field of metal machining technology.

In Chapter Six Lou Anne Bynum of Long Beach City College in California describes perhaps the most complex and ambitious example of a partnership in this volume. The size and time line of the grant that funded the collaborative alone would qualify it for the honor. However, the involvement of eight colleges, twenty-seven cities, industry, and public and private organizations significantly increased the level of coordination required for success. The discussion covers the partnership's operational structure and project components, participant characteristics, performance expectations for the consortium, and the series of challenges in administering a comprehensive college-and-industry-based training project in the Alameda Corridor. The purpose of the collaborative was to prepare local residents for jobs in the region's critical construction and trades industries. The project was successful in contributing to economic development and continuous workforce improvement in California.

Chapter Seven looks at student learning experiences that build community relationships. Linda Woiwod of Skagit Valley College in Washington State details a nationally recognized Learning Into Action program that ambitiously engages students in a full range of service learning activities that benefit the college, the community, and the students themselves. It is grounded in the belief that general education is more meaningful when students integrate acquired skills and knowledge into action. A unique feature of this program is the faculty's central role. The chapter covers the program's basic design elements and approach and looks at a broad range of existing partnerships and activities.

In Chapter Eight, Kathleen S. Hurley of Valencia Community College in Florida presents a partnership between an independent college program and a strong business advisory council that has guided and supported the Center for High-Tech Training for Individuals with Disabilities. Funded

through state, federal, and private grants, the center—with a unique combination of design and concepts and a curriculum that supports the needs of the local business community—prepares individuals with severe physical disabilities for challenging high-tech careers. Although the chapter traces the center's formation, the discussion focuses on the critical role of the business advisory council, especially in the development of curriculum, and its active participation in the center's support functions. Also addressed are the challenges and benefits of maintaining such a partnership.

In Chapter Nine, the volume's guest editor, Mary S. Spangler, provides some observations on the common elements of success and the consistent challenges to overcome in creating and maintaining effective partnerships.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, with material drawn from the ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, Fred Piegonski of Los Angeles City College reviews a range of practitioner-oriented studies, models, and guides addressing partnerships between community colleges and community organizations. Purposely excluding educational intersegmental relationships, the review focuses on relationships with business and industry in the private sector. The readings are categorized into current community college partnerships, the development process leading to partnerships, statewide reports that include recommendations, handbooks with assessment materials, and one objective study measuring economic benefits. Additional sources for further reading conclude the chapter.

Mary S. Spangler
Editor

Reference

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Statewide Advisory Committee for Work-Based Learning and Employment Services. "Partnering with Employers. A Guide to Building Powerful Partnerships: Best Practices and Tips for Success." Sacramento: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2001.

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