

College: Carl Sandburg College
College Location: Galesburg, Illinois
Practice: Educational Technology Center
 Providing businesses, students, and the general public with advanced technology training, facilities, and experience

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| <i>Year Started</i> | 1996 |
| <i>Budget</i> | \$75,000 |
| <i>Program Participants</i> | 4,000 |
| <i>College FTE</i> | 3,400 |
| <i>Target Sector</i> | N/A |
| <i>Staff Size</i> | 9 |
| <i>Structure</i> | Operated collaboratively by community college, public school system, and local four-year liberal arts college |
| <i>Key Outcomes</i> | Education and training provided to more than 50 area businesses |

Introduction

West central Illinois is equally divided between rural and urban settings. And although the area has had its share of economic setbacks, it appears to be on the threshold of new growth. That new growth, however, is limited somewhat by a lack of technology training opportunities. Indeed, the high cost of staying technologically up-to-date, combined with limited Internet access in rural areas, has made it difficult for any one institution to offer advanced technology training to its own students or employees, let alone to the general public.

To address that problem, three of the region's educational institutions—Carl Sandburg College, Knox College, and Community Unit School District (CUSD) #205—have pooled their resources to form a technology training center. The Educational Tech-

nology Center (ETC) offers customized technological training, teleconferencing, and distance learning to local firms, computer education to local students, and computer and Internet access to the public.

Community Background

The economy of west central Illinois historically has been based on manufacturing and farming. In the 1980s, however, many manufacturers closed down or left the area, and many farmers turned to other sources of income as farm profits dwindled. As a result, the service sector became the largest industry in the region. Now, however, manufacturing is regaining strength, with the growth of such companies as Maytag, Butler, Midstate Manufacturing,

| Program focus | Sector specific | Economic condition | Economic base | | | Target populations |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------|
| | | | Mfg | Agr | Svc | |
| <i>Technology diffusion and transfer</i> | No | Stable | 26 | 3.3 | 34 | <i>Existing workers, general</i> |

Service Area Warren, Knox, Fulton, McDonough, Hancock, Henderson, Henry, Schuyler, Mercer and Stark Counties

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|--------------------------------|----------|
| <i>Total Population</i> | 260,000 |
| <i>Median Household Income</i> | \$28,000 |
| <i>% Below Poverty Level</i> | 12.5 |
| <i>% Unemployment Rate</i> | 5.8 |
| <i>% Minority Population</i> | 5.2 |
| <i>% Rural Population</i> | 49.3 |
| <i>% High School Graduates</i> | 75.9 |
| <i>% College Graduates</i> | 12.8 |

MC Products, and Alexis Fire Equipment, all located in the ten-county area served by Carl Sandburg College (CSC). Local leaders call the economy stable with a reliable workforce and see potential for more growth in the near future. Population statistics bear out this positive assessment: the ten-county poverty and unemployment rates are comparable to national rates.

Program Description

Founded in 1966 with the goal of “individual and community improvement through education,” Carl Sandburg College takes seriously its responsibility to provide education that responds to the needs of individual students and of the community. The college is named for poet and biographer Carl Sandburg, born in Galesburg in 1878. Sandburg’s vision of a “people’s industrial college, where people of all ages would be taught, in addition to [liberal arts], something about industry and farming” informs CSC’s philosophy and mission.

In the mid-1970s, CSC obtained funding through a district bond referendum to build permanent facilities in Galesburg (pop. 36,000). Additional sites were established in the early 1990s in Carthage and Bushnell. In 1996, CSC began moving some of its satellite programs to downtown Galesburg, both to make them more accessible to the community and to contribute to downtown revitalization.

The college has approximately 1,050 full-time students, half of whom are in baccalaureate transfer

programs and half in occupational/vocational programs or general studies. CSC offers three associate degrees, two-year applied science degrees in 22 vocational areas, and 29 nine-month vocational certificates. CSC also runs 11 community service programs, including the Adult Learning Center; the Center for Agriculture, Business, and Industry; the Literacy Coalition; and several programs for parents and children.

Leaders from CSC, Knox College, and CUSD #205 began meeting together in 1995 to discuss ways to collaborate and identified a need for technological training in the Galesburg area. Area businesses were sending employees out of the region for training and continuing education, resulting in high training costs and presumably lowering firms’ investments in local workforce development. The general public was also behind the technological learning curve, in part because Internet service providers had been slow to bring affordable Internet access to the area.

Rather than importing technology and exporting students, the group agreed that the area’s technological training and education needs should be met locally—providing training opportunities to businesses, students, and residents, and improving the local workforce. The group met with local economic development entities and business leaders and gained their support to create the Educational Technology Center. Start-up costs were \$632,000; \$132,000 came from state funding sources, \$500,000 from local businesses.

The Educational Technology Center (ETC) offers a variety of technological training venues.

- The Teleconference Center can run interactive satellite videoconferences and workshops, downlink educational and business-related broadcasts, or provide local businesses with a place for meeting or training.
- The Distance Learning Classroom has 25 workstations that are linked electronically to Galesburg High School, Knox College, the three Carl Sandburg College sites, and a new Maytag training center in Galesburg. Through these workstations, students and teachers can have live video and audio interaction with other meetings and training classes.
- The Computer Classroom houses customized computer training for business and industry.

The content of these customized courses varies from database management to computer-based customer service programs. Often the course material will incorporate the company's actual data to make the information even more relevant for employees.

- The Computer Laboratory provides computer services, Internet access, and informal computer instruction for the public. Students, staff, and faculty of the three educational institutions, as well as senior citizens, can use the lab for free; the general public pays a nominal fee.

Since the ETC opened in 1996, its \$75,000 per-year operating costs have been covered by CSC, Knox College, and CUSD #205, each of which pays a portion of the center's costs based on its usage the previous year. In the 1999-2000 school year, CSC used 50 percent of the center's time, the CUSD #205 used 40 percent, Knox College used 3 percent, and business 6 percent. The schools do not use their own operating funds to pay for the center, but seek private donations and grants from funding agencies.

All three institutions also provide staff to run the ETC. Soon after the ETC opened, CSC moved its Center for Agriculture, Business and Industry (CABI) into the ETC, enabling CABI to provide day-to-day operation staffing to the ETC. CUSD #205 has placed its newly appointed technology director in the ETC to assist with its management and to develop new ways to enhance classroom education through technology. Knox College places its students in the ETC as lab instructors and teaching assistants, thus providing them with opportunities for experience and resume-building while in school.

Outcomes

More than 50 area businesses have taken advantage of the ETC's training and education facilities. As a result, the center has increased the skill base of the area—giving more opportunities to workers and expanding opportunities for business growth. In addition, community leaders say that educating prospective businesses about these enhanced training opportunities has helped the region attract business.

Students and residents now have Internet access and training through the ETC. Many residents of

the ten-county area have no other means of access, either because they cannot afford computer hardware or because of the lack of affordable ISPs in rural areas. The ETC thus allows this rural area to stay, as one local business owner puts it, “technologically in step with the rest of the world.”

Finally, by bringing institutions together to envision and implement change for the future of the community, the ETC partnership may create potential for more beneficial partnerships in the future. For example, the President of Knox College envisions a collaborative program that would provide a road map from ninth grade to a bachelor's degree through all three educational institutions—“a complete education without leaving town.”

Strengths, Challenges, and Replicability

Those involved in the ETC, as well as other community leaders, point to the extensive collaboration as the primary strength of the ETC. The educational institution partnership and the support of local business enable the ETC to provide a much-needed service cost-effectively. Because computer technology changes so rapidly, no one institution or industry can afford to keep up with every change and thereby maintain state-of-the-art computer facilities and skills. Pooling resources provides all three institutions and the entire community with access to cutting-edge computer technology and training.

The primary challenge faced by the center is the need for expansion. Demand for its services and facilities has outstripped its physical and staffing capacity. In addition, in order to provide access to technology that is more advanced than what employers and residents would be able to obtain on their own, the center must periodically upgrade its technology. It may be more difficult to obtain funding for these upgrades than for the initial start-up funds, but if it does not upgrade, the center may begin to lose some of its value to the business community. The ETC is approaching this challenge by seeking grant support from various foundations and state and federal funding organizations. The center received state and federal grants this year that replaced all existing equipment and added new equipment.

The collaborative aspect of the program has attracted considerable interest and served as a model for programs in other districts and other

states. The presidents of both colleges and the superintendent of CUSD #205 have been asked to make presentations at state and national conferences about the ETC. The Illinois Community College Board gave the ETC its Award for Excellence in Workforce Preparation, calling the ETC “unique because of the extensive collaboration, but easily replicated.”

For more information, contact:

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