



MAKING THE CASE

Take 30 minutes to work in your group to build a five-minute case for improving labor market outcomes to your assigned audience, putting yourself in the role of a community college president.

Board of trustees: You as the president want to invest in a program that will provide your college with real-time employer demand data to help faculty and staff design programs that are responsive to your local job market and to help students make informed career and program choices. What case will you make to the board that this is a worthy investment?

Faculty: Your college is beginning to design and implement guided pathways. You are meeting resistance from faculty who are upset about the reduction in course choice for their students. How can you make a case for guided pathways through the lens of improving students' labor market outcomes?

Local employers: You have upcoming meetings with the CEOs of several local companies that employ your graduates. You've heard through the grapevine that most of these CEOs are content with their current relationship with the college. How can you make the case for the need to deepen and expand these partnerships in order to improve labor market outcomes for students?

DILEMMAS OF A COLLEGE PRESIDENT



In small groups, read your assigned scenario and discuss possible solutions. Focus your conversation on the role of the *president* in the situation by considering the questions below.

Scenario A: Regional Technical Community College has for years had strong enrollments in fields like cosmetology, home health, hospitality services, and office assisting. However, when the wage data of its graduates were examined 18 months after graduation, it was obvious that the average wages of graduates from these programs were close to minimum wage. Clearly students were being employed, and clearly there was strong student demand. If the college was to close these programs, enrollment at the college would drop (at least in the short term) and so might overall credential completions. But it is hard to defend offering programs that don't pay graduates more than what recent high school graduates could earn in retail and fast-food jobs. What should Regional Tech's president do?

Questions to consider:

1. What should be the role of the president in this situation?
2. What are the right kinds of questions the president should be asking, and to whom should these questions be addressed?
3. How can the president help the college understand the "why" in dealing with this issue?
4. In what ways should the president help the college keep the end goal in mind?
5. Should the president be thinking through issues of scale, resources, sustainability, and outcomes? If not, how does the president make sure these issues are addressed?

KEY FACTORS



Imagine that you are the president of a community college that wants to begin working with employers to create a new curriculum for one of your programs. With your table group, select a field with which you are relatively comfortable or knowledgeable to use during this activity. Take 15 minutes to discuss the following questions.

In designing this curriculum, what unique strengths does the community college bring to the process? What unique strengths does the employer bring?

Why should the college be invested in building this curriculum? Why should the employer be invested? What problems might this curriculum solve for each party?

In light of these strengths and interests, what might an ideal process look like for jointly building this curriculum?

At your college, who is best positioned to begin this process with the employers? How can you get them on board? Why would they be invested in this process?

As the president, what is your role in this process? How might the principles of collective impact help you think about this partnership? What components of internal change management would be helpful to think about here?

MAKING THE CASE: INTERNSHIPS



Imagine that you are the president of a community college and that you are scheduled to meet with the manager of a large local manufacturing plant in a few weeks. For several years, your college has partnered with the company, which has offered feedback on your curriculum as well as on the quality of work from graduates that the company now employs. You hope to start a paid internship program with this company.

Take 10 minutes individually to think about how you would make the case for starting such an internship program. Consider the potential value for the employer, the students, and the college. Then, pair up with a partner, practice making your cases to one another, and provide feedback.



PRE-MORTEM ANALYSIS

After reading Gary Klein’s article “Performing a Project Premortem” from the *Harvard Business Review*, work with your table group to complete the following pre-mortem analysis.

Imagine that you are the president of a community college that is starting the process of building a public safety complex. There is a high demand in your region for firefighters and police officers, and your small programs are not meeting the demand. You hope to collaborate with local employers in order to create a large complex with state-of-the-art equipment that will allow you to triple the size of your fire and police programs, and successfully prepare all graduates for employment in a local fire or police department.

Assume that, five years from now, you have failed to achieve that goal. Identify on the chart the likely major causes of that “mortality.” Focus on the partnership with employers and the employer investments needed to make this complex a success. What might happen that could derail the effort? Who are the actors? What are their motivations? For each cause, delineate specific leadership strategies you will employ to anticipate and avert or address the challenge.

Cause of “Mortality”	Leadership Strategy to Employ

PRACTICE “AUDIT”



Take time to independently reflect on the following questions about your own college. If you do not know the answer to a particular question, consider where you might look for the answer and follow up once back at your institution.

At what point do students at your college get career counseling? How often? What kind?
How are career services integrated into academic advising?

What resources are available on your college’s website to support students in their job searches?

How many students at your college participate in workplace learning?

What labor market information tools has the college invested in? Who has access to these tools?

Which programs at your college have close relationships with employers? Which programs do not?

Who owns the process of students getting jobs?

GRADUATE SNAPSHOT



You become the president of a community college and, two months after you assume office, the state releases data on the labor market outcome one and five years after graduation for each program at all of the state's community colleges. Below is a snapshot of your college's outcomes for five programs.

Program	Award Level	Employed One Year after Graduation	Average Annual Wages One Year after Graduation	Employed Five Years after Graduation	Average Wages Five Years after Graduation
Auto tech	Associate	74%	\$41,000	55%	\$47,000
HVAC	Certificate	90%	\$48,000	90%	\$57,000
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	Associate	42%	\$38,000	84%	\$60,000
Massage therapy	Certificate	58%	\$14,000	56%	\$16,000
Vet tech	Associate	88%	\$26,000	82%	\$29,000

At your table, spend 20 minutes considering the answers to the following questions and then report out to the entire class:

What concerns you the most?

What strengths do you see?

What additional information would you want to assess the patterns in the above data? How might you go about getting that information?

Now assume you have gathered additional data about the massage therapy programs by tracking down students and speaking to employers and have found the following:

- Over 75 percent of students you have found in jobs are unhappy, working long hours, suffering from persistent injuries, and earning low wages.
- Over 20 percent of graduates seem satisfied in their work and have higher wages. They are roughly evenly divided between students who have opened their own businesses and those who went on to get a physical therapy credential.

What next steps might you take as the community college president?

CASE STUDY: LAKE AREA TECHNICAL INSTITUTE



After reviewing the Lake Area Technical Institute (LATI) case study assigned for pre-reading, take 30 minutes to discuss the following questions in small groups.

Based on this case study, what do you know about LATI's prior experiences that might help them to solve this problem? Consider their experiences with both internal and external stakeholders.

Given the consistently low enrollment numbers over many years, why did LATI's leadership decide that closing the precision machining program was not an option? What factors would come into play at your institution?

How can an institution leverage its relationships with K-12 systems, industry, and other stakeholders and partners:

- to increase student awareness of the career opportunities and benefits of an industry sector?
- to develop creative or nontraditional approaches to organizing and delivering technical programs?
- to subsidize or reduce the extraordinary costs of such programs?

Propose a set of recommendations for LATI's president and leadership team to meet the state's growing needs for skilled precision machining workers. In your recommendations, consider the external partnership opportunities you identified above, plus the strengths and challenges within the internal college culture.

What might be some concerns raised by students, faculty, and employers about your recommendations for LATI, and how would you respond?

In what ways would you alter your LATI recommendations for your own institution, if you were faced with a similar situation to meet your state's labor needs? Identify factors influencing your recommendations, such as prior history, partnerships, resources, and internal cultural context.

What are the ways in which LATI tracks workforce needs? How did they come into play when LATI's leaders began considering ways to attract more students to the precision machining program? How does your institution use data on labor market outcomes to track student success and inform program decisions?

CASE STUDY: HARPER COLLEGE



After reviewing the case study assigned for pre-reading and watching the video, take 15 minutes to discuss the following questions in small groups.

Consider the eight strategies for improving labor market outcomes that are explored in this module. Which strategies do you see the most evidence of in this case study? In what areas might you make further recommendations to the college?

How do you see the principles of collective impact playing out in the context of this case study?

Consider Quirk-Bailey's comments about the role of Harper College's president, Dr. Ken Ender, in the partnership. What role did the president play in this specific partnership? What lessons could you take away from this example to apply to other partnerships that you may be engaged in?



ACTION PLANNING

Colleges have many ways of measuring how students fare in the labor market after they leave the community college—student surveys, employer surveys, labor market data, and so forth. Consider an area where your community college could improve students’ post-graduation outcomes in terms of success in the labor market. Using the questions below, sketch out the steps that your institution might take in addressing this problem.

What data do you have to show the size and projected duration of the problem?

What has your campus done to address this problem in the past?

What other organizations in the area are serving the students you serve or serving a different set of students who might benefit from addressing this problem?

What can you bring to the partnership for the employer that the employer cannot get without you? And what can the employer bring that you couldn’t accomplish without them?

Map out a common agenda and a handful of shared measurements.

How might the community college and the employer share the costs associated with the partnership?

How long do you think it will take to address the problem? What do you envision the partnership looking like in five years? Ten years?

How will you monitor the effectiveness of the partnership as it relates to addressing the problem you've prioritized?