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ABSTRACT

Arkansas has 10 public postsecondary stand-alone vocational-technical institutes that collectively serve more than 3,000 full-time and 22,000 part-time students. Private sector and local government support of those 10 institutes was examined in a descriptive study based on semi-structured interviews of their presidents and directors and interviews with an individual at each institute who was identified as being responsible for coordinating a listing of the accumulations of contributions given by the private sector and local governments. According to the interviews, Arkansas' public vocational-technical institutes are currently receiving private support in the following four broad categories: financial, personal services, buildings and land, and equipment and supplies. The following types of support in the category of financial contributions were identified: local foundations, grants, donations, scholarships, discounts, and public service announcements. Contributions under the heading of personal services were as follows: board members, advisory committee members, guest speakers, internship supervision, field trips, and training of instructors. Contributions in the final two categories were as follows: local site acreage; buildings; land; compressed-video instruction facilities; mobile lab instruction facilities; and a wide range of new and used equipment and machinery for use in programs such as auto mechanics, welding, nursing, and emergency medical technician training. (MN)

Private and Local Support of Post-Secondary Public Vocational-Technical Institutes

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Private and Local Support of Post-Secondary

Public Vocational-Technical Institutes

Colleges and universities have commonly reported private sector and local government contributions that have been given to their institutions. Likewise, private and local government contributions have been an integral part of the vocational-technical school resource base for many years. Consider the many equipment donations institutes receive for programs in automobile repair training as an example. Post-secondary vocational-technical schools typically do not have development, public relations, and foundation offices such as those that are commonplace in higher education. As a result, these contributions are less likely to receive the high-profile recognition of their higher education counterparts.

The literature on vocational-technical education indicates private support has been identified as a need to meet the business community's dissatisfaction with worker preparation (Imrie, 1997) and to enhance the delivery of "hands-on" skills to a wider segment of the population (Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, 1997). This type of support from the private sector is vital (Leitzel, 1995); yet little appears to have been done on estimating the value of this contribution. Recent state legislation (Arkansas Act 1158, 1999) has mandated that vocational-technical institutes document the degree to which local support has been obtained. This is to be evidenced by private sector cash and in-kind donations, support from local units of government, and other non-state sources such as foundations.

In Arkansas, there are currently ten post-secondary vocational-technical institutes that have evolved as stand-alone models. These ten institutes serve as strictly vocational-technical schools and do not offer traditional community college degree programs. Collectively they serve over 3,000 full-time equivalent students, in diploma and certificate programs, and over 22,000 students in part-time programs (Department of Workforce Education, 1999).

Purpose of the Study

The wording of the Arkansas legislation called for a system of accountability measures and performance indicators. These were to be developed, to be used as a basis for the budget requests, in eight categories. Categories included student attainment of skill proficiencies, diplomas, skill certificates, and cost per hour of instruction. The last of the eight categories was the degree to which local support has been obtained by the institution as evidenced by private sector cash and in-kind donations, support from local units of government, foundations, and other such sources. The purpose of this study was to begin the process by which these contributions could be identified and subsequently reported.

Method

This descriptive study was conducted with two series of semi-structured interviews. Initially, the ten presidents and directors of the vocational-technical institutes were interviewed at their respective institutions. A four-by-three matrix (Enger, Wright, & Futrell, 1983) was used to elicit types of contributions (money, buildings and land, equipment and supplies, and contributed services) by source of contribution (private individuals, business, and service organizations).

A second round of interviews was conducted with a person identified at each vocational-technical institute as being responsible for coordinating a listing of the accumulations of contributions given by the private sector and local governments. At most of the institutes, this contact person was again the president or director. An interview structure or template was developed to identify the contributions and donations from the private sector and local governments. Throughout the second round of interviewing, this template evolved from one interview to the next and was revised repeatedly. Those interviewed earlier in the investigation were re-visited to further discuss the revised list of contributions. This study did not address the

monetary value of the contributions nor the proportion of each institute's budget represented by contributions from the private sector and local governments.

Findings

The results from the initial round of interviews yielded indications of private support being received in each of the twelve type-by-source combinations in the matrix. The second round of interviews focused on the exact nature of each of the support. The gifts, donations, and contributions received by the vocational-technical institutes are reported below in the four contributory categories: financial, personal services, buildings and land, and equipment and supplies.

Financial Contributions

Local Foundations. Learning from their higher education counterparts, vocational-technical institutes are organizing their own local foundations to support a myriad of functions at the local technical institute.

Grants. Grants are received from private sources and local governments to support the activities of the vocational-technical institute.

Donations. Similar to grants are the donations made by private sources and local governments. Some of these revenues are solicited to support specific "one-time" requests.

Scholarships. Scholarships are provided from private sources and local governments to aid students in their pursuit of a vocational-technical education. Generally, these scholarships are reserved for students enrolling in full-time diploma programs.

Discounts. Local businesses support vocational-technical institute in their service area through the numerous discounts they provided for institute purchases.

Public Service Announcements. Valuable free public service announcements provided by radio, television, and print media, publicize accomplishments and programs.

Contributions of Personal Services

Board Members. The members of the boards of trustees overseeing the vocational-technical institutes give their time freely. Each year board members spend countless hours in meetings with institute presidents and directors, in preparing for these meetings, in observing institute programs, in lobbying their causes, and in travel for all these institute-related events.

Advisory Committee Members. Generally, each major program at a vocational-technical institute has an advisory committee. These committees are primarily composed of individuals having special backgrounds, affiliations, and interests related to specific vocational-technical programs. Like board members, these advisory committee members may spend countless hours in support of the various technical institute programs in meetings, preparations, activities, and travel.

Guest Speakers. Many of the programs offered by vocational-technical institutes invite guest speakers for their classes. Generally, these guest speakers are successful entrepreneurs in the particular program being pursued by the students. The vast numbers of programs and classes associated with these programs produces a large number of donated service hours by these guest speakers.

Internship Supervision. Students in a number of technical institute programs participate in internships and apprenticeships where their supervision is donated. For example, hospital supervision provided by hospital staff for LPN training, work experience supervision provided for air-conditioning technician training, etc.

Field Trips. Many programs utilize field trips to complement instruction in the classroom. These opportunities provide students with first-hand knowledge of practices in the workplace. Orientation sessions during these field trips are generally provided free of charge to the technical institute.

Training of Instructors. A number of vocational-technical institute programs have been fortunate to have instructor training provided by vendors at no charge.

Contributions of Buildings and Land

Local Site Acreage. The site upon which each vocational-technical institute is located was donated, generally by local government.

Buildings. Along with land, buildings have been donated to the vocational-technical institutes.

Land. In addition to the land donated for the site where the vocational-technical institute is located, additional contributions of land have been received.

Facilities. There are numerous instances of facilities being donated for on-site training at locations away from the vocational-technical institute. Examples of these contributions include: facilities provided for on-site industry training, hospital facilities for on-site LPN training, on-site facilities for day care training, etc.

Compressed-video Instruction Facilities. In some instances facilities have been donated for compressed interactive video instruction. In these cases, the vocational-technical institute has been able to offer courses at remote locations with the facilities, including utilities, provided free of charge.

Mobile Lab Instruction Facilities. Likewise, facilities and utilities have been donated for on-site mobile lab instruction. In some instances, the donated utilities have included water and electrical hookups.

Contributions of Equipment and Supplies

Most of the contributions to vocational-technical institutes are in the form of equipment and supplies donated by private sources and by local governments. These contributions run the gamut from new and used automobiles, engines, tools, and machinery for programs in

automotive repair to steel for programs in welding to hospital beds, x-ray machines, and other necessities for nursing and emergency training programs.

Conclusions

This study began with the intention of identifying the wide range of private sector contributions to post-secondary stand-alone vocational-technical institutes in Arkansas. As shown in the findings, these contributions were found in four broad categories: financial, personal services, buildings and land, and equipment and supplies. The outcomes of this investigation can be viewed very positively and with caution.

These post-secondary vocational-technical institutes are receiving an enormous amount of support from the private sector. Undoubtedly, this support would be perceived as vital by the presidents and directors of these institutes, as it has been perceived by others (Leitzel, 1995). This type of support is not new; it has been an important element in the operations of the vocational-technical programs for many years.

The results of this study are also viewed with caution, particularly by the presidents and directors of the vocational-technical institutes. In the political arena where these schools are funded, there is concern that these contributions from the private sector might be viewed as rationale to decrease state support for these institutes. This further complicates the next part of this study, accumulating estimates of the values of these contributions from the private sector and local government.

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