



Aggressive colleges pitch hard for billions in new money

A handful of industrious university relations officers are getting access to a gushing new stream of federal, state and private funds. It's not business as usual. The measuring stick has now become not how many degrees you have granted or welders you have trained, but whether you re-invented the regional economy to compete on a global basis.

The stakes are higher. The players are different. The competition is hardly "collegial." But for the tenacious leader who has the skills to cobble together a long list of seemingly strange bedfellows into an integrated team and craft a bold strategy, the rewards are huge.

Some surprising new money sources like the Department of Labor are packing 8-figure incentives. Even state legislatures and familiar foundations are anteing up bigger numbers; but they are more demanding in what they expect, asking academic institutions to work more productively with each other and with state and local governments, foundations, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and employers.

While there are some losers, there are plenty of winners in this new game. Here are a few examples.

A new role for an existing consortium

"It's not maybe. It's mandatory," says Pennsylvania College of Technology's

Larry Michael about the expectation of real collaboration.

Since 1999, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development has doled out \$120 million through its Guaranteed Free Training incumbent worker development program. The funding priorities for basic skills and more sophisticated IT training were set by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, local Workforce Investment Boards, the Ben Franklin Technology Partners, Industrial Resource Centers, chambers of commerce and local industrial development associations. WEDnetPA, an existing consortium of 28 Pennsylvania colleges, is the administrator, and its consortium members are also the training suppliers.

Ironically, during the first year, only 10 percent of the money went to the consortium partners; 60 percent went directly to employers for in-house development and 30 percent to third parties. But even colleges can learn new tricks. By 2005, the consortium partners share reached 30 percent and continues to grow.

Per-worker funding caps and other restrictions will probably limit the consortium's penetration of this program. However, executives and managers at the individual schools are

honing their marketing skills working with the increasingly powerful private sector and economic development engines in their regions, that are now shaping education policy and distribution of funds.

Department of Labor trumping the Department of Education?

President Bush turned to the Department of Labor to run the new American Competitiveness Initiative. Labor had already created the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED). WIRED involves 197 regional economic development entities with themselves include community colleges, universities, governments and private economic development agencies who competed for \$195 million in grants.

Not everyone got a slice of that pie. In fact, 13 regions were each awarded a \$15 million check. Another 13 were each awarded \$100,000 in seed money. An additional \$65 million was just awarded to them in January. None are typical voc-tech worker training programs. In central Indiana, Purdue is leading a program of advanced materials and manufacturing, and agribusiness. In Montana, it's fuels technology and bio-diesel. In upstate New York, the University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology together are helping transform a manufacturing economy dependent on Kodak and Xerox into an innovation economy driven by photonics and optics.

What's the catch? These consortia had to develop a marketing plan in which they define the regional economy, develop a strategic leadership group comprised of academia and community leaders, do a regional assessment to map current assets, develop an innovative economic and talent development strategy, and determine the resources that can be leveraged and aligned to transform the regional economy.

Emily DeRocco, Assistant U.S. Secretary of Labor described an early meeting: "Representatives from a university sat in the corner, said nothing and had no idea why they were even in a room with community college

Continued on page 48

Characteristics of the new money model

- Surprising new sources with fat wallets.
- Paydays that look more like winner-take-all than share-and-share-alike.
- Bare-knuckled competition.
- Productive collaboration among both academic and non-academic entities.
- Distinct segments within the workforce.
- Focus on regional economic development.
- Strategic instead of tactical solutions.
- Expectations of innovation and measurable impact.

Robinson

Continued from page 46

and economic development people. Fast forward a few years and National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges has become the self-appointed leader and advisor to the movement."

Private foundations are financing partnerships

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has been awarding match grants, not to universities, but directly to local foundations to coordinate nurse education efforts.

Such collaborative efforts are expensive and complex. They require real leadership and unprecedented cooperation. The University of Massachusetts, Amherst's Outreach Workforce Development Initiative and the local Workforce Investment Board were both instrumental in forging a partnership to increase the number of nurse educators in western Massachusetts. The partnership

includes two-year and four-year academic institutions and service providers, and they are encouraging nurses and students to pursue master's or Ph.D.'s to become nurse educators. The local funding source is the Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation, with help from the Massachusetts State Office of Workforce Development. Administrative management is provided by the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County. The two-year budget for this one example is over \$400,000.

In exchange for tuition, fees, books and living expenses, each participating student will commit to: 1) earning their MSN or Ph.D. in a timely manner; 2) teaching at a partner institution while attending school; 3) remaining in western Massachusetts and teaching at one of the region's nursing schools.

According to program director Kelly Aiken, success necessitates a mixed bag of requirements and results. Educational programs, curric-

ula, credit and transfer policies must encourage advancement of nurses. Healthcare employers must make changes in job descriptions. Employers must increase access to advanced nursing education. Tailored academic support services must be provided by employers and educational institutions to nurses who are studying while working.

Katrina, The Salvation Army and a university near you

Over the course of 10 years, CE Technologies has spent upwards of \$20 million to develop a uniform skills certification system. In 2005, CE engaged eight university partners including Rutgers, LSU and Sacramento State, and began doing business as the National Business Services Alliance. NBSA offers 150 tests that assess mastery of skills in 80 job titles covering 60 percent of U.S. jobs. Employees who are deficient can take a range of courses from any of the eight Alliance colleges. Upon completion a successful reassessment produces a

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skill certificate. Employers can use the same methodology to select new hires or identify skills gaps and prescribe requisite coursework for existing employees. The Alliance colleges retain all revenues from courses taken, and they share revenue from skills certification and NBSA projects.

Coincidentally with the rollout of this program, Hurricane Katrina displaced a half million workers, leaving them without documentation or references. The Salvation Army donated \$6 million to NBSA and its colleges to prepare 5,000 survivors for reemployment. NBSA has identified other specialty segments such as mature workers, those out-placed by base closings, military spouses, persons with disabilities, immigrants and Native Americans that offer targeted enrollment opportunities. Senior Director Laura Vandendorpe says she is not expecting to find a willing university in every state. Instead, she is recruiting only those progressive colleges who grasp the scope of these marketing opportunities and are willing to move decisively.

More opportunities for colleges and universities

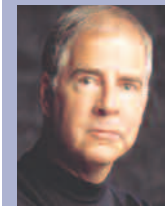
While many community colleges are adroitly morphing to meet changing needs and capture the emerging opportunities, universities have been slow to see their role in workforce development. Yet the marketplace is enormous and can be enormously profitable. Companies lose as many as half of their workers with mission-critical skills every five to ten years. Meanwhile, Baby Boomers make up one-third of the workforce, and their looming retirements will create a shortfall of millions of needed workers. In addition to entry-level assembly line and trades jobs, there are career paths opening wide in biotechnology, software development, nano-technology and geo-spatial technology.

Universities can use their positions of respect to organize economic "clusters" that seek to address the needs and concerns of interrelated businesses, trade associations and educational institutions. Campus

leaders who are interested in playing a role should bone up on the technology transfer and commercialization challenge laid out in the Milken Institute's *Mind to Market* report.

Meanwhile, university presidents who are tired of beating their heads against the wall at the state legislature might re-aim their marketing efforts. For example, the FY 2007 federal budget earmarks \$3.4 billion for newly created Career Investment Accounts, which workers can spend at their discretion on education. Eight states are piloting that initiative.

There are billions coming forth from government, private foundations and industry groups. As Secretary DeRocco says, "This is your tuition." ■



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