



Mapping Upward Project Emphasizes Importance of Employer Engagement

Over the past year, seven community colleges in North Carolina have been part of the [Mapping Upward](#) initiative, a national activity of the US Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education to support colleges engaged in the design of stackable credentials.

Among other outcomes, enhanced employer engagement activities have been a

key focus. In this issue, two *Mapping Upward* colleges share recent experiences.



Using Special Events to Engage New Partners

Isothermal Community College encourages peer colleges never to underestimate the importance of a well-planned event to advance community relationships. During spring 2017, Isothermal's technical curriculum department partnered with its customized training and human resource development programs to introduce the college's plans for a new Comprehensive Applied Sciences and Workforce Development Center. Positioned as an industry appreciation luncheon, the event was designed to bring together representatives from the college, regional industry, and local economic development organizations to learn about plans for the center and the training opportunities it presented. In preparation for the luncheon, an invitation with a rendering of the new building was printed in the college's print shop. Hand-addressed invitations were mailed four weeks before the event. Two weeks before the event, invitees who had not replied were contacted by telephone to make sure they had received the invitation and were asked to confirm their plans to attend. One week before the event an email reminder was sent to all invitees. Eighty-three of 90 invited guests attended, representing industry, economic development, and college partners. Area employers gained a new

understanding of the college's commitment to creating a pipeline of qualified workers with advanced manufacturing skills. As a direct result of the event, new employer partners have met with college staff to learn more about training, technical education, and partnering on work-based learning opportunities. *To learn more, contact [Joe Looney](#), dean of applied sciences.*

Reinventing Advisory Committees through a Business Industry Leadership Team Model

Over the last several years, advanced manufacturing programs at Forsyth Technical Community College have been directed by a faculty-led industry advisory committee. However, faculty felt that to achieve the level of employer engagement necessary to develop and maintain industry-responsive programs, the committee should be led by industry. With the assistance of a new committee chair, a high-level manager at a large manufacturing firm, the college has transformed its advisory committee into an employer-led business and industry leadership team (BILT). The goal is to engage industry professionals to drive curriculum improvement, recruitment, and community engagement. Selecting a chair from industry was critical to ensuring the team's initial success and effectiveness. BILT members also felt the need for new structures and collaborated to:

- Create a mission and vision statement,
- Draft a strategic plan,
- Draft a communication plan, and
- Choose an annual focus area.

The BILT's initial area of focus is student recruitment into advanced manufacturing programs. Other areas in which the BILT will be active include providing guest lecturers, mentors, and facility tours, in addition to driving curriculum improvement initiatives. *To learn more, contact [David Dinkins](#), mechanical engineering technology program coordinator.*

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