

Volume 20-3: Pathways to a Brighter Future

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Educators and
Employers:
Providing Education
with a Purpose

The Three “Legs” of Successful Career Pathways Partnerships

David Bond, Director, National Career Pathways Network



In the previous issue of *Connections*, I started by comparing the importance of *partnerships* in education to the importance of *location* in real estate. Just as the three most important things in real estate are “location, location, and

location,” three of the most important things in education are “partnerships, partnerships, and partnerships.”

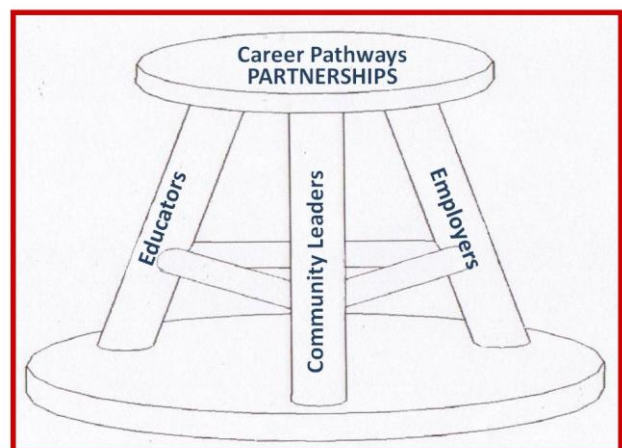
Repeating the word three times does not overstate the importance of the concept. Educational institutions that are not partnered with other educational institutions (i.e., secondary with postsecondary), with business, and with community organizations are doing their students a great disservice. No matter how noble *education for education’s sake* may seem, **all** students must eventually be able to earn a living. There will, of course, be some exceptions, but very few.

A Career Pathways system that prepares students for a valued place in today’s economy requires all partners to do their part. Think of a three-legged stool, where education, business, and community leaders are the legs.

A good Career Pathways system (i.e., a system in which all three legs are functioning as they should):

- Is supported by a partnership of all stakeholders who have a shared vision.
- Provides a context within which students learn required academics and technical skills.

- Provides mechanisms that enable students to formulate plans to prepare for the next step after high school.
- Includes an integrated curriculum that is designed on the basis of national, state, and local skill standards.



- Includes a progressive career development system (elementary through college and adult).
- Creates community awareness and support.
- Provides professional development for faculty, counselors, administrators, and employers.
- Collects and uses data for improvement.

The organizations contributing articles to this newsletter are all involved in partnerships. We can all learn something from them. I hope you’ll also take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about excellence in Career Pathways systems at the 2010 NCPN conference in Dallas, October 20–23.

Career Education in Palm Beach County: Building Strong Relationships for the Future

Constance Scotchel-Gross, Career Education Manager, and Jeraline M. Marsh, Career Education Specialist, School District of Palm Beach County, Florida

For years, Career Education in Palm Beach County has been proud of the strong relationships developed with business and industry partners through its Career Education Business Leadership Committee, also known as CEBLC. These partnerships have served to strengthen and enrich integrated instruction between career and technical education (CTE) and academics. They have also served as beacons of light for CTE academies and programs and have motivated the educational process to move forward through shared talents, ideas, and unique human resources that have been provided via the partnering of participating businesses. We are proud of the connections we have made in bringing education and employers to the table to reach our mutual goals in CTE, which is to provide a solid, rigorous, and relevant education and best possible preparation for all of our students and to produce future employees who are ready for the workforce.

Many of the partnerships that have been made come in the form of local business representatives, each of whom serves on one of over 170 career academy advisory boards. Their primary purpose for serving on advisory boards is to provide ongoing evaluation and consultation about the academy curriculum, keeping it current with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values identified as being necessary for students to work effectively in their chosen occupations. One example of how business partners were connected with our high school career academies was through a program called “Get Real,” a partnership between Career Education and Leadership Palm Beach. Members of Leadership Palm Beach (who represent numerous occupations) volunteered with each of our career academies, providing them with information and assistance from their prospective lines of work.

We are also proud of other partnerships that have been beneficial to our CTE academies and programs. These include the following:

- **Quantum Foundation** provided funding for the expansion of middle school premedical and engineering career academies.
- **Workforce Alliance and Junior Achievement** provided funding and support for “Tools for Success,” a program geared toward assisting ESE students interested in the construction industry.
- **CITI** provided funding and support for the development of high school career centers in three high schools.
- **Palm Beach County’s Business Development Board** sponsors the PACE (People, Available, Committed, Employed) luncheon, an event that enables students to communicate with business representatives regarding job training, skills required, career development, and wages.
- **Education Foundation** provided grant opportunities and administrative services for numerous CTE-related projects.
- **Palm Healthcare** provided a summer nursing camp for students as well as professional development opportunities for medical sciences academy instructors.
- **Palm Beach County Film and Television Commission** provided access to and repair of equipment for district high school television production academies.

In addition to the awesome opportunities provided to our students through these partnerships, we are also very proud of the partnerships we have built with our local colleges and universities to create pathways of learning that ease the transition of CTE academy and program students from secondary to postsecondary. Through these agreements, our students have the opportunity to earn college credits upon graduation and matriculate very smoothly into college life. We have provided our students the ability to save time and money as they can receive college credit for competencies mastered through high school CTE

coursework and can begin their college programs at an advanced entry level.

As we move forward in today's economy, Career Education in Palm Beach County will continue to build partnerships that are based on a philosophy of shared responsibility in helping students thrive and make their dreams come alive.

See the following article for an overview of a recent CTE event in Palm Beach County.

For more information, contact Constance Scotchel-Gross at scotche@palmbeach.k12.fl.us.

Palm Beach County's Career Academy Showcase

Constance Scotchel-Gross, Career Education Manager, School District of Palm Beach County, Florida

Administrators, teachers, business partners, and board members from Florida, West Virginia, Tennessee, Wyoming, and Canada traveled to Palm Beach County to participate in the 2010 Career Academy Showcase on April 20–21. This event showcased the Career Academies of ten Palm Beach County schools that were reviewed by the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) and Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE). Atlantic Community High School's Criminal Justice Academy; Forest Hill Community High School's Environmental Science Academy; John I. Leonard High School's Computer Science Academy; Lake Worth Community High School's Medical Science Academy; Palm Beach Gardens' Tourism, Hospitality, and Resort Management Academy; West Boca Raton's Culinary Arts Academy; and William T. Dwyer's Academy of Finance earned national recognition as *model career academies* after meeting and/or exceeding the National Standards of Practice (NSOP). Palm Beach Lakes Community High School's Medical Sciences Academy, Park Vista High School's Medical Sciences and Information Technology Academies, and Seminole Ridge Community High School's Construction Academy earned recognition as *certified career academies*.

The attendees chose academies that were best suited to meet needs in their schools and districts. In the mornings they traveled to the high schools, where they were given the opportunity to ask questions and view the academies in action. The afternoon sessions began with Jan Bray, Executive Director of the

Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), and Dr. Kathleen Weigel, Principal of Atlantic High School, as the keynote speakers. Breakout sessions were then held covering several areas of interest: Programs of Study, The Importance of Data Reporting, The Reality of Scheduling, Marketing a Model Career Academy, Career Education Community and Business Partners, Building a Successful Middle School Pre-Academy, Turning a CTE Program into an Academy, and Best Practices. A roundtable discussion was held on the last day with career academy coordinators and career education curriculum specialists answering questions and concerns.

We are excited about the opportunity to share best practices and network with career and technical education teachers, administrators, and local business leaders from around the nation. For the past four years, the Career Academy Showcase has offered insight to career academies from other states as well as numerous counties within the state of Florida. The dedication that has been shown by educators around the nation is outstanding and helps maintain the importance of supporting career and technical education.

For more information, contact Constance Scotchel-Gross at scotche@palmbeach.k12.fl.us.

Minnesota Program Advisory Committees: *Invigorated with Perkins IV!*

JoAnn Simser, Systems Director, State Director for Career and Technical Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities; Dan Smith, Supervisor, Center for Post Secondary Success, Minnesota Department of Education; Debra Mills, Vice President, Partnerships, CORD

Strong partnerships between educational institutions and employers have long been recognized as pillars in effective technical/occupational education programs. These partnerships ensure community ownership and build local support, commitment, and resources. In recognition of this fact, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Office of the Chancellor, Division of Academic and Student Affairs, embarked on a project in 2004 that was designed to reinvigorate program advisory committees in the state of Minnesota. In 2010, this project was revitalized to incorporate Perkins IV changes, resulting in the 2010 handbook and corresponding professional development.

Advisory committees are groups of local employers and community representatives who advise educators on the design, development, operation, evaluation, and revision of career and technical education programs and their corresponding career pathways. The workplace knowledge and resources provided by committee members help to ensure that all aspects of the career pathway reflect the needs and current conditions of the workplace and that program graduates are capable of performing in the occupations for which they have been educated and prepared.

The purpose of the *Minnesota Program Advisory Committee Project 2010* was to prepare faculty and administrators at two-year colleges and high schools in Minnesota to select, work with, and make optimum use of technical/occupational education program advisory committees. The intent of the handbook is not to dictate policy but to provide guidelines.

The three main project tasks were:

1. To establish a 2010 project working group.
2. To revise the previous Minnesota Program Advisory Committee Handbook to include:

- Perkins IV requirements,
 - Programs of study,
 - Information on joint secondary and postsecondary advisory committees, and
 - New technologies for communication with advisory members.
3. To lead and facilitate professional development workshops.

The technical assistance of the nonprofit agency CORD was enlisted to execute the project tasks.

A major component of the project consisted of three regional training workshops focusing on the training of secondary and postsecondary CTE educators and administrators covering all 26 Perkins consortia. CORD staff members, in collaboration with the Minnesota workgroup, developed content for the workshops.

The workshops focused on selecting committee members, facilitating effective meetings, and adopting a systematic process for working with committee members, including new communication technologies. The workshops were structured to address the needs of all participating faculty and teachers regardless of whether they had previously facilitated advisory committees. Various models for establishing local or regional committees and systems for ongoing electronic communication were provided. In addition the workshops emphasized building common (secondary/postsecondary) CTE program advisory committee structures along the lines of programs of study/career pathways.

For more information, contact JoAnn Simser at joann.simser@so.mnscu.edu or 651-201-1650, Dan Smith at dan.smith@state.mn.us or 651-582-3880, or Debra Mills at dmills@cord.org or 217.247.9930.

Get Into Energy Career Pathways for Skilled Utility Technicians

The Center for Energy Workforce Development and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

OVERVIEW

Energy jobs offer promising opportunities to both experienced and new workers. The industry as a whole is projected to experience growth in the coming years, particularly with the increase in public investments in renewable energy, clean energy generation, energy efficiency, and the Smart Grid. The growth in demand coincides with the large projected retirements in the industry. Energy employers will need skilled workers for traditional energy as well as future energy-related generation, transmission, and distribution positions. These are jobs that are active, hands-on, and rewarding and are available in every state in the country. In addition, they are jobs in an industry where adding new skills translates into opportunities to make more money. As new technologies are created, workers will need new skills to install and operate the new energy systems, and this means new job opportunities in a stable and growing industry.

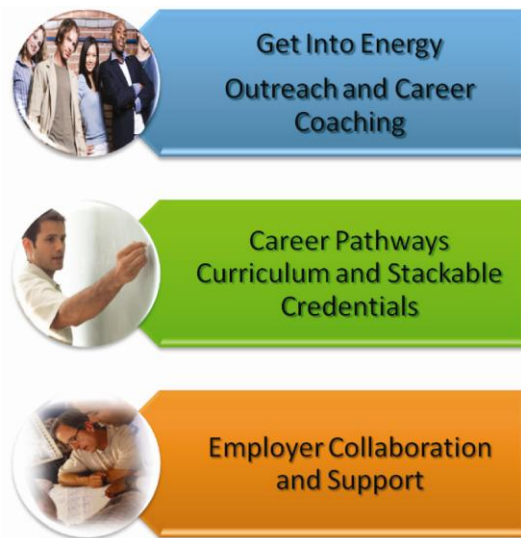
The Get Into Energy (GIE) Career Pathways Model is built on the following principles:

- Targeted outreach and support for students and potential applicants through recruiting and employment
- A pathways system of curriculum leading to a portable articulated portfolio of credentials and degrees
- Employer involvement in all phases of workforce development leading to employment

The GIE Career Pathways Model provides a roadmap for entry into skilled utility technician positions in the energy industry with pathways to higher-level jobs in a variety of work settings.

SUMMARY OF THE MODEL

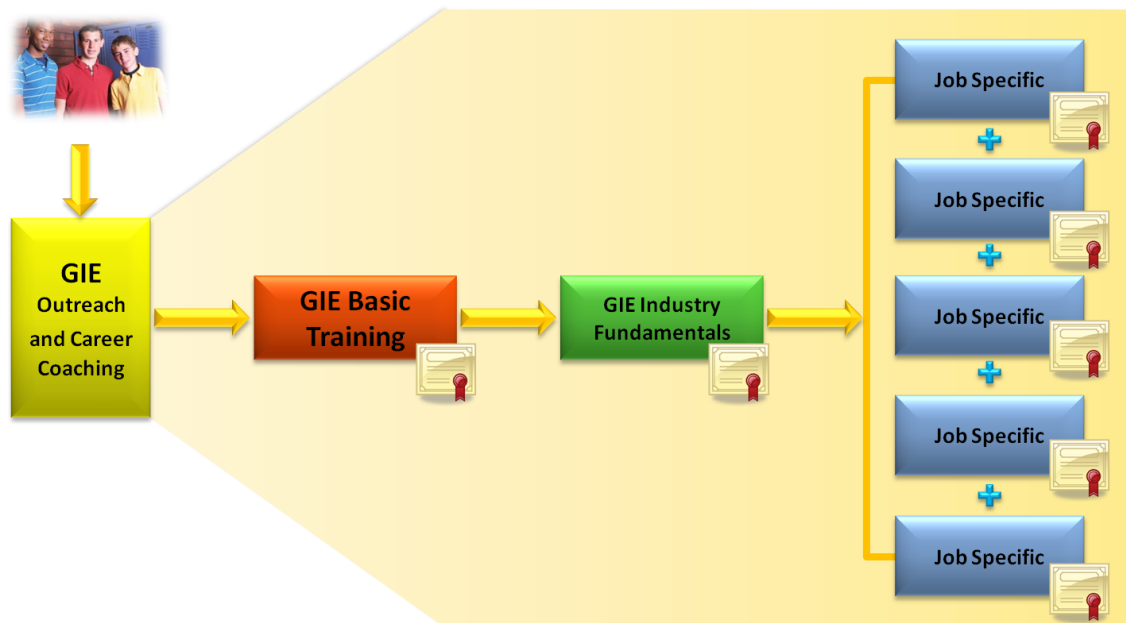
The GIE Career Pathways Model focuses on the needs of three stakeholder groups: students and potential applicants, educators, and employers. The system is divided into key modules supporting these stakeholders: GIE Outreach and Career Coaching, Career Pathways Curriculum and Stackable Credentials, and Employer Collaboration and Support.



Get Into Energy Outreach and Career Coaching

Purpose: Provide outreach and support to students and potential applicants

- **Targeted Career Awareness Campaigns:** Outreach using the GIE brand and website, along with a variety of other materials, to encourage and communicate energy career pathways
- **Career and Education Advising and Guidance:** An established model for advising and guiding those interested in pursuing energy careers, offering information on education and employment opportunities to a specific target population, and helping to navigate to a career in energy



The Get Into Energy Support Network reaches out to assist candidates through the entire career pathway

Career Pathways Curriculum and Stackable Credentials

Purpose: Provide an education framework for career preparation

- **Stackable Credentials:** A clearly defined system of competencies and industry-recognized credentials that are linked to employment opportunities and advancement
- **Uniform Curriculum:** Curriculum based on industry-supported guidelines that leverage existing courses and best practices
- **Education Network:** A network of high schools and postsecondary institutions, including community and technical colleges and four-year institutions, with career pathways programs for the energy industry and strong articulation between and among high schools and postsecondary institutions, including the providers of online approaches to degree and certificate programs

Employer Collaboration and Support

Purpose: Encourage partnerships, building on the successful Energy Workforce Consortia model

- **State Energy Workforce Consortia:** A model for employer collaboration with education and government to develop a qualified worker pipeline balancing workforce supply and demand
- **Employment Opportunities:** A variety of entry points for job candidates, including internships and career pathways to higher-skilled jobs in energy, as well as ongoing workforce development programs

GET INTO ENERGY CAREER PATHWAYS COMPONENTS



Get Into Energy Outreach and Career Coaching

While the current workforce and education systems offer multiple benefits and resources to support the needs of job seekers, the system can be difficult to navigate, even for older adults. All ages and skill levels need guidance in choosing the right career paths for their interests and abilities, and they need information about how to prepare for these careers. They may need to have their skills, interests, and aptitudes assessed, and may need assistance developing an action plan for reaching career and educational goals.



Targeted Career Awareness Campaigns—The GIE portal offers education and career information on energy jobs that is tailored to specific audiences. The site provides career assessments, videos on energy and specific careers, education and skill requirements, and links to employers. The career awareness campaign is also supported by print material in a variety of media, including brochures, posters, postcards, pocket cards, and PowerPoint presentations. The GIE brand can be customized for state consortium use or co-branded by energy companies, and can be used to develop targeted regional campaigns that are linked to a national brand.

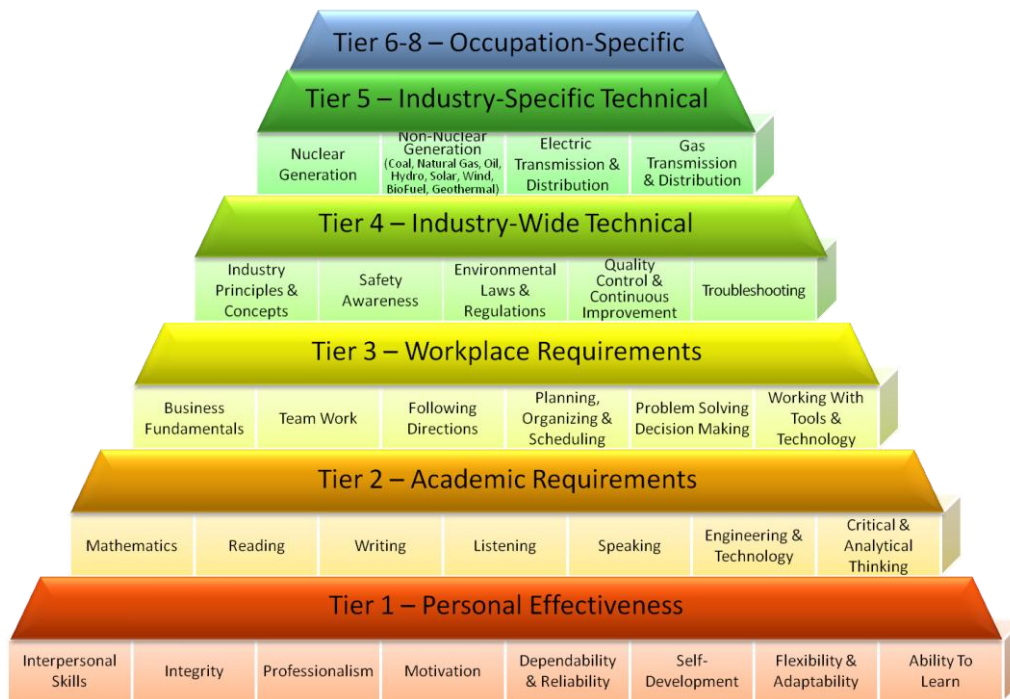
Career and Education Advising and Guidance—Individuals, particularly young adults, may need help in navigating various educational options at different stages of their career action plans. They may also need encouragement and moral support to persist toward their goals. Career coaches, specifically

trained to provide information on energy careers using guidebooks and tools, can provide education counseling, access to state and local resources, access to employment testing, and connections to employers. Coaches may be supplied by the state, community colleges, or employers and receive specific training on and resources specific to energy industry jobs.

Career Pathways Curriculum and Stackable Credentials

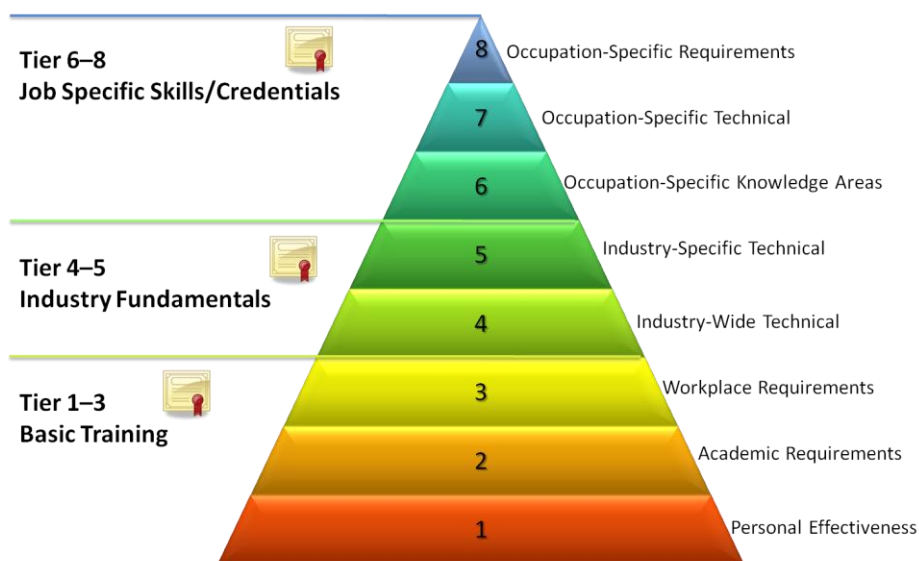
The energy industry provides a wide range of advancement opportunities for its workers, but all skilled technician positions require some level of postsecondary education that includes pre-apprenticeships, technical certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. With additional training come opportunities to take on higher-skilled work and earn higher pay. Key to this effort is the development of a more standardized approach to skills and credentials in the industry, as well as the development of a highly responsive network of educational providers. The development of a system that supports common competencies and curriculum will provide a more cohesive energy education system.

Industry Supported Competencies and Stackable Credentials—The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), in partnership with US DOL, has developed an Energy Competency Model that defines basic competencies, industry fundamentals, industry technical competencies, and job-specific competencies in eight separate tiers. Tiers 1–4 define the common competencies required for any position in an electric and natural gas utility. Tier 5 identifies competencies that are unique to positions in four industry functions—nuclear generation, non-nuclear generation (coal, natural gas, oil, hydro, solar, wind, biofuel, or geothermal), electric transmission and distribution, and gas transmission and distribution. Details for Tiers 6–8 define competencies that are specific to individual occupations.



Each tier of the competency model leads to the next, and mastery of each level is required for success. In the GIE Career Pathways Model, education and training that supports the attainment of competency in Tiers 1–3 is called Basic Training, competency in Tiers 4–5 is called Industry Fundamentals, and competency in the occupation-specific requirements for utility technician positions in Tiers 5–8 is called Job Specific Skills and Credentials. Grouping the skills in this way allows for the development of common

curriculum and education requirements that correspond to the GIE Career Pathways model. This system of “stackable credentials” includes assessments to validate knowledge and skills learned in the classroom as well as on the job, resulting in industry-recognized credentials that are transportable from one company to another. It also allows for flexibility and pathways for career advancement.



Energy Competency Tier Model for Skilled Technician Positions in Energy Efficiency, Energy Generation and Energy Transmission and Distribution

Training	Competencies	Secondary	Pre-apprentice	Certificate Programs	2 year degree and OJT	Apprenticeship
Basic	Tier 1 Personal Effectiveness	→				
	Tier 2 Academic	→				
	Tier 3 Workplace Competencies		→			
Fundamental	Tier 4 Industry – Wide Technical			→		
	Tier 5 Industry Sector Technical			→		
Job specific	Tier 6 - 8 Occupation – specific knowledge and skill requirements			→		

Stackable credentials at each level for Utility Technician Positions

There is an appropriate level of education for instruction for each tier of the competency model. For example, personal effectiveness skills are best taught at the secondary or pre-apprenticeship level. Competencies and training can be mapped to the entire education continuum to align education and training to the needs of the industry. Applicants should enter energy careers with the appropriate postsecondary credential to be successful.

Uniform Curriculum—The goals of uniform curriculum include:

- Reducing redundancy and overlap of programs to help ensure industry-sponsored programs are viable
- Managing the expansion and content of programs offered
- Leveraging investments by sharing curriculum, best practices, and innovations
- Increasing the knowledge and skills of program graduates, thereby expediting their initial industry training
- Providing an academic foundation for new entrants into the energy workforce that will support their continued career development

Education Network—The GIE Career Pathways Model includes a network of community and technical colleges that offer training and credentialing programs linked to the energy career pathways. Pathway programs create a match between the

pipeline of potential workers and institutions in the education network. The education network institutions offer the stackable credentials, connections to four-year institutions, and flexible delivery systems such as online learning, as well as innovation to accelerate learning and assess prior learning.

Employer Collaboration and Support

The development of any career pathways system will not be successful without the employers who provide the jobs. They not only offer employment but ongoing training and the opportunities for advancement that turn the GIE Career Pathways Model into a rewarding, well-paid career for the individual. The model relies on the existing State Energy Workforce Consortia to coordinate with employers in the state and create a tailored process that will support an individual state’s workforce and education policies.

State Energy Workforce Consortia—State Energy Workforce Consortia are a collaboration of the energy industry, education, and the workforce system. Consortia focus on the needs and development of a pipeline of workers for the energy industry in each individual state and develop a plan for balancing supply and demand for the workforce based on the energy goals of the state and the needs of the individual companies. Consortia are organized differently based on the needs of the participants. Various forms include ad hoc groups focusing on

sharing best practices and information, structured organizations with officers and subcommittees, and legal entities.

State Energy Workforce Consortia define demand for both current jobs and future energy jobs and help ensure that the necessary training to prepare applicants for employment will be available.

Employment Opportunities—The ultimate goal of the GIE Career Pathways Model is to provide employment in a rewarding career with opportunity for advancement. Students earning postsecondary credentials will find numerous opportunities in the energy industry, but often don't realize these opportunities exist or have the information they need to navigate the system to find the right fit.

The GIE Career Pathways Model can help enlarge the pool of potential applicants for energy-industry jobs that need to be filled now and in the coming years.

The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD) is a non-profit consortium of electric, natural gas, and nuclear utilities and their associations. CEWD was formed to help utilities work together to develop solutions to the coming workforce shortage in the utility industry. It is the first partnership between utilities, their associations, contractors, and unions to focus on the need to build a skilled workforce pipeline that will meet future industry needs.

Since 1974, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), a national non-profit organization, has been expanding access to learning opportunities for adults by providing business; labor; federal, state, and local government; communities; and higher educational institutions with the tools and strategies they need to create practical, effective lifelong learning solutions.

From the Mountain Ranges to the Rangelands . . .

Career Pathways Finds a Home in Wyoming!

Maryellen Tast, Dean, Lifelong Learning Center, Workforce and Community Development, Laramie County Community College; Tom Martin, Career Technical Education Supervisor, Wyoming Department of Education; Debra Mills, Vice President, Partnerships, CORD

The great state of Wyoming adopted its name from the Delaware Indian word meaning “mountains and valleys alternating.” There is also a claim that the name comes from the Dakota Indian word “mscheweamiing,” meaning “at the big flats” or “large plains.” Both are certainly appropriate in depicting the landscape of Wyoming, as CORD’s cadre of trainers can attest from their experiences over the last several years in delivering staff development throughout Wyoming (Cheyenne, Laramie, Rock Springs, Jackson, Powell, Casper, Riverton, Thermopolis). Topics for keynotes and workshops have included technical skill assessments, programs of study, career academies, implementation of Career Pathways in rural settings, and, of course, the Career Pathways Leadership Certification. A total of approximately 600 educators have been served through CORD workshops and/or presentations at Wyoming conferences over the last three years.

Career and technical education plays an important role in high school reform, and Wyoming has adopted the 16 career clusters. Wyoming adopted a new strategic plan titled *New Directions for High School Career and Technical Education in Wyoming* and developed a *CTE Demonstration Project* to redesign career and technical education in Wyoming through the Career Pathways initiative. Early this year Wyoming started the piloting of assessments in the following cluster areas in: (1) Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; (2) Architecture and Construction; (3) Business Management and Administration; (4) Information Technology; (5) Manufacturing; (6) Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics; (7) Human Services; and (8) Hospitality and Tourism. Just recently the establishment of the Wyoming Careers website within Wyoming Fusion made possible the single sign-on web portal for Wyoming education entities. The site provides career guidance to people of all ages and lifelong learners.

Let's focus on one area of Wyoming—Laramie County.

Laramie County Community College (LCCC) serves three secondary school districts in the southeastern corner of Wyoming and approximately 20 percent of the state's high school population. In January 2010, a core Career Pathways development team consisting of two secondary and two postsecondary members began a six-month project to coordinate every career pathway offered by LCCC from ninth grade through a certificate or degree and into a viable career.

Working backwards in partnership with industry, the two secondary education and two postsecondary education core members of the development team established a postsecondary curriculum to fulfill the needs of employers. A strong concurrent and dual enrollment credit program, postsecondary program of study (POS) requirements, and state high school enrollment and scholarship requirements shaped the secondary curriculum and course recommendations. In integrating all curricula, LCCC and the development team championed the state-mandated Secondary School Course Classification System: School Codes for Exchange of Data (SCEDS) language in the creation of cross-institutional Career Pathways roadmaps using the College to Career Transitions (CCTI) outline as a design foundation.

The development team has begun the next and most time-consuming phase of the process by expanding the team to include additional subject matter experts. Individual meetings are scheduled with the lead postsecondary instructors and secondary curriculum coordinators, the curriculum experts in every POS. Together, these educators have the expertise to examine the myriad of choices facing students who register for high school classes and recommend the most efficient and effective course work for students at each grade to successfully complete a POS with no remediation. This expanded team is also responsible for recommending elective course work that best prepares a student for success in their programs. Working cooperatively, LCCC and service area secondary schools offer all secondary education students four "free" dual credit classes on the college campuses. The development team outlines the best use of these classes to promote our students' programs.

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Brunswick County's First Early College Class Out

Steve Jones, The Sun News, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; originally posted May 13, 2010, at http://www.thesunnews.com/2010/05/13/1471506/first-class-out-at-last.html?story_link=email_msg (reprinted with permission)

Embedded among the more than 300 students who received degrees, diplomas and certificates at Brunswick Community College Wednesday were nine students from the Brunswick County Early College High School, the first graduates of the program that debuted four years ago.

The nine are among 20 of the school's first graduating class who have chosen to move on this year. Eleven others will not have degrees from BCC, but will have college credits. Thirty others will take the full five years of the innovative high school program and graduate next year.

Kiley Brandt, 18, was the first of the first. Brandt led off the BCC students receiving associate degrees and thus became the first early college high school graduate in Brunswick County and possibly one of the first in North Carolina.

Brandt said before the ceremony that she doesn't know where she would have gone to high school if not for the program, which allows students to complete high school and college work in four or five years and move into four-year colleges with credits that will vault them forward, possibly taking two years off a traditional four-year course.

Brandt received two degrees Wednesday, one each in arts and science, and she will take them with her this fall when she enters Elon University in Burlington, N.C., a private school that touts what it calls engaged learning that involves multiple internships, study abroad and the like.

Thirteen early college high schools were chartered in North Carolina in 2005, said Sara Clark of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, and all were, like Brunswick County's, five-year programs. That means this is what the state counts as the first graduating year for the initial students, which now total 10,500 in 70 high schools and colleges statewide. Brandt and her colleagues at Brunswick County's Early College High School, which opened in 2006, will statistically be counted as part of next year's graduating class.

Horry County has more than 300 students in its Early College High School program, which is designed as a four- to five-year course of study, as are some in North Carolina. Horry County students take their high school classes at Horry-Georgetown Technical College's Conway campus. Now they graduate from their home high schools, but in four years, they will graduate from Early College High School, and a new building is being constructed on HGTC's Grand Strand campus with Horry County Schools.

Todd Silbeman of the N.C. New Schools Project, a public-private partnership dedicated to fostering programs such as early college high schools, said North Carolina is not a pioneer of the concept, but it has by far the most participating high schools of any state.

Brandt said she will initially enter college as a psychology major but wasn't sure if that would last until she gets her four-year degree. She values the early college experience because it has an atmosphere of small classes and student-teacher relationships that fits her personality better than a large high school, she said.

The Early College High School debuted with 90 students in 2006, said Vicky Snyder, the school's principal, and 40 of them decided their education would be best served elsewhere.

Brandt and two of her classmates said some students may have wanted to participate in sports or have a greater variety of activities to choose from.

Early college high school "weeds out people," Brandt said. "The people who are supposed to be here stay here."

Classmate and fellow graduate Tiffany Booker, 17, who got an associate's degree in science at Wednesday's ceremony, said the experience matures students and prepares them for the upper-level college courses they will soon undertake. Booker is headed to UNC-Chapel Hill as an academic junior in pre-med studies.

She said the smaller classes were a difficult adjustment at first, but they led to greater growth for her and others.

"Now I kind of go out of my shell a little bit and do things out of my comfort zone," she said.

Some schools said it will be midyear before they decide in which class they will place their new early college students, and some say it will be the end of the first year, said Secanda Seifred, school counselor at Brunswick County's Early College High School. They will enter as freshmen, officially known as first-time undergraduates, and as such will have the full benefits for housing and scholarships.

Fay Agar, director of early college high school for NC DPI and the New Schools Project, said the students will be classified differently for different things. For instance, their status will be as first-time undergraduates for things such as scholarships or housing. But their academic classification may be as a sophomore or junior, depending on the number of credits they transfer from Brunswick Community College.

Early college students who receive an associate's degree will be academically classed as juniors.

She said the exact number of credits students will receive at four-year schools in the UNC system is set out in an articulation agreement that predates early college high school.

Brandt's situation is somewhat different from other graduates because private schools such as Elon aren't bound by the agreement.

The uncertainty about college credits that may or may not transfer may be a concern for the students' parents, but students such as Brandt and Booker say

their experiences have been valuable, and they're not really concerned about the eventual tabulation.

"I would be mildly disappointed" if credits don't transfer, Brandt said, "but my mother would be furious."

For more information, contact the author at sjones@thesunnews.com.

Connections

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Connections is published by the National Career Pathways Network, an organization of educators and employers dedicated to the advancement of Career Pathways, Tech Prep, and other CTE initiatives. NCPN assists its members in planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving workforce education programs. NCPN was founded by CORD, a national nonprofit organization that has been leading change in education for over twenty years.

Questions about *Connections*?

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Visit NCPN on the web at www.ncpn.info.

Save the date!

The 2010 conference will be held October 20–23 at the Sheraton Hotel (formerly Adams Mark) in downtown Dallas, Texas. Visit ncpn.info often for the latest information.

