Burning Questions and Mythbusters – Batch 1.0

Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy

Q: Who is selecting Task Force members?

A: Chancellor Harris is making the final selection. The Task Force is anticipated to have 26 members, with half the seats representing key internal constituency groups. Nominations are being solicited through the leadership bodies of these internal constituency groups. The other half of the seats will be filled by external stakeholders, representing constituencies that depend on our community colleges for workforce training. The membership of the Task Force (in part or whole) will be announced by the end of December. For a timeline of Task Force meetings, visit doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/StrongWorkforce/Events.aspx.

Q: Will faculty have a voice on the Task Force?

A: Absolutely! The Task Force will roll out in 3 phases and is designed to include representatives of as many voices as possible.

- In phase 1, Regional College Conversations invite practitioners, including local Academic Senate leaders and CTE faculty representatives to come together to generate and prioritize ideas to inform the Task Force on how to achieve its goals. The Chancellor's Office is working with ASCCC leader David Morse to help encourage local Senate leaders as well as CTE faculty to attend. This desire to engage faculty is further reinforced by the host CEOs in their invitations to the colleges in their region. Also, the Chancellor's Office has invited the ASCCC Executive Committee to join all Regional College Conversations by sending a representative, and they agreed.
- In phase 2, the ideas surfaced in phase 1 will be vetted with external stakeholders.
- Phase 3 is the Task Force itself. The Chancellor's Office has asked the ASCCC to nominate faculty representatives to serve on the Task Force. Desired skillsets include 1) experience contextualizing general education into CTE, 2) experience contextualizing basic skills into CTE, 3) experience embedding industry-valued credentials into a course/program, and/or 4) experience counseling students on a campus with strong CTE programming. By bringing forth this type of integrated expertise from the faculty, our system will receive input that will enable us to plan and be more effective in serving students and the state of California.

Q: Labor market information is so essential in retooling existing programs or the development of new programs. Are there resources to help us with this?

A: Yes. All colleges in a macro-region are supported by a dedicated Labor Market Research Center of Excellence expert. These experts have at their disposal an array of labor market information tools to support you. They also know of relevant research like sector profiles that can be helpful. And, they can commission or help you commission original research. Find your Center of Excellence expert here.

Q: Is there a way to find model courses/curriculum/programs upon which the faculty could build/refine/adapt/adopt?

A: There are regional, state and national networks that a college can access. Our system's curriculum inventory is searchable online any time. Then, consider comparing employability results of similar programs across colleges via the Salary Surfer and feel free to contact colleges whose program content and goals you would like to emulate. In addition to these tools, consider emailing the network of Sector Navigators or Deputy Sector Navigators or CTE Regional Consortia Chair/Vice Chair to help you locate curriculum, programs and certificates. They can email their respective local, state, and federal communities of practice to help you locate a model. Look them up in the directory.

Q: What about us CTE faculty who are outside of the priority and emerging sectors selection by our regions? Will we be left out of funding opportunities?

A: Aside from targeting investments in the priority and emergent sectors, resources will favor CTE programs with strong employability and completion (either completion of certificate, degree, transfer readiness, or quality industry-valued credential) outcomes. Those programs whose content prepares the students for well-paying jobs are likely to thrive in the future. To that end, it is important that colleges assume the ongoing responsibility for retooling programs and ensuring that the curriculum remains current and responsive to industry needs. This, in turn, will increase students' prospects for employability (placement or wage gain) and completion. Faculty needing support to retool their curriculum should discuss this with their CIO and CTE Dean.

Q: Program discontinuance is difficult and politically charged work. What help can we access to undertake this work?

A: Here are three resources: 1) the new LaunchBoard tool provides outcomes data consistent with requirements of accreditation helpful for you to have data-backed discussions with faculty, 2) learn the "how to" by reading the Program Viability Toolkit and 3) speak directly to other practitioners to counsel you on the process by emailing statewide LISTSERVE on which you belong.

Q: I am a CTE Dean who worked hard to discontinue a program only to have the FTES shifted to another area instead of applying the FTES towards meeting the labor market need that I intended. What is your advice?

One concern of CTE Deans is that many have undertaken the hard work to discontinue a program only to find that the FTES is shifted elsewhere instead of being applied to a new CTE program much needed by the labor market, as was intended. Statewide, this phenomena has resulted in a collective 12-year decline in "CTE as a percentage of the FTES" portfolio. College CIOs, CEOs, and Trustees should be aware of this phenomena and support the CTE Dean towards his/her ultimate goal of improving the workforce outcomes of the college's CTE programming.

Q: Who gets to keep the FTES if colleges within a region work together to deliver a program?

A: There is no change being proposed as to how FTES is allocated.

Q: A lot of CTE programs are higher cost because of the equipment/facilities/lab/supplies cost and instructional cost but colleges are reimbursed the same regardless. Are we allowed to bring this up in the Regional College Conversations?

Yes. The current funding structure has resulted in a 12-year decline in "CTE as a percentage of the collective FTES" portfolio. The higher cost structure of most CTE programs has been identified as being at the root of this collective behavior.   This is a topic ripe for discussion.

Q: Who gets to count completion if a student does the core sequence at my college then goes to another college to finish the specialty coursework?

A: Historically, the scorecard "win" goes to the college where the student starts. But, given the recent acknowledgement of the workforce outcome identified in "skill builder" short-sequence course-taking patterns, as well as the need for more modularization/stackability in CTE instructional design as well as regionally coordinated core vs. specialty coursework within a region, perhaps it is timely to discuss how to best account for and measure workforce outcomes.

Q: What can be done to streamline the CTE curriculum approval process? It moves too slowly for us to be responsive to industry?

A: Hopefully, the Regional College Conversations can surface good ideas on what can be done locally and regionally instead of at the state level. There is always room for continuous process improvements. Clearly, faculty must shepherd the curriculum work and be a partner in identifying opportunities for process improvement.

Q: My college is down to 1 full time faculty in each CTE discipline and he/she already feels overworked. How can we support him/her to do the needed work to retool programs?

A: Many CTE disciplines at a college have only one full time faculty. Some small, rural colleges cannot afford to hire a full time faculty but want to offer programs relevant to the labor market. The Regional College Conversations are intended to surface good ideas from practitioners on what support they need. Is there coordination or collective effort at the regional level that can help with some of these issues that cannot be solved by one college alone? How can the CTE Regional Consortia, Sector Navigators and Deputy Sector Navigators best help CIOs, CTE Deans, and CTE faculty (e.g., regionalize employer advisory committees so that there is less work for any one faculty)?

Q: CTE Faculty need externships with industry to stay current. Can you create a stipend to help us stay current?

A: Rather than each college taking on this endeavor alone, perhaps there can be a regional approach to support faculty pursuit of externships pertinent to their CTE field with the objective that faculty ultimately align curriculum with labor market needs. Stipends would clearly be needed, but the organizing of this program can be set up regionally instead requiring resources at every college. Hopefully, these types of ideas to support faculty professional development will surface through the Regional College Conversation process.

Q: We have initiative overload.

A: Higher education is experiencing disruption for a multitude of reasons. Public concern over student debt load and low completion rates; the shelf life of workforce skills is getting shorter; workers need to acquire training on an on-going basis; technology advances now enable time-to-competency and personalized approaches to education delivery in a way never before possible. These trends and many more developments that are not yet known to us will continue to influence and provide opportunities for us to change into the next decade. These trends are nationwide and the California Community Colleges will be affected.   The major initiatives of the Chancellor's Office aim for systemic progress. No doubt, our colleges do tremendous work on behalf of our communities and serve as anchors for our students.   It is for them that all our efforts matter.