
Aligning Data and Resources to Connect Workers with Jobs An Analysis of our Region's Manufacturing and Healthcare Industries

Convening Committee Kickoff Meeting

July 16, 2014

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Meeting Notes

Questions and discussion about what we know so far

- Concern over whether degrees offered match skills required by the job, especially whether they teach employability and soft skills
- Students have strong incentive to leave programs before graduating to avoid future educational costs and realize wage gains
- Students being hired out of programs before graduation may actually be an indication that the training is well-designed and working for firms
- Financial and family issues are most commonly cited reasons for dropping out from the perspective of school administrators
 - One change that could improve financial feasibility would be for the legislature to expand Oregon Opportunity Grants
- There is no hard data on why students do not complete these programs; they have never been surveyed or interviewed in previous studies

Update from Andrew McGough, Worksystems

- Worksystems has developed a manufacturing workforce plan, mostly focused on the metals and transportation manufacturers, less on high tech
- Employer engagement is one of the most important parts of the plan, but it can be made more difficult if multiple organizations are asking for time from employers
 - Firms are trying to operate on a very lean basis, so employee time is scarce to devote to workforce initiatives
- There is a lot of data available that could be analyzed in different ways to pull out new insights
 - Andrew sees an opportunity for IMS to work closely with labor economists that work for the employment department and Worksystems to understand how we can help them analyze data
- There is an opportunity to expand awareness of the credential programs that are available in order to increase adoption of the credential as a standard for all firms
- Currently working on adjusting and aligning the skill sets that each credential is intended to certify
- Very big opportunity to use data more effectively by working with the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC) to have all post-secondary

students co-enroll in the workforce system so their wage and employment data can be tracked over time. This is currently being discussed.

- Worksystems played a large role in bringing the National Career Readiness Certificate program to the region. This certificate includes training in soft skills, reliability, etc.
 - The certificate is paired with basic manufacturing skills to create a Certified Production Technician credential. The first class from this program will be graduating in August of this year.

Comments on manufacturing by Stacey Smith, ControlTek

- Having a collective, third-party convener for workforce issues is important because firms are unwilling to organize on their own
 - The work of SWWDC has been very good in this regard
- Time is scarce, firms are trying to be lean, so hiring someone is a very measured and carefully made decision
- Forecasting hiring needs is made more complex by changing technology and increasing levels of automation
 - New manufacturing workers will need to know how to control highly automated processes
- Occasionally ControlTek brings in trainers from the local community college to upgrade skills of current employees, seen success with this in past
- The firm had made it a de-facto policy to only hire “smart, motivated and happy” people because they tend to be more reliable, better at working in teams and problem-solving (soft skills)

Update from State Senator Michael Dunboro

- The state legislature is attempting to reverse its long disinvestment in high school career and technical education
- We know CTE is successful because students in CTE program are more engaged than others; they graduate at higher rates
- Some high school CTE programs begin to teach soft skills or they may simply expand awareness of alternative career paths
- The important next step is to re-invest in CTE in a way that engages employers. Some collaborations have already been funded, the legislature will vote soon on whether to expand that program
- The state has setup an Apprenticeship Task Force to look at expanding apprenticeships to other industries outside the skilled trades
 - Employers are unwilling to invest in forming apprenticeship programs because they fear losing their employees
 - There is a need to public incentives for private firms to use apprenticeships more widely
- Health care is a very successful model of employer partnership with higher education: how can this be replicated in other industries?

Comments on health care by Sabrina Roderick and Lynn Busby, OHSU

- Lack of applicants can be a bigger issue for health care hiring
- Lack of experience can also be an issue because hospitals try to create the right mix of experience working within a unit or team. Its not smart to staff an entire unit with new grads or less experienced workers.
- “Externships” have been a successful to bring in less experienced workers and get them up to speed without hiring for permanent position. Must be an externship (after graduation) because need a license or credential to work.
- Changes in coding and electronic health records management are driving demand for medical records technicians who know new systems
- OHSU unions have seen success setting up trainee positions in which someone can increase their skills and provide a path to be promoted
 - Looming retirements make these partnerships even more important to skills and knowledge can be passed down
- Tuition reimbursement is another effective tool for keeping employees in the company and creating internal promotion pathways
- Center for Workplace Enhancement at OHSU provides employees support they need to be more effective and more likely to gain a promotion
- Most hospitals have a plan to increase the diversity of their workforce by increasing recruiting in underserved communities
 - Question if this strategy is wide-reaching enough to inspire children and young adults before it becomes difficult for them to break into the field later in life. How can OHSU communicate how the jobs will change in the future and use that to inspire young people to pursue those occupations?

Group discussion comments

- It is challenging to train everyone that is working in the workforce field to not try to engage one-off with different employers, such as the faculty at a community college requesting the help of a manufacturing firm employee.
 - Often, it’s the same people who are asked to participate because they are the willing. This can be problematic because if it takes too much time then they will not get engaged in important efforts. Need to prioritize what we engage them in.
- There is a major challenge in matching up employer need, which is projected on a 6 month to one year horizon, to long term capacity of training programs, because it can take 2 years or more to create a new program or change curriculum
- The “emerging workforce” is not tracked in the state workforce system. If they were, it could create feedback loops because as students graduate we would know if they got a job, in what industry and how much it paid.
 - This would inform program design, capacity, etc.

- Clackamas Community College uses EMSI data to inform how large a program should be based on labor market demand, but there is a lack of trust in the data because some programs have graduated the number of student thought to be in demand but not all were hired
- Portland Public Schools perceives a disconnection between the culture of manufacturing and business and the culture of the school system. The school system still very much biases four-year university education over middle-skill alternatives.
 - It would be valuable for PPS CTE employees to have data to help them influence administrators by helping them understand the value of jobs that only require post-secondary credentials or associates degrees
- There could be an opportunity to do focus groups on students and alumni of programs in manufacturing and healthcare.
 - This might help us better understand the barriers they perceive to be most important
 - There is a recognition that more quantitative, publicly available data might not tell us the things we need to know in this field
- Lack of career exploration in middle school and high school is a very serious barrier. Students lack role models for some careers because they never meet someone who works in that occupation. This can be especially problematic for STEM careers that require academic planning in high school.

Key takeaways/potential research directions

1. Meet with economists from OED and Worksystems to see if they have ideas for analyses they would like to do but haven't been able to.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the National Career Readiness Certificate and/or the Certified Production Technician programs. What share of the population has accessed these programs? What are the demographics of the program participants?
3. Evaluate the collective impact of all organizations engaged in workforce system across the region.
4. Who is the target audience for this report and how can we take that into consideration when determining the scope of the analysis and type of recommendations?
5. Analyze the spatial accessibility of workforce services, especially in relation to concentrations of targeted populations (low income, low educational attainment).
 - a. Also, assess the spatial distribution of those with the greatest barriers to entering the workforce pipeline (transit dependent, language barriers, child care responsibilities, lack pre-requisite education).
6. Complete literature review on the barriers to entering the workforce system, especially social network affects on awareness of potential career paths.