

BRIEF

**ADVANCING
PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN
ORGANIZED LABOR
AND COMMUNITY
COLLEGES**

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AFL-CIO
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PURPOSE

America's young people are entering the workforce during a time of immense opportunity. The historic federal investments championed by the Biden-Harris administration have opened up new career pathways to good-paying, quality jobs in cutting-edge industries. The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (WAI), a central hub for labor, worker and employer partnerships, is working alongside the Biden-Harris administration to ensure young people entering the workforce—as well as incumbent workers upskilling for new roles—have access to networks and technical training in growing industries, especially future workers residing in marginalized communities historically overlooked by federal investments.

To provide insight on how to meet the rapidly growing advanced manufacturing demand spurred by the President's Investing in America agenda, the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute has created this brief to offer best practices and real world examples of workforce development within the building trades and manufacturing industries. This paper builds on conversations facilitated by the White House's National Economic Council in Fall 2023 among labor unions and community colleges to prepare for workforce development needs. Union-community college partnerships offer one potent pathway to prepare America's workforce for increased growth in manufacturing and construction employment while creating good-paying jobs and careers that will economically uplift a generation.

Union-community college partnerships fully align with the labor movement's core goals of advancing workers' rights, social and economic justice, quality training, and quality jobs. The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute is committed to supporting and expanding union-community college partnerships to improve the well-being of workers, the success of employers, and the growth of thriving communities.

This briefing makes clear that the most successful community college training programs involve labor union partnerships. Our goal is to help future workers and community colleges take advantage of this exciting moment of investment and innovation. Partnerships between community colleges and unions offer a proven pathway to accessible, comprehensive training, and robust careers for all workers, including underrepresented communities, while responding to real-time industry needs and advancing economic prosperity for all.

ORGANIZED LABOR'S KEY ROLE IN

**WORKER EDUCATION
AND TRAINING**

ORGANIZED LABOR'S KEY ROLE IN WORKER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

For workers and their families, the difference between union and nonunion jobs can mean the difference between poverty and moving into the middle class.

Union members work together to negotiate and implement collective bargaining agreements with employers that guarantee the workplace conditions we all care about:

- Job security
- Higher wages
- Health insurance and paid sick leave
- Stable schedule and vacation days
- Retirement benefits
- Training and career development

Through collective bargaining, labor unions also:



Improve wages and working conditions for all workers, whether or not they are union members



Reduce wage and wealth gaps for women workers and workers of color



Provide better job safety protections and better paid leave than that of nonunion workers, including security to exercise workers' rights in the workplace



Advance labor-management partnerships, enabling collaboration and joint problem solving that benefits workers and companies

Workforce education and training programs are better when community colleges partner with unions:

INVESTMENT

Partnering with organized labor is a core element of workforce development programs focused on quality training leading to good jobs. Unions have a long history of investing in and implementing worker training programs:

- North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) and partner contractors invest nearly \$2 billion annually in U.S. apprentice and journey-level training. NABTU's affiliate unions and partner contractors operate more than 1,600 U.S. training centers (1,900 training centers in North America).
- United Steelworkers (USW) launched the Institute for Career Development (ICD), a contractually negotiated benefit for eligible USW members and the companies that employ their members. ICD has 13 participating companies across the steel, tire, rubber, glass container and utility sectors, operating in nearly 60 locations across the United States.
- International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751 established the Machinists Institute, a nonprofit educational institution serving the aerospace, manufacturing and automotive machinists industries to provide cutting-edge education and training to build a highly skilled and diverse workforce to meet employer demand.

STUDENT-CENTERED DESIGN

Ensuring that classes work for students is crucial to the success of worker training initiatives. Unions can assist community colleges and provide guidance on establishing flexible schedules for working students. Community colleges can offer flexible learning schedules, such as evening courses, online learning options, and affordable tuition and fees. This accessibility allows workers to participate in training while fulfilling their work and family commitments.

Unions are laser-focused on quality in their workforce development programs. Their trainees are truly mastering a skill and building a career. We see this through:

- Conducting apprentice and trainee selection thoughtfully so the participants chosen will succeed.
- Paying living wages and ensuring wage progression throughout a worker's career.
- Utilizing "earn and learn" training models, which helps to advance equity by reducing barriers and increasing access for workers from underserved communities.
- Making safety paramount.
- Calling for proper oversight of less-compliant and lower-quality programs.

A VIEW FROM THE GROUND

No one knows better how to do a job than someone who does the job. Unions bring to bear the experience and skills of the workforce in a structured way to inform training programs. Labor representatives can provide firsthand insights directly from the workers on the “shop floor,” or other worksites, into the current and emerging skills needed in the job market. Their input helps colleges tailor their curriculum and programs to better match the demands of local industries, increasing the employability of graduates.

Many unions provide workforce development through “labor-management partnerships” or partnerships with employers, which may be structured as independent organizations:

- Programs are reflective of real-world and job-specific, contextualized circumstances, which translates to a better understanding of what skills are needed and thus imparted.
- Because they are worker-centered, programs:
 - Build on what workers already know.
 - Recognize and reward skill attainment.
 - Are attuned to worker schedules and other life realities that workers face.
- Labor-management partnerships have deep ties in communities, serving as a vehicle that reliably and consistently engages and produces a more equitable and diverse workforce.

Unions have strong connections with employers and industries. Through partnerships with unions, community college students and graduates gain access to a network of potential employers, increasing employment opportunities for students.

LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Union-led and union-management partnered training programs like Registered Apprenticeship programs prepare workers for lifelong careers:

- There is a deep level of buy-in, both from apprentices who are learning and journeymen who are mentoring and teaching.
- There is mentorship, camaraderie, and a sense of paying it forward, because journeymen often received mentorship when they were apprentices.
- The training and certifications received are nationally recognized and portable, allowing workers to bring their skills and knowledge to employers across the United States.
- Union training programs advance equity by increasing access to training and good jobs for workers from underserved communities, such as women and workers of color

CASE STUDY

The Build Your Dreams–Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers Local 105 Partnership with Antelope Valley College, Lancaster, California

The Build Your Dreams (BYD)–Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) Local 105 apprenticeship is the first Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) Registered Apprenticeship program in California and the first electric bus manufacturing apprenticeship program in the country. The partnership has been hailed as a model for successful labor-management collaboration to ensure historic investments in clean energy result in high-quality, accessible careers; it has received recognition from the California Workforce Development Board, the Department of Energy and the Department of Labor’s Apprenticeship Ambassadors Program.

In developing the partnership, Antelope Valley College (AVC) leadership saw the value in employer-led, worker-centered training and championed the program development process, engaging the dean and faculty in steps needed to build the program. In addition to adapting the IMT curriculum, AVC integrated content about union membership as well as electric bus manufacturing. Classes are taught on the AVC Palmdale campus in a state-of-the-art building. The location entailed travel for the apprentices, but it exposed them to the college environment and equipment in a career education facility. AVC also arranged a special session in the campus computer lab to offer instruction in the AVC online application process, and provided computer skills as well.

AVC hired union and employer instructors to teach apprentices, conduct periodic evaluation, and provide feedback. Working with SMART, AVC developed a program to provide college credit for apprenticeship courses. Through the BYD-SMART apprenticeship program, workers who already have been employed at the plant for one year or more have a structured pathway to advancement. Apprentices complete 264 hours of coursework delivered by Antelope Valley College and 2,736 hours of on-the-job training.

In 2017, a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) was negotiated between the company and the union that benchmarks a goal of 40% of the BYD workforce be composed of historically excluded workers. As a result of the labor-management partnership and commitment to training, BYD has now exceeded its CBA goal, with 70% of its workforce composed of members of communities historically underrepresented in manufacturing.

Source: “BYD Launches Apprenticeship Program.” Website, Build Your Dreams, BYD Motors, July 22, 2019, en.byd.com/news/byd-launches-apprenticeship-program/.

THE MUTUAL BENEFIT BETWEEN

**ORGANIZED LABOR AND
COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

THE MUTUAL BENEFIT BETWEEN ORGANIZED LABOR AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Unions can help community colleges align career pathways with industry needs by serving as strategic leaders and partners in designing any number of elements including but not limited to content, curriculum and credentials, as well as sustaining and leveraging industry partnerships to secure resources and provide hands-on learning opportunities to prepare students and advance their labor market success.

Below are some key reasons why partnerships between unions and community colleges are advantageous:

ALIGNING SKILLS AND CAREER PATHWAYS TO INDUSTRY NEEDS

The skill sets and levels of preparation required for successful employment vary considerably from one industry to another, and even from job to job within an industry. For example, career pathways that prepare students for manufacturing jobs will differ from those designed to prepare students for health care jobs.

When designed and implemented well, career pathways offer workers a clear blueprint for educational and employment advancement by identifying the skills and knowledge valued by employers and stackable credentials that match labor market demand.

This ensures workers develop in-demand skills and knowledge, have multiple successive entry and exit points, and can pursue in-demand job opportunities at multiple levels.

LINKING TRAINING TO QUALITY JOBS

Labor partners can work with community colleges to ensure that training is linked to living wage jobs, career pathways and increasingly higher pay. Labor partners also can help community college administrators and staff to embed Good Job Quality Principles advanced by the Biden-Harris administration.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR GOOD JOBS PRINCIPLES

Recruitment and Hiring: Qualified applicants are actively recruited—especially those from underserved communities. Applicants are free from discrimination, including unequal treatment or application of selection criteria that are unrelated to job performance....

Benefits: Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility....

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA): All workers have equal opportunity. Workers are respected, empowered and treated fairly....Individuals from underserved communities do not face systemic barriers in the workplace....

Empowerment and Representation: Workers can form and join unions. Workers can engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Workers contribute to decisions about their work, how it is performed and organizational direction.

Job Security and Working Conditions: Workers have a safe, healthy and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives. Workers have job security without arbitrary or discriminatory discipline or dismissal. They have adequate hours and predictable schedules.... Workers are properly classified under applicable laws. Temporary or contractor labor solutions are minimized.

Organizational Culture: All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected especially by leadership.

Pay: All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips and commissions. Workers' pay is fair, transparent and equitable. Workers' wages increase with increased skills and experience.

Skills and Career Advancement: Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them. Workers have transparent promotion or advancement opportunities. Workers have access to quality employer- or labor-management-provided training and education.

ADVOCATING FOR FUNDING AND PROVIDING ACCESS TO TRAINING RESOURCES

Labor representatives can advocate for adequate funding for community colleges. They can highlight the value of training a skilled workforce, contributing to economic growth, and improving social and economic mobility.

Unions can assist community colleges in identifying resources, including public resources and jointly negotiated training funds, that can support related instruction and training.

Many unions and labor-management partnerships have established training facilities, resources and experienced trainers. These resources can be shared with community colleges, reducing the cost and effort required to set up training programs from scratch.

INCREASE HIRING OF QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS

Providing qualified instructors who are experts in the field is a critical element in ensuring the success and effectiveness of worker training programs through organized labor and community college partnerships. For example, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) represents faculty in all sectors of higher education and can help identify instructors who are experienced workers.

Unions also can assist in lifting up diverse perspectives and sustaining instructor-worker interaction to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that reflects workers' needs. Unions offer a powerful platform of diverse representation to workers who aspire to join new fields. Skilled and knowledgeable instructors can offer valuable insights, real-world experiences and industry-relevant expertise—enriching learning experiences for workers.

INCREASING STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ENSURING DIVERSITY

Unions have on-the-ground connections in the community that can help with recruitment and enrollment, particularly in underserved communities.

Partnerships with unions can attract more students to community college programs, as learners recognize the value of receiving an education that is closely connected to job opportunities and industry needs. This is especially true for students who graduated from schools with a career and technical education (CTE) focus. More than 75% of students with a CTE background enroll in postsecondary education after high school, providing community colleges with an opportunity to connect students with specific interests and skill sets with employers who are seeking qualified candidates.

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Labor representatives can provide insights into the challenges faced by students, especially those who are working while attending college. This knowledge can guide colleges in developing support services—such as flexible scheduling, child care facilities and career counseling—to help students succeed.

IMPLEMENTING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Many unions—notably the building and construction trades unions—have well-structured Registered Apprenticeship programs that provide hands-on learning experiences. Collaborating with community colleges can help formalize these programs and offer academic credit for the training received, leading to nationally recognized qualifications and certifications as well as degrees for participants.

CASE STUDY

Ivy Tech Community College—Building Trades Apprenticeship Degree Program

Since 1993–94, Ivy Tech, the largest postsecondary institution in Indiana, has worked in partnership with contractors, Building Trades Joint Labor-Management Apprenticeship and Training Committees (JATCs), the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Indiana Department of Workforce Development and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship to create a model on how institutions of higher education and apprenticeship programs can work together.

For nearly three decades, the Building Trades Apprenticeship Degree Program has prepared workers for successful careers. The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in Apprenticeship Technology program includes multiple trades with instruction provided in 16 programs at 60 training sites.

The design of the program includes:

- Delivery of the AAS degree classes to apprentices and journeyworkers.
- Leveraging of the educational components delivered by each partner without diluting the technical program offered by the JATCs.
- A range of courses from general education courses to a technical core for a well-rounded program.

Program outcomes of note:

- More than 13,000 degrees have been awarded.
- Thousands of national certifications have been awarded.
- Large numbers of individuals return for journey-level upgrade classes.

Combining the strengths of higher education and the apprenticeship programs leads to incomparable educational outcomes. The program provides an educational path of upward mobility that benefits all involved.

Source: "Apprenticeships—A Win-Win for Students and Employers." Website, Ivy Tech Community College, accessed Aug. 22, 2023, www.ivytech.edu/programs/special-programs-for-students/apprenticeships/.

LEVERAGING TEACHERS' UNIONS TO BOLSTER FACULTY SUCCESS

In addition to unions representing workers in the field of training, unions representing teachers can make valuable contributions to training programs. Partnerships can support the following:

- **Recruit Instructors with Industry Experience and Expertise:** Instructors who have worked in the industry can offer practical insights, share relevant examples and bridge the gap between theory and real-world application.
- **Provide Continuous Professional Development:** Unions, including teachers' unions, and community colleges can partner on faculty development. This ensures that the training content remains relevant and reflects the current state of the industry.
- **Support Teaching Skills and Andragogy:** Apart from industry expertise, collaboration can ensure that instructors have strong teaching skills and andragogical knowledge.
- **Ensure Diverse Perspectives:** Diverse instructors can better relate to the diverse backgrounds and needs of the workers, creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- **Provide Mentoring and Coaching:** Establish mentoring or coaching programs for instructors, especially those who are new to teaching or transitioning from industry roles.
- **Encourage Instructor-Worker Interaction:** Encourage instructors to have regular interactions with workers and their unions, including mentoring sessions, workshops or informal discussions to foster a deeper understanding of workers' needs and aspirations.
- **Recognize and Reward Instructors:** Recognize and reward the valued contributions of instructors in the worker training process.
- **Appropriate Licensure and Credentials:** Teachers unions can help ensure that the instructors who are hired have the appropriate licensure and credentialing for a given program.



CASE STUDY

New York State United Teachers Partner with Local Schools and Future Employer to Bolster Faculty Success in Advanced Manufacturing Training Programs

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) is a federation of 1200 local teacher and administrator organizations (referred to as local unions in New York state) that collectively includes more than 600,000 members from New York schools, colleges, and healthcare facilities. NYSUT is also the umbrella organization for the United Federation of Teachers (UFT); a union of nearly 200,000 New York City members. NYSUT is a union that proudly advocates for public school educators and their students.

NYSUT and UFT are currently working with Micron Technology, Inc (Micron) to help build a workforce development strategy to create a scalable, diverse, and sustainable workforce to support the future growth of the semiconductor industry. NYSUT and UFT collaborate with Micron and local school districts in New York state to develop curricular frameworks and teacher training, as well as pilot the framework - including work-based learning opportunities that enable students to connect what they are learning to real-life career scenarios and choices.

The developed framework provides students with skills that can be applicable to many educational pathways and occupational avenues. Students receive a course of study that combines academic content with workplace and technical skills development and responds to the increasing demand for diverse and technically prepared workers. Through this work, NYSUT accelerates career pathways for students, especially those from underrepresented groups, in an effort to close the talent gap to support the demands of growing advance manufacturing in the United States.

Source: Person, Melinda, NYSUT President, and Michael Mulgrew UFT President. Received by CHIPS Program Office. Accessed Aug. 25, 2023.



SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Unions support and negotiate for lifelong learning and professional development opportunities for their members. By collaborating with unions, community colleges can offer continuous education and training opportunities for workers looking to upgrade their skills throughout their careers.

Many sectors experience constantly evolving practices, policies and technology, such as automation or virtual training platforms. Through partnerships, unions and colleges can ensure that their programming trains individuals in what will be needed and relevant now and in the near-future. Prioritizing the evolution of worker skills, including digital skills, and ensuring workers have access to career pathways and economic advancement that incorporates those evolving skills will bring quality company outputs and employee satisfaction.

ENABLING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

These partnerships also can contribute to the overall economic development of the community by producing a skilled and adaptable workforce. As workers are better equipped for available job opportunities, local businesses can thrive and the community's economic outlook improves.

CASE STUDY

The Rowan University Education Ecosystem: Partnering with Labor and Industry to Train the Workforce of Tomorrow

Rowan University, Rowan College of South Jersey (the community college system of Gloucester and Cumberland Counties in New Jersey), the Gloucester County Institute of Technology and the South Jersey Workforce Development Boards have forged an education and training ecosystem to meet the needs of employers and workers in multiple emerging industries.

Partnerships between unions, community colleges and employers create an ecosystem to develop industry-driven, flexible, accessible, and affordable pathways to credentials and degrees – from pre-apprenticeships through graduate degrees – with a focus on equity, diversity and sustainable employment opportunities. Collaborations include key emerging industries such as:

Offshore Wind

Rowan is developing a flexible, stackable credit education model and engaging with unions and industry partners to credential workers for the nearly 7,000 estimated jobs expected to be created to build, maintain, and staff the nation's largest offshore wind farm. Rowan and its partners are working to establish partnerships with several unions including the Carpenters, Sheet Metal Workers, Ironworkers and IBEW.

Construction Management

Rowan partner institutions have collaborated to develop stackable credentialing in construction industry technologies, notably Construction Management, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Technologies, and Land Surveying, which enable students to complete registered apprenticeships, obtain multiple credentials, entry-level positions, and opportunities for professional licensure. Union partners include the Carpenters, United Association Plumbers, Ironworkers, Boilermakers and IBEW.

BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION

**BETWEEN UNIONS AND
COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIONS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

IDENTIFY MUTUAL OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Organized labor and community colleges should convene regularly to determine their shared interests in developing and supporting worker training programs, including enhancing the skills of workers, ensuring worker voice, addressing labor market and employer needs, and promoting career advancement opportunities and quality jobs.

SUPPORT LABOR ENGAGEMENT IN GOVERNING AND ADVISORY BODIES

Incorporating labor representatives into community college boards and advisory bodies creates a collaborative environment in which stakeholders work together to shape the institution's direction.

CASE STUDY

Washington State Labor Council Partnership with the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges

The Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), the federation of labor unions for the state of Washington, has had a contract since 1998 with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to recruit, train and place organized labor representatives on college program advisory boards, including representatives from occupations and sectors where training is provided. Additionally, WSLC provides policy updates and subject matter expertise to the SBCTC on workforce development, including WSLC legislative priorities and opportunities to partner.

Source: McAloon, Rachel. "Education, Training and Apprenticeship." Website, Washington State Labor Council, accessed Aug. 22, 2023, www.wslc.org/education-training-and-apprenticeship-committee/.

CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT OR REFINE EXISTING EFFORTS

Before designing any training program, a thorough needs assessment should be conducted to identify the skills needed by employers and the specific training needs of workers.

In addition to the broader needs assessment, unions and community colleges can create or modify existing mechanisms to gather input directly from the workers themselves through surveys, focus groups or one-on-one interviews to understand their specific learning needs, career goals and learning styles.

DESIGN CUSTOMIZED TRAINING PROGRAMS AND CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Based on the results of the needs assessment tailored training programs should be developed. These programs can range from short workshops and seminars to more extensive certification courses or degree programs as part of Registered Apprenticeship programs. The curriculum should be practical, industry-relevant, and aligned with the identified skill gaps.

CASE STUDY

Labor Engagement on the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges—Aerospace and Advanced Materials Manufacturing Pipeline Advisory Committee

The Aerospace and Advanced Materials Manufacturing Pipeline Advisory Committee is composed of members from industry, education and organized labor. The committee facilitates coordination and alignment of aerospace training programs, including:

- Providing up-to-date information about aerospace and advanced materials manufacturing training programs.
- Providing information about grants and partnership opportunities.
- Providing coordination for professional development for faculty and other training providers.
- Evaluating programs identified by the committee annually for completion and job placement results.
- Establishing goals for students served, program completion rates and employment rates.
- Coordinating and disseminating industry advice for aerospace and advanced materials manufacturing training programs.
- Recommending training programs for review by the workforce training and education coordinating board in coordination with the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Source: "Aerospace and Advanced Materials Manufacturing Pipeline Advisory Committee—A Call to Action." Website, last modified June 27, 2023. www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/aerospace/aerospace-committee.

ENGAGE INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Incorporating input from local employers and industry experts is vital to design training programs that match industry demands. Unions have a deep understanding of the skills and qualifications required within their respective industries.

Unions can collaborate with their signatory employers and community colleges to identify current and future workforce needs, ensuring that educational programs such as Registered Apprenticeships are aligned with industry demands and ensure successful employment outcomes for workers.

CASE STUDY

IAM District 711, Local Lodge 65, Northwest Shoals Community College and the Tennessee Valley Authority

The International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 711, Local Lodge 65 has formed a partnership with Northwest Shoals Community College (NWSCC) in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

The IAM Machinist Apprenticeship Program at NWSCC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor as a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program for machinists at the TVA Power Service Shop in Muscle Shoals.

- The IAM RA is a four-year program that includes 1,600 hours of classroom training and 6,400 hours of on-the-job training. The inaugural class started in December 2018. The program currently has 30 apprentices.
- NWSCC is part of the Alabama community college system and home to more than 3,500 students.
- The IAM program administrator reported that the state of Alabama has funding to support the construction of a workforce training center in Florence, Alabama, which is expected to open in April 2025.

Source: Andrew Robbins. "Machinist Apprenticeship Program." Website, Northwest Shoals Community College, accessed Aug. 22, 2023, nwsc.edu/explore-programs/workforce-training/nw-scc-strategic-partnerships-industry-training/machinist-apprenticeship-program/

COLLABORATE ON RECRUITING AND COACHING OF QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS

Unions, including teachers' unions, and community colleges can partner on faculty development to recruit and coach instructors. This ensures that instructors are empowered and that the training content itself remains relevant and reflects the current state of the industry.

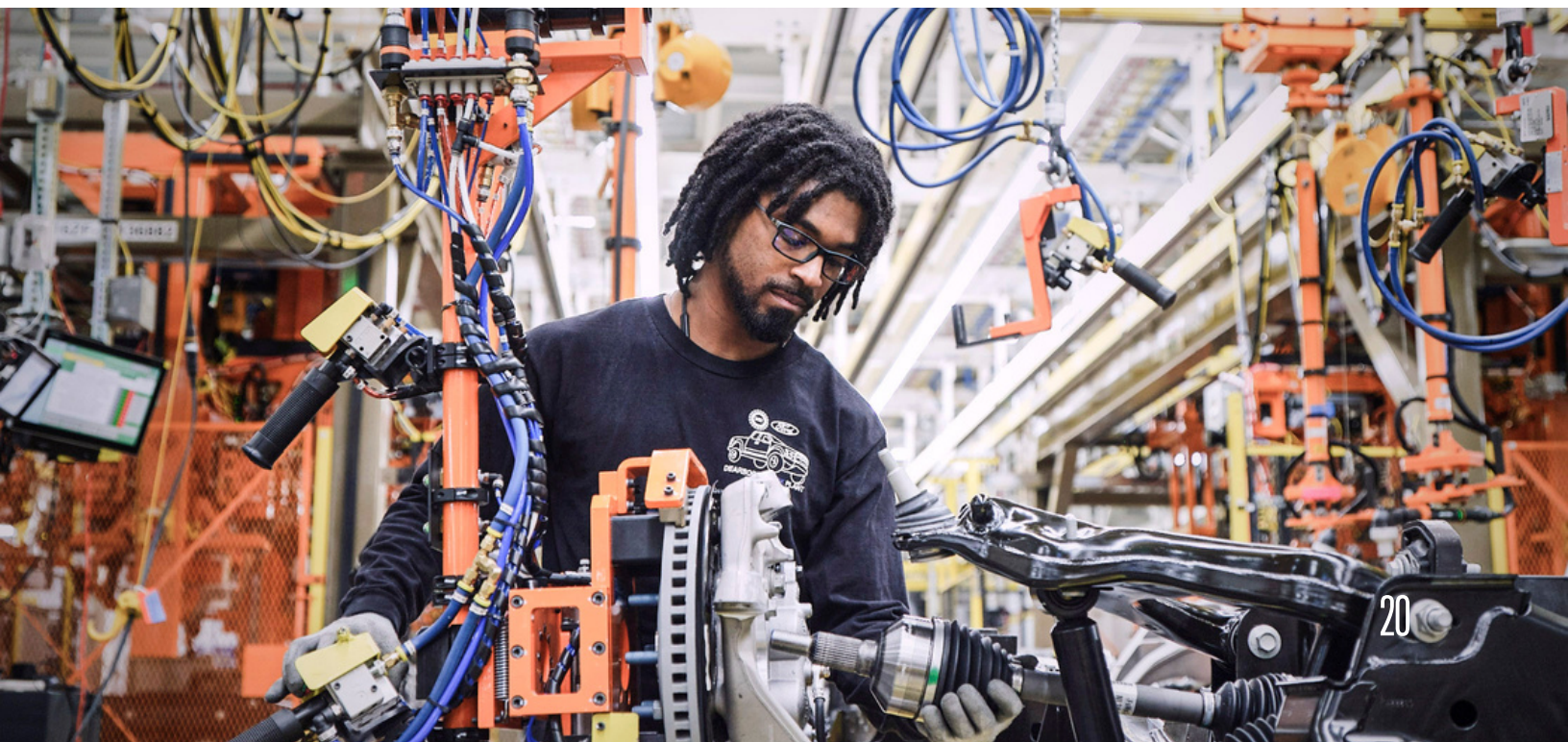
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT WORKER-CENTERED LEARNING

By collaborating with community colleges, unions can bring workers' voice into the design and implementation of skill training and workplace literacy programs, building on what workers already know. Labor unions have direct insights into the skills and competencies that are in demand within industry sectors, as well as the needs of individual workers. Through their unions, workers have a voice in designing programs that meet their needs and goals. Unions can serve as a trusted validator of program content and quality.

Delivering contextualized and integrated instruction can help accelerate students' entry into and successful completion of career pathways. Unions can help community college administrators and instructors identify authentic materials to use in contextualizing their instruction.

COLLABORATE ON EXISTING TRAINING PROGRAMS

Many labor unions have pre-existing training programs. If there is an opportunity for community colleges and labor unions to collaborate on a training program, it is better for both parties to collaborate rather than to create a duplicate program. Through collaboration, labor unions and community colleges can design a program that meets the current training needs of workers as well as future careers needs, including certifications and degrees.



CASE STUDY

Inland Empire Labor Council and Inland Empire Labor Institute Partnership with Riverside Community College in California

In partnership with Riverside Community College District (RCCD), the Inland Empire Labor Council (IELC) and Inland Empire Labor Institute are creating the Inland Empire Technical Trade Center (IETTC). The center will focus on creating curriculum for classes designed in partnership with IELC affiliates to develop career pathways.

To ensure the IETTC is both beneficial to and supportive of students, students' and workers' voices will be integrated into the planning and operation of the partnership, including feedback on identification and inclusion of critical support services. RCCD's Strategic Plan also addresses the need to ensure equity and access to opportunities for all communities, particularly communities of color, women and other traditionally marginalized groups.

The Inland Empire Labor Council also has partnered with Mount San Jacinto College to expand training programs based on the model piloted with Riverside Community College District.

Source: "Riverside Community College District Inland Empire Technical Trade Center (IETTC)." Website, Riverside Community College District, accessed Aug. 22, 2023, www.rocd.edu/admin/iaed/gr/Documents/whitepapers/2022/IETTC.pdf.

IMPLEMENT PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS AND COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING

Competency-based training allows workers to progress at their own pace, focusing on areas where they need improvement while recognizing and building on their existing strengths. Acceleration strategies, such as prior learning assessments and competency-based education, can reduce the time between students' pathway entry and their attainment of nondegree credentials. These strategies:

- Acknowledge and recognize the skills and knowledge workers have gained through previous work experiences, formal education or informal learning.
- Offer opportunities for workers to receive credit for their prior learning, reducing redundancy and expediting their progress in the training programs.

CASE STUDY

Machinists Institute, Council on Adult and Experiential Learning and Community and Technical Colleges in Washington State

The Machinists Institute (MI), based in Seattle, was established by International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751. It is collaborating with the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and Community and Technical Colleges to explore an integrated associates degree linked to a four-year Machinists Registered Apprenticeship program.

Project goals:

- Create a Registered Apprenticeship pathway that includes general education requirements so that apprentices can work toward a two-year credential and apprenticeship completion.
- Explore competency-based models to create a process and structure that will allow for on-the-job learning outcomes to be relevant credit toward a higher education credential.
- Align the MI Machinist Registered Apprenticeship program with the general education requirements of the multi-occupational trades degree to identify aligned competencies.
- Improve completion rate disparities, leading to higher wages for underrepresented populations.

Stakeholders who will benefit:

- Apprentices will be able to fully demonstrate skills and competencies acquired through both technical and on-the-job training.
- Employers will have an opportunity to communicate key skills and competencies required for the apprenticeship job roles.
- Training providers will have an opportunity to better support the industry by teaching in-demand skills and competencies.
- Community and technical colleges will increase their apprenticeship degree pathway completion.

Source: "Machinists Institute: About." Website, Machinists Institute, accessed Aug. 22, 2203, www.machinistsinstitute.org/about-machinists-institute.

CREATE PIPELINES AND CAREER PATHWAYS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Unions and community colleges can collaborate effectively to establish pipelines and pathways that benefit community members in various ways. Together, they can promote equity and increase access to training and good jobs for workers from underserved and underrepresented communities. This partnership linked to industry needs can help underrepresented individuals acquire the skills and qualifications needed to secure stable and well-paying jobs.

Community colleges can work closely with unions to identify target populations, including underserved communities, design and implement recruitment strategies, and develop relevant and up-to-date curriculum that aligns with the specific skills required by the industry. This can include technical training, soft skills development and industry-specific certifications.

CASE STUDY

United Steelworkers Local 550, West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Paducah Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Department of Energy, Four Rivers Nuclear Partnership and Mid-Atlantic Conversion Services

United Steelworkers (USW) Local 550 has formed a partnership with West Kentucky Community and Technical College. This is a project of the USW Tony Mazzocchi Center, which is focused on worker safety and health training.

The partnership also includes the Paducah Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Department of Energy, and the employers Four Rivers Nuclear Partnership and Mid-Atlantic Conversion Services. This partnership was established in 2021 to establish a pathway for local residents to become qualified radiological control technicians and gain employment at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, a clean-up site.

The 240-hour class is offered free to community members through a U.S. Department of Energy–National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) grant. Ninety percent of the participants in the 2022 cohort are now employed as USW members at the Paducah plant. Graduates earn a credential recognized by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Source: “Transforming Lives: The Impact of DOE Training Programs at the Paducah Site.” United Steelworkers video, YouTube, April 20, 2023, www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ9FjaLlrWE&t=1s.

SUPPORT EDUCATION ON WORKERS RIGHTS

Labor representatives are familiar with the needs and rights of workers. This knowledge can be used when developing training programs to ensure that workers are educated about their rights while learning new skills.

USE CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK MECHANISMS AND EVALUATIONS

Unions can establish feedback mechanisms to gather ongoing input from workers about the effectiveness and relevance of the training programs. Community colleges can then regularly review and update curriculum based on this feedback to ensure training remains current and impactful.

Regular evaluation of training programs is necessary to measure programs' effectiveness and make improvements as needed. Feedback from participants, employers and union representatives should be collected to gauge the impact of the training and identify areas for enhancement.

CASE STUDY

The Institute for Career Development, United Steelworkers Local 135L and Erie Community College

The Institute for Career Development (ICD) is a contractually negotiated benefit for eligible members of the United Steelworkers (USW) and the companies that employ their members. ICD is a joint labor-management training program in which members participate in self-directed learning opportunities on their own time. ICD has 13 participating companies and operates nearly 60 locations across the United States. Currently, ICD is found in the steel, tire and rubber, glass, container and utility sectors.

The ICD and USW Local 135L maintains a relationship with Erie Community College. The training ranges from providing tuition assistance to members for various educational programs to conducting classes, such as welding, to coursework that will prepare individual members to take aptitude tests for various advanced/trades positions in manufacturing.

Source: "Institute for Career Development—About Us." Website, United Steelworkers Institute for Career Development, www.icdlearning.org/about-us.

CONCLUSIONS AND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between organized labor and community colleges can yield transformative outcomes for workers, education and communities. The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute has created this brief to serve as a guide for establishing and nurturing successful partnerships that allow both young people and adults who wish to build new skills the ability to take full advantage of coming career opportunities. The contributions of both unions and community colleges are vital in creating a strong, skilled, and resilient workforce that drives shared prosperity and economic growth.

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For additional information or technical assistance in developing partnerships with labor organizations, please contact:

AFL-CIO Working for America Institute info@workingforamerica.org