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The Hidden Innovation Infrastructure: Insights from Clark State College

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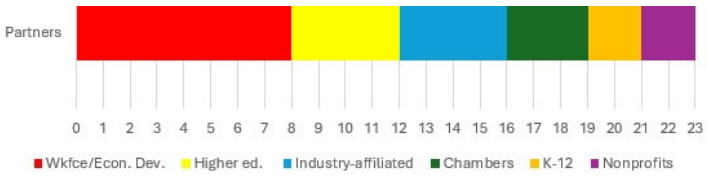
Community colleges and their technician programs play an important and sometimes overlooked role in supporting regional economic development. In this five-year research study funded by the US National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) program, Rutgers' Education and Employment Research Center (EERC) sought to examine how eight leading colleges engaged in economic development through innovations in their technician education programs and to better understand and highlight these models. In addition to the eight college case studies, the project included interviews of 23 NSF ATE awardees, a survey of technician employers, and related labor market research. This brief describes the approach of Clark State College, one of eight community colleges to participate in this study.

PROGRAMS | The study focused on two of Clark State's technical education programs:
Program 1: Industrial Technology *Program 2: Manufacturing Engineering Technology*

PARTNERS | Clark State's programs of focus benefit from partnerships with many regional employers and a diverse set of regional economic development organizations.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



This figure shows the breakdown of Clark State's partners by organizational type. It offers a glimpse into the composition of actors in the regional ecosystem. Twenty-two economic development partners were identified for the survey. Two interviews were conducted: one with the Greater Springfield Partnership and the other with the Logan County Chamber of Commerce.

EMPLOYER PARTNERS

The two employer partners interviewed represented the steel/metal industry and the electricity products industry.

Steel/Metal

Electricity Products

EMPLOYER PARTNERS, CONTINUED

Strategic responsiveness to regional employer needs. Clark State is highly responsive to its regional manufacturing employers, customizing training not only for their future talent pipeline but also for their incumbent workers, leveraging state funds to do so. Clark State integrates an earn-and-learn model, employer-sponsored apprenticeships, stackable certificates, and industry-relevant credentialing into its programs.

A respondent from a firm that created three registered apprenticeship programs with Clark State said,

> "We really need to develop our own highly skilled workforce. *That's where our partnership with Clark State has been really valuable because we've been able to develop a program … that matches our on-the-job training requirements.* Then we submit to the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council for their approval."

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS | Leveraging public funds for technical education programs.
Clark State uses state and federal funds and works with state entities to enhance its programs.

Apprenticeship. Clark State works with the state-level entity OhioMeansJobs on funding for its apprenticeship programs and for incumbent worker training through Ohio TechCred (H1B grant).

Inclusive outreach. Clark State also uses a state H1D grant for targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, including returning citizens and people in recovery. This allows for more inclusive training.

Equipment. Clark State has used federal TAACCCT funding to enhance its equipment and facilities, which are important for training workers in both problem-solving and technology maintenance skills.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS | Clark State reflected some of the best practices for employer responsiveness, strategic use of public resources, and targeted strategies for inclusion.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIVENESS

Clark State works closely with its regional employer partners to customize training to their needs. Those programs may incorporate stackable certifications for current employees and future talent.

STRATEGIC USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Clark State collaborates with state-level entities and programs (e.g., OhioMeansJobs, Ohio TechCred) to support its workforce education. The college has also received public funds for targeted outreach and for equipment.

TARGETED INCLUSION

Clark State targets a variety of underrepresented groups for inclusion through collaborations and funded programming, including women, people with disabilities, returning citizens, and people in recovery.

KEY ROLES AT CLARK STATE | Clark State's programs engage program-related roles as well as senior leadership roles. The college also leverages specific funding streams for certain program-related functions, including targeted outreach to underserved groups and H1B grant administration.

Senior Leadership Roles

1. President
2. Dean, Business and Applied Technologies
3. Asst. Dean, School of Business and Applied Technologies
4. VP of Marketing, Diversity and Community Impact
5. VP, Academic Affairs
6. Director, Admissions and Career Services

Program-Related Roles

1. Principal Technical Instructor, Business & Applied Tech.
2. Professor & Coordinator, Engineering Technologies
3. Asst. Professor & Coordinator, Manufacturing Tech. Mgmt.
4. Welding Instructor & Program Coordinator
5. Project Manager, H1B Grant
6. Coordinator, Career Services
7. Director, Workforce & Business Solutions

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES | Clark State implements through its technical education programs many of the activities identified as important for community college engagement in economic development. Strength was demonstrated in education and training, especially work-based learning. Clark State integrates both a learn & earn model and apprenticeships into its programs.

Education & Training Activities

- Hands-on learning
- Work-based learning (learn & earn model, apprenticeships)
- Grants for equipment
- Dual enrollment
- BA pathway
- Credit for prior learning
- Short-term training/bootcamp style
- National credentialing/industry certification
- Updated curriculum aligned with jobs
- Regionally aligned program with local workforce needs
- Industry advisory boards
- On-site visits, employer visits
- Program job fairs/online matching with employers

Business Support Activities

- Incumbent worker/customized training
- Establishment of facilities for use by local companies
- Technology transfer/applied research

Regional Engagement Activities

- Participates in local economic planning/policymaking
- Participates in state/regional boards

DATA SOURCES | These findings are based on a five-year study conducted by the Rutgers University Education and Employment Research Center in partnership with the National Science Foundation. As part of that study, the EERC team:

Selected	*Conducted*	*Conducted*	*Surveyed*
8	**79**	**31**	**84**
Best-in-class community colleges for intensive study	Interviews with college administrators, faculty, and staff	Interviews with colleges' employer & regional ED partners	Regional ED partners of the colleges, with a 37% response rate

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National Science Foundation

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