



Best Practices: Perkins Grant Consortium Realizes Benefits through Partnerships

Collaboration and cooperation are often keys to the success of many initiatives and the partnerships within a Perkins grant consortium are no exception. Recently, Jim Millard, Dean of Career Programs at Craven Community College, shared what he sees as the most critical ingredients for success in a Perkins consortium. Millard leads the consortium of Craven, Brunswick Community College and Pamlico Community College, in partnership with colleagues Pamela Federline (Brunswick) and Michelle Willis (Pamlico). Among the ingredients for success Millard identified are three C's – communication, cooperation, and collaboration. He says once you've agreed to be part of a consortium, understanding the requirements of the partnership and establishing lines of communication among partner colleges are essential first steps. In a consortium that is grant supported like Perkins, you should include appointed representatives as well as business office staff in a regular schedule of meetings that can occur via teleconference or face-to-face. Building strong relationships among colleagues from each partner institution will provide the consortium with a much-needed support system and the combined experience and expertise of professionals that should yield an effective team.

Cooperation is the next ingredient Millard emphasizes, urging colleges exploring a consortium partnership to develop an agreement outlining allowable use of funds, invoicing, procurement policies, and financial reporting procedures among the business offices of the partner colleges. He says it's important to look for economies of scale whenever possible. All three colleges in his consortium have benefitted from the enhanced purchasing power of the partnership in program areas where they have commonalities. In the early days of the partnership, consortium leadership began identifying areas of program overlap and prioritized the opportunities in which purchasing the same curriculum package and accompanying professional development, for example, could

reduce the investment for individual colleges because of volume pricing and leveraged discounts. Combined events such as hosting one professional development workshop for program faculty from all three colleges have resulted. Millard says thus far, the colleges' nursing and cosmetology programs have probably benefitted the most because of faculty consensus on instructional tools, equipment, and related staff training.



This collaborative (C number three) spirit among the colleges has been facilitated in part by site visits to each other's campuses. Millard says once you start looking through the consortium lens, the opportunities for collaboration, and thus resulting mutual benefits, become increasingly clear and numerous. As faculty collaborate on purchases of instructional resources, the sharing of program ideas and services blossoms. Best practices are easily exchanged, the sharing of lessons saves time and money, priorities become clearer, and the leveraging of each other's contacts allows the entire consortium to benefit. The whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. Consortium partners provide a sounding board for tough issues and give individual faculty and staff the chance to learn from one another. Millard says he frequently hears the remark among consortium peers, "If we can help you in any way, please let us know." His comment demonstrates the powerful benefits of collaborative efforts that can result from a consortium partnership.

Such a partnership is not without its challenges. Millard says it's critical that funding issues are clearly communicated to one another. Though

consideration is given to what each college brings to the consortium, the funding belongs to and is allocated to the consortium. However, Millard feels strongly that all challenges can be overcome if consortium members take the three “C’s” to heart. His advice to others on forming consortium partnerships? Leave your ego at the door. Establish a level playing field right away. The consortium is a *team*. Meeting regularly (at least monthly and communicating via email more often) and discussing issues as soon as they are realized will help mitigate potential problems. Always being considerate of each other’s position and environment can also be very important. And last, but certainly not least, keep your sense of humor. Partnerships are ultimately about relationships, and North Carolina’s community colleges are home to great people who make all types of partnerships work.

To learn more about the Craven/
Brunswick/Pamlico consortium, contact:

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Career and Technical Program Resources

New resources, news and events of interest to our career and technical (CTE) program areas were published or hosted in the past month. Here are some highlights worth noting.

North Carolina in the News:

US News & World Report featured Central Piedmont’s apprenticeship program in its January 12, 2015 issue. The [article](#) highlights the partnership between the college and Siemens USA in Charlotte.

Department of Labor Shares Quick-Start Apprenticeship Toolkit

This new [publication](#) provides helpful steps and resources to start and register an apprenticeship program, from exploring the apprenticeship model as a workforce strategy to launching a new program.

CTE Blog Features Women in CTE/STEM Conference

A recent [post](#) from the Department of Education Office of Career Technical and Adult Education’s Blog highlighted the January 15th “CTE and STEM Conference on Marginalized Girls” hosted by the White House Domestic Policy Council and the Council on Women and Girls, the Department of Education, and the Georgetown University Law Center on Poverty and Inequality. The event featured educators, innovators, researchers, scientists, and young women who are dedicated to increasing the participation of low-income girls and girls of color in postsecondary education and in-demand careers within high-growth industry sectors. The blog post highlights programs and resources to support this effort.

Upcoming Webinar

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration hosts

*Real-Time Labor Market Information:
Environmental Scan of Vendors and Workforce Development Users*

➤ February 10 – 2:00 p.m. Eastern

The [webinar](#) will highlight an environmental scan conducted as part of a DOL technical assistance project to inform the workforce development system about the common uses, successes and challenges of real-time labor market information.

Skills Reports on the Radar:

Bridge the Gap: Rebuilding America’s Middle Skills

A new [report](#) representing a joint effort of Harvard Business School, Accenture and Burning Glass Technologies contends that closing the middle-skills gap will depend on creating a new middle-skills ecosystem that provides employers sufficient access to talent with the skills to fill competitively important jobs. Coordination among employers, educators and policymakers will be essential.

Talent Pipeline Management: A New Approach to Closing the Skills Gap

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation is engaging employers and their partners across the country in developing a new demand-driven approach—talent pipeline management—to close the skills gap. Download the [white paper](#), an [infographic](#) and [stakeholder checklists](#) to learn more about this initiative.