



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.

The consortium shared a commitment to a sector approach to increase the number of students earning industry-aligned credentials. Along with the commitment to work collaboratively, there was an understanding that each college would retain local control to adopt and adapt programs, policies, and processes to fit its unique needs. Across the consortium and at each individual college, leaders engaged with industry, workforce development councils, policy makers, faculty, and administrators to implement the strategies. The sector approach enabled Air Washington to engage with industry, to solidify connections necessary to build programs, and to avoid duplicating curriculum development efforts.

<http://www.airwashington.org>



COLLABORATING ON A SECTORAL APPROACH TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE TRAINING

The Air Washington consortium included 11 of Washington's 33 community and technical colleges: Big Bend Community College; Clover Park Technical College; Everett Community College; North Seattle Community College; Olympic College; Peninsula College; Renton Technical College; Skagit Valley College; South Seattle Community College; Spokane Community College (lead college); Wenatchee Valley College. The consortium received a \$20 million Round 1 Department of Labor TAACCCT grant to strengthen training in these five areas of the aerospace industry:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aircraft Assembly
- Airframe & Powerplant Mechanics
- Composites
- Electronics/Avionics

The consortium identified these strategies:

- Accelerate progress through contextualized basic and developmental skills instruction
- Improve student retention and achievement rates through assessment, placement and support services
- Build programs of study that match industry needs

MAJOR FACTORS THAT SUPPORTED THE CONSORTIUM SUCCESS

History. The timing was right for the consortium to engage in the initiative due to a number of previous actions and current interests in the state. Examples include:

- The Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence (COE), created by the community and technical college system in the late '90's, served as a liaison between the aerospace industry and the community college system.
- In 2010, Boeing put together an "Academic Alignment Team" to work with community and technical colleges, Workforce Development Centers (WDC), and high school skills centers to discuss workforce needs, technology changes, curriculum alignment, articulation, job placement, and other issues of common interest to meet their long-term workforce needs.
- The governor created the Aerospace Council composed of industry, government, and education representatives who identified needs, support, and encouragement of the aerospace industry with the goal of bringing new jobs to the state.

- The state provided funding in 2011 to colleges for aerospace manufacturing training and new equipment – some of which had not been replaced since World War II. The colleges were particularly encouraged to develop programs of study in composite manufacturing and repair.

Infrastructure. While Washington's community and technical colleges are separately accredited, independent institutions, collaboration within the TAACCCT consortium was built on previous relationships. College administrators regularly meet in work-alike groups to discuss issues and pursue initiatives. The partnership of colleges, labor, the COE, and employers enabled Air Washington to build on multiple previous efforts.

Significant Aspects of the Sectoral Approach

Communication and Transparency within the Consortium

From the onset, Spokane Community College maintained that its function as peer leader for the consortium called for an open and transparent management style that encouraged discussions and feedback, with access to highly reliable and verifiable program data. To accomplish that, Spokane established a deliberate and uncompromising demand for intra-consortium communication that required the members to physically gather together at least quarterly. The location rotated among the colleges in the consortium, which allowed each to showcase its programs and services. The members attending these regular meetings included grant managers, navigators, budget analysts, data experts and other involved stakeholders. Agendas were collaboratively developed and included time for developmental feedback on progress, problem solving and program improvement. In addition to the quarterly meetings, the consortium held weekly open telephone calls that typically included 20 or more people - program managers, career navigators, curriculum developers, deans, budget personnel, Air Washington leadership and third party evaluator. Calls were recorded and meeting summaries distributed throughout the consortium.

Enrollment and Completion

The consortium received a one-year extension of the grant, and revised their goals as part of that process.

	Original Goal	Revised Four-year Goal	Actual Numbers by Mid-2015
Total participants	2615	3752	4722
Short certificates earned	481	1841	3977
Long certificates earned	395	488	786
Two-year degrees earned	448	241	356
Participants employed after completion	795	1134	1605

Curriculum Development

Air Washington used input from faculty-industry workgroups to expand, redesign, and develop new programs and courses for the five industry sectors. The teams reviewed competencies for their related programs and realigned as needed, developed and shared new curricula, as well as identified equipment and instructional resource needs. The 11 colleges worked together to develop a common curriculum and to contextualize a pre-employment curriculum across the consortium. The consortium held curriculum workshops that included industry subject matter experts and faculty from multiple colleges, including colleges outside the AW consortium. Many faculty and administrators participated in seminars and trainings for intelligent design of curriculum for both classroom and on-line classes.

Industry Relationships

The support of industry was instrumental in building curricula and employing graduates. The Aerospace COE was a single point of contact for the consortium and a critical source of information. The COE convened meetings with industry and partners, organized factory tours, disseminated information on job openings and workforce projections, and facilitated faculty-industry workgroups that worked on course design. Through the COE, Air Washington shared information with all of the two-year colleges, K-12 workforce programs, and workforce development councils in the state.



Navigators

All of the colleges contracted with their local WDC for sector-focused navigators who were responsible for providing comprehensive student support from recruiting through job placement. The navigators created the crucial link that connected all three stakeholder groups in Air Washington: the students, the colleges, and the employers. The work of the navigator began with recruiting students to the programs, assisting students with the application and funding processes, and continued with serving as advisor and resource to the student. Navigators facilitated the development of career blueprints to guide the student experience, addressed academic or personal barriers that could threaten progress or retention, provided referrals, and helped students with resume and interviewing preparation to facilitate job readiness. Employers would come to navigators when they had positions open and employers served as guest speakers for classes.

This document is part of a series from TCI describing selected strategies employed in the TAACCT 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. Dr. Debra Bragg, professor and director of TCI at OCCRL, and Ms. Mindy Feldbaum, CEO of the Collaboratory, provide the leadership and support for the TCI Network and its affiliated partners and consultants. © 2015 University of Illinois Board of Trustees

Suggested citation: Simmons, D., Cox, D., Lyons-Holstine, K., & Richie, D. (2015). *Strategies for transformative change: Collaborating on a sectoral approach to strengthen workforce training*. Champaign, IL: Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.