

## Testimony

### Committee on Education and the Workforce

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Dr. Keith Miller, President

Greenville Technical College

**Education drives economic growth, but not just any education. When employers and colleges work together to grow a skilled workforce, the individual, the company, and the economy prosper. Greenville and Upstate South Carolina are fortunate to attract new firms and to see existing businesses expand. Greenville Technical College has played an important role in this success. Our job now is to work with employers to bridge the skills gaps that exist in manufacturing, healthcare, IT and other industries. The revival of our economy requires the continued partnership of education and employers.**

#### **Making the Jobs Connection**

- A gap exists between the skills employers need and what workers bring to the table. Several thousand jobs will be available in the advanced manufacturing sector in Upstate South Carolina in the next three to five years, yet thousands of unemployed people are largely unqualified unless they get additional training and education.
- Greenville Tech is part of a regional approach addressing this issue. The Upstate Advanced Manufacturing Consortium will work to equip enough people with advanced manufacturing skills to support companies that locate and expand in the Upstate.
- The list of companies with manufacturing operations in this region reads like a who's who of industry, including BMW, BorgWarner, Bosch, General Electric, Gestamp, Milliken, Michelin, Nestle, and Timken. These companies and other provide a diverse array of manufacturing sectors with automotive, wind and gas turbines, tire and rubber, aerospace, plastics, metalworking, textiles, advanced materials, and consumer products represented.
- The transportation sector continues to grow. BMW leads the way, now the largest exporter of cars in the United States. BMW recently announced the company's new BMW Scholars program, an opportunity for Greenville Tech, Spartanburg Community College, and Tri-County Tech to help the company grow its workforce.

- To attract the nation's best and brightest to manufacturing careers where they will fill the shoes of retiring workers, Greenville Tech works with the National Association of Manufacturers on the Dream It. Do It. effort that invites young people to find and follow a passion into a manufacturing career.
- Greenville Tech is part of the Upstate effort to create an innovative workforce development project, made possible by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. The purpose is to work with employers to reduce training and recruitment costs while helping people become qualified for higher skilled jobs that earn higher pay.

### **Helping People Re-enter the Workforce**

- More than 230 nurses have re-entered the workforce after taking time away thanks to an online nurse re-entry option for RNs and LPNs. These are people like Diane Stewart, who completed the course in November 2010 and was sponsored by WIA through Trident Technical College. Stewart reactivated her lapsed nursing license and is now employed.
- The Quick Jobs with a Future program was developed in 2001 to give displaced workers and those going through occupational transition a way to gain relevant skills and enter the workforce in 90 days or less. Over the past ten years, Quick Jobs has helped 12,000 people. The program has been so successful that it went statewide in 2009 when the State Workforce Investment Board and State Tech partnered to use American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to support Quick Jobs training and get people back to work.
- Quick Jobs training has helped to write many success stories. For example, the woman who came to Greenville Tech when a layoff ended her 23-year career in a low-skilled manufacturing job. Sponsored by WIA, she completed the Physician Practice Health Information program and now works for a local hospital in medical records. Or the man who lost his job at a local plant when a fire closed it down. He completed a series of environmental courses, freelanced for local environmental consulting firms, and eventually became an employer himself, opening a company and hiring several people.

### **WIA Funding Makes a Difference**

- Since many Quick Jobs programs are skill based but do not award college credit, those enrolled can't often qualify for financial aid. Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding was critical in allowing students to use Quick Jobs to get back on their feet.
- With ARRA money exhausted and WIA funding reduced, we are now serving less than 20% of the number of the Quick Jobs clients we served with ARRA support.
- WIA funded incumbent worker training (IWT) grants have provided valuable assistance to companies to keep them and their employees viable and to reduce the risk of downsizing. Greenville Tech conducted IWT training for the life sciences and

advanced manufacturing sectors last year. The chemical sector applied this year, but there is no funding for IWT at this time.

- WIA has also been very supportive of Greenville Works, a coalition of local economic development and educational groups. WIA's ability to continue to fund this strategic initiative has been diminished this year.

### **Making the Education Connection**

- Over 500 students each semester from Greenville County Schools Career Centers earn dual credits, which count toward high school graduation and college, in programs including automotive technician, auto body, building construction, culinary arts, aircraft maintenance, AutoCAD, and welding.
- Our Early College project allows juniors and seniors to earn college credit and experience college work, saving them time and money.
- Greenville Tech works closely with all major four-year colleges and universities in the state. We have joint admission agreements, bridge programs, articulation agreements and a close collaboration with USC Upstate through Upstate Direct Connect.
- Greenville Tech is a partner in the University Center of Greenville, a consortium of higher education institutions working together to bring the people of Greenville greater access to educational opportunities.

### **Pell Grants are Critical**

- Without Pell grants, the single mother who struggles to provide for her family, the first generation college student hoping to raise his standard of living, and the unemployed individual who needs updated technical skills to qualify for one of today's jobs would not have the means to attend Greenville Tech.
- Approximately 50% of our students benefit from Pell grants. That means 7,412 Pell grant recipients receiving \$33,457,407.66.
- Steep cuts in Pell would leave these students with a much heavier dependence on student loans, a large loan debt upon graduation, the possibility of greater dependence on Lottery Tuition Assistance that might trigger reductions in awards, and ultimately, fewer students enrolling, an effect that would impact employers who need a steady supply of well-trained workers.

\*We commend Congress for putting into the recent debt limit extension legislation \$17 billion over two years to shore up the finances of the Pell Grant program. This action will ensure that all eligible students can continue to receive the \$5,550 maximum grant. This support for Pell was bi-partisan and we urge Congress to continue to act to keep this critical program whole.

## **State Funding Has Declined Dramatically**

- State funding for our students has decreased dramatically. For the 1999-2000 academic year, the state provided Greenville Tech with \$1,473 per student. By 2010-2011, that amount had been reduced to \$677.
- Tuition and fees make up a greater portion of our operating revenue than they once did. In 1990, tuition and fees were only 5.8% of the operating revenue, but in 2010, this source of funds was 52.7% of the total. When we have to raise tuition and fees to continue to meet our goals of providing high quality opportunities for learning, we impact the people who can benefit from what we offer.