

A photograph of a manufacturing workshop. In the foreground, a worker is focused on a task, with their face partially visible in profile. In the background, another worker is working at a similar station. The environment is filled with blue storage bins and various tools, creating a professional and industrious atmosphere.

APPRENTICESHIP AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE COLLABORATION: SUCCESS IN WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP: A TIME-TESTED SOLUTION

A critical shortage of skilled labor is a major limiting factor to the future success and growth of manufacturing in Ohio. Furthermore, the manufacturing workforce is aging and moving closer to retirement. Apprenticeship programs can help employers by providing employer-driven, flexible training solutions. Registered apprenticeship has become a statewide model for employers seeking to train their workforce while keeping their business running strong. Businesses gain workers who have been trained to industry specifications at a reasonable cost and apprentices are able to earn a living as they train for high-quality, reliable employment and a rewarding career.

A registered apprenticeship (RA) is a work-based learning model, designed to build talent pipelines by providing employer-driven, flexible training solutions which include structured on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction (RTI). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, registered apprenticeship has been proven to reduce turnover, increase employee loyalty, increase productivity and improve the bottom line.

Throughout Ohio, Ohio TechNet (OTN)ⁱ seed-funding built system capacity for peer-to-peer technical assistance for expansion of apprenticeships, along with several other industry-focused initiatives. OTN 's member colleges provide training and support for registered apprenticeship. Community colleges act as sponsors for apprenticeship programs locally, and also provide technical assistance and related classroom instruction for employer-sponsored apprenticeships. By acting as a sponsor, community colleges can simplify the process for employers interested in apprenticeship, taking away the administrative burdens of RA. Community college staff act as service providers, helping employers through all steps of the RA process, from enrolling and scheduling apprentices' related instruction, to referring apprentices to support services, and doing on-site progress reviews.

WHY SHOULD COMMUNITY COLLEGES ENGAGE WITH APPRENTICESHIP?

Community colleges across Ohio have long supported apprenticeship programs by providing classroom instruction, or related technical instruction (RTI) for local employers and organized labor's bargaining units. Today, these partnerships continue, but with additional support from OTN and the State of Ohio Apprenticeship Council – ApprenticeOhio – community colleges are acting as apprenticeship sponsors and providing holistic solutions to employers and apprentices around the state. Interviews with OTN member colleges have revealed these partnerships have resulted in increased enrollments and incremental increases in student-apprentice completion rates. Additionally, community college apprenticeship programs have become a catalyst for community and workforce relations.

Apprenticeship is a collaborative effort. For small-to-medium size employers, administrative burdens and time commitments are often deterrents from participating in registered apprenticeship programs. When community colleges act as the sponsor for a RA program, local employers can take advantage of the resources and supports offered by the



community college without the larger commitment of time and resources. In west central Ohio, Rhodes State College acts as both RTI provider and apprenticeship sponsor. Margo Meyer, Director of Advanced Manufacturing Initiatives at Rhodes State College, has been supporting local apprenticeship programs, and provides technical assistance to other community colleges within OTN.

In addition to assisting employers with developing RTI and on-the-job training (OJT) for individual programs, Rhodes acts as a sponsor, providing across the board services to local employers and apprentices. “We assist companies by helping with occupation selection, providing samples of RTI and OJT outlines, and help them navigate the college system in the placement of their apprentices, including helping with assessment tools and guiding their apprentice selection process,” said Meyer. “We currently have 135 apprentices from 13 companies participating in our group-sponsored model apprenticeship program. We provide the employers with all the help they need to get their apprentices registered, then we assist the apprentice through the entire admissions and registration process – we register them and provide them with their own orientation program. We provide full feedback to the employers on their apprentices’ progress and grades. We refer them to support services or the tutoring center if needed. If they are eligible for a certificate or to graduate, we help them through those processes.” **This high-touch model has led to a 99% retention rate of apprentices.**

For Rhodes State College, the benefit of apprenticeship to the campus is obvious. Tuition from related instruction from spring 2015 to spring of 2018 was nearly \$1.2 million, with apprenticeship programs utilizing existing coursework. Additionally, the apprenticeship programs provide a conduit for increased partnership with area companies. The employers often provide real-time feedback on course content, which helps develop curriculum that is aligned with the needs of the local economy. Thoughtful RTI selection can allow an apprentice to earn a long-term certificate, which, in turn, impacts State Share of Instruction.

Lorain County Community College (LCCC) has also recently become an apprenticeship program sponsor and has experienced similar benefits. With support from ApprenticeOhio, LCCC became a program sponsor three years ago. Before, LCCC provided related technical instruction to apprentices, but found their local employers needed more help with apprenticeship. Acting as a sponsor, LCCC has been able to relieve employers of the administrative burden of setting up and administering a RA program. LCCC also partners with Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) in Medina County, to offer Tool and Die apprenticeships with apprentices taking classes offered by both Tri-C and LCCC. At completion, the apprentices earn a short-term certificate as well as a certificate of apprenticeship, and can apply this

credit towards an associate degree. Ronda Leffel, Project Manager and Technical Training Specialist for LCCC's Workforce and Business Solutions Division, reiterates the importance of apprenticeship to the community college. "Apprenticeship has definitely brought to light the need for community colleges to focus on services for adult students, who have different needs than traditional students," said Leffel. "Because of the demands of local business and industry partners, we have been more deliberate in scheduling our classes, especially in the evenings, and serving our students. Local industry partners really drive the programs and offerings."

Apprenticeship has also been a way to build cooperative partnerships. By having talented staff responsible for outreach to the community and local businesses, colleges can meet the employers where they are. "By putting good people on the frontlines at the community college, you can dictate the reputation and mindset of what it's like to work with LCCC," said Chrissy Cooney, Program Developer for School and Community Partnerships. "Corporate partnerships can really grow community interest in what it's like to go to college. The apprenticeship outreach team has to be knowledgeable about the entire campus system and the services the college can offer, and the apprenticeship program can be an important pathway into the community college system."

Owens Community College, located in Toledo, Ohio, has seen an increase in partnerships with employers and local union halls because of working with apprenticeships. "We have been able to bring partners to the table," said Glenn Rettig, Dean, School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. "We have been able to meet the needs of different companies and fostered a better working relationship with employers." Rettig also stressed the benefits of working with OTN. "Ohio TechNet has allowed us to do a lot of things specific to individual student advancement we otherwise might not have been able to do," said Rettig. "Many of our students take courses for programs and apprenticeships and those courses are part of certificates. Most times the students are meeting requirements for certificates and don't even realize it. OTN has allowed us the resources to do records audits and find those students and award those certificates."

Owens' Workforce and Community Services staff also provides services and apprenticeship support for local employers and unions. "Apprenticeships have benefited Owens in several ways," said Robert Kraus, Executive Director of Workforce and Community Services. "On the credit side it has helped with enrollment in the certificate and degree programs that offer related instruction required by apprenticeship. On the workforce side, employers often have employees who want to go into apprenticeship programs. Through our workforce training programs, we can help skill them up to get them ready for their apprenticeship by providing remediation in math or through programs that help get the individuals ready for college." Kraus really sees apprenticeships as a way to bridge the college's business and industry relationships. "Manufacturers and companies don't always think about 'college.' Through the relationships developed via apprenticeship programs, Owens can help provide training – and we do it at less cost, can customize it for the company, and be flexible in our delivery."

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN SUCCESSFUL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

A well-designed apprenticeship program will increase a community college's retention and completion rates. In successful implementation of apprenticeship programs, college staff are passionate about apprenticeship and the apprenticeship model. Apprenticeship staff must serve as champions for apprenticeship and become the interpreter between academia and businesses and industry, bridging the gaps between how colleges and businesses approach problems and goals, how they measure success, and how they communicate. Often, this champion will have to advocate for apprenticeship and apprentices to both



college administration and business partners, negotiating solutions that are mutually agreeable.

In successful apprenticeship programs, community college staff:

- Provide wrap-around services to employer and employee (apprentice).
- Facilitate collaboration of workforce and academic staff to ensure student/apprentice success and provide information back to the employer.
- Provide assessment tools, assist in the apprentice selection process, and streamline the student registration process by guiding apprentices through the college admissions process.
- Offer orientation programs that are specific to apprentices.
- Assist the apprentice and employer in understanding FERPA regulations, allowing staff to provide transcripts and grades to employers.
- Work hand-in-hand with instructors and faculty to refer student apprentices to support services or tutoring centers when necessary.
- Navigate college processes for awarding of certificates and degrees.

SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF APPRENTICESHIP: IRAP

Across Ohio, OTN member campuses are successfully implementing registered apprenticeship (RA), utilizing existing coursework and developing robust partnerships with area companies, who often provide feedback on course content. The colleges are serving the unique customer population of apprentices with high-touch support and wrap-around services leading to enrollment growth, high retention rates and reliable tuition income. As a new model of apprenticeship emerges nationwide – the industry recognized apprenticeship program (IRAP) – community colleges are poised to provide training for this new apprenticeship program. IRAPs are a version of non-registered apprenticeships in which industry associations will be tasked with “certifying” new apprenticeship programs. While the details and guidelines around IRAPs are still being developed, it is important to note that registered apprenticeships will not be disappearing, but rather, the IRAP can act as a parallel partnership opportunity for employers and community colleges. Working in collaboration with industry associations, like the Ohio Manufacturers’ Association, community colleges can continue to engage with apprenticeship programs across the State, reaping the benefits of both registered and industry recognized apprenticeship programs. Opportunity for increased collaboration with industry and industry associations will likely continue to reward community colleges with increased enrollments, better community relations, and successful attainment of credentials that help employees succeed.



ⁱ OTN launched in 2014 as the result of a \$15 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant made to Lorain County Community College on behalf of a statewide consortium of 18 community colleges and one university. This consortium works closely with multiple government agencies, workforce and community partners. OTN is helping to transform the way in which higher education works with employers to better align training and education with manufacturing workforce needs in Ohio. OTN partners are modeling or replicating innovative strategies that accelerate the readiness for workers who are in transition to fill in-demand, skilled jobs in advanced manufacturing. To meet state goals and industry needs, the colleges will focus on training in the high-need areas of Welding, CNC/Machining, Industrial Maintenance, Digital Fabrication/Industrial Automation, and Occupational Safety.