

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 181

HE 015 702

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TITLE Private Industry Councils and Higher Education: Opportunities for Success. Higher Education/CETA Project Monograph.

INSTITUTION American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE Jul 82
NOTE 8p.; For related documents, see HE 015 695-703 and HE 015 723.

AVAILABLE FROM Higher Education/CETA Project, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036.

PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advisory Committees; Case Studies; *College Role; Cooperative Programs; Economically Disadvantaged; Education Work Relationship; Employment Programs; Federal Programs; Higher Education; Industry; *Job Training; Low Income Groups; Participant Characteristics; *Private Agencies; *School Business Relationship; Trainees; *Vocational Education; Work Attitudes

IDENTIFIERS *Comprehensive Employment And Training Act; Higher Education CETA Project; *Private Industry Councils; Private Sector Initiative Programs

ABSTRACT

Barriers to employment faced by economically disadvantaged persons and programs, and services that have successfully dealt with some of the problems are described, based on the American Council on Education's Higher Education/Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Project, which was supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. Title VII of the CETA legislation created the Private Sector Initiative Program (PSIP) to involve business and industry in the design, implementation, and assessment of CETA-funded training programs and services. The major program objective is to secure unsubsidized employment for disadvantaged workers. The program mandates the establishment of private industry councils (PICs), which evaluate local labor markets and training and job placement programs. There are indications that PICs are turning to higher education, especially community colleges, for training programs. Four-year colleges and universities are also involved in conducting research needed by local PICs, and often provide an array of occupational training programs and services. Based on case studies, interviews with employers, and interviews with current and previous CETA participants, needs of CETA participants and barriers to successful training, employment, and job retention are identified. It is suggested that in pre-employment training key learning activities should be integrated throughout all activities. Barriers include the following: low self-esteem, lack of acceptable work attitudes and behaviors, below-minimal levels in basic academic skills, and inadequate job search skills. Recommendations to PICs and to higher education are offered, and five case studies that outline education's involvement are presented.

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A Monograph of the Higher Education/CETA Project

Joel D. Lapin, Director, Higher Education/CETA Project

July 1982

PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCILS AND HIGHER EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

By Patti J. Keller and Charles M. Reinmuth

INTRODUCTION

Government officials and private sector spokesmen seem to be in agreement that the nation's ability to deal with the chronically unemployed depends on private sector employment. The creation of the Private Sector Initiative Program (PSIP) promised new approaches to employment of the economically disadvantaged. Prior to PSIP, Titles IID and VI of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) placed these individuals in public service employment (PSE) positions but failed to adequately prepare participants for unsubsidized employment.

Colleges and universities are in a unique position to help private industry councils (PIC's) in their efforts to provide programs and services that lead directly to jobs in the private sector. Higher education has cooperated with leaders of business and industry to provide quality training for many years in a wide variety of occupations. However, colleges and universities must increase efforts to demonstrate to private industry councils that they can develop and implement innovative programs and services that result in unsubsidized jobs for CETA participants:

This monograph will identify barriers to employment faced by economically disadvantaged persons, and describe selected programs and services that have successfully dealt with some of the problems. Recommendations

are proposed to private industry council members and educational leaders for the implementation of programs.

BACKGROUND

Section 126 of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act authorizes PSIP for the economically disadvantaged. Title VII seeks to involve business and industry in the design, implementation, and assessment of CETA funded training programs and services. There are more than 470 prime sponsors throughout the United States. Each of the prime sponsors is mandated to establish a private industry council to plan and oversee the expenditures of Title VII funds. It was the expectation of Congress that CETA training programs were to move toward the major objective of securing unsubsidized employment for disadvantaged workers and that PIC's would be the catalyst. Private industry councils may be incorporated as independent entities or may serve as purely advisory bodies to local and balance-of-state prime sponsors. Membership must include business leaders and representatives from labor, education, and local agencies, with the majority being from the business community. Title VII was clearly designed to redirect CETA programming to unsubsidized employment, as noted in *The Federal Register*:

The ultimate goal of Title VII is to increase private sector employment and training opportunities under

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all titles of the Act, commensurate with reduced emphasis on public and private nonprofit subsidized employment.¹

Private industry councils' responsibilities are to evaluate local labor markets and training and job placement programs, and to determine if proposed programs under Title VII funding would duplicate existing programs. In addition, PIC's are to assure that disadvantaged persons would be the recipients of job training and placement activities.

PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCILS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Private industry councils, established through Title VII, opened the door for new programs that could be developed from members' knowledge of private sector hiring requirements and expectations. Many PIC members recognized the expertise available through higher education in delivering quality programs and services, and used colleges and universities in their service area. This may be related to the fact that in some communities higher education representatives are voting members of private industry councils. Other linkages were formed that resulted in innovative programs, although a cursory examination of available literature indicates that the majority of Title VII training awards went to providers other than educational institutions. As recently as May, 1981, Thomas J. Smith, writing for Public/Private Ventures, a nonprofit corporation, concluded that "Few PIC's have become heavily involved in working with educational organizations."² Smith based his conclusions on information obtained from a study of seventeen Title VII program implementation sites around the nation.

However, there are recent indications that PIC's are turning to higher education, especially community colleges, for training programs. Community colleges have a long history of cooperation with business and industry, and thus are a logical source for program development and implementation. Over four million students were enrolled in employment and training programs in the community colleges during 1980-81. Dale Parnell, president of The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, has noted the similarity between community college training goals and those of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and the nation's employers:

Their [community colleges] primary mission is manpower training and employment development, and they have been involved in these activities since the turn of the century, when the first community college was established.³

Support for extensive CETA program and service linkages with community colleges comes from a recent study by Joel D. Lapin, Director, CETA/Community College Interface Research Project, Catonsville Community Col-

lege, Catonsville, Maryland. Lapin found that:

In many jurisdictions, the community college is often the major—if not the only—educational institution capable of providing occupational training, particularly to the disadvantaged.⁴

A study of CETA programs in community colleges was recently completed by the Washington State Board of Community College Education and the Employment and Training Division, Department of Employment Security. They found that of the 99,000 full-time-equivalent students in the state community college system approximately half were enrolled in vocational programs and courses. Thus the state community college system is the largest deliverer of training activities in the State of Washington to such an extent that, "... over one half of the classroom training provided to Washington State CETA participants comes through the State's community college system."⁵

Four-year colleges and universities are also substantially involved. They typically conduct research needed by local private industry councils, and often provide an array of occupational training programs and services. For example, the University of Texas and Memphis State University have provided labor market research for local PIC's with funds from Title VII. Skill training programs in aviation technology are offered by the University of Central Arkansas for local aircraft companies. Providing services for developmentally disabled individuals is a major function of the Center for Mental Retardation at California State University, Los Angeles. Title VII funds help provide job skill training, independent living classes, mobility, a pre-employment preparation program, computer training, job placement, and follow-up.

CRITICISMS OF TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

As noted, Title VII was created to avoid some of the weaknesses of traditional programs funded through Title IIB, IID, and VI. College administrators noted the "red tape" involved with traditional CETA programs and services and the lack of understanding of basic learning theory as applied to training programs. Educators also cited the CETA emphasis on short term programs that do not meet manpower training objectives. Other educators objected to the "no risk" mentality of many CETA planners, which largely excluded innovative approaches to unique training problems. They expressed displeasure with the inefficiency of day-to-day operations caused by constant CETA staff contacts and demands for information before and after program starts.

On the other hand, CETA planners complained about "red tape" reporting requirements imposed by their own bureaucracy at all levels. They found higher education reluctant to design programs that were short in length, cost effective, and capable of serving large numbers of eligible participants. They felt that educators and employers alike pressured them to provide only the more able students from their eligibility pool, thus ignoring placement for traditionally hard-to-place participants.

Private industry spokesmen also decried the "red tape" involved with CETA programs. They were particularly critical of "products" from CETA training programs who lacked acceptable work ethics and behaviors, and were not physically fit nor had the endurance for the entry-level positions they sought. Also, they felt that they received insufficient background on the participants' strengths and weaknesses from CETA staff members. They were highly critical of the CETA emphasis on public service employment as valid on-the-job training for private sector employment. In short, private sector employers were concerned that CETA funded programs and services were designed with little direct knowledge of what private industry expected from the prospective employees.

PARTICIPANT ORIENTED PROGRAMMING

Although there are some exceptions, there is considerable concern about the lack of effectiveness of some CETA programs and services in general. Literature on this subject is replete with criticisms. The positive approach to the problem is to eliminate or decrease the negative factors. With that aim as a basis, the problem is approached in this monograph through a set of assumptions that relate directly to programs and the participants, as opposed to the broader issues of differences among PIC and CETA staff and higher education. These assumptions are based on case studies and other relevant literature, interviews with private sector employers, and interviews with current and previous CETA participants. These efforts resulted in the following generalizations about participants' characteristics, which are listed along with the rationales used to develop them:

1. Economically disadvantaged persons have a greater need for pre-employment training than the average population. Employers who had experience with hiring the disadvantaged were critical of the "crash training programs" that failed to address deficiencies mitigating against job success. They cited visual and other physical problems, lack of basic academic skills, and lack of motivation as the major deficiencies. They were amazed that participants with many more problems than the average individual would be considered by CETA to be job ready without adequate remediation of these deficiencies.
2. Since the target population must be trained in a relatively short period of time, it is essential that key learning activities be integrated throughout all training activities in order to insure maximum retention. A critical factor in learning theory is reinforcement. The student must also experience practical application through examples of the learning that is being reinforced. The more inadequate the background of the learner, the more essential integration becomes. Prime sponsor planners may not have the expertise to evaluate proposals according to their inclusion of basic principles of learning.

3. Barriers to successful training, employment, and job retention of participants must be identified and addressed in pre-employment activities. The barriers most frequently described were:

- Low self esteem
- Lack of acceptable work attitudes and behaviors
- Below-minimal levels in basic academic skills
- Inadequate job search skills
- Unrealistic career goals
- Undiagnosed physical problems
- Poor understanding of employer expectations
- Minimum knowledge of job opportunities
- Failure to accept the importance of maintaining nutritional habits and basic fitness
- Lack of control of personal life, such as emotional problems and poor knowledge of consumer survival skills and concepts.

The researching of participants' characteristics established a base for a program design that varied significantly from traditional program design. Traditional programs recognized some participant deficiencies and treated them with a concentrated dose of "knowledge," such as intensive but short lived forays into subjects like "job search techniques." These methods did not address the "whole person," from the point of view of participants' physical, emotional and mental readiness states.

A program design that considers the "whole person" concept would be based on the development of an accurate profile of the strengths and deficiencies for each individual to be trained. The profile should include:

1. Assessments of deficiencies and strengths of each individual. These include physical condition, psychological readiness for training, and academic skill levels.
2. Prescriptive activities designed to remedy each deficiency, with a physical examination (including optical and dental checks) as the first priority. It is assumed that motivation for academic skill training and job skill training will be less if a participant has undiagnosed and untreated health problems.

A successful training program should continually repeat and integrate important concepts and information that are essential to the participant's employability. The ideas addressed in the units on career exploration, basic skills, survival skills, physical development, or any other programs' units, should overlap and provide the CETA participant with a practical application of important issues. Through integration, application, and the "fusing" of concepts, related barriers to employment can be adequately addressed.

The flexibility of structure within the program elements allows each participant a chance for success. Once the CETA participant has been evaluated and deficiencies in the various instructional areas are identified, the program staff can zero in on the unique problems of the participant. Individualized instruction reduces the fear of failure, as programming is geared for self paced, obtainable goals, and competition is minimized. Students who experienced problems with institutionalized training or possess learning problems respond well to this non-threatening, non-traditional program style.

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies were selected to represent: (1) The varied nature of higher education's involvement; (2) The range and types of institutional involvement; (3) The types of participants served by programs and services; and (4) The geographic mix of institutions.

Dallas Community College District
701 Commerce Street
Dallas, Texas 75201

Dallas Community College District has been involved in nine different CETA funded training programs since 1973. Various CETA titles have provided funding for such classroom training as optic lens grinding, commercial carpentry, machinist, and several clerical occupations. A current market assessment of the Dallas area and its economic condition has prompted the Dallas Community College District to offer only clerical training and placement.

The curriculum consists of basic clerical skill training coursework, and integrates human development classes (interviewing techniques, resume writing) into the participants' schedules. In fiscal year 1980-81 approximately 80% positive placement was achieved in this Title VII funded activity.

Northern Illinois University
Public Opinion Laboratory
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

The City of Chicago PIC awarded Northern Illinois University a contract to study the problem of youth unemployment and underemployment in the city. The final report provided a portrait of the employment, unemployment, and underemployment experiences of persons aged 16-24 who resided in areas representative of the lower half of the economic structure of the City of Chicago.

Clark College Pre-Employment
Training Program (P.E.T.)
7017 Highway 99
Vancouver, Washington 98663

The Clark College Pre-Employment Training Program was designed to meet the training needs of the disadvantaged and the hiring needs of local private sector employers. Participants generally were those who had failed in other CETA programs or educational institutions and possessed various barriers to employment.

The pilot program, begun in June, 1980, consisted of three main areas of study: physical development, career exploration, and basic skills. All selected students were given a general physical examination, ophthalmic examination, and basic skills inventory to identify individual deficiencies. Then an *individualized* program composed of basic skills, career exploration, physical development, and consumer education was designed for each participant.

The pre-employment training program branched off to provide specific job skill training in such areas as custodial maintenance, electronic assembly, wire welding, and office occupations. All of these include the original three program components of P.E.T., along with specific occupational skill training.

As requested by the local private industry council, the placement element was added. Approximately eighty percent of the participants of Clark College pre-employment training programs have been placed in successful unsubsidized employment. Seventy-five percent have received their GED completion.

California State College, Bakersfield
Center for Business and Economic Research
9001 Stockdale Highway
Bakersfield, California 93309

With the support of the Kern County CETA Prime Sponsor under Title VII, the college has developed and operated a Management Internship Program. The primary purpose of the program is to give full-time CETA students an opportunity to get career related training and experience in private industry while completing their education.

Selected applicants attend training workshops prior to being placed in the private sector. Here they learn resume construction, interview techniques, skill assessment, and job search skills. Advisors for the Management Internship Program contact companies in the community, such as banks, accounting firms, oil companies, and department stores, and apprise them of the programs and arrange for suitable internships.

Glendale Community College
1500 North Verdugo Road
Glendale, California 91208

In September of 1978, Glendale Community College became a subgrantee to the local employment development office for the training and placement of CETA participants. The college, with funds from Title VII, trains CETA eligible individuals in aviation power plant and air frame in cooperation with Lockheed Aircraft. Title VII funds also support programs in bank teller training in cooperation with local banks.

The current Title IIB and VII programs consist of guidance skills (interview and job search techniques, life skills, career planning), survival skills, basic skills (reading, math, spelling), on-the-job training, specific occupational training coursework, and placement. The length of time spent in the various program elements depends on the need and skill of the participant and the occupation selected for training.

Glendale now handles recruitment, selection, and testing in addition to job training and placement. A higher placement ratio has been achieved with selection and recruitment controlled by the college.

The staff of this highly successful and impressive training program identified the following principles as major contributors to program success.

1. Seek participants who possess good attitudes and are truly interested in the program.
2. Handle the screening, recruitment and testing of participants through the colleges if high results in placement are to be anticipated.
3. Hire well qualified staff persons—*essential* to a successful program.
4. Monitor attendance carefully and make sure participants are in daily contact with program staff.
5. Cultivate a good working relationship with CETA.
6. "Sell" students as graduates of the college—the word "CETA" carries a negative connotation to some employers.
7. Gear programs to the hiring needs of employers.
8. Give employers direct input into training program curriculum.

SUMMARY

Private industry councils were created at a time when there was considerable dissatisfaction at all levels of government and the private sector. Although there were a number of points of criticism, the primary weakness seemed to be in the failure of the majority of CETA programs to place participants in unsubsidized employment. Labor Secretary Raymond J. Donovan recently made the government's position clear when he stated, "We are out of the business of providing public service jobs as a substitute for a thriving, growing economy." Top administrators in the Department of Labor contend that the business world must face the reality that paying or in some way supporting training costs is preferable to paying unemployment insurance or welfare subsidies by higher taxes.

The challenge to the PIC's has been to incorporate and implement a business and labor response in the planning of CETA funded programs, and to increase private sector opportunities for unemployed or underemployed persons who are economically disadvantaged. In many cases a priority for PIC's was to develop linkages between employment and training programs, educational institutions, and the private sector.

Earlier CETA programs were found to be lacking in sufficient emphasis on pre-employment training. Too much emphasis was placed on early placement in Title IID and VI public service employment positions with the false assumption that this was adequate for unsubsidized

employment. Often service providers lacked the expertise to provide intensive training in short time frames or even to properly identify the deficiencies, academic and otherwise, that characterized their participants. Such basic learning principles as the integration of key learning activities into all learning activities were largely unknown or ignored.

The following recommendations to PIC's and higher education are designed to provide greater understanding of existing problems and to suggest solutions that will result in improved Title VII programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PIC'S

Private industry council members seem to have considerable materials at their disposal geared to goal setting, communications, statistics, and similar items. What tends to be missing can be summarized in the following two statements.

1. There appears to be little knowledge of the characteristics of CETA participants and why most programs fail in terms of job placement and retention.
2. There are few instances where a clear understanding exists of ways in which colleges and universities can meet and are meeting the program and service needs of the private sector.

Without these understandings it will be difficult for PIC's to achieve the primary goal of placing and retaining economically disadvantaged individuals in unsubsidized employment. The following recommendations are designed to promote understanding and open the way for successful relationships between PIC's and higher education.

1. Contracts must be awarded to institutions or others that have both expertise in diagnosing participant deficiencies and the capability to prescribe and carry out the correct remedies. Members should be aware of these strengths, which colleges and universities can bring to training programs.
2. Require CETA/PIC staff to design requests for proposals (RFP's) that allow flexibility yet demand specific and concise proposals.
3. Private industry council members need to become more familiar with training capabilities of colleges and universities and to recognize the flexibility these institutions can bring to programming.
4. Private industry council members need a working knowledge of the various CETA titles and of how all titles can interface to produce creative and successful programs.
5. Increased confidence in training activities would give PIC members more incentive to use their influence and contacts in the procurement of employment opportunities for Title VII participants.

6. Programs are successful when instructional staff consist of an adequate number of well qualified people. Too often PIC's and/or CETA staff cut this area first when making budget decisions. This inclination stems from a failure to understand or a tendency to minimize the importance of highly trained and motivated instructors.
7. The program and service relationships between PIC's and higher education are not limited to improving the learning and life chances of CETA students, but also apply to learners in general. Non-CETA students are likely to benefit from successful relationships between PIC's and higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Postsecondary institutions, and especially community colleges, have served that segment of the population that is classified as economically disadvantaged. The development of learning resource centers and other programs for "high risk" students is an example of the community colleges' commitment to these individuals in our society.

As cited earlier, four-year institutions have also made substantial contributions. Whether providing research or programs and services, many institutions have demonstrated their willingness to address the needs of the economically disadvantaged and their local private industry council.

Cooperative arrangements between colleges and PSIP programs can benefit both colleges and the private sector in the goals of training and placement in unsubsidized employment. A successful joint venture will benefit the private sector through the provision of trained workers. Colleges will gain invaluable contacts with business, labor, and other community organizations and personnel.

The following recommendations are designed to assist college and university educators involved with PSIP programming.

1. Design short term programs that focus on enhancing the employability of the participant and developing skills for an occupation for which there is a local labor shortage. This can be done by becoming more familiar with the needs of the private sector.
2. Become familiar with PSIP objectives and procedures.
3. Become acquainted with PIC members and, where possible, obtain membership on the local council. Private industry councils are likely to become more and more important in future federal and state training and employment efforts, as the private sector is likely to be more involved in planning and carrying out training.
4. Research suggests that CETA participants require non-traditional modes of instruction, including open entry and open exit, modular units, diagnostic and prescriptive methodologies, and remedial instruction.

5. Understand the role each actor will play in the program production. Educators *must* have the freedom to use their expertise in designing and implementing contracted programs. Be assertive but be sensitive to the input of the private sector and the legislative limitations imposed on CETA.
6. Interpretations of guidelines for CETA funding vary from one locale to another. Administrators of higher education should not be timid about questioning local interpretations if they hinder the delivery of quality training.

CONCLUSIONS

This monograph is intended to provide PIC members and leaders in higher education with information that will contribute to the main goal of placing the economically disadvantaged in unsubsidized employment. Recommendations focus on those elements of program design that are essential for project success. In many instances PIC funded programs and services and accompanying delivery systems may also be applied to continued relationships with the private sector that emphasize economic development efforts. Colleges and universities can view themselves as important resources in efforts to attract new companies, assist existing companies to expand, and aid persons displaced by local plant closings. The opportunities for success latent in PIC and higher education partnerships are relatively untapped. As relationships are better developed and improved programs for participants result, private sector employers will become more willing to provide jobs for the economically disadvantaged.

To promote the understanding and cooperation necessary for a concerted effort to meet Title VII objectives, the authors call for the convening of a national congress of leaders of private industry councils and education. This meeting should concentrate on the development of policy statements and guidelines that will give renewed inspiration and confidence to service providers. The Department of Labor, The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, and the American Council on Education are appropriate groups to sponsor a conference of this magnitude. The authors urge that a committee of key decision makers from each organization be convened to start the planning process for what could be a historic and precedent setting event.

Footnotes

¹ *The Federal Register*, Vol. 4, No. 65, Part 679 I-D, April 3, 1979, p. 20048.

² Thomas J. Smith, *Private Sector Initiatives Programs* (Philadelphia, May 1981), p. 34.

³ *PSIP Clearinghouse Showcase* (Washington: National Alliance of Business, Vol. II, No. 12, September 1981), p. 1.

⁴ *Idem*.

⁵ Hobart Jenkins, *Development of Policy Options to Maximize Access to Community Colleges by CETA-Eligible Individuals* (Report commissioned by the Department of Employ-

ment Security to the State Board of Community Colleges, State of Washington, September 30, 1981), p. 1.

*PSIP Clearinghouse Showcase (Washington, National Alliance of Business, Vol. III, No. 2, November 1981), p. 3.

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Ms. Keller received her M.B.A. in 1980 from City College. She received the Masters of Education in Counseling in 1977 from Lewis & Clark College.

Charles M. Reinmuth

Dr. Reinmuth has overall responsibility at Clark College for vocational education, international education, off-campus programs, and a business and industry contacts program. At Mt. Hood Community College in suburban Portland, Oregon, Dr. Reinmuth originated many of the college's manpower training programs as Evening College Director and then Assistant Dean for Technical/Industrial Education. As Associate Dean of Instruction at Clark College, he wrote training proposals that were funded and implemented for participants in four southwest Washington counties.

Dr. Reinmuth's professional training includes a doctorate in community college administration from Oregon State University and other graduate work at the University of Washington, the University of Puget Sound, Central Washington University, the University of Idaho and Eastern Washington University.

The views expressed in this monograph are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the American Council on Education.