Onondaga Pathways to Careers Community of Practice January 25, 2018 - Transcript

Meera: Welcome everybody, it has been awhile since we connected because of the holiday break which led us to skipping December. But just a reminder we are looking forward to these meetings every month so we will be having our meeting this month and again next month. It will regularly be the last Thursday of every month at noon. This month we are going to have Pellissippi State Community College Presenting and we look forward to a good discussion of their program. As a reminder, Pellissippi is another one of the programs funded by ODEP. ODEP is our Department of Labor Disability Employment Policy. They are our funders as well and they are on the line so they can also address any questions that come up in regards to the particular program and its priorities. We look forward to hearing to hearing from what I think we could call our sister program. I would like to pause and do a roll-call. We have members' names here highlighted in bold and that just reflects some of the explicit RSVPs we got. I will start with those and then others if you are on the line or if I haven't seen you please announce yourself. We have representation with myself from the Burton Blatt Institute. Do we have anybody else from BBI on the call?

Ynesse: Hi, Ynesse is here.

Meera: Great! We also have Celestia backing us up here with her assistance so if you have any difficulties with the Blackboard system please let us know by email or chat box or text messaging if all systems are down, I suppose. I want to try to help you to make sure you can join us and participate. Do we have somebody here from Erie community college? Not yet, but hopefully soon. We have of course folks from the OCC, we have William and Stephanie and Dean, and do we have anybody on the phone? Nope okay. We have our folks from Pellissippi and I know you can't be in the web conference room so if you could let us know who we have from Pellissippi.

We have Randi, Laisse Kita, Michelle, Melissa, and Indira.

Meera: Looking forward to the presentation and I will I will let you know when I hit the slide of course and turn it over to you and then you can just let me know how do you like me to forward to slice each time and take care of that for you. Any folks from Virginia today?

Georgia Coopersmith: I am here from Virginia. I'm with a VR agency and we are working on a career pathways grant actually we have two. One from RSA and one from Morris. In both cases we are working with community colleges.

Meera: We would love if they could join us and during our meeting so if you would like, we are happy to work with you and send you any information that could be useful for you to invite them to our group. That will be excellent to hear about their work with you.

Georgia Coopersmith: I think they would like that.

Meera: From ODEP, I know we have Sheldon and Janet, do we have anybody else?

Karen: Good afternoon this is Karen.

Meera: Gary we don't have your group listed so I need to make sure we get you up there as well.

Gary: It is just me here for us.

Meera: From the SEADA Center, do we have anybody on the phone? No, okay hopefully they'll join. From the New York State Department of Labor is there someone on the phone? We have some folks hopefully that will join us as we continue to progress to the presentation. NDI I see we have Brian Ingrum.

Brian Ingrum: I am taking over for Dave Mayor in the role as the topic expert for career pathways. He thought this was a worthwhile call for me to be on and I will be attending from here on out.

Meera: Welcome to our group! They have had such great insights and feedback for us and we were very glad that we still have your expertise represented. I see online Janet showing as well- did any of your colleagues join?

Janet: I'm by myself in the room that I am in. There might be someone else across the state so if they are I'll have them chime in and I'm not sure if they were really trying today or not.

Meera: I think that covers the list but there may still be some folks that have been joining on the phone and I haven't had a chance to reach out to. If you don't mind, show us you're here.

Rebecca: Hi I am from the NBI also with the LEAD Center.

Meera: Then we'll move ahead and just review the agenda. We welcomed everybody with our Roll Call. Next is our presentation from Pellissippi State community college. If we have time we certainly wanted to discuss a couple of issues; I know here at O.C.C. we have been working towards some new priorities for ourselves and renewing existing priorities. We'd love to talk to you about them and hear what other strategies are part of the same thing. I will provide a brief update on our in person meeting and I would love to get volunteers for our next in-person meeting.

Carolyn Jones: Hi it's Carolyn Jones from ODEP.

Meera: With that, I'm going to turn it over to Pellissippi.

Pellissippi Presentation

Indira: Hello everyone I'm Indira Richardson and I work at Pellissippi State Community College as the director of UPEP. Pellissippi State Committee College is located in Knoxville Tennessee. It was founded in 1974 and is currently the largest community college in our state. Our annual enrollment as a fall 2016 was 10244 students the college has five campuses spread out over two counties and the college currently has twenty eight associate of applied science degrees. The UPEP program is funded by a grant by the US department of labor by the disability employment policy. The use of that program expands the college's capacity to deliver integrated education and career training to students with disabilities. UPEP supports students with disabilities and help them in attaining an associate of applied science degree and internship placement opportunities. UPEP provides participants with academic and career coaching interviewing and job search training soft skills training job shadowing internship placement assistance, and persistent scholarships. In order for students to be enrolled in UPEP they must be in an associate of Applied Science Program at Pellissippi, have a documented disability and be between the ages of fourteen to twenty five. These are students that are in your go to work degree programs. The top four majors our students are enrolled in our video production technology, networking and communication

systems, early childhood education, and communication graphics technology. Last semester seventy five percent of our incoming students were required to take remedial or as we call them co-requisite classes upon entering Pellissippi. Forty-two percent of our students receive federal financial aid and sixty four percent of our students receive Tennessee promise funds. For those of you who don't know what Tennessee promise is, several years ago Tennessee became a start a program called Tennessee promise. It's a program that focuses on increasing the number of students that attend college in our state. It provides students a last dollar scholarship meaning that the scholarship will cover the tuition and mandatory fees not covered by the program. Students may use a scholarship at any of the state's thirteen institutions, community colleges, twenty seven colleges of Applied Technology, or other eligible institutions offering an associate's degree program. To qualify, students must have just graduated from high school attend a mandatory Tennessee promise meeting, complete and submit eight hours of community service per semester, and maintain a 2.0 G.P.A. at the respective institution. As you can see, the majority of our students do take advantage of this program. Now I will give you a little more detail of the types of services UPEP provides in the way we structured our program. UPEP provides each student with an academic coaching, career coaching, peer to peer mentoring, job shadowing, an internship opportunities, interview and soft skills training, job search, training persistence, scholarships, and etc. In order to take advantage of the services UPEP students have certain program requirements they are required to meet. Students are required to sign a UPEP contract each semester. Each student is placed in a contract level we have bronze, silver, silver plus, and gold. These levels are based on where they are in their degree program at Pellissippi. Students must complete all the requirements on the contract as well as our one hundred points in order to be considered fully participating in UPEP and to be eligible for the UPEP scholarship and book stipend. We created the different levels of our contracts in order to focus our coaching, workshops, and activities to better suit the level of the student and what they're currently in school. For example bronze level students are first year students and their contracts focused mainly on Career Exploration, job shadowing, site visits, self- advocacy, study skills, organizational skills, and time management. These students spend much of their time with their academic coaches, working on those skills that they need to be successful in their classes during their first year of college. They work with their career coaches mostly on career exploration activities. Each bronze level student is required to meet the basic requirements listed on their contract; for example, required workshops, turning in their accommodation plans to their professors, and so on and they also have to earn a hundred contract points by participating in their choice of a variety of activities such as job shadowing, site visits, and so on. Silver level students are students in their second year. Silver plus students are students in their third or more years and gold students are students in their final semester. We found that many of our students do not graduate in two years with their associates' degree, as many must take remedial classes or they choose not to take a full coach course load so we've had to create multiple contract levels that we weren't anticipating, like the silver plus. Students in these later levels focus more on career planning and management, and workplace learning workshops and activities such as soft skills, job readiness, employment search, and financial literacy. These students tend to work less time with their academic coaches and more time with their career coaches. Again just like the bronze levels, the students have to meet certain contract requirements and earn one hundred points by participating in their choice of activities. UPEP has a 3-tier approach to helping these students. When a new student comes in, he or she is assigned to one of our career specialists. The career specialists serve like a case manager for our students. Each student is also assigned to an academic coach who will work with them to achieve academic success as the career specialist will help them with job readiness and soft skills. Some of the

things our career specialists do is serve as our students' primary form of contact. The complete the UPEP intake form with the students when they first join the program, they check in with the students on a regular basis and monitor student progress, and help them with advising. Our academic coaches help with their study skills, organizational and time management skills, test taking skills, self-advocacy skills, and etc. They help them with the use of their assistive technology and they also provide subject specific coaching in English and math. Our UPEP career coaches focus on career exploration, career planning and management and workspace learning. Under the career exploration category, they administer the career assessment and then our business liaison meets with them to see what best suits their interests and abilities. The career coaches and business liaison also help research career pathways within their degree area and help them find and prepare for site visits and job shadowing, and informational interviews. Under the career planning and management category, our career coaches provide workshops on many career planning and soft skills topics. They help the students prepare for their 30-second elevator speeches, we call those the P-30 challenge. This is where the students eventually have to talk about themselves and their work experience in a concise 30 second speech before employers that volunteered to come and give feedback. The career coaches also work with the students one-on-one in preparing their resumes, cover letters, and in mock interviews in helping they prepare for their interviews with the federal workforce recruitment process. Under the workspace learning property, coaches help monitor community service, which all students on Tennessee Promise must complete each semester. They help student's research employer mentors and they may help the students prepare for job opportunities in their field of study. We have a lot of different workshops and each contract level attends different workshops. For example, bronze level students attend self-advocacy and teamwork workshops, and silver-plus students attend workforce recruitment programs and targeted resume workshops. In addition to working directly with our students, the UPEP program focuses directly on employer and community engagement activities. We have two staff members that are mainly focused in this area- our business liaison and our community liaison. The business liaison engages employers to find job shadowing and experience opportunities. She is also a member of the mayor's council on disability issues. Being involved in these organizations has allowed her to influence and impact employers in the Knoxville area and meet with employers that are disability friendly. The community liaison meets with high school students and parents to discuss the UPEP program and recruitment and provides workshops on how to provide a smooth transition from high school to college for students with disabilities. She also partners with local organizations and local school districts to provide post-secondary transitions to children with disabilities and their parents. In addition, UPEP partners with local organizations to provide a yearly community resource fair, which we call SOAR. This is for all Pellissippi students at all of the five campuses. Now I'd like to talk briefly about all of the changes we've made to the UPEP program, based on issues we've encountered in our first few years. The first change was creating the student contract. In the beginning, we gave the students a list of the workshops and activities they could participate in however we found many of our students weren't attending. In the contracts, there are required elements and optional elements. We asked them to sign the contract to take more ownership of our experience. We found this to be quite successful, because they have a physical contract they have to look over with their coaches each time they meet. It enables them to see what progress they've made, what they need to do to qualify for incentives. It makes them accountable for their own success. We also started to work with EDIT to create a fully accessible online assessment to use with our students. We were using a different program before but it didn't have the ability assessment which the new system has. We use it to help decide what career and major is the right choice for our students. In effort

to get students to use more of our services such as job shadowing and internship opportunities, we created a new student and parent orientation. At the orientation, we really try to drive home the value of the services we offer in hopes the parents will encourage their students to take control of the services we offer. Recently, we added a UPEP summer academy. Students new to Pellissippi and UPEP were invited to attend half-day sessions on campus teaching them about the campus, what services we offered, how to access email and grades, expectations, information on the differences from high school and college, and some study skills. We found the academy was very helpful for those students who weren't quite college ready in giving them a bit of extra support before they started school. Lastly, one of the changes we encountered is to partner with other local organizations such as project search, BEST, Ready, and the Youth transitions culinary program to redirect some of our students who do not have the capacity for college level work. We encourage students if it's a good fit to utilize these services as pathways to employment. For example, we arranged for two students who were really struggling and were going to lose their financial aid due to low GPAs to leave Pellissippi and join the project search program to be trained to work at UT hospitals where we think they'll be much happier and successful. While this was not part of our original vision for the program, we have had to find new avenues for students so they can be successful in finding employment, which is the ultimate goal. That's a brief overview of our program, does anybody have any questions?

Meera: Thank you so much, that was a great presentation. If folks are unable to use their audio, feel free to type in their questions and I will read them.

Stefanie: I am from OCC. I have a question- how many students are in the program?

Indira: As of the end of last semester we had 91 students. We are still fluctuating right now because we had been closed for snow days. We haven't gotten the final count for the start of the semester yet.

Meera: Do you have students from across the spectrum of disability? Do you find specific types of disability over represented or under represented? Our last presenter last time has become very well known for serving deaf students so they have a lot of services available for them.

Indira: They cross the spectrum, but autism is 32% of our students. We have also a lot of people with psychiatric disabilities, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities is probably the second highest of our group. We have a few students who are hard of hearing or deaf but not a lot of physical disabilities.

?? From Rock Lake? Community College: I am curious about the contract? I find that very interesting and think it could be good for us to look at RCC.

Indira: We have our contract for the semester in the different levels, silver plus and gold are on one contract that we could probably share with you. It changes each semester.

From RCC: I'm curious about how many things you require the students to do.

Indira: It depends on the level. There are three workshops that are required for everyone on every level. Then there are some additional activities, maybe six requirements per semester? But some of them are as simple as turn in your accommodation plan to your professor which is something a lot of them don't want to do. Some of them are very not time-consuming at all but we found they were not inclined to do

it so we had to make it a requirement. Some of their requirements are done 1-1 with their career coach but it's really not a lot.

Meera: if you don't mind sharing the example you are using this semester, we are happy to share it on the listserv and the website.

Sheldon: I wanted to emphasize how important it is that Pellissippi looks at the menu every year and determines if they need to tweak it based on results and involvement. That is a really important part in addition to just establishing the menu for contracts.

Indira: it is definitely not a static document. Every semester we see what did and dint work and revise it, and add new things. We have some students who stay much longer than anticipated.

?: I think one of the examples that we did this semester is that we noticed our students who were heists want to go into their internships, who were very nervous about that part of workspace learning, so we added in like three workshops to help them with that transition. It's the same thing but different, so we're trying to make it not so scary by starting on the silver level to work them into that, thinking about that and a summer job, trying to get over that hesitation that they have.

Stefanie: I have a question about the levels. You speak of silver, bronze, and gold levels and then you speak with students who are with you longer than you'd expect. How it that you determine which level is right for each student being that they progress through their programs so differently?

Indira: Originally it was just bronze, silver, and god. Bronze was their first year, silver second, if they were to get through in 2 years then second semester of senior year would be gold. But we haven't had a single student do that so we assume they'll stay for a 5th semester, which is gold when they're in their internship. We found it wasn't sufficient so we added silver plus. Bronze is first year, silver second, silver-plus is third, and gold is their last semester.

?: Am I correct that there are a number of credit hours associated with where you are placed?

Indira: No it's what year you are in Pellissippi. Once they move into their second year, they're in silver.

Meera: Are the academic coaches the ones responsible for providing academic accommodations?

Indira: No, our disability services department does that. They have a coordinator in the disability services office. Our coaches make sure they go for that appointment and they get those plans and turn them in.

Meera: On OCC's behalf, they have previously had challenges around that too for providing accommodations and then the students not taking those forms to their teachers.

Indira: What we found is when we put it on the contract originally, we didn't have a due date so students would wait until the last day of class, make the contract requirements by turning it in. But we changed the date to the first week of school.

Meera: It helps the teacher too, to adapt materials and etc.

Sheldon: Are the parents involved at all in this contract process?

Indira: They are not involved in the contract. We have asked them to come to the orientation where we talk about the contract, so they are aware of what they are but when they come in and meet with their career specialist, after the first time they generally come alone. We are trying to teach them to self-advocate.

Sheldon: When you mention the contracts to the families, what is the feedback?

Indira: There's normally a positive response.

Meera: One of the interesting things about your program is it's across the board. You mentioned they have to be in applied science, so there's 28 programs that qualify for that currently. Have you hit the stage yet where they are trying to find jobs? And are there any strategies that have been particularly useful?

Indira: We have only had four students this past semester and maybe four in previous semesters so we are just getting to that point. I think next semester we have 8-10 graduating, so they are just now. We have several students who we thought would graduate who are taking another semester. They do not want to leave school, so we haven't had too many students graduate yet.

Meera: At OCC, we are also at that cusp, where we only have a small number who are ready for the employment sector. We also have found with other community colleges that students may enjoy their program and want to take it to the next level and get another degree, so there are some other outcomes that can be achieved.

Indira: 1/3 students who graduated is planning on getting a four year degree.

Meera: I thought it was interesting how your business and community liaison are connected, both for the purposes or recruiting students and finding jobs. Are you connected with the rest of the workforce development system: job centers, VR, other groups?

Indira: Melissa works with them but we haven't had much interaction with VR. We have tried but they haven't engaged much with us. They are extremely short staffed in Tennessee; they have been the hard ones to get involved.

Meera: Thank you Pellissippi, this has been a great presentation. As a sister program, we have heard things we could definitely think about and potentially use to improve what we're doing. I really appreciate it. So moving forward, we have some time for some of our discussion questions. I think some of what we talked about with Pellissippi addresses this, but to the broader group I'm curious what approaches do you take so the students know they are setting goals for workplace learning and employment? How do you get students to focus and work towards that? Brian is there anything from the NBI program that is worth importing?

Brian: The challenges you guys are describing are pretty common. When you're working with youth it's usually a big leap to go from talking about work theoretically to actually showing up at a worksite. From the general experience at the BBI, the more customized you make the approach the more useful it's going to be. Using things like informational interviews, getting them in contact with the actuality, the specifics of the workplace, helping them to understand the connections; all of that can make them feel more comfortable moving forward but ultimately it's going to be a little stressful. Hearing about the contracts could be a good strategy.

Meera: That reminds me of trying to get our students to participate into job shadows that put them into that environment.

Brian: I am a huge fan of the informational interview, putting a youth in front of somebody doing the work and both parties are aware of why, can be super empowering for a youth. It's a bridge between him theoretical and the real. They are much more likely to believe the assessment of somebody already doing the job than they would be to your assessment as a workforce professional. So if you can get somebody who is doing the work they're interested in, to tell them they could have a future and what they're proposing to do could be a good strategy helps address a lot of concerns the youth have with putting themselves out there.

Sheldon: In your question I saw two parts. Do youth or students agree with the goal of employment? To what degree are they actually involved in workspace learning? To those who are participating from VR, do you feel as if there's a commitment of youth to employment and to what degree are they compliant or involved? With these two grants, we tried to build those work base learning opportunities into the educational process so that the individuals progress toward the internship which is more intensive and successively into employment. Virginia VR do you have any thoughts on that?

Virginia VR: We started with our CPIV and now we're going into the DEI. The career pathways at RSA makes it so they have to be VR eligible individuals and they wanted to be regional career pathways employers. We built up an infrastructure and there's a lot of manufacturing along 81. It started out with just the demand side of employers when they hired us, what kind of degrees and certifications do they want. Out of that we have been doing the MC1 manufacturing and logistics, the classes are small maybe 10-12. We have 10 fully employed right now but of course we want more. The logistics is one where we reached out to Blue Ridge community college and they developed a course that integrates with adult education, the foundational skills. Their community of practices involves the VR, the workforce, the community college, and adult Ed. They are just collaborating like crazy and creating something that doesn't exist elsewhere in the state. It's an interesting thing going on there, we are just starting to work with NOVA community college through the DEI. Hopefully we'll do something similar, we do have included in that the adult education to provide a bridge type program. We're not targeting an industry there, we are targeting informational technology in Northern Virginia and we will see if that's easier or harder to crack. The employers will hire qualified people. We haven't been focused on the associate's degree as much as workforce certifications that are recognized by the department of labor.

Sheldon: Any of the community colleges that are on the line, do any of you have individuals involved in workforce learning and are they eager to embrace that.

Virginia VR: Back to workplace learning activities, we needed a pool of people who wanted to go into manufacturing. We started out doing workforce experiences. We bring students in in the summer, maybe 20-30 to a session. While they are doing something, whether it is building a robot or some other activity, they also have people from VR doing behind the scene assessments to see if they can do the work, academically, or skill-wise. They also take them on manufacturing tours and we're doing that in every area now because it enables the youth to see what the workforce looks like and see if they can envision themselves there.

Janet Nebraska VR: We believe in the workspace learning philosophy. Part of that, in high school, were also doing that for adults to help them identify a job goal. We also like when they're out on the job site

to get workspace learning besides academic. It's crucial. In some years past, the people with the most severe disabilities did not have any work experience. So then we had people who were well educated and were having difficulties finding a job. Work base learning opportunities that they could put on a resume are really important. We should do that as part of the planning. In Nebraska we have VR certificate programs. Those programs are driven by the employers and the employers then partner with the VR and say: what are the basic skills somebody needs from a community college to get into employment. Most of those VR certificate programs are driven by employers so they spend a number of hours with mentors at the worksite. Sometimes VR pays for an on the job evaluation with those employers. That has been a good feel for clients and if the mentoring program goes well, the clients tend to get hired at those companies. The work base learning opportunity is so important, we can't teach that in a classroom. The clients need to be out there learning what they're compatible with and what they want to do.

Meera: We have to have that balanced approach, I think it's common across the field that we see that students have lots of education but lack real world experience and it limits their chances in the market. My next discussion question is more narrow to program management, but just thinking about tracking program participants and their outcomes and the best strategies for doing that, if it takes place through interactions with their key point of contact, an academic or employment coach, and then how do we stay in touch with them? Is that something that your programs do, to track your own success in terms of retention in jobs long-term? From discussion I have heard of being able to connect through state department of labor systems that some educational have through agreements and access to that, so we can track students after the fact using that mechanism. We've also discussed about using the systems we use while they're in college, Briefcase and career coaches in different ways. If we have students remain engaged through that system, we can track them. Some have suggested connecting with students through LinkedIn, if they use that effectively we can continue to track them. Any other strategies?

Brian: Some organizations are using data sharing strategies of the other workforce systems, even social security to find the best practices for tracking post-participation. It has been a problem across the board, but sometimes the incentivized cards have been somewhat effective. If you send a response after 6 months, they'll send you a 5-dollar certificate, or something like that. That has been somewhat effective. Everyone is dealing with the challenge of post-participation tracking in any of our programs.

Meera: That's an interesting approach, I think we find that with research participation, and that card could help.

Brian: One of the thoughts is extending an invitation to somebody to come back to the program to speak reestablishes that relationship.

Meera: It also provides real-world examples showing how they can be successful.

Brian: Also from Pellissippi I believe, had an individual who was dealing with a self-employment situation. That student did a presentation and it was very well received.

Indira: He did it on his travel abroad experience, he was the first one of our students to take advantage of that program.

Meera: It's a good strategy, it may be something for us to look at as well, bringing your graduates and success stories back.

Janet: Has anybody reached out, we don't do a lot of follow-up besides cases on social security where we can be reimbursed, via social media? A lot of times when we are reaching out to clients we think about social media.

Sheldon: There are some issues with privacy and disclosure, in addition to the integrity of the data on social media.

Janet: I was thinking more to find and message them, whether on LinkedIn or Facebook. Just message them and reach out, whatever it might be. People are more receptive on social media.

Sheldon: We would welcome the data if someone could try that and see what they got.

Janet: Email isn't always useful because it could go to Junk mail and a lot of young people aren't even using it anymore. We haven't tried it, I would just be curious about the data.

Meera: It's an interesting idea, and we're using systems like Career Coach or Briefcase to try and retain a connection after they graduate. LinkedIn is another option as part of the career building strategy. Networking is a big way to get jobs so if we adopt LinkedIn as a way of developing your network and as a program, we can retain that relationship afterwards. Create Facebook groups maybe.

Janet: I really like the linked in idea. Our career pathway grant is going back and reaching out to successful client's years 13-16. We are having a hard time reaching out, especially with outdated information, that's why we thought about going to social media. Getting them on LinkedIn is an excellent idea.

Sheldon: It's important in the last semester of these colleges to make sure you have the personal email, not just the school email. Sometimes we forget to do that.

Meera: The last thing I wanted to do is provide an update; we had a discussion with the Department of Labor and they raise a good point. We are getting new folks joining our group and April feels like 6 coming up very quickly. It's when we bookmarked a possible in person conference. But, we would like to postpone it to when it would make more sense. We have had more time as a group to connect online and identify those things that could be valuable to talk about strategies for success in the in person meeting. The goal is to have it but when it would be more meaningful. Sheldon, or Karen or Janet anything to add?

Sheldon: One of the things we would like with any of our initiatives, since they are community college based grants, if we were to move forward we want to make sure we have those colleges participating. I think it's still TDB and we want to make sure there's success if we go down that route.

Meera: I know that we have some folks who RSVP'd and Nebraska has programs driven by employers, and in Virginia it sounds like that as well. If you wouldn't mind again, let me know what information I can get you to invite those community colleges so they can benefit from this. If others know about programs at community colleges we would be happy to have them join us. New members are always welcome, let me know if I can get you any information and please introduce folks to me. Thank you so

much for your patience with this. Our next meeting will be February 22nd, just shy of a month away. If folks are willing to present or bring a presenter I would appreciate it. Thanks everybody!