

CLM Workforce Connection

Best Practice: Marion Technical Center *A Replication of CHOICE Career Institutes*

Introduction – CLM Workforce Connection is the local Workforce Investment Board for Citrus, Levy and Marion counties in the State of Florida. Our region borders the Gulf on the west and is centrally located within the northern half of Florida. Our primary industries are Manufacturing, Construction and Services (primarily healthcare). We are fortunate to have a diverse and growing economy.

The Economic Development organizations, the Central Florida Community College, our local school boards and the WIB work together on a daily basis. We are one of the first to strategically locate our operations together in order to capitalize on our partnerships. The following project represents the power of partnership. Certainly when all three come together (education, economic development, employment) success is not far behind. Add to this another “e” and success is sure. Employers are the critical fourth “e” to add to the quotient.

With growth comes pain. Ours has been in the mismatch between a rapidly growing job market and an unprecedented low unemployment rate. Read on and find out how this small community has developed a lasting solution by growing their own.

Innovation – Stroll the campus of the newly opened Marion Technical Institute (MTI) and you will find yourself immersed in a small learning community where the three R’s are relevance, rigor and relationships.

In August of 2005 MTI opened its doors to 300 students, surpassing their goal of 180. This school is operated by the school board, managed by a task force of business leaders, and includes a youth one stop where the youth are matched with paid internships and jobs.

MTI offers five career academies as deemed necessary by local studies. These studies took into consideration what students wanted, what employers needed and what our economic studies supported. These academies are: Automotive Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Culinary Arts/Bakery, Information Technology and Building Construction. A new academy, Business & Finance will be offered starting in the next school year along with the go ahead to double enrollments. The school is open from 7:00 am to 8:30 pm with flexible scheduling, on-line learning, and a student union all making for a one of a kind learning environment.

High Schools should be the pathway to opportunity; however, too many young people are leaving high school inadequately prepared for college or careers. Students are

individuals and as such can not be forced through the same pipeline that works for only a portion of them. MTI brings a small community approach where communities are aligned by specific careers. MTI provides multiple pathways and learning options and presumes that all students will meet high standards yet they will meet these standards through different learning methods and at a different pace.

Innovation is a key word to describe this partnership. This partnership began planning for a revolutionary new school in 2003. The year building up to the opening of the school was filled with many milestones. The broad mix of partners brought their varying strengths, visions and corporate knowledge and has continued to be a solutions-based group to this day.

The first step of innovation began when the Superintendent of Marion County Schools came to the CLM Workforce Board, the Ocala/Marion County Economic Development Corporation, and the Central Florida Community College with an exciting question. “I have a school that is going to be empty in about two years, what kind of school would you like to see there?”

Answers to that question came in unison. “We need to grow our own for our local employers.” “It needs to be more than a vocational school.” “It needs to attract kids who don’t know what they are going to do after high school.” “Kids should earn college credit while they are there.” “It needs to be an honor to be accepted and a privilege to attend.”

Following this encounter came the creative process. This started with strategic planning sessions, labor market studies and forecasts, surveys and focus groups of employers, parents and youth. This effort grew out of the need for more focused information about what would best serve this rapidly growing community while keeping an eye on the future. Being a part of what is called the “technology corridor” that extends through the North Central Florida area and being a leader in manufacturing employment, there was much speculation about business and industry movement. This gap analysis provided the blend of technical, business, and personal needs in the community. Results of this survey combined with statistical data and economic needs identified the following needs which are a cornerstone of MTI.

- Flexible learning opportunities
- Real world learning experiences
- Community/business learning
- Business and school/classroom connections
- Opportunity for dual enrollment in career area.
- Integration of technology into various career fields.

Collaboration –

We already talked about the collaboration that spawned the idea for MTI. Now let’s talk about collaboration in action. There are many different levels of collaboration and MTI is an example of a highly engaged group of collaborators. We’ll start with the Task

Force. This group was formed and had its first meeting ten months prior to MTI opening its doors. The EDC took the lead in pulling together industry representatives that would oversee each academy with enthusiasm and expertise. The task force members and the roles they play keep the curriculum relevant and their competitors participating.

Brian O'Connor is a high level executive with our local Lockheed Martin operation and serves as the Chair of the task force.

- Randy Ewers, recently elected Mayor of Ocala and also the Six Sigma Black Belt for Class 1 is the Advanced Manufacturing Task Force Chair.
- Melinda Monteith, Patient Meal Coordinator with Munroe Regional Medical Center is the Culinary Arts Task Force Chair.
- Patty Schiefer, Region Manager, Sprint is the Information Technology Task Force Chair.
- Gary Scott, Vice President of Ford of Ocala, is the Automotive Technology Task Force Chair.
- Rusty Stout, Owner of IPC Construction is the Building Construction Task Force Chair.
- Diane Clinton, HR recruiter for Marion County Government, is the Task Force HR Recruitment and Intern Placement Chair.
- Chris Yancey, President of Mercantile Bank is the Business & Finance Task Force Member.

These task force chairs all have their own advisory committees that are made up of a broad range of 10 - 20 employers from each industry. The task force meets on a monthly basis as do each of these sub-committees.

In addition to the critical task force members we just discussed, the task force is also made up of members from the School Board, the Central Florida Community College, CLM Workforce Connection, the EDC and the Principal and School Advisory Committee Chair of MTI.

The EDC provides staff to support the activities of the task force and to provide technical expertise for marketing efforts. The EDC investors (Board) place their stamp of approval on the MTI project and showed their support through much higher levels of investment to the organization than ever before. As a result, the EDC funded over \$21,000 of marketing and collateral materials to promote MTI to students, parents and the community at large.

The Marion Regional Manufacturers Association held its first annual golf tournament last year and raised \$5,000 for MTI and their second annual golf tournament is in the works for this year.

The CLM Workforce, the local WIB, provides grant writing assistance, labor market studies and on-going attention to taskforce issues. The Board did open their first Youth One Stop at MTI. This One Stop houses a resource area and is staffed by both school board and Workforce Investment Act personnel. Youth are provided with career and

employment assistance and have access to jobs that have been developed specifically for them and for the general public. Support services are given to those students who are eligible for WIA in the form of gas cards, bus passes, work uniforms and supplies. This One Stop is open in the evenings so that other youth may access the employment and WIA services.

To date this task force has been successful in the receipt of two grants for over \$500,000 and through remarkable leadership the members have contributed cash, materials and in-kind services for a total of an additional \$310,000.

Performance Outcomes –

The students will leave school with industry specific certifications, full-time employment and college or vocational credits. Success for the students includes an increase in attendance, grade point average growth, and virtually no discipline problems.

Business receives over 100 employees trained and certified in industry standards annually. The school provides opportunities for employers to develop leaders by participating as career advisors and in curriculum development. Other partnership benefits include the use of the campus in the evenings for classes for business employees and an understanding of how to work with this new generation.

The educators benefit from the intellectual capital that industry has shared in the design of the classroom, the demand driven curriculum, a new view to education, and a robust and constant community involvement.

Dual enrollment options are available to all students who are interested and eligible for college-level instruction. In addition articulation agreements have been made with our local and neighboring Community Colleges. The articulation process provides an acceleration mechanism to shorten the time needed to complete requirements for a post-secondary degree, technical certification and skill competencies. There are 43 students who are dual enrolled.

Each academy provides internship opportunities for all students in a business environment. Paid internship opportunities are developed that link directly with their course of study. The students must first become workforce certified prior to being placed in a paid internship. Part time jobs are available through the One Stop for the students as they get ready to enter into an internship. A student must be signed off by all of his/her instructors before entering into an internship. This sign-off includes a review of grades, attendance, behavior and completion of the workforce readiness requirements. Once the student is certified as ready for an internship, the One Stop coordinator matches them with an aligned opportunity.

Currently 43 students have been certified as ready for their internships and 100% of them have been placed in paid internships ranging in wages of \$6.00 to \$11.00 per hour. Another 40 are in the process of becoming certified while employers wait

anxiously in the wings to hire them. The kick off for this next wave of hiring will begin in April with the second career fair.

Another 56 youth have part-time jobs as they prepare for an internship. These students have been placed in these jobs through the assistance of the One Stop.

Industry recognized certifications are an important part of the MTI plan. To date 200 certification tests have been taken with 171 certifications granted. These certifications include, OSHA, A+, Cisco IT, Cisco Hardware, Safe Serve,

A goal of the MTI task force is to match each student with a career advisor (mentor) from business. Forty five successful matches have been made.

Linking to demand occupations, economic development and community benefit –

The nationally recognized Milken Institute, an independent economic think tank, released its annual “America’s Best Performing Cities” study, ranking the top cities across the nation for economic vitality based on their ability to create and sustain jobs. Ocala, Florida garnered the 13th slot for overall economic performance during 2003-2004, the period of the research. This study also showed Ocala to be third in job growth and second for increased wages. This booming economy is faced with a troubling challenge as it tries to grow within a dwindling workforce supply represented by an average 3% unemployment rate.

No longer is it possible to look at quick fix ideas for the solution to these employment problems. The community has recognized this fact and has developed MTI which will provide an ongoing supply of employees to the local industries. This grow your own concept has already benefited the community through the placement of students in paid internships that are directly linked to their academy.

The academies that were selected were chosen based on current job strength and future projected job and wage growth. The research conducted aligns well with the President’s High Growth and Job Training Initiative in that all five of the academies selected are also represented at the national level.

New research was recently conducted to assist in the selection of the sixth academy and data was re-affirmed for the existing academies at the same time. These six academies represent over 30% of our quarterly employment and our quarterly payroll. The growth projections to 2010 show that these industries will add an additional 12,829 jobs to our region which averages 2,566 per year.

Each academy has been designed to support our local industry needs. The curriculum selection and the certifications were selected by the academy advisory committees.

The **Information Technology Academy** is designed to develop competencies needed for employment in network support positions. The content includes instruction in basic

hardware configuration, hardware and software troubleshooting, operating systems and computer networking. IT is not in and of itself a big industry in our area, however IT is everywhere within our growing industries. One addition to the IT curriculum that was added to support local needs was the Panduit Network Infrastructure Essentials which teaches voice and data cabling. National certifications that are available are: Comptia A+, Linux +, Panduit Network Infrastructure Essentials, and Cisco Certified Network Associate.

The **Culinary Arts/Bakery Academy** is designed to prepare students for employment in restaurants or commercial kitchens. The content includes instruction on preparation, serving, identification, storage, selection and presentation along with communication, leadership, human relations and safe and efficient work practices. National certifications that are available are: American Culinary Federation, Federation of Dining Room Professionals and ServeSafe.

The **Building Construction Academy** is designed to prepare students for two employment paths; construction and carpentry. Students will be able to develop competencies that relate to construction components, materials and hardware, masonry, plumbing, electrical and HVAC. This academy also looks at planning, underlying principles of technology, labor issues, product skills, communication and health, safety and environmental issues. National certification that is available is the National Center for Construction Education and Research.

The **Automotive Service Technology Academy** is designed to prepare students to become successful automotive technicians to work on the latest computerized automobiles. This program focuses on broad transferable skills and stresses understanding and demonstration of planning, management, finance, technical and product skills, underlying principles of technology, labor issues, and health, safety and environment issues. National certification that is available is the Automotive Service Excellence.

The **Advanced Manufacturing Academy** is designed to prepare students to install, operate and repair the different machines used in the manufacturing job market. MTI students have the unique opportunity to receive training in the electronics lab supplied by Lockheed Martin. This state-of-the-art training lab is also used to train Lockheed Martin's current employees after school hours. This program focuses on broad transferable skills, stresses the understanding of the industrial machinery maintenance technology industry and demonstrates elements such as planning, management, finance, technical and production skills, underlying principles of technology, labor issues, and health, safety and environmental issues. National certification available is the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council MSSC Certification.

The **Business & Finance Academy** will open next year and is designed to offer a foundation built on Microsoft software certification and general business practices. Students can study in the world of business, finance, client sales and marketing or entrepreneurship. Content includes communication skills, forms of business ownership

and organizational structures, supervisory and management functions and skills, business law, leadership, ethics, cultural diversity, insurance and governmental regulations, HR issues, finance and investments and health, safety and environmental issues. National certifications that are available are IC3 and the Microsoft Office Specialist.

Replicability –

We have the tools available to assist with replication. Every thing from our business plan to every form and tool have been documented and put on a CD ROM for easy assistance to any school that wishes to pursue a real life education. If the community has the passion, the innovation and the strong partnerships in place than replication will be easy. The main reason for our success was the involvement of industry leaders. This leadership is not easy to replicate unless the passion already exists within those leaders.

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