



RETHINK ERIE: Initiative Update

December 2, 2008

■ What it is

RETHINK ERIE is an unprecedented collaboration among the business, government, economic development, and philanthropic communities to aggressively address our region's workforce development challenges. It is a forum for discussions about workforce development; and about the education, training, economic development, and personal growth needs that could be met by a community college. The initiative's focus will be RElearning, REtooling, REworking, and REeducating to meet the changing needs of people, business, and industry in the region.

RETHINK ERIE will perform the research needed to determine if an application for a community college is warranted. If so, it will engage the community and necessary expertise to complete an application to the State Board of Education, and follow it through the approval process.

The research process we've developed through RETHINK ERIE can, and will, be replicated over time, so we will have a proven mechanism to consistently gauge the business community's needs. We will then use what we learn to shape not only the potential community college, but also our broader business retention, expansion, attraction, and economic development efforts.

■ Who we are

The initiative is being guided by a Leadership Team comprised of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, the County, the Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC), and a representative of local industry. Five "Work Groups" will advise the team: Finance, Governance, Communications & Outreach, Physical Planning, and Education Services (which will be formed at the conclusion of the research). The project manager (Judith Fagin, PMP) is funded through March by the Erie Community Foundation.

■ Where we are now

With funding from the NWIRC and the County, the Clements Group, a nationally-recognized community college consulting firm, has been retained to assist with the workforce development and community assessment research efforts. The research will be done in Erie, Crawford, and Warren counties, with the goal of gaining the most accurate information possible regarding our regional employers' workforce-related needs. The research process will include a series of individual interviews, community forums, and an online survey, in addition to traditional data collection. The workforce development and community assessment research results will be complete in February: If the data demonstrate the need, we will prepare an application to establish a community college for local and state consideration.

■ **Where we are going**

The research will determine if there is support for an application to the State Board of Education for a community college. However, in advance of the research conclusions, we are investigating budget cycles, funding sources, constraints, policies, and all of the other areas specified by the State that must be addressed in an application. We will also be "touching base" with community groups, legislators, and others to update them about the initiative.

We are very cognizant of the risks and challenges, the greatest of which will be funding. Some of the possible risks being discussed include:

- County Council will not commit to the funding requirements of the application
- Community will not support paying for a community college
- Private post-secondary technical schools will not support the planning process or application
- Post-secondary institutions will not support the planning process or application
- Additional resources (funds, consultants, participants) will be needed to complete a successful application
- Community non-support: Build it, and no students come?
- State funding: Competition with the other community colleges
- Timing risk (given the economy)

If the need is demonstrated, our goal is to have an application prepared by the end of March. This is an aggressive, self-imposed deadline that we will re-evaluate as RETHINK ERIE progresses. This effort is too important to artificially rush; we have to do it right.

■ **Where to reach us**

You can keep up to date at www.rethinkerie.com. For questions or information, please contact:

Mary C. Bula

Vice President, Growth Partnership Division
Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership
208 E. Bayfront Parkway
Suite 100
Erie, PA 16507
(814) 454-7191 (phone)
(814) 459-0241 (fax)
mbula@eriepa.com

Judith Fagin, PMP

Project Manager
RETHINK ERIE
208 East Bayfront Parkway, Suite 100
Erie, PA 16507
Main: 814.454.7191
Cell: 814.528.8589
jfagin@rethinkerie.com

Why a community college?

Northwestern Pennsylvania is not served by a community college, although it supports the other 14 Pennsylvania community colleges through its tax revenues. In addition, the region has acute workforce needs, an eroding tax base combined with an increased demand for social services, escalating poverty, and low post-secondary education rates, all of which would benefit from low-cost and accessible post-secondary education and job-focused curricula.

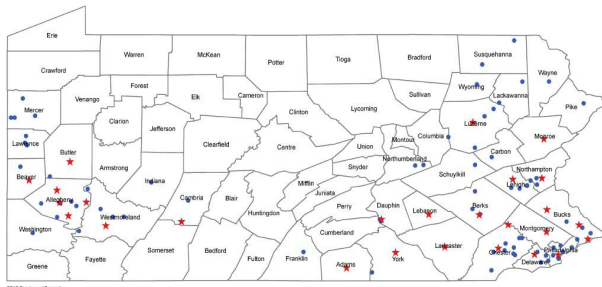
Region needs more skilled workers. Regional businesses are having difficulty finding skilled workers, making it tough to compete; this also adversely affects business attraction efforts.

Region needs affordable education opportunities. Many are unemployed or underemployed, but cannot or will not attend a four-year college. We need affordable educational opportunities that will help them earn sustainable wages.

RETHINK ERIE is a new initiative that will serve as a forum for discussions about the workforce development, educational, economic development, and personal growth needs that could be met by a community college. Discussions will look at **RE**learning, **RE**working, **RE**tooling, and **RE**educating to meet the changing needs of people, business, and industry in the region.

Region needs more post-secondary training options. There is no formal system for public post-secondary training; existing training options are costly, fragmented, and/or difficult to access, and there is no central entity coordinating.

In addition, a community college would have both direct and indirect economic benefits that would accrue to both public and private sectors.



Location of Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and campuses (26) and instructional sites (79) — Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges



[Fast Facts] Community Colleges: US and PA

US data: American Association of Community Colleges

US Enrollment:

Total: 11.5 million
Credit: 6.5 million
Noncredit: 5 million
Enrolled full time: 41%
Enrolled part time: 59%

US Average Annual Tuition and Fees:

Community colleges (public): \$2,361
Four-year colleges (public): \$6,185

US Degrees and Certificates (Annually):

Associate degrees: 555,000
Certificates: 295,000

US Demographics:

21 to 39: 85%
Women: 60%
Minorities: 35%

US Employment Status:

Full-time students employed full time: 27%
Full-time students employed part time: 50%

PA data: Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges

PA Enrollment:

Credit: 189,000 (three of five will transfer to a four-year institution for Baccalaureate degree)
Non-credit: 256,000 (shows commitment to local needs, workforce development, and personal enrichment)

PA Average Annual Tuition and Fees:

Community colleges (public): \$2,327

PA Degrees and Certificates (Annually):

Associate degrees: 555,000
Certificates: 295,000

PA Demographics:

35 or younger: 78%
Women: 60%
Minorities: 28.1%

Part-time students employed full time: 50%
Part-time students employed part time: 33%

Community Colleges Past to Present

(Adapted from material found at the American Association of Community Colleges website: www.aacc.nche.edu)

No other segment of higher education is more responsive to its community and workforce needs than the community college, which is celebrating its centennial — 100 years of serving their communities.

Today, community colleges educate more than half the nation's undergraduates. In the 1996-97 academic year, 9.3 million people took credit courses at community colleges. Another 5 million took noncredit classes, the majority of which were workforce training courses. Since 1901, at least 100 million people have attended community colleges.

Each community college is a distinct educational institution, loosely linked to other community colleges by the shared goals of access and service. Open admissions and the tradition of charging low tuition are among the practices they have in common. But each community college has its own mission.

Community College Trends and Statistics

Community colleges are a vital part of the postsecondary education delivery system. They serve almost half of the undergraduate students in the United States, providing open access to postsecondary education, preparing students for transfer to 4-year institutions, providing workforce development and skills training, and offering noncredit programs ranging from English as a second language to skills retraining to community enrichment programs or cultural activities.

Globalization is driving changes in our economy, and the need for an educated workforce has never been greater. The majority of new jobs that will be created by 2014 will require some postsecondary education. In addition, the demographics of the workforce are changing. As a result, employers increasingly rely on the very students who currently are least likely to complete their education.

Without community colleges, millions of students and adult learners would not be able to access the education they need to be prepared for further education or the workplace. Community colleges often are the access point for education in a town and a real catalyst for economic development.

Community Colleges at the Forefront

- **Health care:** 59% of new nurses and the majority of other new health-care workers are educated at community colleges.
- **Workforce training:** 95% of businesses and organizations that employ community college graduates recommend community college workforce education and training programs.
- **International programs:** Close to 100,000 international students attend community colleges, about 39% of all international undergraduate students in the United States.
- **Homeland security:** Close to 80% of firefighters, law enforcement officers, and EMTs are credentialed at community colleges.
- **Online education:** Students at 41% of public community colleges can earn a degree entirely online and 92% of all institutions offer at least one Internet-based course.
- **Earnings:** The average expected lifetime earnings for a graduate with an associate degree are \$1.6 million, about \$.4 million more than a high school graduate earns.

Data are derived from the most current information available as of January 2008.