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**Transcript of Webinar**

**TAACCCT Job Placement Strategies: From Enrollment to Employment**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Hello, hello, hello and happy Halloween. Welcome to today's webinar. My name is John Vehlow, and I'm here if you need anything, technically speaking. Hopefully, you won't need to hear too much from me, but if you do have any technical questions, please let us know in that chat window on the bottom left-hand side of your screen. That chat window is also where we'd like you to introduce yourself now.

So please go ahead and type into that chat your name, the name of your organization, where you're located in the country, how many are joining you today, and if you're attending in a group. You may also use that chat box to ask our presenters any questions you may have during today's webinar.

You'll also notice that we have a copy of today's presentation and additional resources uploaded in the file share window. You can download that at any time throughout today's webinar. Also, a copy of today's presentation as well as a transcript and recording will be made available on WorkforceGPS in about two business days.

Additionally, to continue producing quality content at your disposal, we will be sending out a survey concerning today's event. Please take a few minutes to fill that out once the webinar concludes. We will also be sending out a follow-up survey in a month's time.

Again, if you haven't already done so, if you're just joining us, please introduce yourself into that welcome chat. We'll have that chat up throughout today's webinar where you can type in your questions and comments at any time.

Welcome to "TAACCCT Job Placement Strategies: From Enrollment to Employment." So without further ado, I'd like to turn things over to our moderator today, Eugenia Agia, workforce analyst, TAACCCT grant, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Eugenia?

EUGENIA AGIA: Thanks, John. Hello, everyone. Happy Halloween, and thank you for joining us today to discuss job placement strategies.

Before we get started I have a brief announcement about two upcoming webinars. The first, from design to implementation, flexible apprenticeship models that work, will be held on Tuesday, November 7th at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time. We're very excited about this webinar. We have some great speakers lined up, and, as you know, apprenticeship is a big emphasis of this administration. So we really encourage you to join us on November 7th.

The second webinar is the next one in the monthly series on performance reporting, and it will be held on Thursday, November 9th at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time. The format for this webinar will be informal. There's no special topic, and instead it will be an open forum for questions and answers on performance reporting. The webinar will be the last one before the November 14th reporting deadline.

So please join us if you have questions. If possible, we ask that you send in your questions ahead of time but, if you can't, just please show up and you'll have a chance to ask them during the webinar. Also, as always, you can have your questions answered by e-mailing your FPO and copying the TAACCCT mailbox or vice versa, e-mailing the TAACCCT mailbox and copying your FPO.

So now, I'd like to turn it over to our special guest, Robin Fernkas, division chief of the Division of Strategic Investments here at ETA, who would like to say a few words about why the topic of today's webinar is so important. Robin, take it away.

ROBIN FERNKAS: Well, thanks, Eugenia. That's quite an introduction. I'm very happy to join you just for a few minutes today. I really wanted to underscore how important job placement really is and why this is such an important topic to be talking about at this juncture in your grant.

From our perspective, we really see this as the heart of the reason for the grant. You're not just building capacity at your institutions for its own sake, of course. You're building capacity so that your institution can help students, particularly students such as our TAA workers and other dislocated adult workers get jobs. So it's one of several outcome indicators, as you know, employment, wage increases, and retention in educational programs, but frankly, it's the one that gets the most attention when our stakeholders look at the grant outcomes.

So we know from talking to grantees that many of you have done an amazing – have done amazing things to improve your employer relationships under TAACCCT, and that is a prerequisite for good job placement outcomes. But we know that job placement is not easy. So we wanted to provide another opportunity to learn from your peers who have some great examples of what they've been doing, and Scott will introduce them in a moment.

But first, I wanted to talk about job placement and how we go about tracking and reporting these placements because, if you don't track a job placement, then you can't get credit for it. And so while we won't focus on the performance reporting aspects of job placement today, we did want to reinforce two things.

First, job placement activities are an allowable cost through March 31st, 2018 as a grant-funded program activity. So you still have five months left, and we wanted to make sure that you were aware of that. Second, tracking those job placement outcomes, though, is an allowable cost through the end of your grant. So that's September 30th, 2018.

So you can, for example, check with your FPO about a modification to continue a staff person beyond March 31st to do the tracking. Or, if you have the funds available, some grantees have hired vendors to help them with this follow-up activity. So if you have any questions about this, please contact your FPO.

Now, I'm going to turn this over to Scott Estrada, who's one of our TA providers under the TAACCCT Learning Network, to introduce our panelists and facilitate today's discussion. Scott?

SCOTT ESTRADA: Excellent. Thanks, Robin. We should do a performance webinar together.

MS. FERNKAS: Yeah.

MR. ESTRADA: I think that was pretty good. Hello, everybody. I see a lot of familiar faces on the webinar. Glad to see you all and see some new folks as well. I'm excited about today's topic.

This is actually a – I guess a part two to what we did at the round four convening, which not all the round four grantees – TAACCCT round four grantees that attended that were – they didn't all – weren't all able to attend that panel. So we wanted to make this available to everybody and to other folks as well. So this is where that's coming from.

I do want to – before I get into introducing the presenters, who you're going to be mostly hearing from, I want to just talk about some of the themes that I took away from the last time we had this conversation and that you'll probably hear some of these as they each go through their own presentations and think about what that means for maybe the last – for the next six months that you're doing program activities.

A common theme with a lot of these three different grants, their job – career and job placement services, they have a robust staff, a dedicated staff, and they're meeting with their students a lot. But not only that, but they're also playing that side where they're also working with employers and meeting with employers a lot.

And that employer engagement side, they – that is relationships that they've built over a number of years. It didn't just happen overnight and they worked with a lot of different employers and it's a very – it's just a deep relationship that they've been developing over time, and some of those even include work-based learning agreements.

So with that all being said, I don't think you all should come away with thinking, oh, jeez, there's six months left of program activities. That's going to be tough. I don't – it's more about knowing what some of these successful strategies were and being able to maybe implement some of that in the final five to six months.

So without further ado, I'll talk about these next – these three presenters here. We tried to find three grantees that – well, actually, from starting off, really just looked at their performance metrics, looked at their employer numbers, and they were all through the roof, all three of them. They did a great – they had a lot of – (inaudible) – and moved them through to completion and they all ended up finding those jobs. So that's the number one reason why we're having them here today, but they're also various different types of grants.

So Michelle Hall here, she's with Manchester Community College. She's a project director for Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative in Hartford, Connecticut, and this is actually a single-state consortium. It's a statewide consortium. It has 12 different members.

Mary Benedict is the project manager for the Advanced Manufacturing to Compete in a Global Economy with Clark State, and that is in Ohio. That's actually just a single-site grantee.

And then lastly, we've got Jennifer Poe. She's the lead data and project manager at Chaffey College, and that is a single-state consortium. It's regional, and she'll go into that. All three of them are going to go into their grants a little more than I am, but that's regional to particularly Southern California, Inland Empire area.

So we wanted to give you different flavors, different types of grantees here so hopefully you can see some strategies or best practices that they had at their level that you can possibly – for yourself.

So without further ado, Michelle, I'm going to hand things over to you.

MICHELLE HALL: Thank you, Scott. Can everyone hear me fine?

MS. FERNKAS: Yes.

MS. HALL: OK.

MR. ESTRADA: We can. Yeah.

MS. HALL: OK. Thank you. I want to just start with a little bit of context. I have about 10 minutes, and then afterwards we can do a little Q&A, if you'd like. As Scott mentioned, the CAMI grant, the Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, is a statewide grant. In Connecticut we've seen billions of federal dollars come in for defense contracts, and so we have a lot of new manufacturing.

We had a lot of new technology, and we have a rapidly aging workforce. And so we currently find ourselves with a shortage in skilled workers, and of course that's only going to get worse over time. So we were able to apply for a $15 million TAACCCT award, and you can kind of see who our partners are down there and what our goals were, which are I'm sure very similar to many grantees' goals.

To provide a little bit of context in terms of employment internships, since we are talking about job placement, I wanted to break down our statistics so you can kind of get a picture of where we're at in Connecticut. So you can see here that we have 86 percent of our completers report that they became employed. We anticipate that number getting to around probably 94, 95 percent once the – once our new people who have just started actually complete this spring.

We have 25 percent of our participants identify themselves as incumbent workers. Again, that can be manufacturing and non-manufacturing incumbent worker. 32 percent of our incumbent workers who were not in the field of manufacturing ended up switching. 69 percent of our incumbent workers are currently receiving training because their employer has encouraged them, and normally those are one-off, two-off kinds of courses. And then you can see we have about 53 percent of our participants began internship.

I know Scott's already mentioned it, but when it comes to talking about employment, I can't talk about employment without talking about the critical importance of employer engagement. How we engage them and the extent to which we engage our employers directly relates to our ability to place students in jobs. And so the next couple of slides will really overlap between employer and employment.

So you can see here what we've done in terms of advisory board membership and then the kinds of contributions that our employers are making, which, as you can see, is significant.

So I thought what I would do is I would just pick five examples of things that we're doing to engage our employers that are leading to an increased employment. And so the first one – I'll just go one, two, three, four, five, but the first one is our governor-appointed advisory board. We identified key employers that we wanted to partner with and we gave those to the governor and he actually invited these people to be part of our Statewide Advanced Manufacturing Advisory Council. We call it SAMAC.

We've been able to leverage this platform to do the following bulleted items. So we've been able to talk to them about increasing starting salaries. So we've moved from about $12 to $14 an hour as starting salary to around $16 to $18 over the last two years. We've been able to talk to employers about a differential in pay for those who have industry-recognized credentials.

We've also been able to talk to them about curriculum and soft skills deficiencies. We've been able to talk to them about joint initiatives that employers and educators could do together. And lastly, we've really started to target things that we can do to help change the perception of manufacturing in Connecticut.

The letter from the governor was really critical. It added credibility, and it validated the need for employers. And so for those of you that are at that place, I think there's still real opportunity to do something like that, regardless of whether you're a single organization, you're a region, or whether you're a state. That was a really powerful platform for us.

The second thing is an employer satisfaction survey. Again, for us this was important because we wanted employers to know that we heard them and that we saw their comments and that we changed our programming accordingly so that they were more apt to hire our students. As you can see here, this is an actual survey with an actual response, and you can kind of look at that a little bit later, if you'd like.

The third thing that – and this is just one example of a recruitment strategy that we have with a company called EDAC Technologies. You can read the details here, but you can see that with EDAC Technologies and our grantees we're able to create this program where students can actually earn a full-time wage while they are taking courses. And not only that, but the full-time wage, it's minimum wage but it's full-time wage for 40 hours a week.

And what they have to do to qualify is complete their first semester with a minimum of a 3.0 and a recommendation, and they – eventually, there's a signing bonus, and they also sign up for a two-year commitment to work with EDAC. The reason why we ended up going this direction working with EDAC in this sort of partnership was that EDAC lost nearly 60 percent of their new hires over the last couple of years because students were chasing one dollar more here, one dollar more there, and we needed a way to sort of stem that. And so we've just started that this fall. So we'll see how that plays out.

Another example is we worked with our Connecticut Department of Labor, and we were given access to their e-mail lists of all of the unemployed people in the state of Connecticut. And we were able to push out information about jobs, and we've been doing that for the last year. And so the timing on that's really critical, and it – normally, the timing is – we do it on Sundays because that's when people are going back in and looking at what they need to do for employment and renewing their benefits. And so it happens at a really ideal time.

And the last strategy I wanted to talk about is this idea of changing perception. We couldn't get students into our program so that we could get them into jobs unless we started to attack the perception of manufacturing in Connecticut. So even though we have plenty of jobs and even though we're really moving the needle on starting salaries and differentials and bonuses and all that, we still really had a perception issue to deal with.

And so you have the slides so you can go in and click on things later, but one of the things I really wanted to point out before I show this short little video is that there are things that you can be doing that are absolutely totally free that we've really leveraged. In Connecticut we didn't have a lot of money for marketing.

So we really had to look at a grassroots approach to how to change perception, and so we did a lot of news coverage, press releases, our partnerships with the Department of Labor, appearances by political leaders, and we had a lot of employer speaker engagements that really gave us – that took our marketing campaign and really elevated it and really got a lot of students interested in the program so that we could then later put them into jobs.

So, John, if you just want to play that video, and when the video's done, I'm done. So go ahead.

VIDEO: Would recommend manufacturing as a career because right now manufacturing is growing.

Students will find that they won't have too much trouble finding jobs, especially in Connecticut.

It's reliable work. It's solid schedule.

I would have students come to Middlesex.

The facilities are excellent. The teachers here are very knowledgeable. Anyone who likes to have a hands-on approach to learning, it's a good career for them.

This is so amazing. I've never thought my dreams would come true as a 20-year-old.

MS. HALL: Thank you. That was almost the right video, but you get kind of the idea. And the slightly longer version of that, what was really great about that video – and we have many of those success stories – is that we engage all of the employers in that process.

So we film at their location. We ask them, and again, that elevates their importance and how they feel about us, and it increases the powerful nature of their partnership with us. And so at any rate, thank you very much. If anyone has any questions, let me know.

MR. ESTRADA: Thanks very much, Michelle. And yes. My apologies. I forgot to – wanted to go into a little bit before having Michelle do her presentation – go a little bit into the format of this. Please don't be shy to post any questions in you have for the specific presenters. We are – we're going to do this in three stages here.

So each grantee is going to talk about their own successes and a little bit about their own grant but then open it up to questions. So I don't want to just save all the questions for the very end. It would be nice if we just kind of mix it up.

So if you have any questions, please type them into the chat. I think we're actually small enough to where, if you want to ask your question over the phone, you're welcome to do that by pressing \*6 to unmute your line. But if you don't want to do that, by all means you're welcome to enter something into the questions – into the main chat section.

It looks like Kelsie is typing something into the chat, but while we're waiting for her to type something up, Michelle, the – I just have a question for you. With regards to that governor-appointed board, was that something that was outside of the workforce board, the state workforce board, or was that – are we talking about the same thing?

MS. HALL: Was it outside of our work with the WIBs?

MR. ESTRADA: With the state workforce board. Yeah.

MS. HALL: Correct. It was outside of that.

MR. ESTRADA: Got you. And you think that having the governor appoint that separate advisory board gave you the – I don't know – the clout to be going to employers and saying, hey, look at this. This is a statewide advisory board that the governor's trying to get employers more engaged with us to help with this TAACCCT grant program? Is that where that's coming from?

MS. HALL: Absolutely. So there had been attempts made before to get some of these really big names at the table. So we've got Pratt & Whitney and Electric Bow and Sikorsky, and trying to get them at the table – an executive from that company at the table was really difficult from an education point of view. But when the governor sends you a letter, you kind of sit up a little bit and you think, yeah. Maybe. Maybe that's important enough for me to leave the office. So it was critical.

MR. ESTRADA: So – and I want – get to to Kelsie's question came in. She says, "When you're doing recruitment strategies with specific companies, for example, EDAC, the example you gave, how do you balance this among all your employers?" It looks like in her situation they have a lot that they would like to do, but it's a tricky balance to not show favoritism.

MS. HALL: Well, in all fairness, we go back, and if you remember, I had a previous slide where I talked about the ways that employers contribute. If you were an employer who's making a concerted effort to contribute and engage with us, meaning you're participating on an advisory board, you're giving us tours, you're coming and you're meeting the students, you're employing our students or doing internships, we are much more likely to engage with you on something like this than for someone who isn't – who has never contacted us or reached out or reached back. So we do give priority to those employers who are fostering that ongoing relationship with us.

MR. ESTRADA: And it sounds like you had a – you did have a good population of employers to reach out to, but on the other side of that with regards to the potential participants who were unemployed, Jenny asks, "How did you get access to e-mails of unemployed participants? I mean, how were you able to get in contact with them and recruit them to get them into these programs?"

MS. HALL: So we didn't have actual access to – what we were able to do was actually give the information we want pushed out to the Department of Labor. So for obvious confidentiality reasons, that information wasn't made available to us, but we took a lot of content and we actually place it on the e-mails that went out to the unemployed people every week.

So that's how the information went out. We didn't actually have their e-mail addresses or the capacity to e-mail thousands and thousands of people. We didn't have that either. So this worked out better.

MR. ESTRADA: OK. Excellent. Well, thank you very much for that. We are going to leave time for more questions at the end. So if you have any other questions that do come up while we're going through other presentations specifically for Michelle, don't hesitate to post them in there. We are keeping track of them, and we'll try to get them at the end.

But with that we can move on to Mary Benedict with Clark State Community College. Mary, are you there? Would you like to take over?

MARY BENEDICT: Sure. I will. Thank you very much, Scott. So just a little bit about our project here. We had a community that was very involved in manufacturing but for a long time had not really had the proper resources to train the workforce in the area. I mean, if you know anything about Springfield, Ohio, if you do a Google search on Springfield, you'll find that a lot of the automotive and the tool and dye industry was centered upon the Springfield, Dayton area.

In fact, at one time about 60 percent of all the machining was done in these two geographic areas. So it was a large concentration, and you can see from this first diagram here that, strategically, where we are located reaches about 60 to 70 percent of the population in North America.

So as the – as time went on and as the economy went through the stresses and strains of recession, et cetera, we have the remnant here of a strong manufacturing climate, but yet we don't have the same kind of workforce that we had before because many times there was, as Michelle talked about, the stigma of parents not really sharing with their kids the great opportunities for manufacturing because, quite frankly, it's a job that's going to go away.

And so there was a tremendous amount of rebuilding that has needed to take place in the Springfield area to really showcase and highlight that manufacturing is not only a viable business to get into but it's one that's sustainable.

And so when the chamber of commerce in Springfield did a survey of folks that were interested in manufacturing, they came up with a very interesting statistic that's been the cornerstone of our program, and that is that there were a large number of people who were interested in manufacturing but they didn't have the skill sets. There was a huge disconnect, poor alignment with what the employers wanted and what the skill sets were of the people that were interested in pursuing manufacturing.

And so in this area, looking at it, it's the third most powerful economic driver in the region. So it made a lot of sense when this TAACCCT opportunity came up that we would take advantage of this and rebuild what had been lost before. We're not the type of region, though, that has huge manufacturers that employ 500 to 1,000 people. In fact, 90 percent of the employers in the area make up the 1 to 300-employee range. So there's a lot of pockets of jobs here, there, and everywhere, and most companies run with 40 to 60 people and have to have folks that have many different skill sets in order to function.

So in looking at this – so when we got together and put together proposal, we were awarded of course round four $2.5 million from the Department of Labor, and basically, what we needed to do was we needed to build credibility within the community to offer these training programs. We had the remnants of a manufacturing training program. When I arrived October of 2015 – or actually, December of 2014 – correct that – we had about 20 to 30 people that were enrolled in manufacturing programs. And so it was just a shell of what had been before.

So one of the things that we did to build back the credibility was created new programs and we took the old ones and we revised them. We made them so that they were relevant to the employers in the region, and the way we did that is we engaged employers very early on in the process to not only be involved in the learning outcome but we said, OK, we need your help in finding the right equipment.

We need your help in finding what is the content of these courses, and what are the outcomes that you are looking for. And also, we need folks that are subject matter experts in your companies that can speak specifically to the types of opportunities that you have within your company and what kind of skill sets that you're looking for.

So these are the programs that we created as a result of that, and these are some of the early outcomes. This is actually outcomes that are about a month old. I did have some other statistics. They haven't quite come in yet, but basically, we took the 20 to 30 people that were involved in manufacturing programs. And you can see that we have 322 students that have taken at least one TAACCCT-funded course, and so we've really increased our supply, which has really gotten the attention of our employers.

I'm very proud of the fact that we have 51 females that are enrolled in these programs. Before we probably had two or three, and so it's really helped kind of turn the tide and gotten the attention of employers because, although they can't specifically say we're looking for females, they're quite encouraged that we have some in the pipeline that are interested in manufacturing.

Now, of these numbers here, 60 percent of these folks that participate in our programs are incumbents that are either working in a company in which they are underemployed and want to move up to the next level. We also have corporate training that's infused in these numbers as well.

So as these employers became more and more engaged with us, they said, we have some employees that have great aptitude. They have a wonderful attitude. They show up every day but they're missing pieces in their skill sets. Can they be enrolled in your program? And so what that has created for us is it's created a standard for which they promote people within the company, but also it's helped to create the standard for which they onboard people as well.

As one of our employers pointed out to us at a meeting, he said, we're coming to you and we're asking for you to help us to find what our skill sets are but we don't know what we want. We don't even know what we want. And so they use basically our programs as a template to create the different steps within the company to promote people. And so you can see that that has an effect on what happens in the community. Now, we become the standard for how they onboard people.

The other thing that we did too is that there was kind of a myth with our employers that, in order to get the right people, we have to have somebody with an associate degree. And so we kind of challenged that whole notion with them and said, well, let's look at a stackable certificate idea. If you could look at the essential skill sets for people to be proficient in entry-level jobs, what would that look like?

And so they defined that. We said to them, does it have to necessarily be an associate degree? And they said, well, no, actually, it doesn't. So would you look at this person after they had received a year of training, they have a full background of what manufacturing is like, they understand how to weld or do industrial maintenance, but let's say it takes them a year to get there; would that be acceptable to you? And so our employers kind of took a risk with us and kind of dropped their old notion, and that did two things.

One, it creates a faster pipeline of supplying them with the workforce that they need, but also, it helps our students who may be a bit intimidated by college and the whole idea of going to school. Now, they've got something that they can bite off that's attainable to them. They can look at a year rather than two years. They can look at maybe getting a certificate, maybe get a year under their belt, get employment, and then they might think about going back and getting an associate degree now that they're halfway through.

So this idea has been revolutionary for our employers because, not only do they look at this chart here and say, OK, I know what I want here. I want CNC, but I also want folks that understand welding and industrial maintenance; is it possible that you could have perhaps a graduate who would have both of those skill sets? That would be really incredible.

And so many of our students, once they get past their first certificate, start to look at this and say, gee, if I went for one of these other ones, I'd be a lot more employable. And so we've had many of our students, some of them three and four certificates, and when they go out into the workforce, they not only have the mobility within the company but they have the promotability as well.

And so some of these things are just kind of a checklist of things that we did to try to serve up the relationship with employers and make it so that it was an easy transition for our students. We do have a career navigator that helps them through resume writing, job search, networking, all those essential skills that we talk about, as well as providing referrals for wrap-around services because we know our students, especially our community college students, can lead some very complex lives. They have families. They have part-time jobs. They have kids, and so they need those extra supports to help them stay in school.

We also look at – in the first two classes we're talking about employment from the first day, but we're also talking about meeting with employers in the first two classes. And this is really essential for them to start to see the connections between what they're learning in class and how this really applies to them on the job.

It also gives our employers the opportunity to go back and see that these students are really learning. They follow through with the promise. They're learning what we asked them to put into the curriculum, and now we can see it demonstrated. We've had employers come back to us and say, I spent some time in your classes, and I'd really like to talk to this person once they graduate. I want him to come and interview at my place.

So we also look at the co-op opportunity. Certificate students can also go for a co-op. It is an option for them. We find that the co-op also helps with that idea and that notion that we have to have somebody who's experienced. That was another hurdle that we had to overcome with our employers is they thought, well, I'd like somebody with two years of experience. Well, can we challenge that notion? What about if this person has a skill set that you were looking for and gained experience on the job? Would you then consider turning around and hiring that person? And so they took a bit of a risk with us, and again, we were able to get in there and get students employment faster.

So from an employer's perspective, they saw us following through. They saw that we were interacting with them. They saw that we were willing to post their jobs for free, set up interviews with students, meet their students one-on-one, and get an insight into the quality of the students. Then if there was something along the way that didn't quite work out, that feedback was immediately given to the instructors and to the program to improve the program. So it was an automatic continuous improvement loop.

So looking at this from this perspective of what can be done now in the last five months, there's some foundational things that they have not been established and some benefits to it, and I think really the – kind of the secret sauce of this is to meet with employers often. Be somebody who is always available to them to talk about their opportunities.

What we have found is that, more often than not, when we have these close relationships with employers, we tend to hear about unpublished job postings. We hear about expansion. We hear about projects that they're taking on or considering taking on, and it gives our students insight as to where the opportunities are within the company.

We find that the multi-craft, multi-skill approach has been incredibly valuable for our graduates to get onboarded quickly. They have not had that privilege before. Before they had to do a lot of on-the-job training which cost them money, and it was very labor-intensive for them. So as an added bonus, having somebody who had multi-skill walking into the place was something that they didn't anticipate would be valuable but we sort of suspected when we started to launch them out into the workforce.

And so this last slide here kind of gives you an idea of what strategies have been most effective for our graduates. Of course the co-op opportunity has been incredible. About 60 to 70 percent of our co-ops get offered a job by the time they leave their co-op opportunity. They tell their friends about opportunities.

We find that students often go in pairs to work together because they get to know each other so well as students that they recommend their friends, and that's an incredible way of getting students on. The many networking opportunities, we give them opportunities to talk with them casually, one-on-on, in class. Any opportunity that we can get them in front of employers, we do.

And also, one of them that I put on there as a very small slice is the drop ins. We find that if we start mentioning the companies in which we have close relationships with, some of our students have had the courage to go out just cold and walk into the company and say, I'm graduating next month. Do you have any opportunities? And we've found that there are some students that they get on-the-spot interviews just doing that.

So it's been an incredible journey. We've really enjoyed it, but a lot of it has really been predicated on just making sure that we have that ongoing strong relationship with them and getting our students engaged with employers from the very beginning. So, Scott, if you want to go ahead and play that video. Hopefully, everybody can hear it.

Video: The advanced manufacturing certificates are designed to be stackable, meaning that they all start with the same courses of classes. This – (inaudible) – classes is repeated in every single one of our certificates, allowing the students to get into the program and then decide which route they want to pursue at the CNC/welding/industrial maintenance.

I like what they offered. It really got to the point. It didn't have extraneous classes that were going to waste my time, and there was a built-in co-op portion which none of the other universities had.

(Inaudible) – colleges that have that relationship with local businesses to get people placed in the right position and, especially if Clark State is willing to adjust their program based on the needs of employers, is awesome.

MS. BENEDICT: All right. Thank you very much, and I will take questions.

MR. ESTRADA: Awesome. Thank you very much, Mary. And actually, again, please write into the main chat if you have any questions. Also, feel free to dial \*6 if you want to ask your question verbally. But can I – I actually want to go – sorry, John. Can you actually go back to the slides?

I want to go back to that chart because that is very cool. I'm a big fan of data, as some of you might know. So if you – how long have you been taking surveys as students are leaving the program? I presume these are sort of like outtake surveys you're taking with students to see, OK. What's working here with their employment placement?

MS. BENEDICT: Since – actually, since we started the program in 2015 when we had our first cohort. It would have been interesting to find out what the statistics were prior to that, but that's when we started really being intentional about asking these students these questions.

MR. ESTRADA: So do you – have you used it at all? I don't mean to put you on the spot, but have you taken some of this data and said, OK. We'll look at – looks like we might have some opportunity in the word-of-mouth category or maybe I don't want necessarily that to be the strongest connection and maybe we can build on our networking? Have you used that to change any sort of – any of your job placement services, or has it been this is just a matter of collecting data for you guys right now?

MS. BENEDICT: Well, I think that early on we were wondering about the true value of job fairs, and I know that those are expensive. They're very labor-intensive. And I think we've reenergized ourselves to realize that those are incredible.

They may not get a job on the spot when they're there, but the relationships that they build with that employer and the amount of touches they have with that employer, it just builds the confidence of the jobseeker, and it gives them the comfort level that they need to do things like drop ins and going to interviews. So I don't think we'll ever give up the job fairs as a result of looking at this.

MR. ESTRADA: That's great. Let's hold that thought about the job fair because it's something I might want to return to when we get to our final Q&A session. But I want to give Jennifer some time to speak about her program and her strategies for job placement, and then we can try to wrap things up with a final Q&A. So thank you, again, Mary, for that.

MS. BENEDICT: OK.

MR. ESTRADA: And we can now move over to Jennifer, the last one, Chaffey College out in Southern California. Jennifer, if you're there, please take it away.

JENNIFER POE: All right. I'm right here. So it's very nice to meet all of you. So our grant was similar to both of the grantees that have already spoken and yet a little bit different. So I'm just going to kind of start with a little bit of a breakdown. Basically, one component of our grant was that we really wanted to build a technical learning center. So that is what we set out to do.

We partnered with California Steel Industries, and when they actually leased one of their buildings to us, they leased it to us for $1 a year. It's a 33,000-square-foot facility with about six classrooms, a computer lab, a pre-engineering lab, electrical lab, mechanical lab. And as far as grant funds are concerned, we put in about $2.1 million into the renovation of the grant, and they matched it with a $1.9 million. So we tried to make it as high tech as possible.

Give you a little background about how large our grant is, we did get awarded the $15 million grant. We are a consortium of 12 colleges, 10 of which are community and 2 are universities. We also partnered with two WIBs as well, and then as far as our service area goes, we have about 27,000 square miles that is our service area, but technically, as of I would say the last few months, it's actually expanded out into the L.A. County area. So people are starting to get a little bit of word of mouth, and so more people are getting referrals and they're willing to drive that hour plus to come to class.

As far as our need, the area that we're in, the conversations have been actually been taking place for about 15 years, trying to find the right grant, trying to find the right opportunity to allow for such a center to be built for such a consortia to come together to leverage both counties, San Bernardino and Riverside County, which is the Inland Empire, and to really start to develop a highly skilled, highly technical workforce because of recent studies that had come out.

A study from the Economic Policy Institute in 2011 released that a staggering 2.8 million jobs that were largely in manufacturing have been lost as a result of the growing U.S. trade deficit in China since 2001. And that same study revealed that the greatest impact was in California with an estimated net loss of 454,000 jobs. So that was our goal, to help replenish the workforce.

And then just to give you a little bit more depth on the breakdown of the different colleges, these are all the colleges. We have one college that actually goes so far down into San Diego County. So we're reaching down a little bit farther out of the Inland Empire. And they were a TAACCCT three grantee, and we helped – we partnered with them to help kind of mold the InTech Center, and we utilized what they had done and kind of added and learned from their best practices. And we kind of adapted it for ourselves.

With all of these different colleges, the main thing to note is that some colleges are for credit, and some colleges are not for credit. So it just depends on what program they – their work plan really was focused on. The center itself is a not for credit moving towards a non-credit courses. We utilize a lot of incumbent workers, and we partner with another department to be able to capture those and the upskilling of all these trades.

So here's a little bit of our metrics. As you can see, we're servicing a large amount of students. We've serviced over 4,000 students. Recently, I sat down and had a little conversation with Scott, and we discovered that some of our subgrantees were actually underreporting because they were trying to be extra safe as far as placements and they didn't count a lot of placements that – basically, they thought it had to be in industry, in their exact field of study.

So even though they had placed them in a position, they didn't actually count that they had placed them. So we're doing a lot of recalculation, but as you can see, we've had almost 500 job placements since we've opened. Mind you about half of our workforce – our student population is incumbent workers. So we wouldn't be placing them.

We would actually be working on wage increases. And although it's not on here, we have about a 90 percent wage increase for all the upskilling of our incumbent workers that have gone through the program. So it's slowly coming together, and it really just depends on what program you're looking at and how – and the students that they're servicing.

Just a little at the InTech Center directly, we're kind of – I just wanted to give you a little scope of what it looks like from a student perspective. We're obtaining them the same kind of way that the other colleges were speaking about. We get them through referrals. We do information sessions.

We host two information sessions a month. At the information session they're basically going to go over program overview. They do do a pre-assessment, and we give each student an interview. And that interview is basically to focus are they committed to the program? What are their goals and their – where are they currently, and what do they hope to attain?

Once they're in the program and they've chosen the path that they want to go on, they are constantly meeting with the placement team. We have a placement team of three people, one work skills navigator and two career coaches. Those people are in the classrooms from day one. They handle the information sessions. They are constantly in front of these students.

Having that constant touch has really helped us with, one, getting the students to actually respond back once they finish the program because they're used to these people. They're used to seeing them, and a lot of them actually have their cell phone numbers and feel free to troubleshoot resumes or interviews and things like that.

During the program they actually go in and teach our soft skills workshops, and so they're working on resumes, communication skills, how to find a job, how to keep a job, doing job searches. We have a newsletter that goes out to them of different job leads. We have student workers kind of helping that team kind of place things together.

After that I just wanted to break down the ultimate goal, and I think the other people have also touched on this, is that everything is based on relationships. Everything starts with the employer relationship, engaging them, nurturing that relationship, doing site tours. They help us with internships and all sorts of different aspects. Then we went on to the recruitment outreach. That was constantly an ever-changing beast right there because – we tried everything we could.

We did a really large social media campaign which actually allowed – and I'm not sure if you guys know, but you can actually market to specific target groups. And so if you have displaced workers, they can market to them.

And so there's different algorithms that can help you identify them, and so we utilized that. The engagement – the case management and the job placement go – they go hand in hand. The basic thing to remember is touches. Everything is just constant touches, ongoing follow up, ongoing e-mails, referrals to supplemental resources, and anybody that can help because our ultimate goal is to help them be successful.

This is just a little slide on the contract ed side of the piece, which is all incumbent workers. We – and all that training is subsidized with an ETP, which is an Employment Training Panel, and they basically are one-on-one contracts with employers that have specific training for their needs and requests.

So we just – I just did one little last slide that just basically was some key points that we kind of focused on that what has made us successful, which is hiring people that are dedicated, that know their why, that know why they're here. We understand. We do – we try to place people in positions that they really want to go in. We don't just throw them in a job to throw them in a job.

And so there's a lot of career counseling that takes place, and we have – our placement team is very special in the fact that they do go above and beyond and they're ready to help out with any student issues or any conflicts that they may be having. If they get placed before they finish the program, then we usually work with them on how they can go into the part-time program.

So there's a ton of different options. And the last thing is just really stay up to date with all the labor laws and hiring practices and everything that's kind of going on out in your area so that you can just stay connected and stay up to date and you can help them the best way possible. And that's it.

MR. ESTRADA: Awesome. Thank you very much, Jennifer. I'm curious. You said you have these three dedicated staffers on your career placement staff, how often – how long are your programs, and how – you said they are engaging with the students a lot, pretty much from day one. How often would you say those touches are happening? How often are they meeting with students – the student from enrollment all the way up until they get placed, a rough estimate?

MS. POE: Well, it really just depends on the student. A student's going to get in what he puts out. And so we have some students who are in that office almost daily, and then we have other students that the touches are maybe once or twice a month.

It just depends on the program also. We offer full-time courses, which is almost like a full-time job, to get them used to being back in that full-time job atmosphere that are Monday through Friday 7:00 to 4:00. And then we offer a part-time course for a lot of people that are already working or just can't handle the full-time component, and they come two to three days a week from 5:00 to 9:00. So it just depends on the student.

MR. ESTRADA: OK. Great. Excellent. Well, I want to – we only have about four minutes left here. I want to try to get some more questions in. So if any folks have some questions for – we'll open it up to the entire panel here. So if you have questions, please feel free to type them in the main chat.

I kind of want to circle back a little bit to what I said at the beginning of this, which is, based on what we just saw with these three panelists and considering that we've got about six months left of capacity building program activities – and again, the grant – I think I want to – if I can just throw some questions out to the panel at large and say – and ask, if you had one – just one piece of advice for any grantees that are looking to build their employer relationships or hire staffers on job placement services or anything at all that's something that you think can be effective that they can do in a final five months to build their capacity, what would be that one piece of advice or one take away that you would give?

And I'll hand that off to Michelle since she spoke first. So it's been a while.

MS. HALL: Shoot. I'm first, huh? OK. I know people have gone over this again and again about employer relationships, but for us it just comes down to that. And I would say that there isn't anything we haven't done in our grant that we did not leverage that statewide advisory board.

So having that platform was really important because we couldn't talk about things like wage increases, which had to happen. We couldn't have a student go through our program and think that they were going to be employed for $12 an hour. So we had to be able to have really tough conversations with employers about what needed to happen if they wanted to employ our students. So I think that advisory group was probably one of the most important things that we did on the grant.

MR. ESTRADA: Excellent. All right. Thank you very much. Mary, can I throw that question to you?

MS. BENEDICT: OK.

MR. ESTRADA: If you had – yeah. Go ahead, please.

MS. BENEDICT: If you have the opportunity in your state to have a UI data match agreement, please pursue that. I know that it's a bit bureaucratic to work through job and family service to get that agreement, but it's an incredibly valuable tool in finding out where your students are working because, if you – if you're trying to do it by – just by student surveys or just having them call you back once they leave the institution, you're leaving money on the table.

This is probably the best tool to definitively find at least 95 percent of the people and where they're working and a good idea of what wages they're making. And if you need any help in helping to get that process started, I'd be more than happy to help someone walk through that. But it's one that, if you're looking at just a very small window of time, it's a small investment at the end of the day of time to get an incredibly rich amount of data. So I would encourage anybody that's been thinking about that to pursue that and pursue it hard.

MR. ESTRADA: OK. Excellent. It is 3:59, which means we've got one minute left, which means, Jennifer, you have – are going to have the final word here on maybe one piece of advice or take away you would offer our participants on this webinar.

MS. POE: Dun-dun-duh (sic). I think the best piece of advice would be just – especially when it comes to employers and engaging employers, and since so many employers are – you have your small manufacturers, your large manufacturers. They're on so many different levels. The best way to get them engaged, at least that we have found, is gentle but relentless pressure.

Just like any other sales technique, you want to meet with them, whether that be a cold call or a site tour, just showing up at their facility, and then you just start following up. That constant follow up, the constant touches with the students, all of that just all coincides. And so as long as you are being consistent and persistent, you're guaranteed to see results.

MR. ESTRADA: Awesome. Well, thank you, Jennifer, and thank you, again, to the panelists for talking about your grants, taking some time out of your busy day to share your thoughts, share your successes and best practices. And with that I think we can – it's 4:01. So we will call it a webinar. John, can I hand it over to you?

MR. VEHLOW: You sure can, Scott. Right there on that last panel there is just a few addresses where you can contact TAACCCT.

And I just want to thank all the participants and presenters today, and if you could just stay logged into the room for just a minute to provide us with some feedback, you'll see a feedback window where you can let us know what you thought of today's webinar.

Please take a second now and share your thoughts. Let us know what you liked or what we can improve on. There's also an additional topics window where you can let us know what you'd like to hear in future webinars. A recording of today's webinar, as well as the transcript, will be made available on WorkforceGPS in about two business days. Also, to better connect yourself with the WorkforceGPS colleagues, please take a few minutes and sign up for the member directory. That link is located at the top of the feedback window.

So again, happy Halloween, everyone. We want to thank you for joining us. Have a wonderful day.

(END)