

Apprenticeships at Work Convening: *Continuing the Conversation*

Session Descriptions

Building Bridges: Bold Partnership Strategies That Expand Your Apprenticeship Ecosystem

Partnerships don't happen by accident — they're built with intention, strategy, and a willingness to think beyond the transactional. This session challenges community college staff to reimagine how they engage external partners — from industry employers and trade associations to community-based organizations — and turn those relationships into a thriving, self-sustaining apprenticeship ecosystem. Grounded in real work from Lake Land College's Center for Business & Industry, attendees will leave with a repeatable process they can put into action immediately.

Intrusive in the Best Way: Proactive Student Support That Works

Workforce development students often face barriers that go beyond academics— transportation, childcare, financial stress, and unfamiliarity with education systems. At Elgin Community College, all work-based learning programs utilize a concierge model of student support. In this presentation, we'll share how this intrusive, intensive model allows apprenticeship coordinators to develop real relationships with students to proactively remove barriers and keep students engaged and on the path to success.

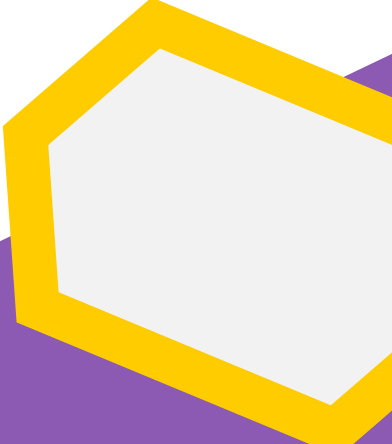


From Program to Pathway: Using Apprenticeship to Advance College-Wide Goals

Whether a college is launching apprenticeship for the first time or preparing to scale it more intentionally, apprenticeship can be most effective when positioned as one strategy among many to advance enrollment, persistence, completion, and economic development. At the request of the president, Heartland Community College led a year long, cross-campus planning process to explore that question, align apprenticeship with departmental and institutional goals, and create a framework for moving from apprenticeship as a program to apprenticeship as a pathway. This session will share that process and provide practical tools, planning methods, and final product examples that participants can adapt to build internal alignment, shared investment, and readiness for the next phase of apprenticeship work applicable to wherever your institution is along the apprenticeship journey.

From Pilot to National Model: How Insurance Apprenticeships Scaled from Harper College

This session explores how Harper College developed one of the earliest registered insurance apprenticeship models in the United States, beginning in 2016 through the American Apprenticeship Initiative grant in partnership with industry leaders such as Zurich North America and Aon. Over the past decade, the program has served more than 630 apprentices, with over 220 completing the insurance program, demonstrating strong completion and employment outcomes. Participants will learn how faculty, deans, and industry partners collaborated to design curriculum, build related instruction, and create a scalable talent pipeline in a new and emerging industry space. The presentation will also highlight how this early model helped inform broader employer-led efforts such as the Chicago Apprentice Network, where Zurich and Aon played founding roles in advancing apprenticeship adoption across industries. Finally, it will showcase how Zurich North America has designated Harper College as a national provider for multiple associate degree apprenticeship pathways.



Degree Apprenticeships

This facilitated session will engage participants in an exploration of degree apprenticeships as an emerging model that integrates paid, on-the-job learning with a college degree. Drawing on our research at New America, the session grounds discussion in the current landscape, nearly 600 programs across more than 300 institutions nationwide—while surfacing where and how these models are taking hold across industries like education, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing.

Through guided discussion and peer exchange, participants will examine what makes degree apprenticeships effective. The session also creates space to grapple with the barriers to scaling the model—from policy and funding constraints to institutional capacity—and to identify concrete strategies for expanding high-quality degree apprenticeships that drive economic mobility and meet workforce needs.

Build It With What You Have: Creating and Scaling a Healthcare Pre-Apprenticeship from Existing Resources

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to launch pre-apprenticeship programs, but many hesitate, believing they need new funding, new curriculum, or new infrastructure to get started. This session will share how Parkland College designed, launched, evaluated, and refined a healthcare pre-apprenticeship by leveraging existing institutional assets, internal partnerships, and employer relationships already in place. Participants will walk through the step-by-step development process, including program design, student recruitment, lessons learned from the first cohort, improvements made for the second launch, and strategies for serving out-of-school youth through partnership with Adult Education. Attendees will leave with practical tools and a replicable framework for building their own pre-apprenticeship pathways without starting from scratch. Parkland's healthcare pre-apprenticeships were partially funded by the IL DCEO Apprenticeship Expansion Grant.



All Aboard the Apprenticeship Express: From Idea to Impact

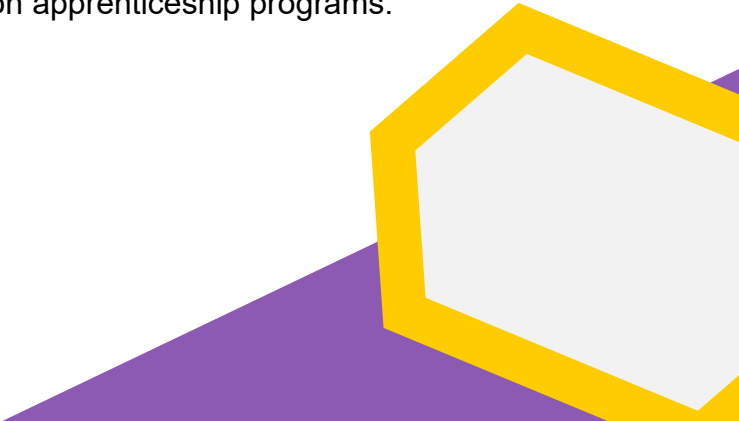
Building a successful apprenticeship program doesn't happen overnight, it takes momentum, the right partners, and a clear destination. In this engaging session, Kaskaskia College shares how we launched Apprenticeships and built it into a growing, employer-driven model. From the first conversations with industry to gaining faculty buy-in and partnering with workforce agencies for funding support, we'll walk through each "stop" along the journey. This session blends storytelling with practical strategies, highlighting both successes and lessons learned along the way. Whether you're just stepping onto the platform or ready to pick up speed, you'll leave with actionable ideas to move your apprenticeship efforts forward.

Apprenticeship with Impact: Strengthening Student Support and Experience Through Collaboration

This session will highlight how Harper College has implemented apprenticeship programs with a strong focus on student support and experience to drive success and satisfaction. Through employer partnerships, mentorship, and integrated advising, the model supports academic and career growth. Key approaches for building a student-centered apprenticeship experience, including recruitment, onboarding, on-the-job support, and career placement, will be shared. The session will also explore common student barriers to success and strategies to address them through collaboration among students, faculty, campus resources, and employer partners, to sustain student success throughout the apprenticeship journey.

Expanding Childcare Opportunities through Apprenticeships

Joliet Junior College (JJC) is working to address early childhood education teacher shortages and improve the success of childcare centers through pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. This session will provide an overview of the strategies JJC used to launch early childhood education apprenticeship programs, engage employers, and partner with regional agencies to fund this initiative. Participants will learn about the successes and challenges JJC has encountered in their early childhood education apprenticeship programs.





Understanding Apprenticeship Degrees: What They Are and What It Takes to Get Started

As apprenticeship programs continue to grow across industries, more colleges, employers, and workforce partners are asking how apprenticeship can connect not only to workforce entry, but also to college credit, degree attainment, and long-term career mobility. This interactive session will introduce attendees to Apprenticeship Degrees as a model that aligns paid work, on-the-job learning, related instruction, and postsecondary credentials. Participants will gain a practical understanding of what Apprenticeship Degrees are, how they differ from more traditional apprenticeship models, and what it takes to begin exploring them in a real-world context. Through a guided activity, attendees will work through an initial feasibility and readiness exercise to identify the core partners, conditions, and questions that should be in place before moving from interest to design. Attendees will leave with a tangible framework they can use to guide conversations and next steps within their own institution, organization, or partnership.