

CAYUGA VOICES

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CAYUGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: WORKHORSE FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Posted on [December 5, 2011](#) by [Daniel Larson](#)

As our country jumpstarts the economy and gets unemployed/under-employed Americans back to work, national attention is turning to community colleges and their workforce development programs. Besides the current unemployment numbers, we face challenges in maintaining a workforce with the skills to compete in the global economy. According to the National Skills Coalition, 57% of the American workforce, 88 million people, have low-literacy, limited English proficiency, or no post-secondary education. The 2010 U.S. Census reports that 59% of residents in Central New York rural counties generally do not have a college education or post-secondary training. Today, 33% of the workforce of 2020 and 45% of the workforce of 2030 are in the workplace, so these people are beyond traditional K-12 or college programs.

At Cayuga Community College, we recognize these challenges, and we are helping to find innovative solutions that address workforce development needs. Launched last summer, we offer the Teachers Professional Development Institute to help address teacher training and continuing education after the New York State Teachers Centers lost funding last year. The institute provides low-cost professional development courses to teachers throughout the region, to help keep our K-12 educators and professionals on the leading edge of academic practice.

In collaboration with the Center for Occupational Research and Development, based in Waco, Texas, and with the New York State Education Department, we are developing curricula to help adult learners find new career pathways. The focus is on skill development, partly the result of two regional employer forums held last year. We are developing new degree and certificate programs in healthcare and advanced manufacturing. There are jobs available in both areas that go unfilled due to lack of qualified workers.

We are the only college selected to serve on the New York State team in the Policy-to-Performance national initiative, which is advancing efforts to transition low-skilled adults successfully to post-secondary education and employment opportunities. New York, one of eight states selected for this project by the U.S. Department of Education, is the national leader. We are working to recommend policy revisions in support of these efforts.

Literacy Zones, developed by the New York State Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department, are helping to close the achievement gap in urban and rural communities of concentrated poverty and for high numbers of families and individuals with limited literacy or English language proficiency. In partnership with the Syracuse Literacy Zone, we are facilitating seamless student transitions

ABOUT

Cayuga Voices presents the views of students, faculty, staff, alumni, leaders, and others affiliated with Cayuga Community College.

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into degree programs and certificates. As this program grows, we think every region of New York State should have its own literacy zone and supporting services.

Funded by a \$550,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, we are coordinating broadband training services to adult literacy programs in eighteen Literacy Zones across New York State. We are teaching 3,000 low-literacy residents about Internet and digital literacy skills through the online learning tool Learner Web. We have related programs underway to help adults develop literacy skills and advance to successively higher levels of education and employment.

This fall, we received a grant from the Coleman Foundation, based in Chicago, Illinois, to launch the Entrepreneurial Road Trip and Boot Camp for students and community members to visit area businesses. We will help them develop conceptual overviews of successful operations, coupled with the practical application of entrepreneurial principles and theory for their own ventures. The three trips will include visits to 3-4 businesses from our historic economic strengths – agribusiness, tourism and hospitality, and manufacturing. By focusing on these areas, we are exposing future entrepreneurs to these markets and helping to provide them with roadmaps for finding success in the region.

We are one of three national sites selected to pilot the Direct Selling Certificate training program, sponsored by the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship and the Direct Selling Educational Foundation. This program teaches independent sales representatives from diverse industries such as health and beauty, energy, financial services, and cleaning supplies how to expand and improve their business. Students are developing skills in finance, marketing, accounting, communication, presentation, leadership, and sales as well as where to find tools and information to help them in their business ventures.

We maintain a repertoire of Customized Training programs for regional employers, covering "hard" skill development in areas such as computer and information technology, literacy and workplace communication, sales and customer service, and computer-aided design, mathematics, and technical programs. We offer programs in "soft" skills, employee assessment, diversity and ethics, and management and leadership development. We help companies implement lean manufacturing practices, resulting in dramatic reductions in production lead times, improved productivity, and inventory reductions. These improvements mean more competitive bids and increased efficiency, enabling companies to take on more work.

We welcome partnering opportunities with employers in the region, helping to produce the innovative, skilled workforce that will sustain existing and attract new business, and will provide residents with careers and incomes resulting in a higher quality of life. We welcome your feedback about our workforce development activities, and we encourage volunteers to serve on our advisory committees and to share their ideas for offerings that would benefit the region.

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