

Testimony of

**Pat Schramm, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Board of South
Central Wisconsin**

and

Dr. Bettsey Barhorts, President of Madison College in Madison, Wisconsin

to

**US Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee
hearing**

**“Addressing Workforce Needs at the Regional Level: Innovative Public and Private
Partnerships”**

February 16, 2012

Chairman, Murray, ranking Member Isakson, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about regional workforce system innovations. My name is Pat Schramm, I am the Executive Director of the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin; I am joined by Bettsey Barhorst, President of Madison College, the primary technical college in south central Wisconsin with a 45,000 student population.

How to position our workforce with the skills needed by industry is a constant focus of our region's leaders. Wisconsin is a state that has already moved into a labor shortage environment due to aging populations and declining birth rates. We know as a community that if we do not concentrate on maintaining the skills of our current workers and preparing all of our available new workers, we will not stay economically viable as a region and a state. We began working over 10 years ago on a "Career Pathway" model with the goal to aggressively grow a skilled workforce for our region

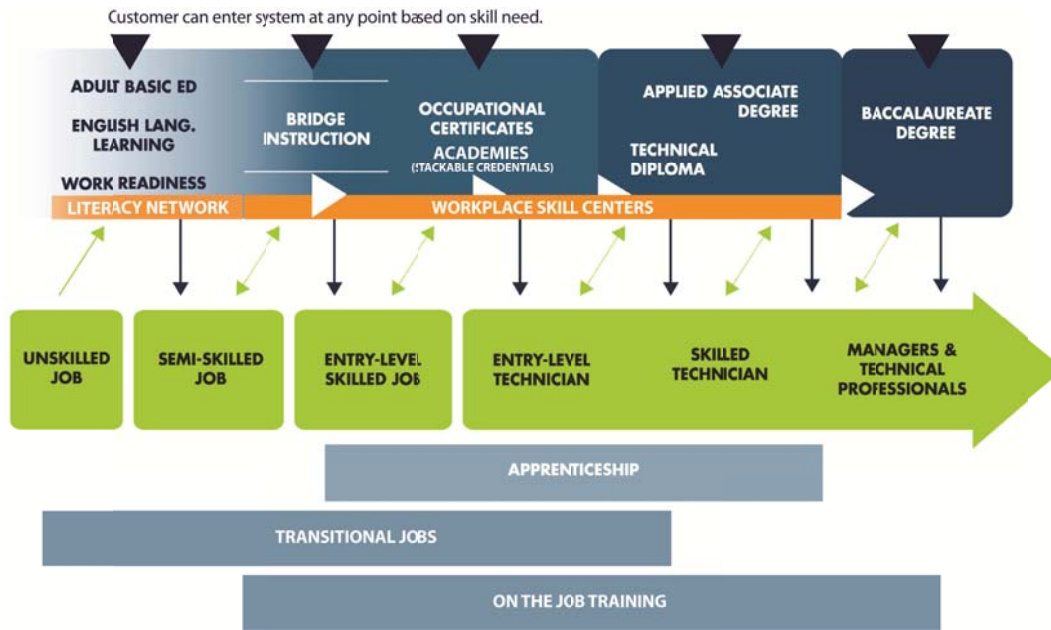
Background – Why and How

We began our work in 1999 as a collaborative of partners; Industry, Economic Development, Educators, the Workforce Development Board and contractors. These Partners were and continue to be committed to improve access, retention and completion of low skill, unemployed and dislocated workers to skill training and family supporting wages. At the Board level we had strong business leaders who understood that we needed to start doing something drastically different. We were working very hard but our training outcomes were not matching the financial investments that we were making. Workers were not successfully completing training and industry was having a very difficult time finding skilled workers. ***Does this sound familiar – this was 1999.***

With the help of the Joyce Foundation we began to work with experts who were pioneering "Career Pathway work. The experts helped us analyze our systems and understand our potential to innovate and most importantly, helped us to learn how to talk about our work. In 2003, we were ready to present to our Boards "Career Pathways" as the framework for how we would do business. At this time we presented a concept and set of principles to the Madison College Board and the Workforce Development Board. We asked both Boards to agree to commit to working within a "Career Pathway" framework. Both Boards agreed to make organizational commitments that included dedicating resources that each organization had in hand and to aggressively seek additional resources to grow the work.

For us, a Career Pathway model was and is an organized modular training platform offered in a more accessible and manageable format. This training is supported by a One Stop Delivery System where personnel are organized to support a workers career pathway progress. The student/worker is also supported by other workforce engagement strategies that can be used as needed, to assure a transition into employment such as

apprenticeships, on the job training and transitional jobs. The system is designed so that the customer can enter the system at any point based on skill need.



Our early work can best be described a proto-typing, small scale changes. The small scale experiments kept reaping results that we could clearly see would produce increased benefits to workers and industry. We just needed to grow the scale. In order to grown the scale of our work; we maintain a discipline resource development strategy. What this means is, when an opportunity presented itself, we would use the one time resources to build industry informed curriculums, integrate new technologies such as patient care simulators, portable robotics training platforms for manufacturing, interactive video conferencing systems within the One Stop System and other strategies that would help us increase the effectiveness of our efforts and have a lasting impact of 3 to 5 years. **Build capacity.**

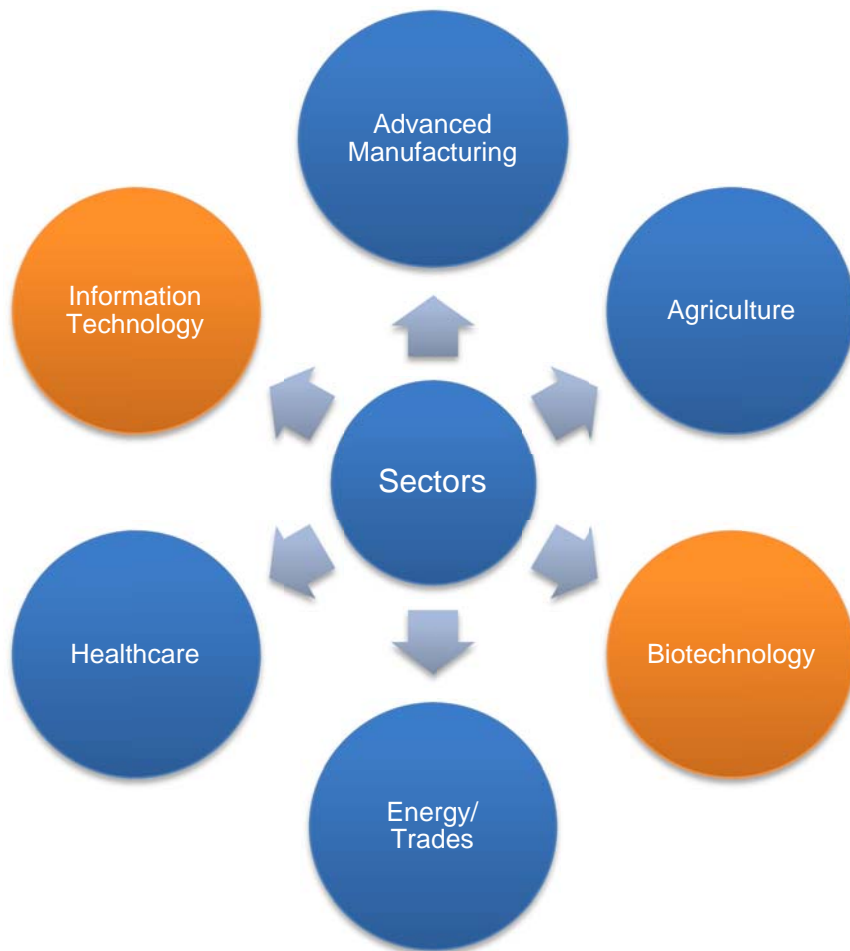
Examples of investment:

Timeline	Development	Investment	People Trained
2000	Department of Labor Industry Partnership Grant	\$1,400,000	998
2004	Workforce Development Board first investment in Career Pathway	\$325,000	400
2008	Community Based Job Training Grant – Biotech	\$2,400,000	550
2007 – 10	WIRED - Regional - 12 Counties	\$5,000,000	2740

2007 – 10	DWD Sector Grants - Biotechnology and Health Care - 12 Counties	\$442,000	200
2009	DOE FIPSE- Center for Adult Learning	\$700,000	600

Summary of the Design:

Key to our work has been our engagement with industry. We organize our work into industry sectors.



Industry Sectors are made up of groups of companies specific to each sector that make a commitment to us, to engage in ongoing conversations that are up close and personal. This industry engagement gives us insight into what the challenges are to maintain a skilled workforce. These employers inform our work. They participate in curriculum design; they serve as trainers for both One Stop System workshops and Technical College training. Most

importantly, they help us understand how their industries are changing so that we can be in front of the change.

There are five other very critical design pieces that have supported our “Career Pathway work.

1. At the College level, we re-organized and re-designed training strategies to provide a comprehensive approach to education and training for individuals that would lead to job placement and career advancement.

This approach recognizes there are career pathways that require specific credentials to advance within that industry. The Career Pathway approach acknowledges that people, whether they are displaced or incumbent workers, are severely limited in the amount of time they have to obtain a credential leading to employment or promotions.

The College and the Board recognized that to address the needs of individuals for skill development and advancement in jobs and pay, the College would need to develop a new means of combining education and training for different levels of employment in an industrial sector.

The development of industry driven curriculum requires analyzing the job structure in a given industry sector, such as health care or manufacturing, and identifying the competencies that are expected of workers at each level in that industry. The training programs are then structured to support an individual while they advance along the career path in that industry - obtaining new skills, promotions and increases in pay.

To implement career pathways the College had to break with the approach that community colleges have used for years: a credential or a degree that requires one or two years of full-time study.

The career pathway model requires that curriculum design be focused on providing the education and training an individual would need to meet the work requirements of a particular job in a career pathway. For the College this has become the primary consideration in designing credentials.

The College has broken down a final credential, such as a degree, into intermediate credentials that can be obtained by an individual. The intermediate credential is developed in co-ordination with industry so that an employer knows when a prospective employee with that credential applies for a job that he or she is qualified.

These intermediate credentials are stackable – that is each intermediate credential will build off one another until a student obtains a degree or diploma often after they have entered the workforce.

This model better serves all of the College’s customers. For dislocated workers, it provides them with short, practical training that will give them the skills to enter a career pathway and begin receiving a paycheck once again. Incumbent workers have the ability to efficiently obtain the necessary skills they need for a promotion. Traditional students that find they need to enter the workforce before they can complete their degree will have accumulated industry recognized credentials that will lead to initial employment.

2. Re-designed the One Stop System.

Instead of just using the career pathway approach exclusively for training programs, the Workforce Development Board worked to use the model for all services provided by the workforce system. All workforce system staff is organized to support a career pathway model.

One Stop System customers are provided service on the very front end of their engagement by a Career Advisor (connected to the One Stop System) who helps the customers assesses their skills and map a career pathway strategy. The Case management system and the job placement and retention staff are organized by industry. This enables the staff to become experts in their assigned industry. It also helps the staff better organize resources to support each customers targeted career pathway. Within our prepared testimony we have provided you a graphic of what this staff alignment looks like at the ground level.

Career Pathway System



3. Worked with the College to establish Job Center based skill centers to support adult learners. These services are co-funded by the College and the Board using Workforce Investment Act funds.
4. Build curriculums so that basic skills were weaved into and reinforce entry level technical skill training.
5. Organize as much training as possible in cohort delivery – where you move a group of similarly skilled students/workers through the training at the same time, giving them an opportunity to build peer to peer support. This also enables us to effectively organize resources around cohorts.

Partners to the Effort

This work is not for the weak of heart. It takes a corps of partners to make it happen starting first with dedicated industry partners. We have over 100 company leaders who work with us throughout year to understand their industries. This understanding is augmented by a deep engagement with our economic development partners at the state, regional and local level, our education partners – we are gifted with a organized technical college system. We have working access to not only the local technical college leadership but also the Wisconsin Technical College System staff. For the workforce system we have contractors that are willing to innovate with us and a Workforce Development Board that seeks and supports innovation.

Results

Over the past 10 years – we have trained over 7,000 workers on the “Career Pathway” platform. This has included unemployed and low skill adults and entry level incumbent workers. Over the past 3 years we have seen an improvement in our Credential attainment rates of 20% plus, improving from a rate of 65% successful completion of training to 89% successful completion. In 2010 the One Stop System staff increased by 40% the number of people who successfully entered and retained employment.

Where we are now: The College has integrated the proven curriculums into the standing Programs of the College. Our entire One Stop System is organized to support career pathway success. The “Career Pathway” service and training framework enables us to align our resources, build and deliver our services and training in way that supports our region’s economic vitality. The Workforce Development Board of South Central dedicates 100% of its Workforce Investment Act resources to the Career Pathway Service and Training framework.

The State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and the Wisconsin Technical College system with the support of their own resources and help from the Joyce

Foundation and other national experts such as CLASP are moving to implement “Career Pathway” strategies statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.