



# Strategies for Transformative Change

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

## Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

## Transformative Change Definition

TCI defines transformative change as follows: Raising the individual, organizational, and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.

## PARTNERSHIP TRIFECTA: EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND INDUSTRY

### About the Florida TRADE Consortium

The Florida TRADE Consortium represents 12 state and community colleges that came together under TAACCCT Round 2 to improve upon Florida's training and education system in advanced manufacturing. This mission is accomplished through improved alignment of partnerships and resources. By offering access to accelerated training, the Consortium seeks to address the growing critical skilled workforce shortage faced by the state's manufacturing industry and related industry clusters. Florida TRADE was developed using several evidence-based models and is designed to provide short-term training that results in stackable or latticed industry-specific credentials that articulate statewide to related associate degree programs that lead to entry- and mid-level jobs in advanced manufacturing.

### Partnership Trifecta for Change

A strength of Florida TRADE is its ability to drive change through the partnership trifecta of education, workforce, and industry. Throughout the states of program design and implementation, the Consortium sought broad engagement of key stakeholders, including college presidents, academic deans, and corporate college directors; state and local workforce board representatives; and small and large manufacturers and industry associations. The input from these groups provide a broad range of perspectives to determine the best approach to achieve success in the proposed programs of study. By coming together and collaborating, the key players are seeking transformative change in education and workforce systems.

### Major Theme: Building Trust with Shared Foundational Principles

Many stakeholders involved in the project noted the commitment to workforce development as the driver for the partners to work together. And, the trust that was built from the shared foundational principles enabled the Consortium to achieve results. The Consortium leadership cites Stephen M. R. Covey, "How the Best Leaders Build Trust, "When trust is low, in a company or in a relationship, it places a hidden "tax" on every transaction: every communication, every interaction, every strategy, every decision is taxed, bringing speed down and sending costs up. My experience is that significant distrust doubles the cost of doing business and triples the time it takes to get things done."<sup>1</sup>

Florida TRADE has adopted the belief that principle-centered action is necessary for true success. From program inception to implementation and sustainability planning, the Consortium has shared three foundational principles:

- **Transparency:** Florida TRADE is branded as a team, a single identity no one institution or partner is highlighted above another. All team members are empowered to share their opinion and leadership opportunities exist at multiple levels. Each individual is tasked with being open and honest about motives and decision-making.
- **Communication:** The Consortium operates using clear and

consistent communication. In establishing processes, consortium members consider various perspectives, including those of students, instructors, workforce personnel and industry representatives. For example, input from each of these groups was incorporated when developing the participant application form. And, a clear communication path is followed between program manager, recruiter, and industry representative to see that the participant moves seamlessly through the placement process.

- **Flexibility:** As a Consortium representing 12 regions, it is important that members remain flexible in decision-making, planning, and implementation. The one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Florida TRADE has set parameters for the overall program, yet maintains flexibility for regions to work within those parameters to meet performance objectives. Reflecting this principle, not all colleges offer the same training courses. The selection of courses is dependent on a region's in-demand targeted occupations, which may also fluctuate from year to year.



<sup>1</sup> Covey, S. (2009). How the Best Leaders Build Trust. Retrieved from <http://www.leadershipnow.com/CoveyOnTrust.html>

By the Numbers: As of September 2014, 2035 students have enrolled in Florida TRADE training programs; 1003 (49%) have completed a program of study. Of those, 901 (90%) have earned at least one industry certification. Of those completing, 248 (25%) have been placed into a paid internship or job. The job placement rate has nearly doubled between the last quarter of performance and the total of quarters leading up to the last quarter. This growth signals improved awareness and gained momentum in the ability to make the job match as more and more individuals complete their program of study. The partnership is developing strategies and actions to increase the placement rate. The current demographic makeup of the participant populations is 42% minorities, 18% females, and 17% veterans.

Internal Partnerships: Florida TRADE was initiated by the Consortium's presidents to show their commitment to finding a solution to the workforce shortage in manufacturing, and their commitment to a model that had the potential

"We knew that there was an infrastructure in Florida. We knew that we didn't have to start with something new.

The power of the grant is putting it all together and moving forward – where our community, and business partners and our schools will see us work together."

Bill Law, President,  
St. Petersburg College

to help address shortages in other industries. This group of leaders looked at the project as the next step in advancing the collective work accomplished over the previous five years—from development to implementation of a dual strategy of offering short-term training combined with articulated credit leading to lower cost education options that makes a college education more affordable for students, while serving as a quicker means to employment and higher

wages. As a result of presidential leadership, there has been instant buy-in and support from staff and faculty within each institution and between institutions to see the project through. Not only do staff know of the program, they are more willing to work together to accomplish an activity or find a solution to a problem, reducing frustrations, time, and costs for performance that may otherwise normally occur.

As a means to ensure sustainability of the program and model, the presidents and Consortium teams came together once again to develop a business plan for the sustainability and scaling of the Florida TRADE project through a \$100,000 grant funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Florida TRADE was selected as an awardee of the Scaled Models for Certificate Delivery grant as a means to learn about the momentum around public-private partnerships in innovative occupational credentialing. The grant supports the development of a business plan and organizational structure that will help establish a blueprint for sustainability and scalability of the Florida TRADE program. The sustainability plan involves merging Florida TRADE into the "Corporate Training/Corporate College" departments of each of the Consortium colleges during the third year of the grant, so when the grant training period ends, programs and services will continue.

External Partnerships: Although the placement numbers are just beginning to climb, the Florida TRADE program has earned recognition through word-of-mouth and awareness strategies. The base of employer engagement has grown from 40 employer partners at the program proposal stage, to more than 270 employers currently. Employers across the state continue to provide input on program development, and manufacturers play a crucial role on each of the Consortium members' Advisory Councils. Manufacturers host plant tours for students, serve as guest speakers, attend campus job fairs, and request Florida TRADE students to interview for job opportunities in rising numbers.

The program is also resulting in broader impact. Economic development departments from across the state are using the program in their strategies to attract new businesses. The state's workforce board is capitalizing on the group to communicate state initiatives, build stronger partnerships between workforce boards and colleges, and find ways to improve reporting of workforce outcomes for institutions. Additionally, Florida's governor recently cited Florida TRADE as part of the state's proclamation of October as Manufacturing Month.

The TAACCCT program Federal Project Officer documented the Consortium's strong working relationship with workforce and industry as a promising practice in its Monitoring Report issued in October 2014, stating, "Florida TRADE has worked diligently in maintaining a long-standing working relationship with businesses and employers in effectively expanding knowledge about the value of manufacturing to Florida's economy and showcasing the high-skilled manufacturing jobs needed by the industry. The State's Manufacturers Association of Florida Center for Manufacturing Excellence recognized the Florida TRADE Consortium as a leader in championing the cause, leading workers to careers in manufacturing."

"The Florida TRADE program has really brought industry and education closer and we are now seeing job applicants, who are being prepared for, and motivated to follow a career in manufacturing. I am excited about the direction we are pursuing and it bodes well for a bright future."

Trevor Charlton,  
Manufacturing Manager,  
Pharma Works

This document is part of a series from TCI describing selected strategies employed in the TAACCCT consortia. TCI is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation. TCI is led by OCCRL at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and The Collaboratory, LLC. ©2014 Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

Suggested citation: Skyrd J., Peacock, M. & Richie, D. (2014). Strategies for transformative change: Partnership trifecta: Education, workforce, and industry. Champaign, IL: Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

