

Democracy's College

Episode 15: Where to Start: How Community Colleges Can Scale Up Their Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Welcome to the Democracy's College podcast series. This podcast focuses on educational equity, justice, and excellence for all students in P-20 educational pathways. This podcast is a product of the Office of Community College Research and Leadership, or OCCRL, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Learn more about OCCRL at occrll.illinois.edu.

Welcome to *Where to Start: How Community Colleges Can Scale Up Their Registered Apprenticeship Programs*. This is Dr. Anjalé D. Welton, associate professor and assistant director for the Office for Community College Research and Leadership at the University of Illinois, and Deveen Owens, Ph.D. student and graduate research assistant in the Office of Community College Research and Leadership. The purpose of the podcast is to bring together community colleges and other partners who are working to scale up their registered apprenticeships. Registered apprenticeships provide participants with structured on-the-job training guided by an experienced mentor or journeyman. This earn and learn education model is registered with the United States Department of Labor. Apprentices receive a stipend or wages and are engaged with an employer from day one. At the end of the program participants receive an industry-recognized credential and a Department of Labor certificate of completion. Registered apprenticeships may be time-based, competency-based, or a hybrid of both and usually last between 1 and 6 years.

We have four panelists joining us for this podcast: Matthew Feuerborn, Dean of Career Technologies Division at Kishwaukee College; Dr. Rebecca Lake, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development at William Rainey Harper College; Dr. Henry Bohleke, Dean for the School of Business and Technology at Triton College; and Joshua Seeberg, Manager for the Skills Initiative at the German American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Our first question for you is, can you each give a brief overview of your apprenticeship program or what you do to support the development of registered apprenticeship programs? And we are going to start with Matt Feuerborn, Dean of Kishwaukee College.

Matthew Feuerborn: Thank you. We have a couple of apprenticeship opportunities available, but in terms of registered apprenticeships we most recently partnered with ICATT and the German American Chamber, when it comes to the development and implementation of an industrial maintenance registered apprenticeship program. We have also had some conversations about even branching that off to include CNC machining. We have also had some past experiences with Department of Labor-approved apprenticeships in industrial maintenance as well as precision machining, but they have been on a much smaller scale with individual companies having to elect to register the apprenticeships.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you. Dr. Lake from Harper?

Dr. Rebecca Lake: We have six registered apprenticeship programs. We are particularly well known for our non-traditional registered apprenticeship programs, which are not those that are in building construction trades or advanced manufacturing. We do have industrial maintenance mechanic and CNC precision machining, yet we also have new kinds of programs with supply chain management, and general insurance, and cyber security, and IT generalist. So we are always looking at the community to

see what kinds of registered apprenticeship programs are appropriate to fill the needs of our community employers and then linking those up with faculty that can develop those programs for submission to the Office of Apprenticeship for registered apprenticeship programs. So we're truly keyed into what is needed in our community, but we have six, at the moment, registered apprenticeship programs. We serve as that intermediary, or gathering companies together, and we will be writing more this summer.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you. Dr. Bohleke from Triton College?

Dr. Henry Bohleke: We are just really getting started. We are in our second year. We partnered under ICATT with the German American Chamber. We are working on expanding what we have started out. We started out, out of our engineering technology program, but we are looking at some other opportunities that have come along. Like Dr. Lake at Harper, we also spend a lot of time talking to our employers and working with our local Workforce Board to try to determine what are the real needs of the community and what are the positions that we have a hard time—that they are having a hard time filling. We recently had a job fair for our engineering technology program here at the college, and of the 29 employers that were there it sounded, as I went to one to the next introducing myself, it sounded as if they were all looking for the same person. And fortunately that is the program that we have at present, but we are really looking, as I said, to expand.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Which is why this is called *Scaling Up Apprenticeships*! And then, Joshua Seeberg from German American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest.

Joshua Seeberg: Thanks for having me on. This is Joshua Seeberg from the German American Chamber of Commerce. I work in the Skills Initiative Department, which is helping to promote and expand the ICATT program that you have heard the other colleges mention. Every college on this phone call are great partners of ours. What we do as the German Chamber is we have the advantage of bringing in the frameworks and structures and outlines from our parent organization in Germany. We are drawing from over 100 years of experience in the field of putting together and running apprenticeships. We brought them to the United States and adapted them to the US market. And we work with colleges to provide the related training instruction and work with companies to help them develop their internal company training program. We are a DOL-registered program, of course. We have four profiles currently: industrial maintenance technician, CNC machinist, transportation clerk, and mechatronics technician. We are expanding those as well in the coming years. We are very excited to have plenty of college partners in Illinois, and we are also expanding out of state starting this year, into Wisconsin, and we have our eyes on Indiana as well.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Wow, thank you. So our next questions is, What partnerships are important to scaling up registered apprenticeship programs? Speaking to the partnerships that you are developing. First, Dean Feuerborn from Kishwaukee College, could you talk about the partnerships that are important to apprenticeships?

Matthew Feuerborn: Partnerships have to be fairly robust in terms of the relationships that are established between the college or the training entity, as well as the employers. Really the importance is the employers and the relationships there, and then the colleges, and then also obviously the partnership with the Chamber to actually interface between all.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you. Dr. Lake, is there anything you would like to add about partnerships and what partnerships are important?

Dr. Rebecca Lake: Partnerships, as we all know, you can't have a registered apprenticeship program unless you have a company, an employer, because 50% of this is that the student has the job and is hired, and the other 50% is that they go to the college, with Harper, for the related training instruction. Most of all of ours are in an AAS degree, so they have to be college ready to come in. Our cyber security is under continuing education. However, partnerships also include how you find those students that are ready, that can read and write and do math, that are college ready, and can come into those programs. So we reach out to high schools, as all community colleges do, and we do that and make sure that the colleges know what kind of things we have available in our district. We also are working with the WIOAs because we have registered apprenticeship programs that are in the approved list for the State of Illinois. So they are already eligible for WIOA dollars, whatever those might be. It could be incumbent worker dollars, or on-the-job worker dollars, or ITAs, which are individual training accounts. And then within the college itself, we do that kind of internal marketing, so that the students who come to us understand what we have available. As we grow those programs, we will increase that internal marketing, too. So, there are two kinds of partnerships, both employers and those seeking a career change or new to a career.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you. Dr. Bohleke, what partnerships are important to Triton College as you are scaling up your apprenticeship programs?

Dr. Henry Bohleke: Well, as the others have mentioned, the employer relationship is extremely important because you cannot have an apprenticeship if you don't have an employer who is willing to buy into the program. And that's been a critical component. As I mentioned earlier, we partnered early on with the German American Chamber through the ICATT, and that has been a great relationship. And they are really helpful to us. We don't have an office of apprenticeships as of yet, and so it's something we have started through a couple of our career programs. So we have really struggled a little bit to have the resources to scale up. But the German American Chamber has been able to provide us with the resources, and we have done this by working with employers and working with our local Workforce Board. And also, with having the German American Chamber engaged in a lot of our advisory committee meetings, having them come to meetings that we have here at the college, engaging them with our career services office, and also having them be a partner with our high schools. They are also good about going out to the high schools and working with high schools to try to help us find the students. They have really been an incredibly important component of this. In part, because like many institutions, and coming out of 2 years of financial stress, we don't have the bodies to really take this on ourselves.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you. And then last, Joshua Seeberg with the German American Chamber of Commerce.

Joshua Seeberg: As the third-party intermediary that puts together the ICATT program, we have a slightly different perspective, but it is still very similar. We do the high school outreach, and we partner with schools and of course our college partners. And as everyone mentioned, the companies are our primary partners, because this is an industry-led, industry-driven program that is employer led; they determine how this program is to go in the end. So, industry first and the schools and the colleges. The advantage is you have advisory boards made up of industry leaders in the area, so we draw from that as well. Then maybe something that wasn't mentioned, we are an industry association; there are other

industry associations. We work very closely with the Illinois Manufacturing Association, EDOs, chambers of commerce, talent organizations, you draw from many sources when putting together apprenticeship programs.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you.

Devean Owens: Our next question: What resources are critical to scaling up your registered apprenticeship program? And we will start with Dean Feuerborn.

Matthew Feuerborn: The resources that are critical in terms of the staff and personnel resources in many cases were people in industry. To have people on the ground to actually do the partnerships and to make those communications and outreach contacts to prospective students and prospective employees. That is an absolutely critical resource, to have the people to actually conduct the work and do that outreach. That is somewhat what we already accomplished with a lot of our other partnerships. As Joshua mentioned, the economic development corporations, someone that sees what we have on in our local area, that would include our DeKalb workforce connection where we actually have people in the local high schools throughout our region in order to help promote some of these opportunities. Also again to have the context and the resources to make that outreach to employers. That takes a lot of time and a lot of boots on the ground, and a lot of conversation and commitment, and follow-up and follow-through, when it comes to some of that. Really, it's the people and the support in order to make those connections to all of those partners that we have talked about.

Devean Owens: Great, thank you. Dr. Lake, is there anything you would like to add?

Dr. Rebecca Lake: Resources that we have found really start internally here at Harper. One of the things that has been quite apparent, and that there is the need for, is that we have a champion, which is myself and my team. We have a special area called the Office of Apprenticeships that is embedded where I am at in the workforce, economic development, and outreach kinds of programs for the community. So we have a champion and a focus. We have the time to go out. I have outreach specialists that go out into the community, and like Joshua was saying, ICATT sent some students to us also. We have funds to do that; right now we are part of the American Apprenticeship Initiative Grant, so we have funds to do that. We essentially set it up with a plan, so it wasn't a hit-or-miss kind of endeavor. So the resources that we have are all focused and allow us to continue to grow the program. We will probably put another four of them in with the Office of Apprenticeships by the end of the fall, by December, so that we can meet those needs in our community. So resources are important, but it is more than time and funds; it is really having a plan or someone to focus that in your institution.

Devean Owens: And Dr. Bohleke.

Dr. Henry Bohleke: I think from our standpoint one of the most critical components has been to get faculty buy-in. A lot of our faculty have been here for 30 or even 40 years. This is a new model. They are not familiar with it. Even if they know something about the European system, this is a different model than what they are used to, and it has been a bit of a challenge trying to get faculty to really understand what it is that we are trying to do. But I think it is one of the most critical components, because if faculty support it then you are halfway there. Then the other aspect of course is of course finding the right partners, whether it is the German American Chamber, or one of the labor unions. The right partner is also important. Then a commitment. I spend a great deal of time myself working on building

apprenticeships, talking to employers as I meet them. I spend a great deal of my time focusing on, have you considered an apprenticeship. Particularly those employers who already have tuition reimbursement for their employees, because they are one step closer to that commitment of an apprenticeship versus an employer who does not have any resources going into developing their people.

Devean Owens: All right, and Joshua Seeberg.

Joshua Seeberg: As everyone mentioned, building upon the partnerships you have, especially with industry. For example, ICATT is a consortium; it stands for Industry Consortium for Advanced Technical Training. The idea is that industry is pooling their resources to make this happen. So you build upon that by building up your network and getting more companies to participate. Also bringing on more profiles to offer more apprenticeship occupational profiles to companies who may not have a need for a CNC machinist or an industrial maintenance technician. There are a lot of kind of niche profiles out there that companies have a big need for, and we are working on filling those that way. Finally, always working on improving and bringing in new best practices and improving upon your structures to make it more streamlined and more efficient.

Devean Owens: Thank you. And our last question: In hindsight, what advice would you give to community colleges looking to start new apprenticeship programs? We will go back to Dr. Feuerborn.

Matthew Feuerborn: In hindsight, I guess the advice I would offer would also follow some of the comments by Dr. Lake and Dr. Bohleke, in terms of the planning and intentionality of it, and getting out well ahead of it. So, setting that goal and putting the plan in place well in advance, because as we talked about in terms of partnerships and resources and those commitments, it takes a lot of time to end up fostering and developing and growing it and building momentum to make it robust and sustainable.

Devean Owens: Okay. Dr. Lake?

Dr. Rebecca Lake: We have lots of community colleges that come to see us. We had people from Iowa; from New Mexico; from Florida; from Ohio; from Mississippi, they are coming up next week; all asking the same kinds of questions. I think a lot of the colleagues on this call said those same kinds of things. It has to be intentional. It has to be that you are answering a need in the community. To think that the community employers will immediately drop the dime and want to do registered apprenticeships is not correct in our, well, what we have run into. You really have to give the time, and outreach needs to be out there a lot. So, if you can get your people to go out and touch base with lots of employers. I always say that there needs to be four things: you need to have employers, because this is employer driven; you have to have a champion in your college; you have to have faculty who want to be involved, and you have to have admission on your side. So if community colleges want to do this, those are four basic things that you need to start with. Admissions has to be out really helping you to sell this new kind of commodity. This is very new; [the] community colleges lexicon has not included registered apprenticeship programs in the last couple of years. We just now started to understand about it. But it is doable, and it is all sharable. You can go on our website and see everything and share it with everyone. It is doable, and it works.

Devean Owens: Thank you. Dr. Bohleke, is there anything you would like to add?

Dr. Henry Bohleke: I would say that to anyone that is not doing apprenticeships right now, find the right partner for your institution and get started. You can't wait for the ideal time, because it will never come.

Every community college in every state that I am aware of is struggling for resources. We are also looking at a sea change. We are looking at the baby-boom generation that is huge is getting ready to retire at a time when, an article this morning from the Associated Press says that there will be 2 million new American manufacturing jobs in the next decade. And we are looking at all of these dynamics coming into place, along with a 4.3% unemployment rate. So, the employers are desperate; they are looking for people, and the quicker you get started into apprenticeships, the easier it will be to sustain them and to continue to grow the program. And so I would say, if nothing else, just get started.

Devean Owens: Thank you. And finally Joshua Seeberg.

Joshua Seeberg: Needless to say, I would highly recommend partnering with an intermediary like the German American Chamber of Commerce. I mean, not only in shameless self-promotion, but you know when we talk to colleges especially, there seems to be a mystery around what is an apprenticeship and how do you get it together, and what are the pieces that need to be put together to do it? That is what we bring, this kind of turnkey solution, with over 100 years of best practices all in one package. Why reinvent the wheel? Partner with German American Chamber or someone similar who already has that code cracked, and then it really takes the load off of having to start from nothing and build up something there. So it is go for a partner with a ready-made solution.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Thank you. Those are some of the sentiments that we have heard from the community colleges that we have spoken to about the newness of this. That is why we titled this podcast *Where to Start*. In closing, is there anything else that you would like to add or that hasn't been discussed that you think is important for those trying to embark on developing and scaling up their apprenticeship programs? Anyone is welcome to chime in, if there is anything else that we haven't discussed.

Dr. Henry Bohleke: I just would like to say that I think, again, that the partnership is a critical component, as Mr. Seeberg expressed. That can take a tremendous load off of the institution and off of the academic areas. Get faculty buy-in, and engage the faculty in what the process is, what it is about, and the benefits. The average apprenticeship pays a much better wage than most of the other jobs in manufacturing. I think one estimate I saw was about \$60,000 a year. So this is [a] tremendous opportunity for our students, particularly some of the students that may not have opportunities otherwise. They are struggling to get out of the jobs in fast food. These are good sustainable jobs that will be around for a very long time, and we really need to work on this model and move ahead as institutions to find the best way to make this work for our employers.

Dr. Rebecca Lake: We have made it so that our registered apprenticeship programs are all sustainable. So, self-sustaining for the college, so when the grant goes away we will be able to continue this. It is important that we share that with other community colleges. Please go on our website <http://www.harperapprenticeships.org/> and download anything you want. Print it off, and you can change the name and use it. Feel free. We have found ways to make sure that this apprenticeship program and the ones we will be growing are all sustainable. That is something that community colleges always want to have. We don't want to do one-offs, where we will try something and we end it. We always want to find out how we make them self-sustaining. And so, we have found ways to do that.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: That is important, thank you.

Joshua Seeberg: I have one thing to add, and it is kind of echoing what Dr. Bohleke said, but start now. Apprenticeships can last up to a few years, several years; our apprenticeships all take about 3 years. We are trying to build a workforce. Get together now, and don't neglect to work on a pipeline of applicants to get into the apprenticeships. Even though there are all these job openings out there, and as was mentioned, they are great paying jobs, it is really difficult to get kids excited about things like manufacturing and to get them into the career. To find ones who have the STEM background to get into the career like that, either training in the high school or simply math and science classes. So, you need to start a little earlier than college to begin with. I think everyone on the phone would agree. So, don't neglect that aspect of it. Thank you.

Dr. Rebecca Lake: Just to reiterate, that was a good point, to just get started. It made me think that this December we will graduate the first 19 registered apprenticeships in the country in general insurance. They will graduate with an AAS degree in business, and the concentration is in general insurance. So we will be graduating those. These happen to all be from Zurich Insurance, and they all have jobs. And they are going to be growing, so it does pay off. In 2 years they are done, and they graduate with zero debt, yet have 2 years of experience in their jobs and are on their career path. So, get started, like everybody else said.

Dr. Anjalé D. Welton: Excellent, thank you! I appreciate everyone for joining us for this very informative podcast. Thank you.

Closing: For more information about registered apprenticeships, we recommend that you visit occrll.illinois.edu/CTEApprenticeships. For more podcasts, links to today's recommended resources, or to share your comments and suggestions, visit occrll.illinois.edu/democracy, or send them via Twitter @occrll. Tune in next month when Chauntee Thrill from OCCRL talks with Dr. Jennifer Banks, the coordinator of mathematics and science at Washtenaw Intermediate School District, about responsive mathematics pedagogy. Background music for this podcast is provided by DubLab. Thank you for listening and for your contributions to educational equity, justice, and excellence for all students.