

WEST VIRGINIA

BRIDGING THE GAP

TAACCCT ROUND 3

CURRICULUM REVIEW RETREAT SUMMARY



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I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The West Virginia Community and Technical College System collaborated with Thomas P. Miller and Associates, LLC (TPMA) and Mason Bishop from WorkED Consulting, LLC to conduct a Curriculum Review Retreat from August 5 to August 6, 2015 at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College. The purpose of this Retreat was to gather faculty and staff from the *Bridging the Gap* (BTG) consortium colleges as well as TAACCCT grantees from other states – Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Florida – to discuss curriculum and establish networks for best practices and sustainability strategies in three industry sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Energy, and Information Technology. *A full list of Curriculum Review Retreat attendees can be found in [Appendix A](#).*

The Retreat offered a forum for these faculty and staff to discuss:

1. Industry-recognized credentials offered and embedded in pathways;
2. Innovative program delivery;
3. Ways to partner with national industry associations;
4. Connections to occupational knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies; and
5. Challenges faced, successes stories, and best practices associated with course development.

The Curriculum Review Retreat agenda can be found in [Appendix B](#).

A summary of the Curriculum Review Retreat follows below, and includes discussion around the following sector breakout sessions and panels:

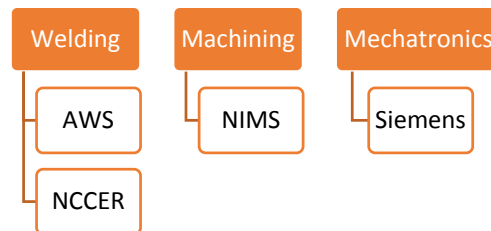
- II. Sector Breakout Sessions
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Energy
 - Information Technology
- III. Panels
 - Non-Credit to Credit Articulation
 - Open Entry, Open Exit Courses
- IV. College Resources Shared

II. SECTOR BREAKOUT SESSIONS

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

OVERVIEW

The colleges participating in the Advanced Manufacturing breakout session revealed a number of focus areas in the sector – welding, machining, and mechatronics – that are prevalent in the colleges’ regions and exhibit projected growth. To ensure students are prepared for the workforce in this sector, certifications have been integrated into the programs. These certifications are awarded after students pass examinations at different points throughout the program, providing students with multiple opportunities to receive stackable credentials. The table below outlines the different focus areas and certifications discussed at the Retreat.



The colleges in the sessions addressed a number of topics ranging from hybridization of hands-on content and accelerated program strategies to how changes in the industry affect learning outcomes and balancing employer-specific versus generalizable skills in curriculum development.

SUCCESSSES

- + Learn-and-earn, apprenticeship, and internship programs that allow students to earn a stipend while they are enrolled in the technical programs have reportedly improved student retention. According to the participating colleges, many students receive a certificate and leave the program in order to obtain paid employment so these opportunities may encourage students to remain in the programs.
- + Many colleges reported embedding developmental education courses into technical programs. Industry emphasizes a need for colleges to address English and math deficits with students, but many students leave before completing these courses. With this in mind, many colleges have begun incorporating technical-focused English and math into the programs so that 1.) Students receive exposure to topics in their field of study early on and 2.) Students can see how English and math apply to the fields they are entering.

CHALLENGES

- Finding and keeping faculty has been an ongoing challenge for many colleges that attended the Retreat. Typically, colleges cannot offer potential instructors more than the industry is paying them. In addition, these candidates often do not possess the educational credentials that the college requires despite industry experience.
- Recruiting students for Advanced Manufacturing programs has been a challenge because there is a negative stigma attached to the sector. Faculty reported that many see the Advanced Manufacturing sector as factory work and fail to recognize the recent strides in technology. Because of this, potential students are typically discouraged from enrolling in the programs despite drastic technological shifts in the industry in recent years.

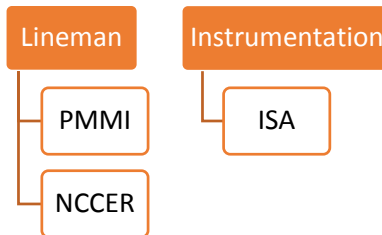
BEST PRACTICES

- ***Embed soft skills into programs.*** A number of faculty have found ways to embed soft skills into technical programs. Faculty reported a need to create a class environment that resembles a work environment to prepare students for the workforce. A number of solutions were discussed such as having class during typical business hours, taking cell phones away for class time, and utilizing time clocks.
- ***Establish agreements with employers.*** Many colleges reported challenges in retaining students enrolled in the technical programs as many leave for employment. Colleges that did not have this problem emphasized a need to establish agreements with employers to wait to hire students until they complete the technical program. Students completing the programs have higher degrees and can move up in the company, which is a selling point to employers and students.

ENERGY

OVERVIEW

The programs in the Energy sector are set up to provide students with a foundation of skills upon which the students can specialize their focus area (i.e., oil and gas, midstream, etc.) as they move forward in the program. The specialization opportunities offered at their institutions, curricula used in these programs, and industry trends were discussed during the breakout session. More specifically, Lineman and Instrumentation program curricula were outlined as well as their associated certifications (PMMI, NCCER, and ISA). The table below outlines the programs and certifications discussed at the Retreat.



The colleges discussed a number of topics including accelerated delivery methods, block scheduling, aligning the program with industry-recognized credentials, methods of assessments, and employer engagement as well as how these topics influence curriculum development in the Energy sector at their institutions.

SUCCESSSES

- + The colleges reported that there have been high placement percentages of students in the Energy sector, especially in the state of West Virginia. Due to projected growth trends, the colleges anticipate that this trend will continue and could aid with program sustainability.
- + The colleges in the Energy sector have focused their efforts on increasing student completion. With this in mind, hybrid and online offerings, accelerated formats, and bridge/gateway courses have been integrated into program development. These offerings reportedly provide students, especially incumbent workers, with more flexibility in their education increasing the likelihood of program enrollment and retention.

CHALLENGES

- Colleges reported that there is no single credential that is nationally recognized for Energy programs other than an AAS degree. For colleges that are offering credentials, some are focusing on ways to teach students how to describe the skills associated with the certification to potential employers with the understanding the employers may not recognize the certifications.
- Many students and instructors in the Energy sector are struggling with the general education requirements at the colleges. Students are not interested in math and English, and instructors do not know how to make math and English relevant to the student's program.

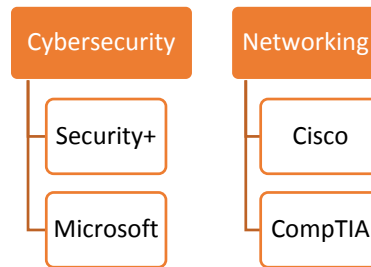
BEST PRACTICES

- ***Embed safety and other certifications in programs.*** Many colleges reported the benefit to embedding safety certifications such as OSHA and First Aid training, and additional skills certifications such as CDL and forklift training into Energy programs to make students more marketable. Employers stress the importance of safety in the workplace and the additional certifications shows that students in these programs are prepared for the workforce immediately upon program completion.
- ***Create an open environment for employers.*** Some colleges described implementing open classrooms for employers that want to observe course content. Employers can feel comfortable with the content the college is teaching and were reportedly more likely to partner with the college. The open environment also provides students with the opportunity to network with local employers.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

OVERVIEW

Faculty from a number of West Virginia colleges discussed IT curriculum at their institutions as well as challenges and success stories in program development. Colleges are reportedly embedding certifications and internships into programs and integrating hybridized course content to expedite student time to completion. Because the IT sector changes so rapidly due to frequent technological advances, getting students back in the workforce as quickly as possible is a focus with many of the programs. The table below reflects the focus areas and associated certifications discussed at the breakout session.



Colleges also discussed the importance of integrating project management skills into curricula as well as technical math and English to increase student marketability.

SUCCESSSES

- + Many colleges are implementing accelerated program formats to expedite student time to completion. Reportedly, this structure is working well for students and instructors as it gets students into the industry as quickly as possible.
- + Colleges have reported embedding technical math and English into IT courses to address deficits in education. These courses provide students with cross-cutting skill sets that make students more marketable in the competitive IT sector.

CHALLENGES

- The IT sector is constantly changing due to technological advances. This makes it difficult for colleges to develop curricula as they need to always take into account projected growth and industry technological changes.
- Hybridizing IT courses has been a challenge for many faculty as students prefer more interaction and videos in their course content. Traditional online classes are not ideal for these students so faculty are attempting to find unique ways to hybridize IT courses.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Consider having a testing center at your institution.** Colleges reported the importance of having a testing center at their institutions as there are many certifications in the IT sector. A testing center also allows the college to more accurately track students once they complete their certification examination, which has been a challenge for many faculty to date.
- **Fast-track qualified faculty.** Qualified faculty in the IT sector are difficult to find because colleges have specific education requirements and IT has strict certification requirements. However, some colleges have found that fast-tracking faculty through teaching credentials, especially faculty that possess the required IT certifications, has been beneficial in expediting faculty time to teaching.

III. PANELS

NON-CREDIT TO CREDIT ARTICULATION

OVERVIEW

Palm Beach State College (PBSC) and BridgeValley Community and Technical College¹ implemented processes for non-credit to credit articulation at their institutions to provide students completing non-credit programs of study the opportunity to obtain college-level credit to promote career pathways and life-long learning. At PBSC, the articulation process began with faculty removing trade courses from the technical programs that did not articulate to credit. The contact hours in the trade courses were aligned to credits based off academic rigor, time in class, and certifications offered at a ratio of 38:1 contact hours for a full-time status classification. Once the process was complete, apprenticeships, curricular practical training (CPT) credits, and certifications were recognized as credits toward a degree program.

BridgeValley followed a similar process to articulate credit at their institution but has a college-wide Chief Academic Officer determine what technical courses articulate to credit. This individual is tasked with examining assessments, syllabi, curricula, and course books to determine whether courses can articulate to credit. Students in technical programs are also required to determine within two weeks of program start whether they are interested in articulating credit to a degree program. Once the student decides to articulate credit to a degree program, returning back to a non-credit distinction is not an option.

SUCCESSSES

- + At PBSC, the Financial Aid department is split between non-credit and credit so staff are aware of the different processes for both sides. Reportedly, this has helped move the process of articulation along faster.
- + Going through the process of articulating non-credit courses to credit provides students with the control to decide whether they want to pursue a college credential or remain on the non-credit, technical side.

CHALLENGES

- To begin articulating programs to credit, the colleges reported cutting technical courses that could not articulate. Many faculty members argued that important content was being cut from the programs when transitioned into credit.
- Many non-credit programs do not require math and English courses, which makes articulation to credit difficult as there are general education requirements on the academic side.

¹ The panel discussion on non-credit to credit articulation was led by Rick Reeder from Palm Beach State College in Lake Worth, Florida and Laura McCullough from BridgeValley Community and Technical College in Charleston, West Virginia.

BEST PRACTICES

- ***Use similar colleges as resources.*** Similar colleges that have successfully developed a process for non-credit to credit articulation can be great resources for starting the process. For instance, West Virginia anticipates using a structure for apprenticeship programs and credit award from Ivy Tech Community Colleges in Indiana to begin a statewide process of apprenticeship articulation.
- ***Be aware of statewide policies.*** In the state of Florida, every college can individually determine whether or not they want to award credit for certifications. However, in the state of West Virginia, there are specific policies and procedures for non-credit to credit articulation including credit conversion formulas and information to include in course descriptions. These differences will influence how colleges can implement non-credit to credit articulation at their institutions. *To see West Virginia's full articulation policy, see [Appendix C](#).*

OPEN ENTRY, OPEN EXIT COURSES

OVERVIEW

Polk State College² has recently implemented an open entry, open exit model that provides an alternative to traditional classroom learning in that students have greater control over their learning schedules. Students can complete courses in several weeks, a month, or over a semester. In other words, students can enroll into a course, or multiple courses, at any point in the year and complete the course at any point during the specified timeframe. Typically, students complete the self-paced courses at home and/or in a computer lab.

The Engineering Technology program is being used as a pilot for the open entry, open exit course model at Polk State with a three credit hour course broken into three one-hour interactive modules. Each student completes the three modules within the 15-week timeframe and is required to schedule time in a computer lab for the hands-on components of the courses. There are a total of nine labs for the three credit hour course managed by two faculty members. The modules contain quizzes with a final classroom examination at the end of the module in which the student receives a grade.

SUCCESSSES

- + Students are able to schedule lab time on weeknights and weekends with a lab manager. The open scheduling is reportedly beneficial for non-traditional students as it accommodates their schedules. Lab managers are also available during regular business hours – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. – to ensure that traditional students are accommodated as well.
- + The strain on the faculty members has reportedly decreased due to the open entry, open exit course models. Faculty act more as facilitators in the courses rather than instructors and the open scheduling provides faculty with more one-on-one opportunities with the students.

CHALLENGES

- Resource concerns from divisions at the institution – Financial Aid and the Registrar's Office in this case – regarding needed changes to infrastructure made it difficult to move forward. Financial aid processes, for instance, must stay segregated due to different federal regulations.
- Migrating traditional classroom activities into the learning management system for transition into online content was a challenge for the college. Assigning a faculty member to this task helped the process move forward more efficiently.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Work to increase institution buy-in.** Reportedly, institution buy-in was critical in transitioning to an open entry, open exit course structure. Cooperation and dedication from faculty and the institution as a whole helped move the process forward.
- **Become familiar with the process.** Polk State participated in a number of webinars and educated staff on the process to increase familiarity with the structure. Once the institution was more familiar with open entry, open exit models, they were reportedly more comfortable with the changes.

² The panel discussion on open entry, open exit courses was led by Howard Drake from Polk State College in Lakeland, Florida.

IV. COLLEGE RESOURCES SHARED

A number of resources emerged from the breakout sessions and panel discussions that the colleges found valuable. Documentation of these resources is listed below.

TECHNICAL PROGRAMS

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

- **VRTEX:** a virtual reality welding trainer designed to provide a full featured, expandable platform in an easy to use and engaging welding training tool. The tool is ideal for basic to advanced welding training and as a testing, recruitment, and engagement tool for education and industry.³
- **Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC):** industry-led training, assessment, and certification system focused on the core skills and knowledge needed by the nation's front-line production and material handling workers.⁴
- **TimeStation:** time and attendance system that runs on mobile devices. Allows students to punch in and out, and faculty to run time and attendance reports easily.⁵

ENERGY

- **North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP):** corporation that supports renewable energy and energy efficiency industries, professionals, and stakeholders to develop and implement quality credentialing and certification programs for practitioners.⁶
- **NAVPERS Training Manuals:** Free Navy training courses developed through the Bureau of Naval Personnel that contains technical and basic information on a number of technical areas.⁷

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- **National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE):** national initiative to address cybersecurity in education and workforce development that builds upon existing successful programs to facilitate change and innovation.⁸
- **TestOut:** online labs for academia and IT professions so students get a broad range of hands-on experience in a safe, simulated environment.⁹

LEARNING STRATEGIES

HYBRIDIZATION

- **Quality Matters:** Faculty-centered, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online courses and components.¹⁰
- **SoftChalk:** Educators can create professional and engaging learning content quickly and easily, which enhances teaching and improves the learning experience for students.¹¹

³ VRTEX: <http://www.lincolnelectric.com/en-us/equipment/training-equipment/vrtex/Pages/vrtex-360.aspx>

⁴ MSSC: <http://www.msscusa.org/>

⁵ TimeStation: <https://www.mytimestation.com/Default.asp>

⁶ NABCEP: <http://www.nabcep.org/>

⁷ NAVPERS: <https://archive.org/details/navpers&tab=collection>

⁸ NICE: <http://csrc.nist.gov/nice/>

⁹ TestOut: <http://www.testout.com/home>

¹⁰ Quality Matters: <https://www.qualitymatters.org/higher-education-program>

¹¹ SoftChalk: <http://softchalk.com/>

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

- **Open Campus:** free, online non-credit developmental education courses/tutorials from Bossier Parish Community College. Courses are set up in module form to allow anyone to prepare for placement testing, study/practice, or brush-up on professional skills.¹²

¹² Bossier Parish Open Campus: <http://www.bpcc.edu/opencampus/whatis.html>

V. CONCLUSION

The Curriculum Review Retreat held at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College in West Virginia included nearly 60 faculty and staff from colleges in West Virginia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, and North Dakota. As a result of the sessions, new opportunities emerged—most prominently a decision by West Virginia to utilize up to two of the Colleges in the TAACCCT consortium to pilot open entry-open exit as a student access and success strategy. New networks and peer-to-peer support were established, and support for successful TAACCCT-funded projects and sustainability was enhanced as a result of the Retreat.

APPENDIX A. LIST OF ATTENDEES

Below is a list of Curriculum Review Retreat attendees outlining name, institution, and industry represented.

Name	Institution	Industry Represented
David Michaels	Blue Ridge Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing
David Teets	Blue Ridge Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing
James Bayly	Blue Ridge Community and Technical College	Energy
David Mathers	Blue Ridge Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Erica Ledet	Bossier Parish Community College	Advanced Manufacturing
Tom Isaacs	BridgeValley Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing
Ron Rogillio	BridgeValley Community and Technical College	Energy
Bob Hayton	BridgeValley Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Laura McCullogh	BridgeValley Community and Technical College	Information Technology and Advanced Manufacturing
Rebecca Prokity	BridgeValley Community and Technical College	Project Director
Michael Wahlers	Cape Cod Community College	Energy
Seyed Mirkhani	Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Ward Malcom	Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College	Energy and Advanced Manufacturing
Scott Nicholas	Mountwest Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Joey Hazelwood	New River Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing
Walt Johnson	New River Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing
Mike King	New River Community and Technical College	Energy
Tricia Hoover	New River Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Amanda Sauchuck	New River Community and Technical College	Project Director
Clint Gilbertson	North Dakota State College of Science	Advanced Manufacturing
Maureen Capp	Palm Beach State College	Information Technology
Richard Reeder	Palm Beach State College	Advanced Manufacturing
Doug Furr	Pierpont Community and Technical College	Energy
Howard Drake	Polk State College	Advanced Manufacturing
Aaron St. Clair	Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing
Matthew Payne	Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Jackie Whitley	Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College	Project Director
Wesley Williams	Vance-Granville Community College	Advanced Manufacturing
Kenneth Wilson	Vance-Granville Community College	Advanced Manufacturing
Keith Shearon	Vance-Granville Community College	Advanced Manufacturing
Russell Edwards	West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College	Advanced Manufacturing

Name	Institution	Industry Represented
Lucy Kefauver	West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College	Energy
Adam Beatty	West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College	Information Technology
Karri Mulhern	West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College	Project Director
Gerald Rowley	West Virginia University at Parkersburg	Advanced Manufacturing
Pam Braden	West Virginia University at Parkersburg	Curriculum Coordinator
Chris Furr	West Virginia University at Parkersburg	Energy
Michelle Wilson	West Virginia University at Parkersburg	Workforce Director

APPENDIX B. CURRICULUM REVIEW RETREAT AGENDA

RETREAT PURPOSE

To conduct peer-to-peer third-party review of curriculum and courses in advanced manufacturing, energy and information technology pathways, and establish a network of TAACCCT-funded colleges to share best practices and program sustainability strategies.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5TH

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 9:00-9:15 AM | Welcome – <i>Jim Skidmore, Chancellor Emeritus & Bridging the Gap Project Director</i> |
| 9:15-9:30 AM | Goals and Objectives of the Retreat – <i>Mason Bishop, WorkED Consulting, LLC</i> |
| 9:30-10:15 AM | Strategies, Deliverables and Outcomes of BTG
<i>Facilitators – Sector Leads (Doug Furr, Dave Mathers)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of Sector Pathways• Types of Classes and Curriculum Being Developed• What is the “Big Picture” for West Virginia? |
| 10:15-12:00 PM | Sector Breakout Sessions – Building Pathways
<i>Facilitators – Nicole Dunn (TPMA), Doug Furr, Dave Mathers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of Educational Pathways• New Innovations Implemented• Initial Challenges Faced and Defined• Industry-Recognized Credentials Offered |
| 12:00-1:00 PM | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:30 PM | Credit Articulation Panel
<i>Facilitators – Rick Reeder (Palm Beach SC), Laura McCullough (BridgeValley CTC)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenges Faced and Successes in Developing Articulation Opportunities• What Role did PLA Play?• Clock Hours to Credits• Next Steps |
| 2:30-2:45 PM | Break |
| 2:45-4:30 PM | Sector Breakout Sessions – Courses and Curriculum
<i>Facilitators – Nicole Dunn, Dave Mathers, Doug Furr</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New and Modified Curriculum Review• Learning Outcomes Identified• Connection to Occupational KSAs and Competencies |
| 4:30-5:00 PM | Day One Wrap-Up <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summary and Questions |

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6TH

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 9:00-9:30 AM | Review of Day One and Discussion – <i>Mason Bishop, WorkED Consulting, LLC</i> |
| 9:30-11:30 AM | Sector Reports |
| 11:30-12:00 PM | Meeting Conclusion – Next Steps |

APPENDIX C. WEST VIRGINIA POLICY FOR NON-CREDIT TO CREDIT ARTICULATION

**TITLE 135
PROCEDURAL RULE
WEST VIRGINIA COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE EDUCATION
SERIES 3
CONVERSION OF NON-CREDIT TRAINING ACTIVITIES TO COLLEGE-LEVEL CREDIT**

§135-3-1. General.

1.1. Scope. Rule establishing guidelines and procedures for community and technical colleges to convert non-credit training activities to college-level credit.

1.2. Authority. W. Va. Code §18B-1-6.

1.3. Filing Date. January 30, 2008.

1.4. Effective Date. February 28, 2008.

§133-3-2. Purpose.

2.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide consistency among community and technical colleges in converting non-credit courses to credit. This policy will provide an opportunity for participants in workforce development and other non-credit courses to convert those courses to college-level credit and meet the goal of providing additional options for individuals to pursue a college credential and engage in life-long learning.

§135-3-3. Options for Awarding Credit.

3.1. If non-credit courses are delivered utilizing the same competencies as an existing college-level course, and the competencies have been met, it may be granted that course number.

3.2. Special topic courses with institutional course numbering may be utilized to identify courses to be converted from non-credit to college-level credit.

3.3. The Certificate in Technical Studies, Board of Governors AAS Degree, AAS in Technical Studies, AAS in Individualized Studies or other existing degree programs may be utilized to grant college-level credit for non-credit activity by applying the procedures and guidelines of those programs.

3.4. Competency levels of appropriate non-credit courses may be compared to required general education course competencies to determine academic credit to be awarded through an assessment appropriate for the discipline as

determine by the chief academic officer of the community and technical college or designee.

3.5. The actual awarding of college equivalent credit is made by the chief academic officer of the community and technical college or designee.

§135-3-4. Credit Conversion Formula.

4.1. For lecture courses, conversion of non-credit to college-level credit hours will be no less than 15:1 contact to credit hour.

4.2. For laboratory hours, conversion of non-credit to college-level credit hours will be no less than 30:1 contact to credit hour.

4.3. For on-the-job training activity, conversion of non-credit to college-level credit hours will be no less than 160:1 contact to credit hours.

4.4. For those courses delivered through an accelerated format and mastery of equivalent course competencies are documented, the contact to credit hour requirement may be waived.

§135-3-5. Course Description.

5.1. For each non-credit course being considered for college-level credit, the following information will be compiled:

5.1.1. Course title: Listing of the full title of the course

5.1.2. Credit hours: The number of academic credit hours to be awarded

5.1.3. Contact hours: Actual number of course hours

5.1.4. Topic description: Brief overview of the topic

5.1.5. Competencies: Listing of competencies to be taught

5.1.6. Outline: Listing of the content to be covered in the course

135CSR3

5.1.7. Learning Resources: Listing of textbooks, handouts and other instructional material

5.1.8. Suggested Method of Instruction: Instructor's methodology and mode of instruction

5.1.9. Methods of Evaluation/Grading: Listing of activities, assignments and assessments that will be utilized to determine the grade

5.1.10. An assessment will be used to document prior skill level attainment for the proposed college credit course.