

Dorey Diab, President, North Central State College in Ohio

M: Today we welcome Dorey Diab, president of North Central State College in Ohio. North Central 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.

North Central State is part of the Advanced Manufacturing Mechatronics and Quality Consortium that was formed as a result of a TAACCCT Three grant award. The consortium is unique in that it's not a regional or state consortium but instead is made up of colleges from around the country: Mount Wachusett Community College in Massachusetts, Southwest Tennessee Community College in the Memphis, Tennessee area, Bossier Parish Community College in Louisiana, and of course us here at North Central State College in Mansfield, Ohio

M: Dr. Diab, please describe how you used the TAACCCT grant to drive change at your college.

DOREY DIAB: We really cannot understand the importance of grants such as the TAACCCT grant without really putting it into context of the environment that we have been living in. One important reason for the culture of innovation and change, especially in the area that the college services, it's because the low education attainment, the education attainment of our service region is really pretty low, at 15% in Baccalaureate degree in comparison to the 28% statewide and 32% nationally. A second important reason is the wide skills gap. Adults with some level of higher education is about 38% statewide. Economists and employers, government entities, all of them tell us that the demand in this globally competitive economy is more like 65%. Another reason is the global disruption of the internet and technology across the globe. Another reason is the demographics in our area is stagnant at best, not only that but also the number of high school graduates is really dropping. And the recent Great Recession has proved the validity of these concerns that we have and the environment that we live in.

So, these factors caused us to look at things in completely different way, realizing that if we can continue on doing things the same way we will get what we have gotten, and that is not the way to be in in this globally competitive world.

So we need to focus not only on the traditional student but also nontraditional students in order to raise that educational attainment and reduce the skills gap, and more

importantly help our people get better jobs, because with better jobs come better salaries and with that come better standard of living, better quality of life for all of us.

So along came the complete, the college completion pathway model. Now, the pathway model have identified, four key categories along the student success journey. Those are the connection, entry, progress, and completion, and that goes all the way from pre-college to post-graduation in order to enhance students' success and their ability to get jobs or transfer.

Through the TAACCCT grant we connected more with the jobs and families services, the employers in our area, and most importantly the adult population, mainly those impacted by the Trade Adjustment Act, which is an emphasis of the TAACCCT grant, the unemployed, the dislocated grant, and also the underemployed. Along the entry category we provided a simplified pathway for connected adults, for concerned adults into the industrial readiness training.

Along the progress category we provided a pathway from the industrial readiness training to certificates, like the Certified Production Technicians all the way through the Associate Degree, especially in engineering.

Along the completion category more adults are completing their training and certificates, maintaining or improving their current jobs or finding new jobs.

M: How has the TAACCCT grant helped you engage with employers and community partners to advance the College's mission and vision?

DOREY DIAB: You know, in community college it's just that. It's a college for the community. And so the TAACCCT grant helped us fulfill our mission even further by opening the door to a new way to engage the community partners, whether that is a community organization, government entities, foundations, business and industry, employers etc. So that really was a great help for that and pushing us further along this journey of partnerships. And also the other thing that helped us through this partnership, we're able to place industry experts in leadership roles which provide us with the real world versus academia type of approach to curriculum design and employer engagement, and so that made our curriculum more relevant to the employees and the employers.

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

DOREY DIAB: If it wasn't for the TAACCCT grant we really would not have been able to be as connected in partnering with adult population, business and industry, government entities, employers, and especially job and family services.

We also learned that in order to really meet the needs of our students we need to partner all together students, community, employers, etc. and that that would be the key for all our successes. And also one of the key things, one of the successful things of this consortium is the fact

that it's not a local consortium or a regional consortium, it's an interstate type of consortium from the different states that you have indicated. So we did not end up having to compete regionally, and it also provided us with an additional excellent source of sharing resources and best practices for the benefit of our region and our state.

M: What is your long-term vision to scale and sustain the great work that you have done thus far?

Sustainability is one of the biggest challenges of any grant, and generally speaking as an overall concept the more that grant gets embedded or the competencies or the learning get embedded into the curriculum the better it is for the sustainability of the program. So one of the things that for the TAACCCT accomplishment that are really truly aligned with our strategic plan, which is about enhancing student access and student success, very critical in today's environment. And not only that, they are also aligned with our STEM program, science, technology, engineering, and math, especially being a technical college and with a big need for our manufacturing and health sector that exists in our region.

So, updating and upgrading curriculum, engineering curriculum has been a key component of the long-term sustainability of this grant. And when you put it in more credit courses which are going to be continuing with our current program that really works well for sustainability.

One of the ways of sustaining grant is to build on the success of the existing grant and go after additional

grant, and so we have been successful, because as far as success in the TAACCCT grant we are able to go after the Right Signal Grant through the American Association of Community Colleges and the Lumina Foundation, and that will help us map training into industrial recognized certificates at the regional and national level. So it's really been a great thing for us and looking forward to continuing to implement that in our curriculum and sustain it for the long term.

M: Close—Thank you to Dorey Diab, President of North Central State College in Ohio. 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.

(Music up and out)