Community, Workforce, and Employer Partnerships

- Institutions may evaluate non-collegiate training programs that result in industry certifications, military recognition, professional licensure, apprenticeship completion, and other workplace skills development.
- CHE would be an ideal partner to provide support in coordinating these connections with the business community, the workforce system, establishing a clearinghouse of CPL partnerships, etc.
- Optimally, institutions should develop a partnership policy to connect their CPL programs with community, workforce, and employer partners.
- This institutional policy should include a clear statement advocating the value such partnerships provide to the institutions, the external partners, and the students. This statement should be written with the expectation that it will be shared with external partners.
- The policy should also include guidance to internal stakeholders on how to develop and maintain such partnerships.

<u>Example elements of partnership policies:</u>

- Benefits of Partnerships: The partner (business, military, regional intermediaries focused on talent, etc.), employee (servicemember, etc.), and institutions all benefit from this kind of evaluation.
- Partners can use CPL crosswalk opportunities to leverage limited education funds. They may also be able to use this crosswalk to attract those looking for support in furthering their education.
- Employees benefit in realizing that their work and training in the “real world” is worth college credit which could induce more people to return to school than might have otherwise.
- The institution could gain increased enrollments and contract support for specialized training.
    - An additional benefit to institutions is gap analysis; they can observe outcome applications in the “real world” and update or create curriculum in response.
- The inclusion of these evaluations will then allow employees to have more ease and flexibility in choosing a program that fits their college and career plans.
- The method of evaluating partner training will vary between colleges, industries, and training design. It is suggested that the institution take the time to engage faculty and staff in the creation of local evaluation standards and practices that are equitable for all participants.

<u>Best practices for developing and maintaining partnerships:</u>

The following are suggestions for developing these standards and practices to ensure a strong partnership with the employer, community, or workforce partner while maintaining the academic integrity of an institution's programs:

- Before deciding to conduct a full evaluation, take steps to make sure the training is of a caliber that will meet college-level curriculum requirements and standards. Appropriate curricular documentation (e.g., training plan, syllabus) is required to confirm this standard fulfillment.
- Use the following checklist to make a determination:
  - Does the training subject align with an academic offering? How long has the partner been offering the training?
  - Is the training accredited/credentialed? This is not a requirement but beneficial information.
  - Does the partner have a training department or liaison? As best practices, the training should be reviewed on a regular basis and the employer should be providing the institution with updates when the training is substantially revised.
  - Did the partner create the materials for the training or were they purchased from a vendor? Be aware that partner-specific material may be synthesized into content originating from a vendor. In such a case, consider whether an evaluation of the original content is practical and/or efficient.
  - Who teaches/trains the employees and what are their credentials? How are training records maintained?
  - How does the partner assess the training? Is there a pre-and post-test? Does the employee have to "pass" the training as opposed to just attending it? Are there grades?
  - How long is the training program (contact hours, days, weeks, months)?
  - Are there hands-on demonstrations or simulations? Are these assessed? How?
- Once it has been determined that there is comparability between the training and an academic course or competencies, then it may be a good idea, but by no means required, to conduct a site visit.
- If faculty determine that the partner's training program is established and ready for an evaluation, then the various documents from the checklist above can be collected and reviewed. The overarching objective is to see if there is a comparability between the training and an academic offering.
- Faculty will look for alignment with competencies and/or outcomes for a course or courses. The extent to which there is alignment will determine if credit can be awarded. Documentation should be reviewed by the faculty department and or director/dean before approving credit for the training.

- In instances where partial credit for a course is considered, colleges should be prepared to offer students an academic plan that allows the credit to be used or expanded to full course credit through supplemental coursework or modular/competency-based learning.
- An agreement/memorandum of understanding/contract should be drafted for both the college and the partner. It should cover the following:
    - Duration of the agreement.
    - The training documentation required by employees that will be recognized by the institution for credit.
    - Any exceptions to credit recognition.
    - The offices or titles of the persons that should be notified in writing should the agreement need to be terminated or revised.
    - The institution should have a designated office where the agreement is kept (registrar's office) and where it will be maintained.