Apprenticeships At Work – Apprenticeship Convening – July 9, 2025

Break out Session details

**Session #1 - 10:45-11:30 am**

*From Transactional to Transformational: Modernizing Employer Engagement for Apprenticeship Growth –* Room AGC1000

This session explores how colleges and training providers can modernize employer engagement to build meaningful, long-lasting partnerships that drive apprenticeship success. Blending workforce development strategy with on-the-ground practice, the presentation highlights how to move beyond traditional models—such as promoting preset credentials—and instead co-create training that reflects employer-identified job roles and competencies. Participants will learn practical ways to identify and engage potential partners, reduce common barriers, and frame apprenticeship as a solution to real business needs. Lake Land College and Parkland College will share insights from their evolving apprenticeship work, including lessons learned, strategies for building trust, and how to align employer expectations with Gen Z learners.

Topic areas: Employer Engagement, Recruitment Strategies, Partner Development and Collaboration

Presenters: Aimee Densmore, Parkland College and Bonnie Moore, Lake Land College

*The Apprenticeship Journey:  Success Stories and Stumbling Blocks –* Room AGC1001

Explore the full journey of apprenticeship programs—from securing business partnerships to apprentices achieving DOL credentialing, including employer engagement and maintaining partnerships and recruiting, retaining, and supporting apprentices through completion of their apprenticeship. Learn how to effectively navigate challenging student scenarios while serving as the vital link between colleges and employers. Presenters will share best practices, lessons learned, with opportunities for audience discussion to spark new ideas and strengthen your own program’s impact.

Topic areas: Employer Engagement, Recruitment Strategies, Student Support and Experience

Presenters: Michelle DeVore and Kelly Bay, Illinois Central College

*Apprenticeships 101 –* Room AGC1020

Are you considering starting an apprenticeship at your institution?  Does your college already do apprenticeships, and you want to know how to get involved? During this session, we will walk through basic apprenticeship vocabulary, what apprenticeships are, and where they could be located in any given institution.

Topic areas: Selling Apprenticeships to Your College, Partner Development and Collaboration

Presenters: Angela Gerberding, Illinois Community College Board

*Building Stronger Apprenticeships: The Critical Role of Mentoring and Harper College's Train-the-Trainer Course –* Room AGC1040

Mentoring is a key component of successful apprenticeship programs, providing apprentices with the guidance, support, and real-world insights they need to thrive. This session will explore the vital role mentors play in apprenticeship success and highlight how Harper College is equipping mentors through its innovative Train-the-Trainer course, "The Mentor and the Apprentice." Attendees will learn about the benefits that structured mentor training brings to an apprenticeship program. Whether you're building a new apprenticeship program or enhancing an existing one, this session will offer practical ideas and inspiration to elevate the role of mentoring in your apprenticeship programs.

Topic areas: Student Support and Experience, Mentorship Training

Presenters: Dr. Sean Bailey and Alesha Blank, Waubonsee Community College and Besa Sadiku, Harper College

**Session #2 - 1:15-2:00 pm**

*Apprenticeship with Impact: Building a Stronger Student Experience –* Room AGC1000

This session will highlight how Harper College has successfully implemented apprenticeship programs that not only prepare students for the workforce but also provide robust support systems that ensure student success and satisfaction. Through personalized mentorship, strong employer partnerships, and integrated academic advising, Harper’s model demonstrates how pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship pathways can foster a sense of belonging, build confidence, and empower students to thrive both academically and professionally. The presentation will share best practices and lessons learned in building a student-centered apprenticeship experience, from recruitment and onboarding to on-the-job support and career placement.

Topic areas: Student Support and Experience

Presenters: Besa Sadiku, Harper College

*Landing the Business:  Sales Strategies for Higher Education Teams –* Room AGC1001

This interactive session, Landing the Business: Sales Strategies for Higher Education Teams, is designed specifically for staff with little to no sales experience who are responsible for building partnerships, securing grants, or responding to workforce development opportunities. Participants will learn how to approach business development with confidence by mastering a simple, consultative sales process, learning how to talk about their programs effectively, and understanding how to close deals without being “salesy.” The session also explores how to turn everyday networking into meaningful connections that lead to real opportunities. Attendees will leave with practical tools, proven techniques, and a mindset shift those transforms “sales” into authentic relationship-building.

Topic areas: Employer Engagement, Selling Apprenticeships to Your College, Partner Development and Collaboration

Presenters: Alisha Clark, Prairie State College

*Support That Sticks: How Holistic Case Management Drives Apprentice Retention and Completion –* Room AGC1040

Apprentices face a range of academic, professional, and personal challenges that can impact their ability to complete their programs. In this session, learn how holistic case management — integrating academic support, career coaching, and personal development — can significantly boost apprentice retention and completion rates. We'll explore practical strategies, share real-world examples, and highlight how proactive, customized support systems create stronger outcomes for both apprentices and employers. Topic areas: Selling Apprenticeships to Your College, Student Support and Experience

Presenters: Danielle Kuglin Seago, Stephanie Spencer and Laura Paley, College of DuPage

**Session #3 – 2:15-3:00 pm**

*Generations in the Workforce –* Room AGC1000

Today’s workforce spans four generations - Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z - each bringing unique perspectives, values, and expectations to the workplace. This session explores how historical context shapes generational traits, how those traits manifest in work behaviors, and what employers can do to bridge generational divides. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, attendees will gain a deeper understanding of multigenerational dynamics and learn how to foster inclusive, adaptive workplace cultures that attract and retain talent across age groups. Special emphasis will be placed on Gen Z’s emerging influence and what it signals for the future of work.

Topic areas: Employer Engagement, Recruitment Strategies, Student Support and Experience

Presenters: Aimee Densmore – Parkland College

*Building Bright Futures: Advancing Early Childhood Education Through Registered Apprenticeships –* Room AGC1001

Explore how developing a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) in early childhood education can be a powerful strategy to address the ongoing workforce shortage in the field. Apprenticeship programs create accessible pathways for individuals—especially those already employed in daycare and early childhood learning centers—to upskill, gain credentials, and become teacher-qualified. These earn-while-you-learn models not only support career advancement for current workers but also help stabilize and strengthen the early childhood workforce by filling critical vacancies with well-prepared educators.

Topic areas: Industry Specific Apprenticeships

Presenters: Joy Fitts - Kaskaskia College

*Pre-Apprenticeship: 7 Days to Career Success –* Room AGC1020

Elgin Community College has launched a “7 Days to Career Success” Pre-Apprenticeship program designed to meet the needs of employers, community members, and state entities such as WIOA. This innovative model equips underemployed and unemployed persons with industry knowledge, recognized credentials, and the opportunity to interview with hiring employers, all within just seven days.

Topic areas: Pre-apprenticeships

Presenters: Gina de Rosier-Cook, Tim Whitney, and Elissa Kojzarek, Elgin Community College

*Get Set, Go: The First Steps Toward Education-Aligned Apprenticeships –* Room AGC1040

Curious about launching an apprenticeship program at your college but not sure where to begin? This session is designed for institutions in the early stages of exploration or implementation. We'll break down the key building blocks of a successful apprenticeship model—from employer engagement and program design to funding and student support. Learn from real-world examples, uncover practical tools, and leave with a clear roadmap to get your program off the ground. Whether you're forming your first partnership or pitching the idea on campus, this session will equip you with the confidence and know-how to take that critical first step.

Topic areas: Employer Engagement, Recruitment Strategies, Selling Apprenticeships to Your College, Funding Models, Partner Development and Collaboration, Student Support Experience

Presenters: Corey Young, City Colleges of Chicago and Danielle Kuglin-Seago, College of DuPage