**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**TAACCCT Student Recruitment: Strategies for Success**

**Monday, July 10, 2017**

*Transcript by*

*Noble Transcription Services*

*Murrieta, CA*

JENNIFER JACOBS: Now, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Eugenie Agia. She's a workforce analyst for TAACCCT grants at the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Eugenie?

EUGENIE AGIA: Thank you, Jen. Hello, everyone, and thank you for joining us on today's webinar on student recruitment strategies. Before getting started we have two brief announcements about the upcoming round four TAACCCT convening.

First, you should have received a save the date for the event, which will be held on September 26 to the 27th here in Washington, D.C. The convening will be a great chance to share promising practices and early evaluation results, provide peer networking opportunities, and promote the impacts of TAACCCT through scaling and sustainability.

Second, a call for presentations has gone out to all grant leads who have until Friday, July 28th to submit a proposal to present. The themes for the presentations are innovations around the following topics: scaling and sustainability, career pathways, job placement, acceleration strategies, partnerships with the workforce development system or other stakeholders, employer engagement, student supports, and industry focus.

And let me emphasize that presentations on the topic of scaling and sustainability are encouraged, especially given that this is the final round of TAACCCT and the last TAACCCT convening. As mentioned, grant leads are in charge of the proposal process. So if you are a partner college interested in submitting a proposal separate from your consortium, please inform your consortium lead. As always, feel free to e-mail the TAACCCT mailbox with any questions.

And with that, I would like to introduce today's facilitator, Christian Lagarde, project manager of Workforce and Economic Development at the American Association of Community Colleges. Christian, take it away.

CHRISTIAN LAGARDE: Thank you, Eugenie, for that, and hello, everyone. As Eugenie just described, I can't believe – she just said it is the final TAACCCT convening. That sort of shook me a little bit to think that since 2011 – 2012 is my start date with TAACCCT – that we've been undergoing this journey for that long, and this is the final convening. So yes. I hope all you round fours that are on the call, you're in attendance, please, if you have something great to talk about, please submit and do – for that call for presentations.

So this is Christian Lagarde. For those who have heard my voice or have been on our monthly webinars in the past, you know that we have a little – this is going to be a little bit of a change. For those that have participated in the monthly calls that I facilitate, we do it more consultancy style where we invite a grantee to come in and share their problem and we try to crowd source it together. They give ideas. They give their challenges. We share our own challenges and share some successes along the way.

This time we sort of flipped it a little bit. This time we went looking for a successful grantee involved and had a successful track record in recruitment, and I am very happy to say that we got one, a very, very stellar model of recruitment, and that is the Building Illinois Bioeconomy Consortium. With that I am now going to hand it off to Diana and Shannon from the consortium to talk about what they did and what you could do in your consortium to help your recruitment numbers. And with that I give – I hand it off to Diana.

DIANA NASTASIA: Good afternoon, everyone. As you can see, the title of our presentation is lessons learned from a TAACCCT bioeconomy consortium. The speakers today will be myself. I'm Diana Nastasia. I have a PhD in communication– (inaudible) – scores, and I am currently a project management associate for the Building Illinois Bioeconomy Consortium.

The project manager of the consortium was supposed to also be with us. Her name is Courtney Breckenridge. She leads our processes on the TAACCCT grant. Unfortunately, she's not with us or, fortunately, she's not with us because she's in Washington, DC at the bioeconomy 2017 conference and also meeting with an array of public and private stakeholders for sustainability purposes. So we are making all that great effort towards building sustainability for our projects and programs.

We also have on the call Shannon McGhee. Shannon McGhee works with the Hawthorne Strategy Group based in Chicago in Illinois also, and the Hawthorne Strategy Group has been retained by our consortium to do the public relations and marketing and outreach for our consortium. They have been working with us for more than a year now. They are going to be with us until the end of our TAACCCT grant, and they are the group that really leads our marketing efforts and makes us thrive in terms of student recruitment and retention. So Shannon will be covering a lot of those technical aspects that you will want to hear about. Next slide, please.

I will be giving you a little bit of background about our consortium overall, the sector we operate in, the models we use in all of our work, some of our programs, those kinds of general things, and then, as I mentioned, Shannon will drive you through the actual marketing efforts and student recruitment efforts. Next slide, please.

I will be telling you just a little bit about what bioeconomy is. So we operate in a sort of a hot button sector, which is the bioeconomy. This is the sector for which we applied for the TAACCCT grant and succeeded to secure our round four TAACCCT grant. And just to give you a broad idea about what bioeconomy is, this is from the Institute of European Environmental Policy from a 2015 document or study.

As a system, the bioeconomy has existed since humans first appropriated natural resources for their own gain, such as burning firewood or cultivating crops. So in this definition the bioeconomy is something very old, something that has existed ever since humans have existed. On the other hand – and this is from the U.S. Congress from a 2016 study – the bioeconomy is innovation leading to the sustainable eco-efficient transformation of renewable biological resources into food, energy, and other industrial products. So in this case it's dabbed as innovation. So it's old and new.

It's a domain that stands just sort of at that crossroads between something that has existed forever and something that is new, and I'm sure many of you operate in such fields, fields that have been been our grandparents' but are also ours and we try to showcase to our potential students, to our students that they are both way old and in the same time cutting edge, very modern. Next slide, please.

So on this backdrop of the bioeconomy as a sector, a set of five universities and colleges have put together a grant proposal for the TAACCCT round four, and in 2014 we were awarded a $10 million grant for this round four. The consortium has spent the first two years building those programs that would address the sector of the bioeconomy, and you will see a little later which areas of the bioeconomy we are addressing completely.

And after those two first years of going through the processes of building the programs and getting them approved by the Illinois Community College Board and on the university side, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, in 2016 we were ready to sign a memorandum of understanding between the five university and colleges for the purpose of providing multiple pathways for students to meet education and career goals. And again, this is something we will show you in more detail a little later.

And we are really in the process of signing articulation agreements between our lead institution and the community colleges on the grant so the students would have pathways not only into certificate programs and two-year programs but also further from two year building up into four-year programs. So we are at that detailed point at which we are signing program-by-program articulation agreements with the help of the articulation staff at the colleges and the university. Next slide, please.

Going back to who we are, we span the state of Illinois really from the south most area of Carbondale to past middle with the Carl Sandburg College, and you will also see with some of our technical assistance providers, including Hawthorne Strategy Group and CAEL, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. We also expand into the Chicago area. So we are really from the south border of the state to the north border of the state, covering the whole state of Illinois with Southern Illinois University, which is located in Edwardsville. In the St. Louis metro area we are also expanding into Missouri.

You can't see that on the map, but we truly cover a bi-state area because of SIUE's placement. So we are one university, SIUE, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Different colleges are Lewis and Clark Community College, Southeastern Illinois College, Lincoln Land Community College, and Carl Sandburg College. And so the bioeconomy is the sector. These are the partners on the TAACCCT grant. Next slide, please. Thank you.

We have the uncommon situation of having SIUE as the lead school, and as you all know, typically TAACCCT grants are led by community colleges. However, when writing the grant for this project, all partners agreed that SIUE is supposed to be the lead school because it includes two very important centers. They are training and resource centers. One is The National Corn-to-Ethanol Research Center, NCERC. I'm going to call it NCERC from now on. It's the place where I work where the TAACCCT grant headquarters are based for this project.

And then The Environmental Resources Training Center, ERTC, which is another one of the centers on our campus. They both have public-private partnerships. They both, to some extent, test products and technologies and ideas for the industry, for the sector, and they also provide education and training to an array of students for credit as well as non-credit. And so all the partners on the grant are able to benefit from what's being offered at NCERC and ERTC at the SIUE campus.

I also wanted to mention that on that link where it says hands-on experiences, there is four-minute video that you can see after you download the presentation, and you will see the resources that these two centers offer and all the wonderful things that we do in – (inaudible) – training and you'll hear from instructors, from students themselves, from an array of people who are connected with our programs. So if you think about this, NCERC and ERTC are dealing with energy and with water, which we consider to be two of the most important, the critical issues of our time, and that's the core of our grant. Next slide, please.

So in terms of resources we have dedicated case managers for students to access resources at the university, at SIUE, as well as at each of the community colleges on the grant, as well as to connect with resources outside of the university, especially in the employment and training agency but also in other community locations. We have strong partnerships with local community development and employment and training agencies. And actually, the case managers are hired through them, and that's one of the strengths that we consider to have.

And we also have an array of very qualified, very talented, and educated technical assistance providers that we have hired on the grant, EMSI, which has some student– (inaudible) – career coach and analyst for identifying careers and research, the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, CSW, which provides sector strategy employment connections, Hawthorne Strategy Group which, as we said, deals with marketing and public relations, and then CAEL which helps us with prior learning assessment, with PLA. We can go on to the next slide, please. Thank you.

And so in terms of our approach I'm going to walk you quickly through this so we can get to our marketing side. Next slide, please.

Our mission is developing a well-trained quality workforce by merging the collective strengths and resources of each of the partner schools, the five schools that I mentioned, with a network of committed regional employers, which you will see in a moment. And in terms of our vision, it's preparing residents of Illinois and neighboring states for in-demand, high-wage jobs in the bioeconomy. Next slide, please.

These are our values. We are fostering partnerships between industry and education, developing flexible targeted training programs, streamlining the process for connecting the displaced and disadvantaged workers to programs in the bioeconomy, and then promoting bioeconomy jobs and career paths. We really think we are the forefront of preparing talent pipeline for the bioeconomy to cover the jobs of the present but also think about, foresee, and prepare for the jobs of the future. Next slide, please.

So when we started conceptualizing what we do in the bioeconomy, we didn't just make a lineup of educational programs, but we tried to match those jobs, those careers, the educational programs leading to them with specific subsectors. So the bioeconomy includes all of this area, energy and manufacturing, agriculture, life, and physical sciences, infrastructure, operations, management, and business, education, communication, and outreach.

And under each of these you can see the various types of jobs that we are addressing through our training from the entry level to the midlevel to the advanced level. So for example, for energy and manufacturing at the entry level it would be a computational science technician. Then at midlevel civil or environmental engineer. At advance level a lead mechanical engineer. So again, for agriculture and infrastructure going from technician or operator to scientist or equipment manager to senior plant scientist or plant manager.

And so going on this way we have conceptualized what people need for a certificate, for a two-year degree, for a four-year degree, and upward, so covering the first two years, the community college years, and then going into a university setting. And we truly recommend this type of process for any field you are in because it is really rewarding both for the project management team and most importantly for the potential students and the students. They can understand. They can– (inaudible) – crazy with this type of process. Here is where I am, and here is where this degree or this set of degrees, these set of stackable degrees can take me from the lower level to the upper level. Next slide, please.

And also we have not just conceptualized various types of careers and the career ladder leading to those, but we have conceptualized what are the jobs for each of these subsectors of the bioeconomy in our region.

And you can see there some companies that are truly related to the bioeconomy such as Green Plains, for example, but you will also see there some of the companies that are more related, for example, to fossil fuel but hire quite the higher – (inaudible) – graduates of our programs because, as I mentioned, we prepare for the jobs of today with a view to also training these people for the jobs of tomorrow.

So you can see both the array of organizations and the old economy, the newer economy included in this scheme of ours in which we classify employers that we work with and that hire our graduates. Next slide, please.

In terms of our actual programs that we prepare for, these are more the educational aspect. We prepare for bioprocessing, biofuels, water management, restoration ecology, process maintenance, and integrative studies, integrative studies being the SIUE side, the university side. Integrative studies is an innovative type of four-year degree in which students can choose two or even three areas and combine them, and that is why it is much easier for students to articulate from a two-year community college degree into integrative studies.

They need to integrate into, for example, just the regular environmental studies or engineering. And so this program provides that hub that was needed to articulate from certificate to two-year degree, from a two-year degree to four-year degree. Next slide, please.

And finally, this is one of the career pathways constructed with the actual programs in mind from even high school diploma but then certificate, associate in applied science, which we also have the grant and then the bachelor's degree, the integrative studies bachelor degree with the education pathways possible, the job title possible, and then the average wage which we have taken from career pathways of this sort. We actually have seven. This is one example. We can definitely make the other ones available to whoever e-mails to us to ask for those. Next slide, please.

And finally, I am moving to Shannon who will talk – be talking to you about marketing lessons.

SHANNON MCGHEE: Thanks, Diana, and hi, everybody. Thank you so much for having us on today. As Diana mentioned, my name is Shannon McGhee and I'm with a consulting firm here in Chicago called Hawthorne Strategy Group and we specialize in a number of different types of integrated communications but workforce development is one of our strong suits.

Personally, I come from an organization before Hawthorne. I was with the economic development organization for the city of Chicago, and we do a lot of workforce development work as well. So throughout my presentation I'll be talking about some lessons learned from working with the Building Illinois Bioeconomy. I'll talk a little bit about what we've done to raise recruitment, and then I'll also talk just about best practices and ways to scale them up or down as you guys think through marketing for your programs.

So to start out I want to kind of take a break from us talking at you and give you a chance to let us know what you would like to learn most from this section. So if you want to take just a second and tell us through the chat panel what you would like to learn most from the marketing section of this webinar so we can go ahead and make sure to cover it.

The chat panel, for those of you who haven't seen it, should be in your screen. So go ahead and let us know what you would like to learn most. I'll give everybody just a little bit more time here. I see a lot of folks typing. So just a couple more minutes to let us know what you would like to learn most about the marketing for this consortium and also marketing for workforce development more broadly.

So some things I'm seeing right now is strategy to increase participants, how we leverage that video that Diana pointed to earlier in the presentation as a marketing tool and where, how we increased awareness of where the jobs were, and what channels are best to use in marketing to reach different folks?

So first – and I think this will cover a lot of your questions – before starting any marketing plan, kind of what we did as a team when we sat down with the project management team over at NCERC, as Diana mentioned, so Diana and Courtney, who's not able to join us today, to really get into who our audience was, which is the most important part of any marketing strategy is really understanding who you're talking to and what they want to hear.

As Diana shared, the bioeconomy is such a broad industry and it covers a lot of different sectors and our programs touch a lot of different types of education. So there's water management certificates. There's a lake management certificate. There's ethanol production, bioprocessing. So they're really all over the place, and so in order to use our time most effectively and make sure that we are setting up a consistent message across the consortium, we sat down to think about who we're really talking to and what they want to hear. Not what they do but who they are and what matters most to them.

So we looked at our programs, and they span everywhere from an eight-week period to a four-year degree. So the way that we grouped our audiences here is by program length and flexibility and what folks need. So you'll see that on the screen there's a construct that we developed, and we figured out that we're really talking to three different types of people, despite what the program was teaching.

So you had those folks who have an immediate need for increased earning power or a job. So these are folks who may be laid off, are generally – they have the potential to be eligible for TAA benefits, those folks who need a job right now. We call that our immediate need audience. This is an audience who might be interested in a program – any of our program that's less than six months and they need very flexible types of programs and some of our programs are online. So we figured for this immediate need audience, now we know how to talk to them generally and what programs work for them.

The second audience that we have that we tailor all of our program materials to is the betterment audience. This audience is maybe somebody who already works in an ethanol plant or already works in the industry and who is looking for a little bit longer of a program to either get that promotion or jump over to another sector in the bioeconomy. And then as Diana mentioned, she's sitting at a four-year institution. So we also have this third audience that we consider the traditional student. So for these students or this audience, they can have programs that are more than two years and have limited flexibility. They need limited flexibility in what types of programs we're teaching.

So now that we've kind of figured out where our audiences fit and who we're talking to based on the programs that we have, we did an exercise to figure out where they are and where they're going. All of our marketing materials and all of our messaging is rooted in kind of moving people to enroll, and in order to do that we have to figure out what they need to hear and what we're up against.

So this is an example exercise that we did for that immediate need category. This exercise is called the believe-think-feel-do exercise. It gets at looking at what your audience believes, what they think, what they feel, and what it makes them do. So I can quickly walk you through how we went through this exercise as a group for the immediate need category, again, those people who have been laid off recently or who need a job right away.

So for these folks we were looking at how they feel about educational programs. What do they believe? Currently, they may not really believe that there's job growth there. We sit in Illinois and many of you have heard the news about a recently passed budget but at the time they may have issues or have some challenges in the Illinois budget situation when it comes to colleges.

There may be a language barrier, and they may have had a bad interaction with school in the past. So what does this make them think specifically about our programs? They may think the job training doesn't work to get what's needed. They may think that programs don't teach the skills that they needed to get to a different job. How does this make them feel? They feel overwhelmed, less confident, or feel angry. And what does it make them do? Shut down.

So where do we want to move them to in order to enroll in our programs? We want them to believe that getting a job or education is possible or attainable. We want them to think that the connection between a better paying job and our certificates or degrees is there. We want them to picture themselves in this program. We want them to feel hopeful and optimistic and then reach out and enjoy exploring their options.

So for us in all of our marketing materials, after doing those exercises for each of our audience, everything that we write and we put out there has a right call to action based on these exercises that we've done, and this is just one exercise to get there. We know for that immediate audience the – we know – we want them to see a case manager, but we know that we have – we're up against pre-held beliefs and that the motivation of time to outcome is there.

For betterment – for the betterment audience we want them to see a case manager as well because we know that that's the best way to enroll for these audiences, and we want them to feel that it's attainable by talking to someone. And for the traditional student we want them to register.

So with that I want to take another second and figure out from all of you on the line what the most helpful marketing channel has been for you in reaching your audience. There should be a poll that pops up in your screen. So go ahead and vote there. What is the most useful marketing channel so far for you in reaching your audiences? Seeing a couple of those come in. I think, Jen, they can see the results; correct?

MS. JACOBS: Yes. They can.

MS. MCGHEE: Perfect. So it looks like materials development is high up there with 50 percent of you on the line saying the materials development is the most helpful way in reaching your audience. Also seeing employer outreach up there, a little bit of earned media, and a little bit of social media. Give you a couple more seconds to answer.

Great. So it looks like materials development has been the most impactful way for those on the line to reach their audience, which is something that we see as well. And so something that we do in all of our materials is to make sure to address some of these messaging things that we kind of set up in the beginning of this marketing section.

And from a materials perspective too, I'm bringing back up the career ladder that we were talking about earlier. So especially for those audiences that need to get back to school fast, we've developed a number of different materials for these audiences. For example, I want to bring back up the career ladder. When we're putting together fact sheets or brochures or other types of materials, we show very clearly kind of where your degree and level of education can get you an onramp in terms of earning power.

So you'll see – kind of hard to see in this screen, but it's in the PowerPoint if you want to enlarge it. It shows you very clearly that at high school these are the types of jobs you have. Here's your average wage, and as you kind of articulate through our program, you can see how wages increase. For us, we've developed a number of different materials as well. One of the examples is in the file share section, and we'll talk a little bit about that later.

So once we kind of grounded our audience, we developed a suite of materials, including fact sheets on each program and certificate. We developed catalogs for each school and a core piece of material that just has the case manager's number on it and some quick facts about earning power and where to go.

We know that the best way to use these materials is being really strategic about how you get it in people's hands. And so what we did in our region is we assessed the existing resources to be able to get materials to folks. This is a really good thing to do is developing strategic partnerships in your community, especially when you have limited resources, whether those be marketing dollars or staff time.

So a couple of the strategic partnerships that we made to send out our materials are on the screen right now. So there – one is SIUE. Southern Illinois University's unique access is that they have their central campus in Edwardsville, which is kind of a suburb of St. Louis, but then they also have a campus in East St. Louis, which is an underserved community right across the Illinois border.

It's a side of St. Louis right across the Mississippi River, and there's a Head Start program there, which is based on taking students and getting them better resources for early education. And there's a pool of parents on that campus, and so what the – what we did along with the– (inaudible) – team is we developed a partnership where we got in front of Head Start parents and we utilized their case workers as they're working with students and parents to be able to tell them about our programs and offer those to those parents as ways to get back to school and trying to increase their earning power.

We also targeted unions and employers in areas where there was laid off steelworkers in Granite City, Illinois. There was a – (inaudible) – down there for US Steel, and so we made sure to do some target outreach through our case managers there to tell US Steel workers who often had TAA benefits to be able to come to our program.

We also targeted existing staff at energy employers in the region. Some of our programs are online programs to train for operational side jobs like marketing and accounting in bioenergy plants, and so we targeted existing staff through their employers. We targeted an air force base which is close to the area, and we put just our blanket materials. We have a general fact sheet and a one-pager. We didn't recreate materials for these, but we kind of designed them evergreen and smartly and made sure to get them in the right hands.

We also work with Amazon Career Choice beneficiaries, and that has a program where they will help pay their employees to go back to school. And so we reached out to Amazon and formed a partnership there. We also linked into community groups around new immigrants in the St. Louis metro area and farmers in southern and central Illinois. So for all of these activities it was really about the smart partnerships that we made to get general materials in their hands and making sure to deploy our overarching resources in existing organizations that already targeted the audience we were – audiences we were looking to serve.

You've heard us talk a little bit about case managers as we've gone through this presentation, but they're really one of the most impactful way that we get good enrollment numbers. So we have a network of case managers who are embedded in each school, and so it was very important for us to be able to arm them with materials to help them do their job as effectively as possible.

So we actually deployed a case manager training, and there's a toolkit, which is in the file share section of your webinar, that shows some just existing language that they can use to go out in the field. There's some sample social media language. There's a sample media alert. There's a list of helpful dates and times and some other best practices for enrollment so that they can get the strain of marketing off of their hands and be able to just use those materials to link into groups.

And one of the things that we worked with our case managers very, very strongly on was to make sure to alleviate some of the burden of taking in different levels of enrollment. And so when we were looking at each different school, each case manager, and the way that they worked, we were really focusing on developing an intake message – mechanism for them so that they can effectively talk to potential enrollees and that those enrollees felt like they were getting their questions answered.

So a couple of questions that we asked ourselves was how to – did interested applicants get in touch with you for different schools? It was a number and an e-mail. Where do we send them if we can't help them? So if our programs don't train for what they need, what other resources are available where they can get the skills they need like workforce investment boards or county resources. How do we reply quickly with limited staff? A lot of times these case managers are just one person, and so we know that when people come in through the pipeline to get trained, they want to hear quickly or else they get not – disinterested. So we wanted to make sure to arm our case managers with ways to respond. And how do we track them through their journey to ensure that they got training?

Some tips that we found to avoid losing candidates was to make those partnerships with organizations who help areas we don't like soft skills or they may need county-level resources to be able to pay for school. And so we developed strong partnerships with workforce investment boards and community development organizations across our communities.

We developed an auto response, just a common e-mail response so that when folks e-mail us, they just get a quick note back saying thank you for your e-mail. We'll get back to you in the next few days. And each school tracks kind of how their candidate gets – how the candidate's going, and we track their contact information so that we can check in as they continue on their journey to get more training.

So we're going to take a quick break here and ask another question. So we'll pull up a poll. What area do you see the most potential for growth in your marketing efforts? Give everybody a couple more seconds. Give everybody a few more seconds to answer. This is really good. One of the areas that I'm seeing here are social – is social media, a little bit of employer outreach, and a little bit of materials development here. Great.

Social media is one area that we hear of a lot, and one thing that we have noticed here, we want to make sure that we are being efficient with our time and the – (inaudible) – team's time. And so we look at ways to kind of do marketing smartly and efficiently, and social media is one way that you can do that and really kind of cut your time down.

To manage a social media channel is really time-intensive to post content every day, and so ways to help do this wisely and efficiently so it doesn't take over your full job is to focus on one social media channel like Twitter and to develop content at once and schedule it out but also to develop a toolkit for partners to help you get the word out. A lot of times it takes a really long time to build up a good social following, and so in the file share section you'll see a case manager toolkit example that I referenced earlier.

There's social media content in there that case managers actually sent to community organizations in their areas to be able to post for us. So that content helps drive people back to our social channel and helps get the word out through a trusted advisor, another organization who already has a good following and network in the area. And it helps to spread your word and your relationship with community organizations doing similar work to you.

I saw materials development in there as an area to grow. A lot of times it's really easy to be tempted to recreate content for every event that you do, but you can also get away with developing a tailored fact sheet, maybe a one-page fact sheet that includes short information with impactful information like salary range, number of jobs, etc., and where candidates can apply.

Print or order a lot and use those at every event where you can spend more face time, but your core messaging is on that one piece paper that the person can just take away after talking. And make sure that you're kind of looking at and focusing in on a couple of channels, like I mentioned earlier. Maybe it's Twitter and your website is just a one-page scrolling for core information but to really spend time on developing those relationships and getting face time when you can and honing in your message.

So I noticed a couple of questions through the main chat panel, and really appreciate those. And I'll hand it back over to Diana, but we'll leave some time at the end to answer those questions and make sure that you get the information you need. Diana?

MS. NASTASIA: I'll be very brief going through the sustainability effort slides so that we have sufficient time for the questions. Next slide, please. Next slide, please. Thank you.

A couple of things related back to what Shannon said from our project management team's perspective. Firstly, just we picked up a concept from the DOL challenge, the prototype development challenge that we were part of and applied for, and that's the concept of anchor institution.

We truly believe at this point that the TAACCCT grant has allowed us to become an anchor institution regionally for us at SIUE and also to each of the community colleges on the grant in their own smaller – in their own regions, in their own area, geographical areas and social areas where they operate. And so we – at this point real sustainability from the perspective of the anchor institution.

The fact that we were able to identify audiences, as Shannon said, not only from the point of view of what they do, which we had – previously we included in the grant proposal, but also from the point of view of who they are as individuals and groups is something that we will carry on through other projects across the university.

We are hoping to institutionalize those types of practices so that we attract potential students and future students systematically in specific ways to specific programs that meet their own individual needs and also lead them to the most fruitful type of employment after they're done with their education and training component.

The fact that we were able to design messages specifically for those types of audiences, whether viewed as who they are or what they do, is also another powerful tool in terms of what we have become as a consortium and what we have become each of the institutions on the grant through this process that we are still going through towards the end.

Having the career libraries was also an important tool, and it is – it continues to be a wow moment for a lot of people on the grant and also some of our partners that we are still in the process of identifying.

So, for example, there is an organization in St. Louis called BioSTL – Bio St. Louis – which does things kind of related to what we are doing, the same types of educational processes, trying to identify lower income people to go into those programs but on the St. Louis side in the Missouri area more focused on Missouri. They're now using our career ladders, and we are offering them a graduate assistant who is able to help them build additional career ladders that will be helpful in additional related industries in the bioeconomy and also the material development and the social media that Shannon mentioned.

So we are at the point at which we are making each of our institutions into an anchor school in our region. We are using all these models of the case management, of the hybrid and online learning, the experiential learning, of tutoring, mentoring, coaching, learning communities sort of united together and definitely of the prior learning assessment, the PLA, to provide to students a comprehensive type of model, again, in the bioeconomy, specifically on the grant but also institutionalizing those in other areas of the university. Next slide, please.

We are trying as hard as we can, with the help of one of our technical assistance, CSW, with the help of Hawthorne Strategy Group and also to build our advisory boards through sector partnerships and have employers trust us, come to us for training so that for each of the programs in the grant we would have possibility for certificate, a possibility for two-year option, and the possibility to articulate into a four-year option.

So from non-credit to full for-credit, every option would be open, and employers would work with us on this, trust us on this, and send their people to be further trained. Or even we have come to situations in which employers receive various resumes for specific jobs. They think those people aren't qualified enough, but they refer them to us for further training and then reconsider if they would hire or not. And last slide, please.

With the help of Hawthorne Strategy Group, we are truly in the stage in which we do ongoing targeted outreach in a very sort of strong manner. We visit high schools on a regular basis. We collaborate with community organizations weekly, monthly. We participate in their events. They participate in ours. We have a speaker bureau of sorts with several people. Courtney, the director of the NCERC, even the chancellor of the university are ready and able to speak about these programs on a need basis, if there is an opportunity to connect to the media, earn the media.

Again, from our events, from participation in various types of activities in various venues from K to 12 to community to academic and so on; and – (inaudible) – leadership participating in all sorts of conferences. We have had presentations at NCWE, ACT T (ph), SAT T (ph), and so on. And yes. We have done this with the money of the TAACCCT grant, but we are ready and able to move this model into institutionalization, into having this incorporated into community colleges at our partners and the university on our SIUE side.

Thank you for participating, and we are opening this to questions.

MR. LAGARDE: Perfect. Thank you both so much for today and sharing with us. In the last seven minutes we definitely want to address some of the questions, and I want to start with Kurt's question about targeting rural populations.

So I guess, Shannon or Diana, I know Indiana isn't 100 percent urban. There is some rural populations. How did you guys address targeting participants in the rural populations of the colleges?

MS. MCGHEE: Yes. I can take this one. So we did it a couple of different ways, and it depended – our colleges are in a number of different rural populations, but they also are targeting different folks. So, for example, one of our programs is an agricultural water certificate, and it's for incumbent farmers or farmworkers.

And so the way that we targeted that population is we reached out to newspapers in the area and just gave them press release content to be able to post. A lot of times those news rooms are pretty small, and they're just looking for content to post. So if you just write up a quick press release format news story, they'll put it out there for you. We also took out some ads in some rural newspapers to go side by side along with our content, and we linked into existing groups in those areas.

I think it's really important in rural areas, and even in urban areas, to make sure to figure out which groups already have good memberships of people who would be good for your program and send along newsletter content and figure out how to get in front of their membership. So it could be 4-H. It could be a number of different groups in rural areas.

MR. LAGARDE: Got you. Got you. OK. More rapid fire here. So this would be for both of you. Maybe Diana and Shannon can talk about this. The question is about program staff and college staff. So did the program staff for the TAACCCT grant get help from the college communication staff, or maybe what did that relation look like for the TAACCCT staff and then the overall college staff in developing this marketing plan?

MS. NASTASIA: I'll take this one briefly, and then Shannon can add, if she would like to. We really just did the math initially, and the SIUE marketing staff was not able to give us a full staff member at the time when we started. And so we asked them, would you prefer – and we also asked our FPO on the grant would it be better to hire someone through SIUE's marketing or would it be better to maybe use the full services of a firm?

And when we did the math, it was easier and better to work with such a firm as Hawthorne Strategy Group than have one single person who would do everything for us. So after this process of thinking through with everybody, we decided we would take up technical assistance services, and that's what we did.

As I mentioned, we are always thinking about sustainability and moving further, and whether the university will continue to work with Hawthorne Strategy group in specific ways or not, we will continue to have those materials produced which are high quality, the templates for the case manager training, the template for the social media work, the website templates, and so on that we will continue to be using far beyond the life of the grant.

MR. LAGARDE: Got you. Got you. Great. All right. So Shannon, I think this may be – if we can squeeze in two questions, if we can do them really fast to see if we can get them. So question one.

MS. MCGHEE: Sure.

MR. LAGARDE: And it's almost a two-parter. "If your campus does not have a public relations department, what is a good way to gain that earned media that you were describing?" In your mind, what's a good way to get some or to do it?

MS. MCGHEE: Yes. Yeah. And that's a tough question because news is changing, and a lot of times news rooms are shrinking. But every media outlet has – should have on their website an e-mail and a phone number. Sometimes it's as easy as sending just a quick e-mail with some intro information and trying to get on the radar of a reporter and just having a quick intro call.

Also media alerts and you can – there's – there may be an example in the file we shared, but there's also examples online, if you Google a media alert template and just sending those along to the news desk whenever you have event really can help.

MR. LAGARDE: Perfect. Perfect. Yes. Free media is the best media, as they say; right?

MS. MCGHEE: It's also the hardest media, but yeah.

MR. LAGARDE: Exactly. It's also the hardest. OK. So second, the second part to this and the last question, "If your campus does have a healthy marketing budget or you do have some funds, in your opinion, what is the best paid media strategy that you would recommend?"

MS. MCGHEE: Got you. So it really depends on where your audience is and the type of program. But generally, the most mileage that you'll get is if you go through – I found really good success with native content, and what that basically means is – I'm sure everybody looks on a news website and you'll see kind of little sponsored articles.

A lot of town newspapers and even larger national PR newspapers have paid content options where you can purchase space and write kind of an informational article that goes a long way because it's not short like a billboard. It's not social media. So it's not pleading. It's actually a good space to have hearty information where you can really reach your audience through a credible source that they are already reading.

MS. NASTASIA: I would also add, especially on the TAACCCT grant, the types of programs that are related closely to the industry, using former students as champions and employers as champions.

MS. MCGHEE: Totally.

MS. NASTASIA: Many of our success stories are related to people going out there and saying, this was so great, and we recommend that somebody else starts this again.

MR. LAGARDE: That's – yeah. Making – that's a great point, Diana. Making use of your alumni. Boy, they're the biggest mouthpieces and the biggest champions you can possibly have for your program. No. That is a very, very good point. Testimonials or something like that.

MS. NASTASIA: And if people who are on the webinar today click through those links that are all over our presentation, they will see not just that initial review but also one about steelworkers, and those are our former students who are saying they were on a one-on-one relationship with the instructors. They received hands-on training. They received opportunities they never thought they would otherwise.

MR. LAGARDE: So please do, if you – as Diana just described. If you haven't downloaded the PowerPoint, please do. It is 3:00 o'clock. We like to start on time and end on time. Thanks for your time.

The webinar will be recorded and put up, as you see the link, on WorkforceGPS in a couple days. Any questions regarding this webinar or anything else, you can always use the TAACCCT mailbox, and we are there for you. Thank you all. Thank you so much, Diana and Shannon, for participating today. We can't thank you enough.

Thank everybody for attending, and hope you all got something out of it. We'll talk to you soon.

(END)