

Dale Chapman, President, Lewis & Clark Community College

M: Today we welcome Dale Chapman, president of Lewis & Clark Community College in Illinois with multiple campuses that serves over 15,000 students each year. Lewis & Clark is one of more than 700 community colleges that have received federal grants known as TAACCCT --The US Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Program.

TAACCCT helps community colleges and other eligible institutions of higher education expand and improve their ability to deliver education and career training programs that can be completed in two years or less, and prepare program participants for employment in high-wage, high-skill occupations.

M: Tell us about the role TAACCCT has played in developing the Mississippi River Transportation Distribution Network.

Dale Chapman: The Department of Labor's TAACCCT program, in our case I think you have to give them a lot of credit for taking a bit of a risk, because our sense of place is a confluence of America's great rivers, the Mississippi River, the Missouri, and the Illinois Rivers all converge here just 30 miles north of St. Louis, and our proposal really was called the Mississippi River Transportation Distribution Network, we referred to it as MRTDL, and basically the Department of Labor understood that there are clusters of occupations that relate to the river, 40-some different occupational clusters actually. And so the concept was that we would choose a community college as a sister institution from headwaters to the gulf about 2,300 miles, and if you started in New Orleans, Delgado Community College, come up to Hinds in Mississippi, Southwest

Tennessee Community College in Memphis, Mid-South Community College in West Memphis, Arkansas, West Kentucky Community Technical College in Paducah, St. Louis Community College District in St. Louis, Lewis & Clark Community College across the river in Illinois, John Wood Community College in Quincy and Minnesota State, Southeast Technical in Minnesota.

And so basically those aligned with the six, actually seven if you include the Ohio Great Lakes core districts, and the idea was to kind of get the community colleges to get to know their core engineer districts so that as we think about the integration of the river and transportation corridors and workforce training needs that they would have an integrated approach, and that is kind of how this whole idea was conceived and how it has worked. And I think it has worked beautifully, because they kind of took a risk on this kind of innovative project.

M: Can you talk about how the TAACCCT grant has helped to build partnerships between Lewis & Clark and other colleges along the Mississippi?

Dale Chapman: Community colleges are by nature kind of entrepreneurial. They tend to reach out to community partners, stakeholders, and the nongovernmental organizational world, NGO world, private sector, public sector, other institutions of higher education in the academic communities. And the idea is vertical integration, the extent to which you can, you want to create on ramps and ways for underserved populations to get involved in career programs. The river has been a traditional source of

doing that so that is, this, what the TAACCCT grant and what the Department of Labor allowed us to do was to get to know these other institutions and develop kind of a cultural institutional trust in those other institutions that they will deliver on what they promise to do and so will we.

And now that has come a dynamic that will last beyond the actual grant period, because we now see ourselves as the MRTDL institutions and that really what we have built here is like a vessel and that the TAACCCT grant was in the vessel and as the TAACCCT grant ends then there will be other things we'll put in the vessel, because we know each other now and have learned to trust each other.

M: TAACCCT grants include a lot of different elements. Can you talk about which ones in particular have been helpful to Lewis & Clark and its partner colleges?

Dale Chapman: Well, I think we have all learned from each other and some of us had strengths in certain areas, and we are, in the case of Lewis & Clark we were already doing credit for prior learning.

Dale Chapman: And basically, we believe in that, that is part of our culture, we were able to teach that to some other institutions, and all of us end up using credit for prior learning as one of the strength elements in this so we could really shorten the pathway for people to be successful at getting their credentials. And speaking of credentials, we developed stacked and LAST credentials so that students could find these vertical integration pathways. That was really successful. And so midcareer

people who are in transition or people just coming into the workforce all benefit from the tools of the TAACCCT grants.

M: What are some of the lessons that you think you have learned from the implementation of the TAACCCT grant?

Dale Chapman: You know, when you work with nine institutions spread over 2,300 miles, the entire length of the Mississippi River, third largest watershed in the world, I think we didn't anticipate in advance maybe, and maybe should have, that there will be senior level transition among the Chancellors and Presidents. There has been, it's times you feel like you're riding on a trolley car and there are people getting on and getting off, and so we had to stop, back up, spend time teaching the culture what MRTDL is, what the TAACCCT grant is, to the senior level Chancellors and Presidents.

Dale Chapman: I think that we should have probably anticipated that a little more than we did for a five-year kind of project. And so then the key, I think, to the success has been that the people who were at the next level, the implementation level faculty and senior level staff were very constant, stayed with the program, got committed to the program, saw the benefit of it to their institutions, and they were champions to communicate the value of this to the Chancellors and Presidents as they did shift. So I would say that I would count that as a major strength of the program.

M: How are you leveraging the TAACCCT grant? What will be sustainable in the long term?

Dale Chapman: We have been for about a year and a half to two years now looking for a pivot strategy. We have structured this valuable community college Mississippi River consortium. How do we use it beyond the Department of Labor funds for other things?

And that has started to happen now, this pivot strategy, so the, some of you may be familiar with the Swarovski company, the crystal company, they are headquartered in Austria, they have a Swarovski Water Schools. They are looking to sort of teach the next generation of students the value, the preciousness and value of water. So they have a water school on the Danube River, they have one on the Nile, they have one on the Yangtze, one on the Amazon, they had none in the United States. So when they heard about the MRTDL grant and our National Great Rivers Research and Education research program they really wanted to identify their brand with our brand.

Dale Chapman: And so we're establishing the first United States Swarovski Water School as of about three weeks ago. We will extend that to our partners, first Delgado because it's an anchor in the southern Miss, Mississippi River area, we're the middle Miss, and then we'll go to the upper Miss, and then we'll extend it to the other partners as we sort of learn the strategies of how to do that. That's just one example.

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M: You're in year three of a four-year grant, and you've learned a lot of lessons along the way. Is there something that you would have done differently, had you know then what you know now?

Dale Chapman: Well, I think we might have started our pivot strategy a little earlier. It's sort of hard to think about a pivot strategy when you're in year one of the grant

Dale Chapman: What we didn't do soon enough, I think, is to sort of think, "Okay, well, what are those corporations or partners that span the river?" Ingram Barge, Marathon Barge, chemical companies that use the river as a way to transport commodities worldwide, agricultural industries, ADM and so forth. So I think that we're now kind of playing a bit of catch up to see are there private sector corporate partners that will see this as valuable and will want to keep it going, because there is a welder that they can find for their barge industry in New Orleans and in Minnesota and in St. Louis, and our logistics professionals, process operations technology professionals and so forth that they can take advantage of and that they can have their corporate cultures identify with the trainings, particularize the training for their needs.

Dale Chapman: That is one thing. I think that probably more time spent with the Chancellors and Presidents. I think that this is a, this had one of the most impactful results of anything that has happened in my 25 years here as President, this TAACCCT grant.

So I think that trying to get the attention of Chancellors and Presidents a little more aggressively, I think, and get the collective thinking on this as opposed to, and a little bit of burden sharing so that I think there would have been more creativity coming out of that

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M: How are the impacts of the TAACCCT grant going to be scaled both at Lewis & Clark and at its partner colleges?

Dale Chapman: So, Delgado Community College is building a port campus on the major salt port there in New Orleans and doubling in size and scale, the port is, Panama Canal is expanding, and so that puts a lot of pressure on that port, so it's kind of a smart strategy for Delgado to be building this port campus and all of the occupational clusters around ports they are putting in place. So, these same companies travel the entire length of the Mississippi, so we're at the mid-Mississippi area, as is West Kentucky Community Technical College, because they come in where the Ohio is, we come in where the Missouri and the Illinois is. We have been approached by the maritime industry here to develop a maritime program. The Lewis & Clark Maritime Institute will come out of this. Delgado has been very generous in sharing their simulator software. They have mapped the rivers between St. Louis and New Orleans and so we'll be able to use that. But mates and deckhands and there are about seven or eight occupational clusters in that industry, and we'll be featuring all of those as part of our Maritime Institute.

M: So the Maritime Institute is a direct follow on from the activities of the grant?

Absolutely would not be anywhere near approaching being able to do this without this consortia, without the Department of Labor grant, and without Delgado, for example, as the partner.

M: Close—Thank you to Dale Chapman, President of Lewis & Clark College in Illinois. Stay tuned to additional conversations about the impact of TAACCCT with community college presidents in this podcast series. The Labor Department implements the TAACCCT program in partnership with the Department of Education. One point nine billion dollars (\$1.9 Billion) in grants were awarded under the TAACCCT program. For more information visit TAACCCT.org.