

Front Range Community College High School Program

Fort Collins, Colorado

Focus on Business and Industry Involvement

Colorado Innovation Profile

Colorado's Career and Technical Education programs are developing a seamless system of education that ensures ease in student transition from one educational system to another and from one level of instruction to another.

There are eight key strategies that Colorado CTE teachers and administrators are implementing:

- *Implementing Career and Technical Education Plans of Study;*
- *Strengthening Accountability for Results;*
- *Moving To a Project-Based Focus for Local Planning and Implementation;*
- *Assessing Career and Technical Skills;*
- *Integrating Academic and CTE Skills and Knowledge;*
- *Transforming Professional Development, Recruitment and Retention of CTE Teachers;*
- *Ensuring Effective Instruction and Strategies for Special Populations; and*
- *Connecting CTE to Employers and Workforce Priorities.*

The Colorado Community College System has prepared a series of "Innovation Profiles" that describe how Colorado's schools, community colleges and community partners are creating innovative strategies to improve their programs on behalf of students.

Key Innovation Activity

Related Strategy: Connecting CTE to Employers and Workforce Priorities

Front Range Community College (FRCC) offers high school students the opportunity to participate in rigorous CTE programs on a college campus and to accelerate their accumulation of college credits. FRCC highlights the value of business/industry involvement.

Background

The High School Programs at Front Range Community College are CTE programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for gainful employment matching the present and emerging needs of the community. Students enrolled in these programs spend half of the school day at their home high school and the other half at FRCC in one of the following 12 High School Programs:

- Animal Technology and Research;
- Architecture and Landscape Design;

- Automotive Technology and Service;
- Carpentry- Home Framing;
- Culinary Arts;
- Equine Science and Husbandry;
- Industrial and Design Technology;
- Ironworking and Industrial Welding;
- Law Enforcement Training and Exploration;
- Med-Prep- CNA;
- Plant and Greenhouse Science;
- Wildlife, Forestry, and Natural Resources.

Four hundred high school students from the Poudre and Thompson school districts participate in The High School Scholarship Programs. These programs allow juniors and seniors selected by their home high school counselor to attend one of 12 programs for the one-year program. Students receive a scholarship in the full amount of tuition from their respective school district. The twelve programs are an extension of the student's home high school experience, but are delivered by FRCC. High school students do not take classes with college students, but are in a separate program with separate classes.

To participate, students are expected to be committed to an entire academic school year at FRCC. Students enrolled in these high school programs do not receive a college transcript or college credits, but receive high school "elective" credits on their home high school transcript. But, in 10 of the 12 programs, FRCC offers articulation to students upon completion of the High School Program as long as students: enroll at FRCC within three years of graduation of high school, enroll as a student at FRCC in a related postsecondary program, and receive a letter grade of C or above (or a B in the Automotive Technology and Service Program) in high school courses.

Key Factors in Implementation

Strong Industry Connections

Students obtain intensive work-based experience and training through the High School Programs at FRCC. A strong relationship with local business and industry adds value to the educational experience at FRCC by way of in-class training and off-site internships.

High School Program Director Gary Cagle emphasizes the importance of challenging business partners to get actively involved in helping strengthen FRCC's High School Program. He tells business partners directly, "If you don't participate, you relinquish the right to complain about our programs." In challenging one industry group to action, Cagle said "Enough is enough about complaining about manpower. It's time to put money where your mouth is."

This straight talk is yielding results. To strengthen FRCC's relationship with the construction industry, Cagle decided to participate in high profile business organizations by serving on the committee for the Association of Builders and Contractors in Colorado (ABC). That group alone represents about 150-175

major home builders, contractors, masons, ironworkers, etc. in Colorado. He started serving on ABC's committee to encourage industry's involvement in training a new generation of workers.

Business Partners as Adjunct Instructors

FRCC encourages its business partners not only to provide advice on the structure and content of its courses, but to actively share in classroom instruction. Industry representatives bring a level of immediacy and relevance to their teaching to which students respond. An electrical company stepped forward saying, "We will come in and bring in our supervisors, bring in our lead people, and teach an electrical unit." Many of ABC's member organizations also responded by offering to come to the High School Program classrooms to teach lessons. For example, workers from LPR construction, a \$600 million ironworking company based in Loveland, now come in to teach forklift training and blueprint reading. LPR also committed to assisting in the redesign of FRCC's ironworking climbing structure. Having industry representatives actually teach in the classroom represents a significant shift in how teachers see their role, but FRCC teachers have largely embraced the approach and see the benefits of having such a high level of direct industry involvement.

Work-based Internships

Another key strategy is offering work-based internships to connect students with business and industry. Students in seven of the 12 programs have an internship experience of up to 72 hours. Most programs run Monday through Thursday on the internships and students are required to come back to FRCC to meet with fellow students and teachers on Fridays. During these "touch base" sessions, students and teachers identify their positive and negative experiences and learn about where they are struggling. Students indicate that the internship reinforces the work ethic training they have been receiving at FRCC.

Cagle says that the internships should not be perceived by employers as "cheap labor," but must give the student a worthwhile educational experience. To ensure that the internship has value and contributes to a student's educational experience, the companies offering internships must come to campus one night so that FRCC staff can outline the expectations of the internship. FRCC teachers maintain a strong connection to the student and the worksite by visiting each student at their internship site and meeting with the student's supervisor.

Not every student qualifies for a community-based internship, but those who do qualify take the experience very seriously and perform well for their sponsors. In the 2007-2008 year, out of 155 students interning with about 100 employers, only one student did not complete the internship. There are other payoffs too. About 40 percent of those students that complete internships are typically hired for summer jobs at the company with which they interned.

The role of business and industry is so critical to FRCC's philosophy that FRCC intentionally hires most, if not all, of its instructional staff for the High School Program directly from industry, as opposed to hiring teachers with no industry experience and no industry connections. This direct industry experience makes it more natural for instructors to build the type of ongoing business education partnerships that are critical for FRCC's programs to succeed.

Results

In a 2007 vocational follow-up survey given to 2005-06 graduates, 73% of graduates were continuing education and 43% were employed in a field related to the training they received at FRCC.

Teachers of the High School Programs noticed that sharing a campus with postsecondary students encouraged a rigorous, college-bound culture amongst the secondary students in the program. Based on data from 2001-2006, 67% of High School Program at FRCC students continued their education at a postsecondary institution, 32% were employed in an area related to their program of study, and students in 10 of the 12 CTE programs received articulated college credit at FRCC.¹

Last Updated August 30, 2008

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This Innovation Profile was created by **Meeder Consulting, LLC** (www.meederconsulting.com), a firm specializing in leadership and aligning education systems with workforce needs, on behalf of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS). CCCS administers and leads career and technical education in Colorado on behalf of secondary education, community colleges and other CTE providers. Information about CTE in Colorado can be found at www.cccs.edu and www.ColoradoStatePlan.com.

¹ Source: CTE Fast Facts, FRCC publication.