



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Pennsylvania's Community Colleges Key Partners in Workforce Development and Training

Dr. Christopher M. Reber, President
Community College of Beaver County (Pennsylvania)

Dr. Christopher M. Reber has devoted his entire 35-year career to higher education. He began his duties as President of the Community College of Beaver County (CCBC) in July 2014. He previously served for 12 years as Executive Dean of Venango College of Clarion University in Oil City, Pennsylvania, where he was the chief administrative and academic officer.

Since arriving at CCBC, Dr. Reber has led new initiatives in support of a student-focused learning environment, enrollment management, partnership opportunities, and a culture of planning, assessment and improvement, among others. He also has led the development of new programs to meet high priority workforce needs throughout southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond.

Dr. Reber's career includes 18 years at Penn State Erie and The Behrend College, where he served on the senior management team in several positions. In the 1980s, Dr. Reber served as Chief Continuing Education Officer and Director of the Human Resource Development Division at Lakeland Community College, near Cleveland, Ohio.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Latin from Dickinson College, a master's degree in college student personnel administration from Bowling Green State University, and a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Pittsburgh. He also holds a post-graduate certificate from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.

Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges have collaborated with educational and business partners for more than 50 years to provide high-quality, affordable education and workforce training to their communities.

During the 2013-14 academic year, 344,000 credit and noncredit students were served at one of Pennsylvania's community colleges, representing more than one in four undergraduate students in Pennsylvania. Students who enroll in a community college prepare to transfer to four-year institutions, or participate in programs that prepare them to enter the workforce, or enhance skills to advance within their existing careers. Each independently-run community college in Pennsylvania is guided by a Board of Trustees, which is integral to advising and supporting the college's offerings.

CCBC looks forward to working with the natural gas industry to continue to develop training offerings as work progresses on the Shell site.

The decision to create new programs at community colleges is not undertaken lightly. It is a multi-step process that accounts for local labor market data; demand in high-priority occupations; student interest; equipment, facility and faculty needs; college strategic plans; and the needs of local employers. Many colleges consult with advisory councils comprising employers in various industries.

Because our colleges are locally controlled, we are able to respond rapidly and efficiently to the demands of the businesses in our communities, developing



and implementing both credit and noncredit curricula to ensure that our workforce has the skills and training needed by these vital employers.

For example, the Community College of Beaver County (CCBC) launched a new Process Technology associate degree program focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education. The program goals include increasing the number of highly-skilled, well-educated and diverse process technicians in the region; contributing to a needed workforce, should Shell build a proposed \$2.7 billion ethane cracker plant near the campus; and meeting the employment needs of regional industry partners. CCBC looks forward to working with the natural gas industry to continue to develop training offerings as work progresses on the Shell site.

Our people in Beaver County are some of our greatest resources, and my colleague presidents would say the same of their communities. I am proud to say that here at CCBC we have invested in programs that can help turn misfortune into opportunities for displaced workers.

When one of our local manufacturers announced they were closing their doors in 2014, we worked with a local union to create a new program, Supply Chain Operations for Warehousing and Manufacturing. Many of the displaced workers already had some level of experience in inventory control, shipping and receiving, basic industrial maintenance and floor operations. However, there were still many missing parts. In order

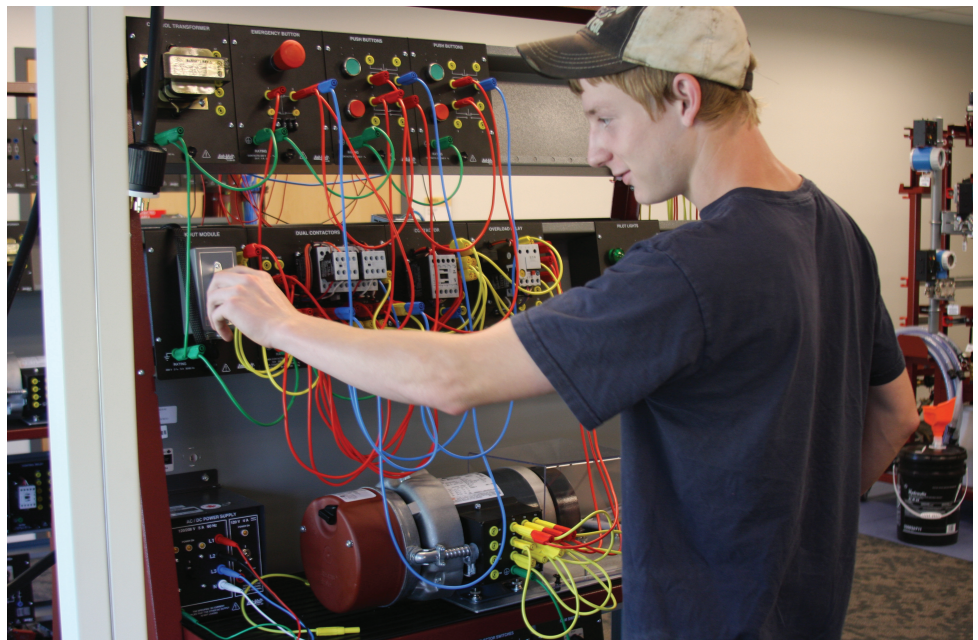
for the displaced workers to successfully apply for jobs such as Logistic Technician, Supply Chain Technician, Logistics Supervisor, Traffic Supervisor and other related fields, additional training was required.

To address these gaps, several modules were added, based on market research of this high-priority occupational field. One of the greatest areas of concern for the group was the workers' lack of computer exposure. As a result, an intensive 120-hour computer module was built into the program. Additional areas included the technical components of managing a warehouse or manufacturing unit utilizing Lean principles, current safety rules and regulations and a host of other processes that are essential for these high-demand jobs.

Once the groundwork was completed, what followed was a win-win partnership between two neighbors who provided the displaced workers with the best of both worlds. Morning classes for the displaced workers took place at The Beaver County Career & Technology Center, where they learned about logistics alongside high school students enrolled in the same program. A quick hop and a jump landed the new trainees at CCBC for afternoon sessions, to learn computer fundamentals, safety in the workplace, mechanical and electrical concepts, interpersonal communication skills, business operations and other topics related to the logistics and supply chain industry.

In addition to academic offerings, our community also provides customized training for Pennsylvania employers. In 2013-14, employers invested more than \$10 million in employee training through direct contracted services with Pennsylvania community colleges.

Pennsylvania's community colleges have led and championed workforce development and training for more than 50 years, and we look forward to what the next 50 may bring. If your business has training or workforce needs, we'd welcome the opportunity to work with you. W



*Students in the Process Technology program train in CCBC's growing industrial Maintenance Center
Photo Credit: Megan Shever*



During an open house for CCBC's Process Technology program, interested students had the chance to meet with local employers and CCBC's industry partners • Photo Credit: Megan Shever

For more information, or to learn more about the many training and educational offerings of Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges, visit www.pacommunitycolleges.org.