

MONROE COUNTY FIELD HEARING

April 4, 2013

Field Hearing

Subcommittee on Higher Education & Workforce Training

Monroe County, MI

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Executive Summary

STATE OF THE COLLEGE

- Each year JCC serves more than 9,000 students in three counties and through on-line delivery of courses.
- Students enroll at JCC for a variety of reasons. To better align with the educational and career goals of our students JCC is adapting existing programs.

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYERS

- In December 2012, JCC received notification by the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) of available Michigan New Jobs Training Program (MNJTP) funds. Employers in essence receive free training dollars for individuals, by adding new jobs to their payroll.
- In early February, MNJTP contracts were sent to the Michigan Treasury totaling \$499,500.00 earmarked for training, through diversions of state withholding from new employees/positions
- Employers have identified both soft and technical skill deficiencies in workers, and therefore connected with JCC to create customized training to remedy these issues.
- An on-line job board was created for employers to utilize for their hiring needs. Qualified job candidates are referred to employers by JCC Faculty and the Career Coach in response to job vacancies.

MATCHING EMPLOYER NEEDS THROUGH CURRICULUM

- Technical expertise is integrated into curriculum to meet employer expectations, demonstrated through work based learning opportunities and job offers.
 - The curriculum of the work/life skills class (FYS) will incorporate the importance of soft skills, critical thinking and problem solving as these are fundamental characteristics found in successful employees.
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Field Hearing

Good morning. Congresswoman/Chairwoman, Foxx, Congressman Walberg and other distinguished guests.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training at this hearing entitled “Reviving our Economy: The Role of Higher Education in Job Growth and Development on behalf of Jackson Community College”.

Employers from all sectors have identified a variety of deficiencies relating to the workforce. JCC is working to address these issues through curriculum and program reform, customized training, student seminars; work based learning opportunities and advisory groups.

Recently a number of employers have contracted with JCC through the MNJTP grant to proactively address training of workers. Training for employees is more than just on-boarding for technical or hard skills; it includes a host of communication, soft skills and behavior awareness initiatives.

Examples of training requests and objectives we have received from local employers include personal coaching and mentoring, time management, trust and team building, employee engagement and sensitivity training. Additionally, local employers have expressed the need for quality workers in the field of manufacturing, and at all levels of the organization.

To help meet employer needs, the Associate in Applied Science program at JCC is designed to provide the hands-on and theoretical knowledge necessary to produce graduates that are properly trained, and job ready. The various concentrations within the Associate in Applied Science are high demand technical manufacturing disciplines. JCC is currently adapting existing programs and creating new curriculum to meet the newest technology and the more rigorous technical expertise that employers are seeking in candidates.

JCC is in the preliminary stages of creating the framework within this system to allow students interested only in a concentration to achieve that immediate goal and then later, as they progress in their careers, they can add the other academic core courses to expand their concentration to earn the Associate degree if they so choose.

This restructured approach will allow for a larger student base, and assist in getting students aligned with their educational and career goals faster. An additional benefit will be realized in meeting employer needs through access to qualified and competent job candidates.

Further, employer feedback tells us that many workers do not demonstrate proficiency in problem solving and critical thinking skills. To address this concern, JCC will be integrating basic math skills into the early concentration courses. This method should allow students to get the math experience they require within course(s) that are in their area of interest and through a platform designed to engage them while learning.

In addition to critical thinking and problem solving skills, employers report that they are experiencing and observing a lack of communication skills. Specifically, soft skills such as diversity appreciation, appropriate messaging and trust. As JCC continues to demonstrate flexibility and reform curriculum to address employer needs, the First Year Seminar (FYS) course for new students is also being modified.

This life/work skills course is designed to set the student on the pathway for success from a 360 degree perspective with both technical and soft skills imbedded into the coursework. To do this, the message of “creating a culture of achievement” is woven throughout the course and maintains center focus. This is the framework needed to support a stronger work ethic of the future workforce. Changes to this class are on-going and key stakeholder voices are heard to ensure that outcomes align student success. With course outcomes such as time management, critical thinking and teamwork, students taking this course will be workforce change agents, giving employers the quality and caliber of employees they need.

JCC's employer partnerships are beneficial to our students. As the Career Coach, I see first-hand, the contributions students make in the workplace through internships and other learning assignments. Students share positive feelings about their experiences in addition to a sense of pride and achievement which serves as validation for their sacrifices and hard work.

Ensuring that employers are finding quality workers is a priority for JCC and we will continue to participate in valuable discussions regarding expectations, implement best practices and research market trends to demonstrate our support. For the convenience of employers seeking to fill positions, the Jobs for Jets section on JCC's main web page was created. This venue affords employers the opportunity to quickly post jobs vacancies which are accessible to JCC students and alum. Later this month we are hosting a job fair to help local employers find the talent they seek for their organizations.

In summary, JCC is actively responding to our local employers by providing quality, work-ready graduates through reformed curriculum and programs designed with their input.

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today.

