

LEARN & EARN
MICRO-BUSINESS CASE

Health Careers
Collaborative



Employer-led Collaborative Creates Skilled and Credentialed Talent Pool

Health Careers Collaborative

Employer-led consortium collaborates to increase the skills and education levels of entry-level workers, creating shared talent pool and setting best practice business standards.

UC Health (formerly Health Alliance) and Cincinnati Children's Hospital, two of the largest health care employers in Cincinnati, Ohio, were struggling and competing against each other to hire talented professional employees, while experiencing high turnover rates in entry-level positions. In 2004, these health care employers met with Cincinnati State Technical and Community College (Cincinnati State), and educational partner, Great Oaks Career Campuses, and discussed innovative solutions to the shortage of professional health care employees and ways in which they could work together to "grow their own" talent pool of skilled and diverse workers. These organizations founded the Health Careers Collaborative (HCC) of Greater Cincinnati, a business-led consortium providing employers with skilled, credentialed, loyal and diverse workers, while providing entry-level workers with educational opportunities leading to career mobility.

HCC Produces Skilled and Credentialed Employees

HCC successfully created a career pathway with multiple entrance and exit points for incumbent, low-skilled, entry-level hospital workers to advance, as well as for unemployed and disadvantaged individuals to complete education and training that positions them to fill entry-level work opportunities created as incumbent workers advance. To date, 3,000 credentials have been earned by participants, one-third of whom are minorities. Pathway participants are identified by the health care employers or local community organizations, and then assessed with WorkKeys upon entrance and at various points along the career pathway. Based on assessments, 90 percent of incoming students to Cincinnati State's associate's degree program require developmental

education classes, for which employers have agreed to pay tuition.

After completing the developmental classes, these working learners are grouped in learning community cohorts and enrolled in one of five current associate's degree programs: nursing, respiratory care, occupational therapy assistant, clinical lab technician, and surgical technician. The cohort structure helps create strong bonds with fellow working learners facing similar challenges.

Employers agree to prepay tuition for entry-

PERSONAL STORY

Barbara Schwab was motivated - she wanted to pursue her postsecondary degree and start a career, but she could not pay for school. After working at a doctor's office for many years, she took a full-time job with TriHealth in their Insurance Verification department because they provided tuition assistance. In 2008, she entered the *School at Work*® program and took general education courses to refresh her education. In 2009, her *School at Work* mentor told her about HCC and she applied and entered with the first TriHealth HCC cohort. She finds the support from TriHealth, Cincinnati State and her peers in her cohort to be extremely beneficial and essential to her success. In February 2013, Barbara will earn an associate's degree in nursing. Barbara plans on staying with TriHealth after receiving her degree, thankful for the company's support of her education. By receiving her nursing degree, Barbara says, "I will be able to help someone and care for them, and if I can do that for one person, I think I will have done a whole lot in my lifetime."

Business Outcomes

- 11.9% ROI (UC Health)
- 85% retention rate
- 90% transition to finish bachelor's degree
- Credentialed and skilled talent
- Diverse workforce

Employee/Student Impact

- Prepaid postsecondary tuition
- Job coach and career navigation
- Workplace flexibility
- Informal and formal supports

Health Careers Collaborative

- Business-led model
- Establish professional health care talent pool
- Contextualized curriculum
- Career pathway for entry-level workers

level workers directly to Cincinnati State, recognizing that typical tuition reimbursement benefits create a barrier to continuing education for low-wage workers. Job coaches provided by employers and community partners mentor participants, help them develop work-ready and interview skills, and promote understanding of health career pathway opportunities. Curriculum, 30 percent of which is online, is developed and updated jointly by the health care employers and Cincinnati State.

Community partners, including Dress for Success Cincinnati, Mercy Neighborhood Ministries, Inc., and Superjobs Center, play important roles by identifying potential low-income and unemployed workers from the community who might participate in HCC, assessing applicant skill levels and providing additional supports to increase odds of success.

■ Setting Standards for Employer Participation

Employer partners are held to best practice standards in order to join the consortium based on lessons learned and their understanding of the needs of working learners. Employers in the consortium take responsibility for paying tuition for non-credit developmental courses to prepare working learners for collegiate level classes. HCC employers also agree to move beyond simple tuition assistance and prepay tuition directly to Cincinnati State, reducing the burden on their employees. Employers encourage their managers to work with the participants around flexible work scheduling in order to make time for education. Each employer also offers a retention specialist or career navigation coach to help working learners overcome barriers while progressing through the career pathway. TriHealth piloted the use of *School at Work*® programs, which includes contextualized academic refresher courses for incumbent workers, and is now adopted by all employers.

HCC is piloting the use of the National Career Readiness Credential and Profile Plus assessments to offer pathway participants enhanced career exploration and guidance. Setting these standards and holding all employers respon-

sible ensures that only best practice companies, deeply committed to “growing their own” professional workforce, join the collaborative.

“HCC demonstrates that when business, higher education and community organizations collaborate they can create a more skilled and ready workforce and provide the employer with a positive return on their investments in training and education.”

— Alan R. Jones, HCC Chair
Corp. VP of HR and Public Safety, (Ret.)
UC Health

■ Return on Investment and Outcomes Reported

The key to this successful model, according to the employers, is that it is business-led and that the education and community organizations are willing and trustworthy partners. The early findings indicate a 11.9 percent return on investment for UC Health, measuring retention, absenteeism and performance scores. Since 2004, more than 3,000 HCC participants have entered the pathway and earned a credential, and nearly 200 have enrolled in the associate’s degree program; 23 have graduated to date. Of the two most recent graduating associate’s degree classes, 90 percent went on to pursue bachelor’s degrees. For the entry-level health care certificate training, there is an 88 percent completion rate and an 82 percent job placement rate for unemployed certificate graduates, with starting salaries of more than \$12 an hour. Those incumbent workers who progressed through the career pathway held an average GPA of 3.24 and an 85 percent retention rate with their current employer, compared to 35 percent among non-pathway participants. The collaborative is jointly creating and expanding the pathways and curriculum available to students with a recent focus on long-term health care and health information technology. New health care employers continue to be recruited, most recently, Mercy Health Partners, and each contributes to evolving HCC’s best practices and student success.

For more information about HCC, please visit www.hccgc.org

COLLABORATIVE SECTOR: Health Care
COLLABORATIVE HISTORY: Since 2004

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About Corporate Voices

Corporate Voices is the leading national business membership organization shaping conversations and collaborations on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we are a unique voice, and provide leading and best-practice employers a forum to improve the lives of working families, while strengthening our nation’s economy and enhancing the vitality of our communities.

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Find Out More

Corporate Voices is committed to identifying and spotlighting businesses supporting postsecondary completion while making significant contributions to internal company goals. “Best practice” talent development models that increase access to career opportunities through education and training are being examined for characteristics that are transferable and replicable to other employers. This research is being conducted with the guidance of the Corporate Voices Learn and Earn Business Leadership Team consisting of business executives leading promising models and those interested in peer-to-peer learning. If you are interested in joining, contact Peggy Walton at pwalton@corporatevoices.org. Team members include:

- Verizon Wireless
- UPS
- Convergys
- Expeditors
- CVS Caremark
- AOL