UCLA Community College Review: Community College Partnerships with the Private Sector—Organizational Contexts and Models for Successful Collaboration

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For many years community colleges have maintained close ties to local schools, governments, and community agencies. Recently, however, these colleges have expanded their local relationships to include partners in business and industry (Orr, 2001). These partnerships with the private sector have become increasingly popular over the past 15 years. In 1990, less than half of the nation's community colleges offered training programs in conjunction with local businesses. By the mid-1990s, roughly 90% of two-year colleges had joined "the business of training workers for specific companies, rather than just teaching generic subjects or trades" (Stamps, 1995, p. 36).

Several factors have contributed to the recent popularity of two-year college partnerships with the private sector. The recent economic recession is one; as a consequence of the nation's economic slowdown, many states face severe budget shortfalls and, as a way to bring expenditures in line with revenues, have reduced state appropriations for institutions of higher education (Hebel, Schmidt, & Selingo, 2002). As a result, community colleges have had to look elsewhere for financial support, and private sector partnerships have emerged as an increasingly important source of postsecondary funding (Jackson & Glass, 2000). In addition, evolving labor requirements, particularly in high tech and rural areas, have influenced the creation of community college relationships with local business and industry. Through partnerships with small and mid-sized businesses, community colleges have been extremely successful in helping high tech and rural economies grow and become more competitive (Information Technology Association of America, 2002; Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001a).

Partnerships with the private sector are also influenced by the intense pressure community colleges continually face to provide innovative curriculum to their students, especially in the areas of technology and information systems. According to Daniel (2002), if community colleges are to preserve their role in training the nation's high-tech workforce, they must continue to offer cutting-edge curricula that prepare students to meet the technological demand. Private sector partnerships enable community colleges to create academic and technical training that responds to the high tech labor needs in the community (Swindle, 1999). Finally, the community college's obligation to respond to local demands has also influenced the recent popularity of partnerships with the private sector. As Anderson has stated, "The basic mission of the community college is to meet the local educational needs within the community. In providing teaching, training, personnel, and facilities to meet the needs of local businesses, government agencies, and industry, all participants can benefit" (2001, pp. 7-8).

The recent economic slowdown, evolving labor requirements, the need to provide a state-of-the-art curriculum, and a desire to respond to local demands have greatly helped community college partnerships with the private sector to grow in significance and lead to new streams of revenue for two-year colleges. In addition, they have helped to infuse state-of-the-art technology and modern business practices into contemporary community college facilities and academic programs, and they have assisted two-year colleges in reaching a previously underserved population while providing local businesses with a skilled labor force (Jackson & Glass, 2000). As community colleges have become more experienced in developing and maintaining partnerships with the private sector, many scholars have begun to identify strategies for successful partnerships, as well as to discuss some of the benefits and challenges inherent in such relationships. Similarly, community college practitioners have started to publish case studies of successful programs and have contributed to the literature on best practices for partnerships with the private sector.

This article discusses strategies for creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships and describes several successful types and models of partnerships with local businesses and industry. The article concludes with a discussion of the benefits and challenges inherent in creating and facilitating community college partnerships with the private sector.

The Essential Elements of Successful Partnerships

A review of recent community college scholarship and institutional research documents pertaining to two-year college partnerships with the private sector provides insights into the organizational qualities and leadership practices that are critical to the formulation of productive relationships. What follows is by no means an exhaustive list of traits or institutional best practices; rather it highlights several key themes that consistently emerge during examinations of successful partnerships.

First, prospective collaborators must recognize the existence of a community need or opportunity that calls for collective action (such as rising unemployment rates or the entrance of new businesses into the local economy) (Spangler, 2002; Sundberg, 2002). Embedded in this statement is the implicit expectation that community college administrators, local business leaders, and civic leaders are frequently engaged in dialogue concerning the community's economic growth, labor demands, and social welfare. Active participation in civic organizations and community boards (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, regional economic development task forces) provides community college and local business leaders with opportunities to network and identify common interests or community concerns that can be addressed most effectively and efficiently through collaboration (Sundberg, 2002).

A second critical element of successful partnerships is the establishment of shared missions and goals. As Buettner, Morrison, and Wasicek (2002) note:

> Every community is made up of various entities, each with its own mission and priorities. Although the diversity and scope of the missions represented in any community are substantial, so is the overlap between them....It is within these overlapping interests that the most promising seeds of successful partnerships are often found, for it appears that when a partnership emanates from an overlapping but noncompetitive mission, its potential and potential durability are the greatest. (p. 6)

The identification of shared organizational missions and goals necessitates that community college leaders and their business counterparts engage in frequent and candid conversations concerning their respective organizational and community visions. This strategy was particularly important to the establishment of the Illinois-based Center for Manufac-

turing Excellence, a collaborative venture between Carl Sandburg College and Maytag-Galesburg Refrigeration. The center, which houses state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment, customized training, and the college's manufacturing certificate and degree programs, was established to address the region's anticipated labor shortage and Maytag's need for employees with advanced technology skills. Despite the political, economic, and administrative challenges associated with embarking on a 2-million-dollar collaborative initiative, "Representatives from the college, Maytag, and other manufacturers involved in the project were committed to listening to and trying to understand one another's positions and needs" (Sundberg, 2002, p. 17). This intentional process of sharing information and ideas provided a foundation for the establishment of a shared mission and the successful completion of the Center for Manufacturing Excellence, a facility that trained more than 700 individuals, including Matag employees, during its first year of operation (Sundberg, 2002).

The creation of value and benefit for all partners is the third key strategy for building successful partnerships (Spangler, 2002; Sundberg, 2002). Although this principle may seem self-evident, its significance cannot be overstated. Given the decline of community college funding and the profit maximization motive that drives private industry, collaborative initiatives between these two entities must generate tangible economic or political benefits for all involved. Sundberg (2002) expands on this point: "Because profit is essential for businesses to operate and remain viable, the benefit becomes an even more important component in partnerships with them. Maintaining the partnership can best be achieved by continually assessing the value being delivered and by being flexible and responsive to the fast-changing needs of business" (p. 13). Community colleges seeking to embark on collaborative initiatives with the private sector must develop project proposals that clearly outline the benefits to be accrued by all participants—the business, the college, and the community at large.

Strong leadership, particularly at the senior administrative level (e.g., college president) is another organizational quality essential to the establishment of powerful partnerships. In case study after case study, institutional researchers and community college scholars highlight the important role played by organizational leaders in the establishment of institutional cultures characterized by vision, innovation, and mutual respect

(Buettner, Morrison, & Wasicek, 2002; Haire & Dodson-Pennington, 2002; Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001b; Spangler, 2002). Based on their case study of North Iowa Area Community College's multiple and diverse private industry partnerships, Buettner, Morrison, and Wasicek (2002) underscore the significance of strong executive leadership:

> It is absolutely essential that the CEOs of the partnering organizations clearly define the purposes of the partnership and how the partners will measure and define success. A united executive front with a comprehensive vision of the future is a necessary but insufficient condition for success. Through their actions, the CEOs must model the change process inherent in organizational alignment....They must help others in their respective organizations to redefine roles and relationships and build a consensus around the vision for the future. They must foster commitment and coordination for successful partnerships. (p. 10)

While college and industry executives are certainly not the only organizational players involved in the creation of productive partnerships, these individuals do play key roles with respect to establishing the initial vision, goals, and values that will inform all subsequent project decisions. The early and frequent demonstration of a commitment to enacting the principles of change and collaborative leadership are essential to ensuring the success of the endeavor.

The final strategy for building successful partnerships described here is the establishment of shared governance and accountability. A number of the model programs reviewed for this article identified decisions pertaining to hiring practices, staffing matters, compensation, and the day-to-day operations of project facilities as significant sources of tension between partners (Buettner, Morrison, & Wasicek, 2002; Irlen & Gulluni, 2002; Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001b; Sundberg, 2002). One effective means of resolving these management issues is the creation of a governance structure that ensures all constituents equal representation in matters of both daily and long-term consequence. Frequently, separate advisory or governing boards comprised of college, private sector, and community representatives are charged with the responsibility of overseeing daily project operations. These boards are typically separate from either the college or company's central governing body and, as a result, are afforded a great deal of freedom and flexibility with respect to their

administrative decisions. Although it is certainly not the only means of establishing shared accountability for collaborative initiatives, the development of independent governing boards with an equal number of seats at the table for all participating organizations has proven an effective strategy for ensuring that the shared mission and goals described earlier in this section remain at the center of all decisions pertaining to the partnership. The following section illustrates how the principles of good practice outlined previously in this article have been translated into a wide range of community college and private sector partnerships.

Types and Models of Community College Partnerships with the Private Sector

Community college partnerships with the private sector come in many forms. Some are tailored to meet business needs directly; some are focused on economic development; others engage businesses in training specialized populations such as welfare recipients and dislocated workers; and still others arrange private support for individual students and college programs. The following section discusses successful models in each of these areas. It should be noted, however, that the types of private sector partnerships are too varied and diverse to be captured sufficiently in one article.

Customized Contract Training for Private Businesses

By providing contract training tailored to major employers in the region, community colleges can help existing businesses to increase productivity through continuing education and training and can attract and retain new students and partners through focused training programs and other services (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001b). Unlike traditional occupational education, however, in contract training the colleges' clients are outside partners, such as local employers or government agencies, instead of individual students (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

Community colleges are well suited to provide customized contract training to local business partners and often can do so at much lower costs than can in-house programs. However, to be successful in creating and maintaining customized training partnerships, colleges must take several criteria into account. According to the National Alliance of Business (2001), indicators of a successful partnership include relevant existing curricula

and faculty experienced in a specific training area, a willingness to develop or modify programs to meet an employer's needs, and an ability to provide flexible training on and off campus and around working hours.

Southeastern Community College in North Carolina has been extremely successful in developing and maintaining contract training partnerships with local business and industry. Faced with declining enrollments and few corporate partnerships in the late 1980s, Southeastern began an aggressive campaign to foster growth in the college and its community. Its first step was to initiate recruitment efforts towards local businesses, and soon it began to research the needs of firms considering relocating to the area (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001b). The college was then able to approach potential partners with a customized package of relocation support services including workforce and skills training, technical relocation support, ongoing skills upgrading, and general consulting.

Columbus State Community College (CSCC) in Ohio has also established very successful worker training programs; CSCC provides customized training to over 4,000 employees at almost sixty different companies (Meighan, 1995). Its success comes from the support of its president and academic departments; a professional, highly-trained staff; a wide range of services, including standard, nonstandard, credit, and noncredit courses; and the ability to offer courses at a variety of training locations.

Technology Centers

One of the most pressing challenges facing both community colleges and manufacturing industries is the need to update their training curricula and technological capabilities as a means of ensuring a competitive advantage in the ever-changing, high-tech market that defines the 21st century. One strategy that has proven particularly effective for both entities is the collaborative development of technology centers that integrate the college's vocational curricula with the training needs of the local private sector. In addition to offering a wide variety of credit and noncredit courses via traditional classroom settings and distance learning programs, these technology centers frequently include state-of-the-art manufacturing centers that provide students and local businesses with the physical space and high-tech equipment necessary to test new designs and manufacture product prototypes (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001c).

The Hagerstown Community College Advanced Technology Center (Maryland) was opened in 1990 with the intention of facilitating the modernization and regional competitiveness of local industry through the collaborative development of training and technical assistance programs. Participants in the partnership include the college, representatives from local industry, and government officials interested in working together to respond to the region's economic development needs. The center offers high technology learning classrooms and labs, a shared production space that provides small businesses and students with access to equipment otherwise unavailable to them, and telecommunications facilities that are connected to the state's fiber optic distance learning network (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001c).

In addition to hosting the college's credit-bearing training initiatives, the Advanced Technology Center is also "responsible for all of the college's noncredit, contract, and customized training...in industrial technologies and information systems. It targets its efforts at local small and medium-sized firms and their employees. Some 95% of its training is done for firms with 100 or fewer employees" (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001c, p. 151). Due in large part to the center's efforts, the local unemployment rate now stands at 2.7% and the program model has been adopted statewide, delivering training to more than 650 companies and 29,000 workers. The Hagerstown Advanced Technology Center provides an excellent illustration of the economic and educational benefits derived from collaborative partnerships focused on the creation of technology centers that combine state-of-the-art facilities with customized training packages that meet local demand.

Workforce Development Partnerships

Community colleges have participated in pre-service workforce training for many years. With the passage of the most recent Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in July, 2000, however, the opportunity for two-year colleges to participate in strategic planning for local workforce development has greatly increased. Two-year colleges are a critical factor in the new legislation, a point reinforced in a joint report from the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Education, and Labor: "Community colleges play a particularly important role in adult education, as they have often geared toward educating an older, working population" (1999, p. 13).

Successful workforce development programs align labor needs of local businesses with training offered by community colleges and priorities set forth by local and state workforce development boards (Jacobs, 2001). In order to create such an alignment, community colleges must collaborate with various community sectors, primarily local businesses and industry (Orr, 2001). Designed with input from industry partners, workforce training programs should be short term (six months or less), should be matched to local high-demand occupations, and should provide career ladders for advancement following entry-level employment (Gennett, Johnston, & Wilson, 2001).

One example of a successful workforce development collaboration can be found in the Bridge Program at the City Colleges of Chicago. This program's partners include community-based organizations that help to recruit students, local employers that can act as advisors for training programs and provide jobs to participants, and local workforce development boards that provide funding for the programs. The Bridge Program has been successful in raising the wages of over 125 graduates (Jenkins, 1999) and has been modified to include Spanish-speaking students and employers (Jacobs, 2001).

Similarly, Cabrillo Community College in rural California has leveraged its business and industry relationships to provide work opportunities as well as career counseling, academic and tutorial support, and financial aid information to low-income students (Jacobs, 2001). The strength of the college's partnerships, as well as its collaboration with the local workforce development board, has made employment possible for many students, especially previously underqualified adult workers.

Welfare-to-Work

Community colleges have long been involved in training low-income students and welfare recipients for employment in business and industry. However, they have begun to play a larger role in moving government aid recipients from welfare to work since President Clinton signed into law the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which stipulates that single parents with dependent children must be involved in federal or state-approved work activities by the end of two years in order to continue to receive welfare assistance.

In order to provide effective welfare-to-work programs, community colleges must maintain strong relationships with both local welfare agencies and nearby employers (Brock, Matus-Grossman, & Hamilton, 2001). These partnerships are crucial, as they ensure that colleges adhere to federal and state welfare-to-work policies and because they facilitate the employment of aid recipients. Moreover, community college welfare-to-work programs should maintain a clear focus on employment but encourage participants to continue their education in the future.

The Advanced Technology Program (ATP) at Oakland Community College in Michigan is an exemplary welfare-to-work program. Key components of ATP include strong industry partnerships, career opportunities for participants, a community-based task force that can provide political support for the program, and a strong administrative support structure within the college (Pagenette & Kozell, 2001). At ATP, participants receive job-specific technical training as well as career readiness skills that correspond to the technical area of study. In addition, teamwork and problem-solving techniques are integrated into all coursework, and job-specific technical training is based on employer input. ATP has been extraordinarily successful: Over the past five years, roughly 90% of participants who completed the program have acquired full-time jobs in the area in which they were trained.

The JOBSplus! program at Onondaga Community College in upstate New York is another example of a successful welfare-to-work program. This program was developed with three principles in mind: Workforce preparation activities should be authentic and simulate labor force conditions; work experience and classroom training should be combined; and individuals should be given the greatest possible degree of self-direction in selecting opportunities that will move them toward economic independence (Higgins, Mayne, Deacon & LaComb, 2001). JOBSplus! offers several family-centered programs to help participants look for, secure, and retain jobs. These services include specialized case management, legal assistance, and domestic violence workshops. In addition, JOBSplus! offers several job readiness projects and services and supports participants in job retention and self-sufficiency strategies.

Business-Based Scholarship Programs

In recent years, several community colleges have begun to partner with local businesses to provide scholarships to their students. These partnerships have been highly effective both in training community college students and in helping them to secure employment in well-paying and high-demand fields. Some partnerships are geared towards encouraging local businesses to contribute to a scholarship program as a way to support economic development in the community. Other scholarship programs are more reciprocal in nature, benefiting not only students and community colleges, but local business and industry as well.

The Rising Star Program in the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) is an endowed scholarship fund that provides a $2,200 award to high school graduates who enroll in a DCCCD college within one year of high school graduation. The program is funded entirely by contributions from local businesses as well as a few wealthy individuals and currently boasts an endowment of over $11 million. The Rising Star Program has been extremely successful in educating local high school graduates; retention rates among participating students are 20% higher than the state average (Whiston, 2002). The success of this program is due in part to the proactive approach DCCCD takes in marketing the program and recruiting potential partners.

The Technical Scholars Program (TSP) at Spartanburg Technical College in South Carolina is another example of a successful business-based scholarship program. Participating businesses provide Technical Scholars with full scholarships (including tuition, fees, and books), and employ the students in part-time jobs in the area of the students' academic program. In addition, the employer pairs each scholar with a mentor who can help the student adjust to the company environment. Sponsoring businesses are also asked to make a small donation to Spartanburg Technical College to defray the costs of maintenance, advertising, and recruiting. Although Technical Scholars are not required to accept employment with their sponsoring company upon graduation, over 80% of graduates have done so (Pelham, 2001). This three-way partnership has greatly benefited Spartanburg Technical College, its students, and participating local businesses.

Business-based scholarship programs, as well as contract training, technology centers, workforce development programs, and welfare-to-work initiatives are examples of successful partnerships between community colleges and the private sector. Each model benefits the community college and its students in different ways, and each faces diverse challenges and barriers to implementation. The following two sections discuss some of these benefits and challenges in more detail.

Benefits to Community College Partnerships with the Private Sector

Earlier in this article, the creation of value and benefits for all partners was identified as a key strategy for building successful partnerships between community colleges and the private sector. This section outlines several of the benefits frequently enjoyed by three distinct partnership constituents: the community college, the business or industry, and the students who participate in the collaborative programs. While the specific benefits associated with particular partnerships are situated within the local context, the themes of economic growth, labor force development, and curricular innovation commonly frame the benefits and outcomes sections of institutional research and program evaluation efforts.

From the private sector perspective, the economic benefits associated with community college partnerships include the promotion of regional competitiveness and industrial modernization, opportunities to attract and retrain new businesses to the local community, and an increase in the productivity of existing businesses through recruitment and training of a skilled labor force (Hurley, 2002; Irlen & Gulluni, 2002; Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001b, 2001c; Sundberg, 2002). Southeastern Community College's Business and Industry Skills Training Center and the Center for Manufacturing Excellence at Carl Sandburg College are two prime examples of collaborative initiatives that have delivered significant economic benefits to their private sector partners. One of the primary functions of Southeastern's business center is the recruitment and retention of new industry to the coastal-plain area of North Carolina. These recruitment initiatives include the development of customized relocation and training packages designed to offer firms tangible incentives to move into the region. Southeastern continues to offer these services to firms even after the firms have become established in the community as a means of actively contributing to the sustained health of the organiza-

tions. The recruitment and retention of these new industries is a source of significant regional economic growth resulting in $30 million in local investments and the creation of nearly 200 jobs (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., 2001b).

In addition to pursuing the introduction of new industry into the region, community college and private sector partnerships are also actively working to increase the economic productivity and profits of existing businesses. The Center for Manufacturing Excellence, the collaborative project between Carl Sandburg College and Maytag-Galesburg Refrigeration described earlier in this article, was developed in response to a recognized need to retrain workers for the demands associated with increasing levels of technology in the workplace. In its first two years of operation, the center retrained nearly 230 Maytag employees (Sundberg, 2002). Both of the specific projects mentioned above speak to the tremendous economic development benefits that are derived through the initiation of collaborative educational partnerships with community colleges.

At the beginning of this article, declining levels of federal and state funding were identified as significant sources of motivation on the part of community colleges actively pursuing partnerships with the private sector. While the economic benefits that accompany increased private investment in a community college and its programs are certainly paramount when evaluating potential partnerships, the institutional benefits derived from strengthening relationships with local business and industry are by no means limited to the balance sheet. The growth of community college and industry partnerships has been translated into the acquisition of state-of-the art equipment and software that is utilized to expand the educational offerings and prepare program participants for employment in today's ever-changing and high-tech labor market (Hurley, 2002; Sundberg, 2002).

In addition to these capital improvements, community college and private sector partnerships also contribute to the development of curricular innovations that bridge classroom learning with hands-on experience in real-world employment settings. Internship, mentorship, and entrepreneurial programs provide participants with opportunities to translate knowledge gained in the classroom into practical work experiences while simultaneously facilitating employment options for students beyond graduation (Irlen & Gulluni, 2002). While increased financial and capital resources

are certainly important outcomes associated with private sector partnerships, community colleges also enjoy tremendous curricular and instructional benefits that actively enhance student learning.

In a chapter on the contemporary context of community college and private sector partnerships, Spangler (2002) asserts that one of the essential elements of these collaborations is the direct benefit afforded students and program participants. In addition to increasing the profit margins of participating businesses, the collaborative programs and initiatives described above provide college students and members of the local labor force with meaningful personal and employment development experiences that contribute to educational advancement and higher levels of job satisfaction (Allen, 2002; Irlen & Gulluni, 2002). Community college partnerships with the private sector are a critical means of increasing access to innovative postsecondary education and training programs, allowing both new and incumbent workers to acquire essential interpersonal and technical skills. The Asnuntuck Community College machine and tooling internship program, created in collaboration with local manufacturers based in the Enfield, Connecticut, area, offers an excellent example of the student benefits that are derived from community college partnerships with the private sector. According to both the Asnuntuck Community College president and a program administrator, "The internship program in particular has proven invaluable, especially for student self-development. The students have been able to use the internship component to demonstrate skills learned, identify areas in which they need to put more energy, and develop their self-confidence" (Irlen & Gulluni, 2002, p. 41). Community college and private sector partnerships are a significant source of curricular innovations with benefits that extend well beyond the bottom line of profit maximization; these partnerships have made tangible improvements in the lives of the individual students.

Challenges of Private Sector Partnerships

While there are many benefits to community college partnerships with the private sector, there are also several challenges inherent in creating and maintaining these relationships. These challenges often arise due to difficulties involved in funding and managing human resources for the partnerships, because of the challenges in integrating different organizational missions, cultures, and administrative styles, or as a result of resistance to change among community college faculty and administrators.

One of the biggest challenges facing community college partnerships with the private sector is linked to the relative instability of funding for the programs, especially in times of scarce financial resources. Because community colleges tend to eliminate auxiliary programs rather than cut funding that supports their core academic mission (Sheldon, 2003), financial backing for community college partnerships with local business is often at risk or inadequate. A national survey of workforce training directors at community colleges found that 35% believed that their budgets were insufficient to equip their training facilities properly, hire experts, and develop the most effective curricula (Doucette, 1993).

In addition to the scarcity of financial resources, community college partnerships with the private sector also face challenges due to human resource-related problems. These partnerships are often extremely dependent upon specific individuals, and very little information exists about the kinds of leadership and management skills necessary for developing and maintaining successful partnerships (Spangler, 2002). As well, many colleges have cited a "lack of experienced trainers or expertise" (Doucette, 1993, p. 15) as a significant barrier to maintaining successful partnerships with local businesses. In order to provide effective workforce or contract training courses that are responsive to local business demands, community colleges must be able to staff partnership programs quickly and often run into trouble when experienced instructors are not available. In addition, college customs or union rules governing course loads and teaching schedules can make it difficult for full-time faculty to participate in partnerships with the private sector (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

Other challenges to partnerships with the private sector emerge as a result of opposing organizational missions or administrative styles. Businesses, in order to be successful, must be responsive to the marketplace and hire employees who possess high-demand skills. Institutions of higher education, on the other hand, are often less responsive to the market, partly because faculty value their academic freedom and ability to structure courses as they please. Many community college instructors are unwilling to allow local businesses to have the final say over course content or pedagogical style (Hanks & Williamson, 2002). In addition, private-sector partners may become frustrated when colleges delay the development of a partnership in order to attain approval from multiple constituencies (such as students, faculty, and staff) (Spangler, 2002). In order to

meet all parties' expectations and objectives, community colleges and their partners in business and industry must work together to integrate these opposing missions and cultures.

Additional problems may arise when community colleges are expected to put the needs of their private sector partners above their own in order to win contracts and build relationships. As Gruber (2000) notes, effective partnership training "should fit as well as possible into trainee schedules, reflecting employer rather than college needs. Partnerships should explore options that include providing training at the worksite, scheduling training to fit preexisting worker schedules (including all shifts), surveying workers as to best available training times, and delivering training in small groups" (p. 34). While this approach may be beneficial for local business partners, it can create many financial and human-resource related problems in community colleges (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

Resistance to change among many faculty and administrators in community colleges can also make private sector partnerships challenging. Even though community college presidents frequently feel compelled to pursue partnerships with local businesses because they represent an alternative source of revenue, many faculty are less enthusiastic about these relationships, as they often require modifying traditional or unique academic courses in order to meet industry needs (Hanks & Williamson, 2002). In addition, some professors view vocational or workforce training as an unwelcome intrusion into an educational institution whose focus should remain on the liberal arts or transfer functions (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

Faculty are often not alone in their distrust of vocational or workforce training programs in community colleges. Administrators also may view contract training or specialized skills preparation as a distraction from the more fundamental missions of the community college, such as access or transfer (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). As well, some administrators are wary of programs born out of partnerships with local businesses because they may be quite expensive and targeted at low-income, undereducated students who, according to some, are not suitable for college (Jacobs, 2001). Administrative support of private sector partnerships is an essential component of their ability to succeed, however. As Dougherty and Bakia (1999) report, presidents and other administrators can make or break a community college's training program according to their willingness to educate internal and external constituencies about private sector

partnerships, remove structural and policy barriers (which are often based on traditional academic practices), and provide the funding and facilities necessary to develop and maintain the partnership's programs.

Conclusion

This article has provided a broad introduction to the key themes, strategies, benefits, and challenges associated with the growing prominence of community college partnerships with the private sector. A thorough examination of the contemporary economic, political, and social contexts within which these partnerships are formed, along with a review of diverse partnership models, provides interested educational administrators and industry leaders with valuable insights that can be used to inform future collaborations. While an exploration of relevant research does not reveal a one-size-fits-all model for building successful partnerships, Haire and Dodson-Pennington (2002) encapsulate well the essential components of productive and mutually beneficial initiatives: "The road to successful partnerships requires strong leadership, well-developed and nurtured trust among partners, constant and consistent communication, clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each partner, commitment to a mutually developed goal or mission, and sufficient resources and systems to develop additional resources" (p. 74).

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