THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
IN WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A CASE STUDY

A doctoral thesis presented

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to explore how one community college in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States engages with its key external industry stakeholders as it designs and implements workforce education and training activities. This study was bounded by considering the college relationship with selected industry stakeholders and focused specifically on the creation and establishment of the college’s welding program. The research question of the study is: How does Mid-Atlantic Community College (MACC) engage with key external industry stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities? The theoretical framework selected for the study is stakeholder theory with a focus on the descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects of the theory. Three stakeholders internal to the college and three stakeholders external to the college were interviewed, and documents reviewed. Data analysis revealed five themes. Participants exhibited strong tendencies to collaborate and approached issues strategically to reach both short-term and long-term goals. The findings of this study are relevant to college administrators and staff, faculty, business leaders, economic development officials, and policy makers.

Keywords: community college, workforce education and training, stakeholder theory, collaboration, engaged partnerships, workforce policy.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2008, the United States became mired in the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression. Although over the past several years the national unemployment rate has inched down towards six %, between 2009 and 2014 the national unemployment rate remained above historical norms, with the national monthly rate peaking at 9.6 % in 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Jobs must be created to continue to stem unemployment and provide career opportunities for workers (Holzer, 2015). Just as importantly, skilled workers must be trained to fill existing and future positions (National Skills Coalition, 2010). A key mission of community colleges is to provide workforce training to ensure that businesses have access to the skilled workers they need to be successful (Milliron & Wilson, 2004).

The White House has emphasized that the strategic use of these institutions will help develop a skilled workforce (The White House, n.d.). In 2014 alone, billions of tuition and public dollars were invested in creating an infrastructure of community colleges across the nation (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2014). This investment must be leveraged as communities work to find solutions to improve workforce development.

There exists a varied emphasis on the use of community colleges to provide education and training (Dougherty, 2003; Desai, 2012). This emphasis has been looked at through the perspective of the colleges (Embry, 2006; Torraco, 2008; Wainright, 2004; Zeiss, 2003); the states (Drury, 2001; Duffy, 1997; Friedel, 2010); the local economies and priorities of the college (Dougherty, 2003; Grubb, Badway, Bell, Bragg, & Russman, 1997), and the federal level (Government Accountability Office, 2011). The emphasis placed on workforce development by college presidents, boards of trustees, and state or local workforce economies have contributed to
the uneven emphasis placed on the community college workforce development mission (Dougherty, 2003; Desai, 2012). The extent to which community colleges are used for training depends on state governance structures, funding, and competition from other training providers (Jacobs & Dougherty, 2006). States have also taken specific steps to drive funding and emphasis toward community college training (Friedel, 2010). Some states have even developed governance structures that enhance the emphasis of community colleges in workforce development (Duffy, 1997; Friedel, 2008).

While these studies provide examples of how community colleges have been utilized in workforce development, one relationship that needs further understanding is how the colleges work with their stakeholders at the local level. A key component of two-year colleges in the United States remains their emphasis on their local communities (Vaughn, 2006). Further, there is a growing emphasis on college interactions with their communities focusing on the economic needs of business and industry with an emphasis on education and training (Levin, 2000). Examining a college’s interaction with stakeholders may provide clarity to stakeholder interactions as the college fulfills its workforce development goals. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how one community college in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States engages with its primary stakeholders as it designs and implements workforce education and training activities.

**Research Question**

How does Mid-Atlantic Community College (MACC) engage with key external industry stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities?
Significance

Workforce development programs have a profound impact on individuals, businesses, and communities, especially those serviced by a particular community college (Jacobs, 2012). These programs positively impact workforce opportunities to the collective benefit of whole communities (Schrock, 2014). For individuals who are unemployed, new skills can improve their earning power over time (Jacobson, LaLonde, & Sullivan, 2005). However, the availability of training also remains important to those who have jobs. The disparity in wage growth and the stagnation of salaries indicate that people who are employed can also benefit from further education and training (Harlan, 2014). Workforce development also leads to employee satisfaction, since it offers professional development and the possibility to improve the quality of life for workers (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

The development of the American workforce is essential in assisting businesses meet their objectives (United States Department of Commerce, 2014). Companies strive to be economically competitive, and access to an educated workforce drives their competitiveness (Grubb & Lazerson, 2006). In addition, “states can increase the strength of their economies and their ability to grow and attract high-wage employers by investing in education and increasing the number of well-educated workers” (Berger & Fisher, 2013, p. 1).

Various entities in the community have a stake in community college workforce development programs. Businesses need access to more skilled workers because there are significant numbers of jobs that go unfilled due to a lacked of skilled applicants, and this trend is expected to continue (Woellert, 2012). As many of these jobs are middle-skills jobs, requiring more than high school but not a bachelor’s degree (National Skills Coalition, 2010), the role of
community college training programs is significant. Many of the jobs remain unfilled simply because there are no workers with the appropriate skills to fill the positions and many of those jobs are in technical fields (President’s Council, n.d.).

President Obama believes some of this skilled worker shortfall can be addressed through a cooperative effort of businesses and community colleges to provide the right type of training so skilled workers will be available (Obama, 2012). The president is not the only elected official who has an interest in workforce development. Public policy makers at various government levels have the responsibility to create many of the policies that impact and influence the workforce development environment through laws, funding, and regulation. Governments have encouraged community colleges to enhance their workforce mission to help governments attain their economic goals (Levin, 2001). For example, Iowa has created programs that directly target funding to community colleges for workforce development (Friedel, 2010). South Carolina has placed a special emphasis on using the workforce development mission of its two-year colleges to attract industry to their state (Duffy, 1997). Federal policy also drives many workforce education and training activities in the states. The Workforce Investment Act (1998), which was recently updated in July 2014, has been the major legislation authorizing the organization and funding of the workforce investment system in the United States for the past 16 years. This law helps to detail the role of multiple stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels in the development and implementation of workforce policy (Workforce Investment Act, 1998).

Positionality

Parsons (2008) notes that positionality takes into account the complicated and interrelated aspects of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and other identities recognized by the
communities in which one lives. Since this study plans to examine how a college operates among and with its stakeholders when delivering workforce education and training, bias can originate from the socially constructed identity of being part of a group. I am part of a group of administrators who have learned about and worked to implement workforce development policy solutions at the community college. This group constitutes a subset of the larger community that is composed of all the stakeholders in the workforce development system which includes businesses, workforce development administrators, and elected officials.

Jupp and Slattery (2010) wrote about how personal experiences play a large part in directing one’s perspectives, and Silverman and Marvasti (2008) noted that using the researcher’s own experience as a starting point is an effective means to frame a research. My personal experience related to community colleges, education, and training is derived from twenty years of employment in this field. While working for the American Association of Community Colleges, I was the association’s chief advocate on Capitol Hill as Congress wrote the major federal job training law, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. In this role I advocated the position that community colleges should be the centerpiece of the nation’s workforce development efforts. While I worked on the campuses of two different community colleges, this belief grew deeper. These jobs also allowed me to view and interact with the workforce system from the state and local practitioner level, not just on the federal level. Because I had not dealt with workforce development issues previously, my basis for viewing policy emanates almost entirely from the perspective of the community college.

The concept of foregrounding and backgrounding our complex identities was noted by Briscoe (2005), who wrote that we can foreground and background various aspects of our positionality based on our environment. The forefront of my positionality is the perspective that
community colleges should be the primary providers of and leaders in developing workforce education and training solutions. The background is my perspective as a member of the overall community of workforce development professionals. The ability to place my identity as a community college administrator in the background as I work through my research will be a way to isolate my personal bias in the study.

My personal experience influences my interest in this topic as well as the positive impact of community college training programs on those enrolled. I have witnessed people’s lives turned around and businesses helped by community college training. That reinforces my belief that community colleges should be a lynchpin in the nation’s training system. In addition, given the current state of the economy, continued unemployment, and a deficit in skilled workers, the nation must find the most effective delivery methods to help people gain education and training so that businesses can be globally competitive in today’s market. I have had the benefit of attending a private four-year undergraduate institution, earning a master’s degree, and now being enrolled in a doctoral program. This makes me a strong advocate of the value of higher education; and my desire is to help individuals reach their goals, no matter the educational level at which they begin or end their journey.

One’s race and gender can impact positionality (Parsons, 2008). I was raised in an all-white, middle-class community, but I was raised to not judge people based on their race, religion or economic background. In my formative years in college and just as I entered the workforce, this background had an impact on how I viewed my job and the world around me. It was hard not to see things through the lens of a White man from a middle-class suburb because I had had such limited interaction with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, having been out in the world of work for over twenty five years, I have been exposed to and
immersed in our multicultural society. My belief that people should not be judged based on their race, religion, or background became something that I was able to apply in the real world, not just theoretically. I believe people should be accepted for who they are and not placed into any of the narrow boxes with which our society so often wants to categorize people. Working on Capitol Hill and for national associations, I was exposed to people of every race and from every part of the country and was able to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of people’s differences. Working at community colleges has further expanded my belief of not judging people based on how they look or speak or what their background is. Community colleges serve everyone: rich and poor, employed and unemployed, male and female, and people from all races and creeds. My outward appearance as a White male, while clearly obvious to anyone who looks at me, is not the lens through which I look at the people the college is trying to help. I try to look at them from their perspective--what they hope to get out of the college experience--and I strive to help them. My positionality in this arena comes not from my upbringing over thirty years ago, or what I look like, but from the lessons I have learned and professional and personal exposures I have acquired throughout my career.

Avoiding personal opinions will be critical in minimizing bias. I will try to avoid overly broad generalizations or stereotypes. Parsons (2008) notes that it is possible to fall into generalizations or stereotypes when looking at a group (Parsons, 2008). As Machi and McEvoy (2009) point out, it will also be critical to constantly reflect and continually learn and understand what the research means and where it is going. It will be important to acknowledge that although the impact the community college may have made at first glance appears positive, I cannot accept that immediately. The study must probe deeper, examine the impact of that action, and look at it from as many viewpoints as possible as a scholar-practitioner to gain a clearer
perspective. The study must not be influenced by the experience of the researcher (Patton, 2002). This is especially true when gathering and compiling interview data (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004) and while memoing (Saldaña, 2009). I will maintain vigilance in assuring that I hear the interview answers from the viewpoint of each participant and not automatically attempt to make sense of them exclusively through my own perspectives.

**Theoretical Framework**

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Freeman, Wicks, & Parmar, 2004), will be used as a theoretical framework to understand the approach of a single community college as it strives to implement its workforce development mission in its local community. Stakeholder theory states that to be successful, a business must create value for all the stakeholders with which it deals, and that one cannot look at the stakeholders in isolation because the interests of all stakeholders are linked (Freeman, 2009; Freeman, Wicks, & Parmar, 2004).

Building off the work of Freeman (1984), a more nuanced use of stakeholder theory has emerged. Donaldson and Preston (1995) identified three categories of stakeholder theory found in the literature: normative, instrumental, and descriptive. The *descriptive* approach is used to examine the theory from the perspective of the corporation, the *instrumental* approach applies stakeholder theory by focusing on the relationships between the stakeholders and how organizational objectives can be achieved through stakeholder management and relationships, and the *normative* approach is used to examine stakeholder theory from a moral or ethical viewpoint (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

The descriptive aspect of stakeholder theory takes a broad look at stakeholder relationships from the perspective of the corporation (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The
perspective of the corporation helps to determine who stakeholders are and how they impact organizational plans (Savage, Nix, Whitehead, & Blair, 1991). Phillips (2003) argues that an organization can view stakeholders based on their ability to impact the organization and those stakeholders around them. Kaler (2006) points out that implementation of stakeholder strategies requires organizations to limit the number of stakeholders with which they deal and how much attention to pay each stakeholder. The corporation perspective also determines the value and interaction with stakeholders versus shareholders when it comes to considering the long-term prospects of the corporation, not just the immediate financial objectives of the organization (Sison, 2008).

Instrumental stakeholder theory begins to more deeply mine the relationships between the organization and its stakeholders and how “trusting and cooperative relationships help solve problems” faced by the organization and the stakeholders (Jones, 1995, p. 432). Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2011) touch on this concept in what they describe as the Principle of Stakeholder Cooperation, in which stakeholders create value among each other because of their ability to “jointly satisfy their needs and desires by making voluntary agreements” (p. 67). These types of relationships can lead to a “sustained competitive advantage for the corporation” (Dyer & Singh, 1998, p. 675) or allow them to exceed their historical performance (Donaldson, 1995). Partnership management and balancing the needs of stakeholders can be a challenge (Savage, Bunn, Gray, Xiao, Wang, Wilson & Williams, 2010). The authors note, however, that instrumental stakeholder theory can be a tool to help understand relationships among multiple stakeholders, something that is especially valuable as these stakeholders work together to solve problems that are too complicated for one entity to solve independently (Savage, et al., 2010).
The normative aspect of stakeholder theory has created much discussion among scholars involving the obligation of organizations to stakeholders relative to the importance of shareholders. Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue that the clearest purpose of a stakeholder theory approach to business is grounded in the normative approach, with a focus on the critical element of the moral or ethical basis of business relationships. Agency theory argues that organizations’ obligation is to advance the financial interest of the corporation above the interests of other stakeholders (Maitland, 1994). In contrast, Donaldson related the opinion of philosopher Wesley Cragg, where the moral view is that not all stakeholder concerns are equal, but that all stakeholder views must be considered (Donaldson, 2002). This moral perspective has been used to focus on how the corporation should act, that is in a morally upstanding way (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & DeColle, 2010). It is not enough to expect or hope that corporations should act ethically, but that society has to hold organizations “accountable for meeting their economic goals in a socially responsible and ethical way” (Agle, Donaldson, Freeman, Jensen, Mitchell, & Wood, 2008, p.161).

Using the descriptive, instrumental, and normative lenses of stakeholder theory provides useful context for this study. The descriptive aspect is used to explain characteristics and actions of an entity (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This lens will provide an understanding of how the college approaches its business and why college leaders are developing particular stakeholder relationships and making programmatic decisions relative to its workforce program. Since the instrumental aspect provides a look at relationships between stakeholders (Dyer & Singh, 1998), this aspect of the theory will provide a look at how the college relates to external stakeholders, as well as discover possible commonalities between the external stakeholders themselves. Finally, the normative aspect provides a window to examine the behavior of an entity from a moral or
ethical standpoint (Jones & Wicks, 1999). This will provide insight into how the college’s workforce development activities connect with the mission and vision of the college, and how those activities are serving the needs of stakeholders in their community.

Conclusion

A single qualitative case study will be used to explore how one community college in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States engages with its primary stakeholders as it designs and implements workforce education and training activities. Chapter two of this thesis will present literature on the workforce education and training programs, the role of community colleges in delivering workforce education and training, and a treatment of stakeholder theory. Chapter three will present the methodology that will be used to research the dynamics of stakeholder relationships and workforce education and training employed by Mid-Atlantic Community College. Chapter four will provide findings and analysis based on the data gathered. Chapter five will provide conclusions and recommendations for theory and practice.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There are over 1,100 community colleges in the United States (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). They have developed a reputation for providing quality education and training programs tailored to the needs of their communities (Boone, 1997). While originally created at the turn of the 20th Century as junior colleges with the mission to offer two years of academic programs, these entities have evolved into institutions that have a broad mission to serve those in their communities in many ways. In addition to preparing students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities, community colleges also provide adult basic education programs, community education, terminal occupational programs, contract training, and other workforce development programs that enhance economic and workforce development in their communities (Milliron & Wilson, 2004).

Attention to education and training programs is especially important today. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), unemployment rates have been on a downward trajectory since the beginning of the 2008 recession; however, the number of jobs that are unfilled because employers cannot find qualified workers remains a challenge (Sullivan, 2013). It is critical that businesses in this country have access to potential workers with high level, high demand skills.

Most community colleges are poised to deliver workforce development programs. As a report of the Education Commission of the States stated, “where they are effective, community college workforce development programs further both the career goals of workers and the business objectives of employers” (Friedel, 2008, p. 47). Increasingly, reaching out to partners
to deliver training programs is becoming a critical element in community college workforce development. These partnerships can be with businesses, other education providers, and K-12 schools (Orr, 2001).

This literature review provides a working definition of workforce development, discusses the historical roots of education and training programs through federal programmatic initiatives, and explores how community colleges and stakeholders have worked to meet the needs of the local workforce. It also examines stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984, Donaldson & Preston, 1995), the theoretical lens through which this study will be viewed.

**Workforce Development**

A number of definitions of workforce development are used to define educational efforts targeted at high school students as well as adults (Jacobs & Hawley, 2009). Although workforce development is so diverse that not a single definition can capture its complete essence (Jacobs, 2002), some have defined workforce development “as a better way of describing career technical education” (Jacobs, 2002, p. 2). Katsinas (1994) provided a sweeping description of workforce development. He felt it encompassed

“the education and training programs…delivered through formal and informal means, that are designed to enhance the skills of people to gain or maintain socio-economic status. This includes programs for new entrants into the labor market, temporarily dislocated workers, and currently employed workers, and specifically includes the traditional vocational/occupational/technical for-credit curriculum of community colleges, as well as noncredit customized training for business and industry, as well as
employment and training programs for the temporarily dislocated and long-term unemployed” (Katsinas, 1994, p. 9).

Later, Grubb (2001) developed a more concise description, which captures the same components as Katsinas’ more comprehensive definition. For the purposes of this study, Grubb’s (2001) description of workforce development programs helps to provide an understanding of the meaning, evolution, and scope of workforce development in the United States. According to Grubb (2001), “Workforce development programs provide individuals with competencies necessary for employment: technical skills, basic academic competencies…problem solving, communications, teamwork…motivation, reliability, and the ability to work with others.”

In practice, workforce development is conducted by community colleges in two ways. The first is an offering of credit-bearing programs through which participants can earn an academic degree or credential in a specific workforce program. The second is through non-credit programs, which are not for academic credit, but which can lead to a certificate, license or provide specific job skills for the workplace (Government Accountability Office, 2004). Although there is a dearth of data on the use of non-credit programming for workforce development (Van Noy & Jacobs, 2009; Government Accountability Office, 2004), non-credit instruction at community colleges accounts for forty percent of community college enrollments, with many of those students in workforce development programs (D’Amico, Morgan, Robertson, & Houchins, 2014). These non-credit students tend to be older than traditional age credit students (Van Noy, Jacobs, Korey, Bailey, & Hughes, 2008). In the non-credit area, a prominent way to deliver this training is through contracts with businesses. Known as contract training, these agreements allow colleges to quickly respond to the specific needs of a business (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). Non-credit workforce training is also offered at community
colleges through open enrollment classes in which anyone in the community can enroll. These programs tend to be shorter in length, less expensive, and maintain more flexibility in times offered as compared to credit programs. This helps enhance access to non-credit programs that provide opportunities for students to pursue a workforce credential or gain a specific occupational skill (Government Accountability Office, 2014).

**Roots and Evolution of Workforce Development Education and Training Programs**

The creation of the workforce development system is rooted in policies developed by the federal government, and implemented and tailored for specific industries and economic conditions by governmental entities, high schools, and colleges (Gordon, 2003). Vocational education/career technical education (CTE) and adult training programs created and implemented through these federal policies are workforce development as consistent with Grubb’s (2001) and Katsinas’ (1994) description. The following sections describe the evolution of these federal programs.

**Vocational Education/Career Technical Education**

The evolution of modern workforce development in the United States can be traced back to John Dewey, who wrote about training people for work and careers in what nearly a century ago was known broadly as vocational education (Dewey, 1916). It has evolved over the years into what now is referred to as career technical education (CTE) (United States Department of Education, n.d.).

**Early Development of Vocational Education Programs**

In an attempt to provide some standardization and support for vocational education, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith Hughes Act into law in 1917, the first federal
program in the United States to provide structure and funding support for education (Friedman, 2004). This law specifically supported programs focused on agriculture, trades and industry, and home economics. The law was passed in part to help prepare the United States for World War I. Wilson reasoned that if the country went to war it would be critical to have skilled workers so that the nation could maximize agrarian and industrial output to support the war effort (McClure, Chrisman, & Mock, 1985).

In 1917, Charles Prosser was appointed to serve as the first federal commissioner of vocational education. He presented 16 theories of vocational education, which became the foundation of the system. Among the most important of these were training people on the same tools they will experience in work, becoming familiar with the minimum amount of skills to work a specific job, the value of the experience of people working in the field to be involved in delivering the training, and the importance of programs being available that teach how the skills will be used in the real world, not in theory (Prosser & Allen, 1925).

By 1926, the federal government was providing almost one-third of the support for vocational education programs. In addition, states began to fund these programs more and more with their own dollars. As a result, during the 1920s and part of the 1930s, enrollments surged in vocational education (McClure et al., 1985, p. 72). By 1940, it was apparent the United States was again preparing for war. The infrastructure created by the 1917 Smith Hughes Act was already in place and needed to be expanded to account for 1940s conditions. Emphasis was placed on expanding manufacturing-related training in cities and agriculture-related programs in rural areas (Thompson, 1973). Multiple pieces of federal legislation were passed providing the funding to expand these programs, primarily through the Vocational Training for War
Production Workers (VTWPW) and Vocational Education for National Defense (VEND) programs.

Impact of Changing Post-War Economy

In the decades after the war, political leadership in the United States recognized how technology was changing the needs of the workforce in the 1950s and into the 1960s. Technology was having an impact on both skilled and unskilled labor. Unskilled jobs needed to become more skilled to account for greater technology in the workplace, and skilled jobs were being reduced because technology automated tasks that had previously needed thousands of workers to accomplish (Peters & Woolley, 2014a; Smith, 1968). For example, new machinery introduced in coal fields from 1950 to 1962 reduced employment in the coal industry from 415,000 to 163,000. Technological change impacted white-collar workers as well. The United States Census Bureau needed 4,000 statisticians to interpret the 1950 census. Due to computers, the work on the 1960 census required only fifty statisticians (McClure et al., 1985).

To help address these workforce realities, President John F. Kennedy organized the Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education in 1962. This panel was tasked with providing recommendations to support the workforce needs of the changing economy. They recommended that the training programs being developed match the needs of the economy (Thompson, 1973). In addition to recommending that funding be directed to support programs in particular industry clusters (e.g. agriculture, industry, home economics) the panel also suggested that aid should be focused on helping specific groups of people. These included secondary students, those with disabilities that prevented them from participating in the traditional high school programs, and the unemployed (McClure et al., 1985; Thompson, 1973). These changes in focus were included
in the new Vocational Education Act of 1963, which also quadrupled funding for vocational education (Friedman, 2004).

The reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act in 1968 led to significant changes in a number of areas. First, it combined many of the separate federal funding streams and programmatic elements that had been passed by Congress since the Smith Hughes Act in 1917. It also required each state to establish advisory councils on vocational education. These advisory councils were involved in developing a five year state plan for vocational education, which then had to be submitted to the federal government and approved before funds would be released (McClure et al. 1985).

**Linking High Schools and Community Colleges**

Dale Parnell, Oregon State Superintendent of Public Instruction and later President of the American Association of Community Colleges, wrote of the importance of community colleges and high schools working together to connect their curricula (Parnell, 1971). By the mid-1980s Parnell had refined his vision into what he coined the Tech Prep program; a program that combined the last two years of high school and first two years of college though a mixture of strong academics, applied learning of technical skills, and the involvement of employers in helping to develop curriculum and potentially provide instruction (Parnell, 1985). Parnell looked at this program as a way to provide a roadmap to educational success for students who did not necessarily want to seek a four year degree but who could gain skills in high school and community college that would prepare them for the workforce (Beebe & Walleri, 2005). Commonly referred to as two plus two programs, Tech Prep provided the funds and structure to help high schools and community colleges integrate selected CTE programming. Therefore, students could seamlessly move from high school into the community college without having to
repeat coursework and they could be prepared for the rigor of college (Hershey, Silverberg, Owens, & Hulsey, 1998). The Tech Prep approach was codified into law as part of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990, commonly referred to as the Perkins Act (Carl D. Perkins, 1990).

The Perkins Act was subsequently reauthorized in 1998 and again in 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The 2006 version of the law, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, is the current federal law overseeing CTE. It is designed to enhance academic rigor, strengthen connections between K-12 and postsecondary higher education, support career pathways, and augment state and local flexibility in creating programs (Carl D. Perkins, 2006; National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, n.d.). The law provides financial governance and support for CTE programs, which prepare students for careers in fields as diverse as cosmetology, automotive repair and restoration, information technology such as data entry, computer repair and programming, and health care (National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education, 2015).

The evolution of these vocational education/CTE programs discussed in this section are represented in Figure 1:
Figure 1. Vocational Education/Career Technical Education. This figure represents the evolution of the federal role in vocational education/career technical education.
Governmental Policies Supporting Adult Workforce Training

After World War II, as the size of the labor force increased and technological advancement changed the nature of work and life, an emphasis on the importance of human resources took hold as a way to provide for stable economies (Briggs, 1987). The end of World War II had serious implications for the American economy, as millions of service personnel were leaving the armed forces and the economy no longer needed to produce armaments at a level to fight a global war. These workers would need new skills to help them integrate into civilian jobs with the skills that would help businesses retool to civilian production. The laws and policies supporting vocational education were still needed, but would not be sufficient to address the needs of adult workers. Therefore, additional policies and actions focusing on the needs of adults would need to be developed. These new polices, over time, altered the relationships between stakeholders (Guttman, 1983).

The Employment Act of 1946

The United States Department of Labor regards the Employment Act of 1946 as the first effort to comprehensively consider how policies can positively impact the labor force in the United States (Wilson, 2009). This Act was an effort to provide economic and workforce information to help the federal government decide what policies were necessary to help create employment. A new body was created in the Executive Office of the President: the Council of Economic Advisors. It was their duty to issue an annual report on economic trends and suggestions. The report was then considered by a newly formed congressional committee, the Joint Congressional Committee on the Economic Report, whose task it was to respond to the recommendations made by the president’s report. These bodies were designed to provide coordination between the legislative and executive branches (Hansen & Viner, 1947).
While its focus wasn’t specifically on improving human resources through training programs, the Employment Act of 1946 showed a commitment by the federal government to focus on creating the macroeconomic environment that would provide workers with employment opportunities (De Long, 1996). However, a focus on creating training programs would come in the decades that followed. This was necessary as the federal government moved to implement policies that would respond to an ever-changing economy and workforce. Influential programs, and updates to those programs, were signed into law with regularity in subsequent decades.

**The Manpower Development and Training Act**

In the 1960s, the US government began to emphasize the need to specifically train individuals for employment. It no longer simply stressed the broad approach of using fiscal policy to address workforce needs (Briggs, 1987). It was also the beginning of the era, which continues today, in which the government funds training programs designed to help people increase skills and wages (Greenberg, Michalopoulos & Robins, 2003). Another important element of this era of workforce policy is the focus of the federal government to provide a structure for a national strategy to improve worker skills (Donovan, 1965).

Signed into law by President Kennedy in 1962, the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) was designed to help “workers who are denied employment because they do not possess the skills required by our constantly changing economy” (Peters & Woolley, 2014a, p. 1). Kennedy also stressed that this “training is important both to them as individuals and to the economic health of the entire nation” (Peters & Woolley, 2014a, p. 1). The law was passed to help minimize structural unemployment and to allow the economy to keep pace with technological change in the workforce (Smith, 1968).
The law provided direct funding to individuals for three major activities: direct education and training, transportation and living expenses for those receiving training away from their homes, and living allowances for certain unemployed individuals with the intention of allowing people to support themselves and their families while undergoing training (Bachmura, 1963). The law provided up to 52 weeks of training (Peters & Woolley, 2014a). The original focus of the law was to provide assistance to those who were displaced from their jobs as a result of technological change. Amendments to the law in the later part of the 1960s, however, expanded the law to more broadly serve people who were economically disadvantaged regardless of the reason (Briggs, 1987).

**The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act**

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon in 1973, was the next major piece of federal legislation focusing on workforce training. It provided job training and employment opportunities for individuals. It continued to focus assistance on the economically disadvantaged, the unemployed, and the under-employed, with the goal of increasing their earned income (Gay & Borus, 1980). However, CETA differed greatly from MDTA. First, it dictated the switch of program operations and control from the federal government to state and local entities. This was designed to make the system more adaptable to local needs and concerns (Dickinson, Johnson, & West, 1986) and to end the “patchwork system of individual, rigid, categorical manpower programs which began in the early 1960s” (Peters & Woolley, 2014b, p. 1). CETA also continued a program begun in 1971 that provided public sector employment for individuals to help them gain skills and earn income (LaLonde, 1995).
The law had four broad goals: decentralization of programs from the federal government to the states, better service for low-income individuals, more flexibility to allow states and localities to use money as they saw fit, and the establishment of manpower planning councils to allow individuals and businesses at the local level to have more involvement in planning and decision making (Van Horn, 1978). Despite these goals, there was concern about the efficacy of the program. The public service jobs in which individuals were placed “were often considered useless make work” jobs and conflict arose between those placed in jobs and existing public sector employees” (Bailey, 1988, p. 301). Another flaw in the program was that although local flexibility on how to use money was increased, the CETA system did not establish accountability mechanisms on whether the funding was being used effectively. Finally, the involvement of local business people in the process never took hold as hoped (Bailey, 1988). More broadly, the law was not written clearly enough, as it provided state and local flexibility and the multiple goals of the law too often conflicted with one another (Van Horn, 1978).

The Job Training Partnership Act

When Ronald Reagan signed the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) into law in 1982 he stressed the importance of learning from the past and looking to the future. In his statement released upon signing the bill, he stressed that too much of the funding and effort under CETA had been wasted and that it was, in his view, a bureaucratic boondoggle. He also pointed out that there was a need for training workers already in the workforce because 20 million workers “rely on skills that won’t be needed within 20 years” (Peters & Woolley (2014c, p.2). JTPA replaced CETA and furthered the emphasis on providing flexibility to the states to spend money that is delivered to them from the federal government under a block grant approach (Cook & Rawlins, 1985). The new law also mandated significant changes that altered the relationship between
levels of government, on what types of activities money would be spent, and the role of the private sector (Guttman, 1983).

JTPA placed more of an emphasis on coordination of activities among governments. State and local plans had to be developed to receive the money emanating from the federal level and those plans had to be coordinated with each other as well as coordinated with other agencies or entities that have responsibility for education and training such as departments dealing with education or health and welfare (Job Training Partnership Act, 1982). This coordination was injected into the new law to make programs more effective and efficient (Jennings & Ewalt, 1998).

Placing individuals in public sector jobs proved controversial and was not an effective way to improve individual skills or private sector employability (Bailey, 1988) and the federal government desired more of an emphasis on training (Peters & Woolley (2014c). As a result, JTPA put an end to the use of funds to place individuals in public sector jobs and targeted less funding towards income support of trainees as had been allowed under CETA. The new law placed a stronger emphasis on using dollars for training for new skills (Cook & Rawlins, 1985). The new law thus directed funds away from hiring people into public sector jobs and providing income support and more towards direct training (Cook & Rawlins, 1985). This direct training approach also placed a greater emphasis on those who were among the structurally unemployed because they had been displaced from their jobs because of increased foreign competition, changes in technology, or wide scale layoffs in their industry (Cook & Turnage, 1985; Kletzer, 1998).

A final significant change worth noting is the emphasis JTPA provided the private sector at the local level. A criticism of CETA was that there was not a strong enough role for
businesses in the development of programs (Bailey, 1988; Guttman, 1983). Under JTPA the private sector members of the local governing bodies, known as Private Industry Councils (PICs), were given a stronger role and the law was designed to make them equal partners with local government in the creation of local workforce plans (Guttman, 1983). With this stronger role in planning and representation on PICs, businesses held more sway in decision making and pushed for more of an emphasis on the training and placement of individuals in employment than had occurred previously under CETA (Cook & Rawlins, 1985).

**The Workforce Investment Act**

The federal law overseeing adult worker training programs from 1998 through 2015 was the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Signed into law by President Clinton in 1998, WIA established the national framework for a workforce investment system that is run at the state and local levels and has a strong component of individual choice in selecting training options (Workforce Investment Act, 1998). Although this law was reauthorized as the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act in July 2014, the workforce investment system was still operating under WIA until WIOA was fully implemented. The law seeks to provide additional coordination among stakeholders by creating a system of one-stop centers. Individuals can go to these centers to learn about the training programs for which they may be eligible and discover which providers are available to deliver the training they seek (Cohen, Timmons, & Fesko, 2005). In addition, the law set up the administrative and governance structure of the workforce investment system by requiring all states to have a state level workforce investment board to establish statewide priorities for workforce training. Local workforce investment boards were also established to oversee programs on the local level.
These boards are similar to the PICs established under JTPA, but must have a majority membership of business and industry (Workforce Investment Act, 1998).

The evolution of these government policies is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Adult Worker Training Programs. This figure demonstrates the evolution of federal policies
Challenges and Opportunities

The current state of the economy and the need for workers to have skills that match emerging industry need has created an atmosphere where policy makers, businesses, and individuals are looking to the community colleges to provide solutions. Business and industry in many locales consider community colleges to be the predominant provider of career and technology education and have recognized that the community colleges can be counted on to develop high quality programs (Davis, 2008).

Many of these technical jobs are called middle skills job. These are jobs that require more than a high school education, but not a four-year degree (Torraco, 2008). The National Skills Coalition (2012) has done comprehensive work identifying these middle skill jobs. These jobs are in various fields including health care, information technology, construction trades, transportation and distribution, and installation, maintenance and repair. Community colleges across the country offer training in all of these areas (“Community College Industry Partnerships,” n.d.). Because these middle skills job account for almost half of all job openings expected in the immediate future (Holzer & Lerman, 2007) the community colleges will have the opportunity to provide training to significant numbers of the future workforce of the country.

Policy makers have high expectations for community colleges. In a speech before a joint session of Congress, President Obama warned that if we do not have a sufficiently educated and trained populace, America will not be able to compete economically with foreign countries. He also stressed the importance of attending at least some college, but not necessarily obtaining a four-year baccalaureate degree (Malcolm, 2009). However, college enrollment is not enough. It is also important to develop programs that allow people to complete their education, no matter
the level, with a skill or credential that will help them succeed in the workplace. Kotamraju and Blackman (2011) note that community colleges can increase completion rates, in part by considering the importance placed by industry on global competition and by partnering with industry to imbue the correct skill sets into the local workforce.

Despite the high expectations for their services of community colleges, another critical reality of today’s economy is the level of financial support for community colleges. There has been a reduction in funding for higher education over the last decade (Government Accountability Office, 2014). Due to today’s economic conditions, community colleges are seeing higher enrollments, are receiving less aid from their states and local governments, and are raising tuition to account for the reduction in state and local support (D’Amico, Katsinas, & Friedel, 2012). Attempting to deliver the programming necessary to meet education and training needs in an era of reduced funding is a significant challenge for community colleges. Nevertheless, colleges have taken proactive steps to provide needed programs by lowering costs, operating as efficiently as possible, and prioritizing the most important services to be offered to their communities (D’Amico et al., 2012).

**Community College Workforce Development Initiatives**

Community colleges have made workforce development a key component of their mission in a variety of ways. Many colleges dove deeply into offering contract training for individual businesses and more open enrollment courses with a workforce development emphasis (Friedel, 2008). Zeiss (2003) expanded on the benefits of contract training. He pointed out that this approach has multiple layers of benefit: It provides skills to workers so they can maintain or acquire employment, it gives businesses access to the high quality workforce
they need to be globally competitive, it creates partnerships between colleges and businesses that strengthen communities, and it helps to bring more revenue into the colleges (Zeiss, 2003).

Other examples of community college partnerships abound. Colleges have collectively moved forward to link their comprehensive mission in offering occupational training, transfer, and community education programs to become a key force in education and training to drive statewide economic development (Friedel, 2010). Some colleges have taken an entrepreneurial approach in which they proactively work to capitalize on changes in the economy or governmental policy to establish programs to meet the needs of individuals and businesses (Grubb, Badway, Bell, Bragg, & Russman, 1997). Some colleges have placed an emphasis on addressing the needs of lower skilled, lower income individuals, helping them gain skills that will allow them to move directly into the workforce, earn increased wages, and move out of poverty (Bragg, Dresser, & Smith, 2012). Conversely, others have taken the primary approach, helping workers acquire skills that will position them to benefit from more education rather than going right to work (Jacobs & Dougherty, 2006).

The genesis of workforce development opportunities is the demand created by students, businesses, elected officials, or economic conditions (Dougherty, 2003; Friedel, 2010; Jacobs, 1992). Examples from the literature have shown a variety of ways community colleges have worked to address the needs of their communities. Individual community colleges have trained a broad variety of white-collar employees for diverse jobs within a single business (Taylor, 2005) and taken a community-wide economic development emphasis to address diverse needs of various sectors in their community in blue-collar trades like manufacturing and heavy equipment manufacturing (Merrell, 2007). Community colleges have worked to help communities enhance their workforce by encouraging classes needed by multiple businesses to train workers so they
have “essential and technical skills that are important across a range of jobs” (Baird, 2011, p. 598). Community colleges have also made it a priority to help individuals with very low academic attainment to acquire basic skills so they can overcome multiple barriers to employment such as poverty, limited English, and minimal basic skills, and begin their journey into the workforce (Embrey, 2006). These diverse approaches to training reinforce the notion that community colleges should be prepared to educate and train both high skilled and lower skilled workers, as there is a need in the economy for all levels of workers (Jacobs & Dougherty, 2006).

Community colleges have also demonstrated that they can work together, providing workforce training to multiple businesses across a wide geographic area in order to augment workforce development beyond a single community college service area. For example, a coalition of five colleges in Southwestern Virginia created a shared initiative to help provide skilled workers for businesses seeking to expand and become more competitive (Drury, 2001). Some of these initiatives can even support workforce development across an entire state.

Students are able to acquire basic and occupational skills in a more integrated programmatic structure by enrolling in a course that teaches basic skills while at the same time teaching occupational skills (Wachen, Jenkins, & Van Noy, 2011). Another statewide approach was established to respond to the concern of businesses that not enough workers were participating in registered apprenticeship programs, which the state Chamber of Commerce perceived were needed to have a positive impact on economic development (Stieritz, 2009).

These brief examples provide evidence of the diverse types of workforce education and training in which community colleges are involved. It also shows the importance of partnership, especially with the business community. Community colleges work hard to ensure that the
programs they offer are in line with what business requires. There is very little guessing among the colleges as to what the need is because they are so closely connected to the communities they seek to serve.

**Community Colleges and Stakeholder Relationships**

Establishing, strengthening, and managing stakeholder relationships are necessary for a community college as it moves to execute an agenda (Sygielski, 2011). These relationships can be informal couplings in which the partners work together intermittently, or they can be formal partnerships, sealed with contracts, memoranda of understanding, or articulation agreements (Amey, 2010). From the perspective of a community college, stakeholders can be broadly broken into two groups: internal stakeholders who work for the college, and stakeholders who are external to the college, such as businesses, elected officials, and the community as a whole (Hom, 2011; Sygielski, 2011). Lattimore, D’Amico, and Hancock (2012) described community college related stakeholders based on three categories: market, political, and academic. The market perspective considers stakeholders who are neither part of the college nor part of a governmental apparatus. The political perspective encompasses entities of local, state, and federal governmental authority. The academic perspective is made up of those who are inside the college (Lattimore, D’Amico, & Hancock, 2012). No matter how stakeholders are classified, it is critical that colleges understand which entities can influence college decisions and priorities.

Colleges use stakeholders in a variety of ways to execute goals. Both internal and external stakeholders serve on college advisory boards and institutional committees to help inform leadership of needs; and both can provide first-hand information and knowledge of important trends that impact decisions and outcomes (Wang, 2013). Positive relationships with
stakeholders can help colleges as they leverage financial resources and augment human resources to function more efficiently (Ghosh & Githens, 2011). Not only can they leverage resources, these partnerships can increase access and opportunity by providing facilities to help colleges expand their offerings (Amey, Eddy, & Campbell, 2010) and to provide expertise in student support functions such as assessments and mentoring (Schwitzer, Duggan, Laughlin, & Walker, 2011).

Stakeholder partnerships can help develop the strategic direction of the college (Doyle, 2011). However, while colleges reach out to stakeholders and use them to strengthen their processes and reach their goals, sometimes the stakeholders themselves also have agendas and expectations. Stakeholders can exert pressure on community college presidents, which can influence the ability of the president to establish priorities (Tekniepe, 2013). In addition, external stakeholder partners can have high expectations when it comes to which types of students should be allowed to enroll in economic and workforce development programs. This has the potential to negatively impact the open-access mission of community colleges (Yarnall, 2014). More broadly, stakeholders may openly or clandestinely oppose change if their input is not solicited (Jaggars & Hodara, 2013).

There are several ways a community college can address the problem of stakeholders having too much influence in driving the agenda of the college. First, community college leaders can establish a clear role for stakeholders in the strategic planning process (Lattimore, D’Amico, & Hancock, 2012) and actively build stakeholder consensus while balancing competing priorities among multiple stakeholders (McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011). While this is no easy task, colleges can position themselves to effectively meet this challenge by proactively building relationships with stakeholders at all levels of the institution. The college can use administrators,
faculty, board members, community outreach, and marketing efforts to build and strengthen connections to their stakeholders (Holm & Vollman, 2012). They should also communicate directly and clearly with stakeholders so that the stakeholders understand how specific actions or programs of the college fit into the context of the broader vision of the institution. This contextual understanding of college actions helps to provide buy-in from stakeholders (Nausieda, 2014).

Stakeholder partnerships can be most effective when the outreach and partnership building is conducted in a strategic way and over a period of time, thus building strong alliances, not temporary partnerships, that will help the college meet multiple goals over time (Adams, Edmonson, & Slate, 2013). These strong, long-term alliances are important because the sustainability of partnerships has shown a greater opportunity for long-term economic and workforce impact (Cejda & Jolley, 2014; Fox, 2015), which can benefit entire communities in addition to helping individuals gain higher-order skills and improve their employment potential (Schrock, 2014). It is important to note that it cannot just be assumed that relationships will prosper and have longevity. Colleges must work to foster these relationships. Establishing partnerships with complementary goals, especially among the business community, can foster strong, long-term relationships (Melendez, Hawley, & McCormick, 2012). These relationships can be nurtured by communicating consistently to ensure that the college and the partner continue to share a common vision (Grandgenette, Thiel, Pensabene, & McPeak, 2015).
Stakeholder Theory

Overview of Stakeholder Theory

The term *stakeholder* was first used in the business context in the early 1960s as a means to recognize that, in addition to their shareholders, there were others interacting with a corporation whose needs and interests should matter to the corporation (Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Purnell & De Colle, 2010). *Stakeholder Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, written by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, has been recognized as the seminal work in the development of stakeholder theory. Freeman’s work has become such a focal point of study and application that a 2007 study identified 179 articles addressing his work (Laplume, Sonpar & Litz, 2008). Freeman’s work has been cited as the key starting point for the scholarly conversation about stakeholder theory by many authors (Crane & Ruebottom, 2012; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2011; Roberts, 1992; Rowley, 1997). Freeman (1984) wrote that a stakeholder “is (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (p. 46). The relationship between stakeholders and corporations can guide how an organization functions (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

At its foundation, the emphasis of stakeholder theory can be found in looking at two fundamental questions: Why does a corporation exist? And what is the responsibility of the corporation to its stakeholders? (Freeman, Wicks, & Parmar, 2004). From the lens of stakeholder theory, the corporation does not exist solely to make a profit, but the business mission is combined with social responsibility (Roberts, 1992). By focusing beyond just profit, stakeholder theory purports that managers make decisions with the interest of multiple
stakeholders in mind (Freeman, Rusconi, Signori, & Strudler, 2012). Following this line of reasoning, the theory combines business and ethics. Business should not just focus on profits, but also on the relationship and needs of all the partners, or stakeholders, whose activities are interrelated (Freeman, 1994). As such, the theory reasons that the interests of all stakeholders have value and organizations must work to recognize and account for multiple stakeholder interests (Mainardes, et al, 2011). Using stakeholder theory as a basis for understanding, Jones (1995) points out that developing relationships with stakeholders and working to understand their needs will allow organizations to build lasting relationships with stakeholders rather than just short-term contractual arrangements. This will allow the organization to build trust among their stakeholders, thus giving the organization an advantage over other organizations in reaching its goals.

Over the last three decades, stakeholder theory has been used as a means to further understand the functioning of businesses and their relationships. The literature shows that scholars have worked to further clarify and apply stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Crane & Ruebottom, 2011). Others have identified what they view as the shortcomings of the stakeholder approach (Friedman & Miles, 2004; Jensen, 2002).

**Social Identity and Stakeholders**

Crane and Ruebottom (2011) used the three strands of stakeholder theory to help classify the social identity of stakeholders when applying the theory. Social identity theory argues that individuals place themselves and others into categories where they share similar traits. For example: race, income, or social standing. This provides people with a means to identify themselves and how they fit into their environs (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This social identity
also provides an avenue to better understand relationships between organizations (Fiol, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009). Taking social identity theory into account helps to understand why Crane and Ruebottom (2011) point out that relationships must not be looked at from only an economic perspective but also from a social perspective; that importance must be given to “the underlying attachments that bind social groups together” (p. 85).

The social identity of stakeholders has been used to help understand actions and decisions in the nonprofit and higher education communities. In higher education, in the broadest sense, stakeholders can be broken into two major groups: those who work on campus, and those who interact with the college from beyond the campus community. In his analysis of institutional effectiveness at the community college, Hom (2011) identifies stakeholders and their perceived effectiveness of the college based not only on whether they are on-campus or off-campus, but also based on their level of interest in a particular mission of the college and the level of authority they have to impact that mission. He also writes that the president of the college and other decision makers will weigh priorities and decisions based on these stakeholder perspectives (Hom, 2011). When examining stakeholder relationships in the nonprofit community, LeRoux (2010) found that nonprofits generally balance their focus between the needs of those they serve and the entities from which they get funding, but in some cases the funders receive more attention than clients, whereas nonprofits have a significant dependence on outside funds. In this case, public colleges and nonprofits have to balance their social identity as institutions that serve the public interest with the reality of having to obtain funding to execute their mission.
Criticism of Stakeholder Theory

A significant criticism of stakeholder theory is how stakeholder is defined. Crane and Ruebottom (2011) note that its use in understanding business interactions is limited because the “identification of stakeholder groups has remained vague and superficial” (p. 77). Too broad a definition of stakeholder also holds the theory back, according to Friedman and Miles (2004), because even though some authors have tried to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate stakeholders, how legitimacy is defined cannot be universally agreed upon. The inconsistent use of the term stakeholder in the literature can also be confusing to scholars trying to review the breadth of literature on stakeholder relations (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

The relative importance of various stakeholders is also a concern. Why should all participant need be treated equally when some stakeholders have more of a stake in the final outcome of decisions than others? Further, the theory fails to look at how the environment of the stakeholder relationship changes over time and how it may impact the needs and concerns of various stakeholders (Mainardes, et al., 2011).

The criticism has also gone beyond mere definitions and into the core of the functioning of a capitalist economy. Jensen (2002) criticizes the stakeholder approach by arguing that stakeholder theory forces management to try to serve the needs of everyone, and that in its worst application, it can lead to negative economic impacts (as happened under communist regimes). Jensen argues that the long term health of the firm must be paramount and that the immediate needs of stakeholders should be a secondary concern, not a primary way to do business.
Conclusion

This literature review provides background for a number of topics that help to offer context to a case study on how a community college relates to its stakeholders to provide workforce education and training in its community. Specifying a working definition of workforce development and showing the evolution of workforce policy over the last century helps to better understand the environment in which community colleges provide training and what types of training they aspire to offer. The portion of the literature review that shares examples of community college training, colleges’ rationale for offering programs, and the nature of college stakeholder relationships shows how, in practice, various community colleges are working with multiple types of stakeholders in their communities and addressing the expectations of others.

The evolution of program priorities through the changes in federal policies demonstrates how the needs and roles of various stakeholders have changed and become part of the workforce development system over the years. The workforce system and programs have evolved from having limited stakeholder participation and dedication to specific areas of the workforce, (for example, agriculture and manufacturing under the Smith Hughes Act in 1917) (Briggs, 1987), to today’s much more integrated and comprehensive system that seeks collaboration and multiple stakeholder participation with a stronger influence on what happens at the local level (Workforce Investment Act, 1998; Carl D. Perkins Act, 2006).

As the literature has revealed, there is much at stake in developing the workforce skills of the American people. It has an impact on national security as well as on the functioning of local economies. More personally, it has a direct impact on developing specific skills of individuals
so they can support themselves and often their families. Community colleges were established to address the education and training needs of their citizenry (Jacobs & Dougherty, 2006). This literature review helps provide a base of understanding of some of the issues and relationships a community college must navigate to offer workforce development in its own area.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Research Questions/Hypothesis

This study will be an intrinsic, qualitative case study (Stake, 1995), employing the interpretivist paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005). It will examine how a community college has successfully worked with the key stakeholders in their local community to ensure that the college is well positioned to provide workforce education and training programs. The research question to be answered by the study is the following: How does a community college engage with key external industry stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities?

Paradigm

A paradigm provides a “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of the world” (Filstead, 1979, p. 34). The interpretivist paradigm holds that there are multiple realities through which to view the world, and that what someone perceives to be reality is developed in their own mind based on the stimuli they receive. (Ponterotto, 2005). The interpretive paradigm is useful in studies that engage in the use of interaction between researchers and participants, in helping the participants uncover their own reality associated with the topic (Ponterotto, 2010). While the stakeholders in this study are all connected by their involvement in workforce training delivered by Mid-Atlantic Community College, the perspective of each stakeholder will be unveiled through the interview and document review process.
Qualitative Research

A qualitative research approach was for this study. Qualitative research is used to examine a research problem in which unknown variables must be discovered, and an understanding of the problem emerges from obtaining data and knowledge from the participants in the study (Creswell, 2012b). Qualitative research is “characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (Creswell, 2012a, p. 22). This methodology is an effective tool to examine how societal interactions influence the development of relationships (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2003). These societal interactions are important when examining the relationships between MACC and its stakeholders because it will allow the study to examine the relationships through the lens of their community norms, as well as through the lens of personal interactions. Both of these factors play an important role into how stakeholders relate to one another.

Qualitative research attempts to understand the meaning behind the actions taken by individuals (Alexander, 2006). The study will examine the actions and decisions of the MACC president and senior college workforce officials that led them to make workforce development a strategic priority for their institution, and the actions they take when reaching out to their external stakeholders to create and implement workforce programs. It will also study the actions taken by the external stakeholders, and how they respond to the college’s approach and their actions to improve the workforce development conditions in their community. Examining the issue from these perspectives will provide an understanding of the needs, relationships, and interconnectivity between the stakeholders and the college involved in the case.
Case Study

This study employs the case study approach to examine the problem of practice. The case study approach has been used in the social sciences for over a century (Stake, 1978). Stake notes that Wilhelm Dilthey contended, as far back as 1910, that the existing scientific studies were limited in helping to understand human behavior. Instead, Dilthey believed that a deeper understanding could be gained by closely examining the actions and words of individuals and their impacts on others (Stake, 1978). Yin (1981) argues that case studies are a benefit to the distribution of knowledge because they examine phenomena within the naturally occurring environment in which the phenomenon takes place. He also emphasizes that while case studies can be hard to write and for readers to follow, this problem can be avoided if the case study is built on a firm conceptual framework (Yin, 1981).

Case studies allow the researcher to look at a particular problem, in a specific venue, during a specific timeframe (Stake, 1995). This method is useful in understanding cause and effect of individual or organizational actions, and to understand complicated phenomena (Vissak, 2010). Case studies often involve in-depth data collection from a variety of sources such as interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Bustamante & Moeller, 2013). Case studies are also useful in understanding interconnected social processes or practices (Mason, 1996). The case study method is a particularly useful tool when examining the social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Stake (1978) writes that case studies are best for understanding “existing experience and humanistic understanding” (p. 7) rather than for developing theory. Stake (1995) identifies three different types of case studies; instrumental, collective, and intrinsic. The instrumental approach
is often used when attempting to provide more information or a deeper understanding of an existing theory (Ruddin, 2006). The collective approach is used to study same or similar phenomena at multiple sites (Stake, 1995). An intrinsic case study is used to focus on a topic; specifically on a single case that can be isolated and studied to learn more about the issue (Creswell, 2012a). This study will be an intrinsic case study.

An intrinsic case study examining cause and effect of actions (Vissak, 2010) and the interconnectedness of social processes (Mason, 1996) aligns well with the theoretical framework selected for this study: stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory describes how an entity can be successful by understanding how the needs of stakeholders are connected to others. The case study method being used to examine MACC’s relationships will be able to delve into organizational and individual connections and how those connections impact MACC’s ability to design and implement workforce education and training programs. In their totality, these characteristics of the case study will be helpful because the perspectives of key stakeholders in the workforce system, such as businesses, elected officials, workforce officials, and college leaders, will need to be gathered to best understand the relationships established and tactics employed by the college to position itself to deliver workforce education and training.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher in this study must play an active role in gathering and interpreting data from multiple sources. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions, observations, and document review will be used to gather this data. Because qualitative studies tend not to rely on data gathering tools developed by others aside from the researcher (Creswell, 2012a), it is critical that the researcher be actively engaged in determining the types of initial questions to ask, where
and what type of documents to look for, and to have a firm understanding of the subject matter so that paths of inquiry can be advanced based on how subjects respond to the open-ended questions. The interview questions were pilot tested with community college workforce experts in an effort to uncover potential bias in the way the questions are drafted (Chenail, 2011).

**Justification of Approach**

Stake (1978) emphasizes the ability of case studies to convey information and relate true life experiences. This study provides insight to practitioners about the process of interfacing with community stakeholders by highlighting the experiences of one college. Interviewing participants about their interactions related to the workforce training offered at MACC and reviewing documents related to that training provides a clearer understanding of that process. Merriam (1998) emphasizes the importance of the bounded nature of the phenomena to be apparent in order for the case method to be applied appropriately. She notes that the bounded nature of the study can be determined by thinking about who one would interview to understand the topic. “If there is no end…to the number of people who could be interviewed or to the observations that could be conducted…” then it is not bounded enough to be a case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). This case study is bounded by examining the activities at a single community college relative to the development and delivery of welding programs, and examines how the college interacts with a finite number of industry stakeholders.

**Research Site**

This research was conducted at Mid-Atlantic Community College (MACC) (pseudonym). MACC was founded in the 1960s and is a comprehensive community college offering diplomas, certificates, and associate degrees. The college prepares students for transfer to four-year
institutions, provides career technical training, and provides customized training to enhance workforce skills for local businesses. The institution enrolls about 6,000 credit students, 57% female and 43% male. This institution was chosen for this study because of the level of interaction with the community, the variety of industry in the area, geographic location, and a track record of providing workforce education and training.

The college is located in a rural portion of the state and serves three counties and three independent cities with a total population of approximately 250,000 people. The population has a median annual income of approximately $50,000, and educationally approximately 80% of the population possess a high school degree or above (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Major industries in the area include biotechnology, information technology, transportation and logistics, food manufacturing, health care, and manufacturing.

This study focuses on the college’s welding program. The program’s non-credit curriculum meets American Welding Society Standards (AWS) and students are prepared for AWS certification exams. In the past two years over 300 students have enrolled in welding classes with over 60 having received certification. The welding classes offered by MACC include basic welding, intermediate welding, introduction to pipe welding, and introduction to welding fabrication. Each class runs for sixteen sessions over eight weeks and costs approximately $600. Classes are held in a new 4,000 square foot welding and machining laboratory away from the main campus, but located adjacent to an interstate highway, thus providing high community visibility. The lab is equipped with arc welders, oxygen/acetylene torches, drill presses, and band saws so students have the opportunity to train on state of the art equipment similar to what they will encounter when they are hired by industry.
Participants

Participants in this study are college personnel and external industry stakeholders in the college’s service area who are familiar with the welding activities of the college. Participants were chosen through snowball sampling a mechanism that uses participants who are already engaged in the study to recommend others who could participate (Creswell, 2012a). The college president was the first point of contact in the study. He was asked to identify other study participants who would be knowledgeable about the welding need in the community and the college. He identified the college vice president for academic affairs and the college program director for welding. He also identified two business people and the head of the regional economic development entity as external stakeholders who would be knowledgeable participants. This sample size provides the study with a substantive pool of data to provide detail on the actions of the college from multiple perspectives.

All participants received an email requesting their participation which included a description of the research project, why their participation was being requested, and the parameters for the interview. In addition to details about the study, industry stakeholders were informed that their participation was suggested by leaders at the college being studied. These communications are included in Appendices A and B. Appendix A is a request for institutional and individual participation to the president of the college being studied. Appendix B is a request to participate to targeted stakeholders within the college and to industry stakeholders outside the college.

This study examines how a community college has positioned itself with stakeholders to develop and deliver workforce education and training. The work the community college
conducts with any of these stakeholders does not occur in isolation. It is influenced by the impact it could have on other stakeholders. A pictorial display of the stakeholders and their interconnectedness from the community college perspective has been developed for this study to provide a snapshot of these connections. This pictorial display is represented in Figure 3.
Data Collection

The data to be collected for this research was gathered through three core activities: individual interviews, observation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), and document review (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). One-on-one interviews were conducted with selected college personnel and selected external industry stakeholders using a snowball sampling method (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). The one-on-one interviews lasted approximately one hour. Specific questions were developed and tailored to the interview subjects based on their position and involvement in the topic being studied. The review of documents included strategic plans, annual plans, regional and state economic surveys, and resources on the webpages of the stakeholder organizations. The interview questions posed to the participants are included in Appendix C.

The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions to spur discussion. Handwritten notes were taken as needed, but an effort was made to keep note-taking to a minimum, to make the interview as conversational as possible. The interviews were recorded using two digital recording devices: an I-phone app (Rev Voice Recorder) and a hand-held digital recording device. Permission to use the recording devices was requested verbally at the time of the interview as well as in writing through the informed consent form as included in Appendix D.

The interview data was coded and organized based on codes, categories, and themes. Data gleaned from earlier interviews was used to fine-tune questions asked of subsequent participants (Saldaña, 2009). Every effort was made to conduct the interviews in person. Conducting interviews in person, as opposed to over the phone or via the internet, provides the opportunity to pick up on non-verbal cues and provides a pleasant environment to welcome free
flowing conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.178). Five of the interviews were conducted in the office of the participant. For one interview it was not possible to meet in person so the interview was conducted over the phone.

A review of documents provided helpful background and valuable subject matter around which to tailor interviews with participants who had been involved in their development (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In this study, this included documents dealing with the workings of the local workforce investment system, strategic plans related to workforce education and training, and economic and workforce development reports. This information was useful in ascertaining how the college related to its stakeholders while developing the college welding program.

**Data Storage**

Assuring that data collected during a study is securely stored is a key component in research (Patton, 2002). The researcher had the responsibility for maintaining the security of digital, electronic, and written data gathered throughout the course of this study. The digital interview recordings were stored on a password-protected computer. The recorded interviews were transcribed the day of the interview by using a professional transcription service, Rev.com. These digital transcriptions are kept on a password protected computer. Printed copies of the transcriptions have been secured in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher has access. All digital, electronic, and paper versions of data gathered during the course of this study will be kept in a secure location for four years after the study is completed for possible use in the development of articles for scholarly journals.
Researchers must be cognizant of the impact their research may have on individuals with whom they interact during the data gathering process (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). The researcher has completed the Protecting Human Research Subjects Participants training as mandated by Northeastern University. The certificate of completion for this training is included in Appendix E. While the human subjects in this interview were exposed to little or no risk, the data is still protected, and only the researcher and principal investigator will have access to it. The identities of the participants are protected by having pseudonyms associated with their answers on written notes in place of participant names.

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) identified the value of four methods of data analysis related to case studies. *Categorical aggregation* looks for relevant ideas to emerge from data, *direct interpretation* looks to draw meaning from a single instance, *looking for patterns* helps researchers find connections between data, and *naturalistic generalization* can be applied to convey meaning to the findings of the case study that can be applied to other instances (Creswell, 2012a).

*Categorical aggregation* (Stake, 1995) was an effective approach to examine the data. Categorical aggregation provides a method to employ an organized process to analyze data through a thorough reading of or listening to the data, focusing on a specific type of information gathered which can be compiled into themes, and examining how this information impacted the participants in their interactions with others (Forneris & Peden-McAlpine, 2009). The study looked for commonalities and differences among the industry stakeholders as well as the community college officials as to how they believe Mid-Atlantic Community College has been
able to engage stakeholders and provide workforce education and training. This technique was utilized during the interview, memoing, and document review process.

To help further frame the data analysis process, the study employed an analytic strategy and analytic technique as recommended by Yin (2014). Working data from the ground up was the analytic strategy. This approach allows for the uncovering of patterns which can help the analysis reveal commonalities within the data to help identify useful and fundamental ideas that can later be used to help analyze the data more deeply (Yin, 2014). This approach is useful for researchers who are familiar with their field of study and therefore are in a position to see how various themes within the data collection may be grouped and understood (Yin, 2014). Given the researcher’s two plus decades in the workforce development field, this approach is appropriate for this study.

The analytical technique to be employed for this study is explanation building. This method is helpful when the researcher desires to explain why certain things happen. It is an approach that helps to uncover linkages that indicate how or why something happened (Yin, 2014). Explanation building is an appropriate fit for this study, as it seeks to understand and explain how the college engages its stakeholders.

The coding process allows the researcher to answer the questions of who and why (Yin, 2014; Gerring, 2004). Saldaña (2009) outlines a process of First and Second Cycle coding that identifies themes on which the study is focused. Data was analyzed through hand coding. A combination of Process Coding and In Vivo Coding was used for First Cycle coding. Process Coding is used to look for action and emotion in the participants as they seek to accomplish a goal or deal with a problem (Saldaña, 2009). In Vivo Coding is used to gather exact phrasing
used by participants to help understand their perspective (Saldaña, 2009). Process Coding allows for to the identification and understanding of the broad concepts that are inherent in interviews and documents. In Vivo Coding was a useful complement to Process Coding because In Vivo Coding captures the true words and phrases of the interviewees to provide more depth and context to the data.

The Second Cycle coding process used pattern coding, which allows the data to be organized into themes and allows for data to be culled into smaller, more identifiable and explainable units (Saldaña, 2009). Themes can explain why something happened or derive meaning of an action (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Pattern Coding was helpful in looking at data gathered from the assorted methods of data gathering employed.

As Baxter and Jack (2008) and Merriam (1998) recommend, analysis should be continuous as data is gathered. The examination of commonalities and themes of the research was ongoing throughout the interview, memoing, and document review processes, rather than waiting until all data is gathered. Merriam (1998) notes that this technique helps to keep the data analysis process from becoming overwhelming. Analyzing pieces of data as they are acquired will more readily provide the opportunity to see the trends as they are developing and minimize the challenge of trying to make sense of too much data at once. This technique also allows for the modification of interview questions if needed to better investigate unanticipated trends that may be developing.
Trustworthiness

Validity and Credibility

The validity of research design and analysis is a critical component of a study because validity is directly connected to the integrity of the study (Perakyla, 2004). Validity and credibility were maximized by using triangulation. Triangulation allows for the use of multiple sources to discover supportive themes (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). More specifically, triangulation allows a study to highlight and gather themes and compare data gathered through personal interviews, observations, document reviews, and previous scholarly research (Creswell, 2012a). For this study, the documents to consider included strategic plans, mission statements, annual plans, and studies of economic and workforce conditions in the region.

Member checking is another technique that ensures validity in research (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Cho & Trent, 2006). This method allows for one or more participants to review the data gathered to assess its accuracy (Creswell, 2012a; Thomas, 2006). A particularly helpful reason to use this method is to ascertain whether the data is complete, fair, and objective (Cho & Trent, 2006; Creswell, 2012a). In this study, all participants were asked to participate in member checking and all complied with this request.

Using snowball sampling helped to assure that the characteristics of the interview participants were appropriate to the study and did not create validity problems (Mason, 1996). To gather accurate data for this study, it was important to interview people who are intimately knowledgeable about the workforce education and training work of the college. The knowledge base of the interviewees and the richness of their responses added to the validity of the data (Patton, 2002). The snowball sample, in which participants identified for the study helped to
identify more subjects to be interviewed (Creswell, 2012a) created a participant pool that understands the college’s role and activities in workforce education and training. This snowball sampling was also be helpful in minimizing any challenges related to the attitude of participants. While the interviewee pool selected by snowball sampling is based on chance meetings based on recommendations (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008), what is not left to chance based on this method is their knowledge of the college. The participants understood why and how they were selected and the goals of the study. These factors contributed to having interview participants who were willing and able to provide useful information.

Researcher bias and familiarity is addressed through disclosing the bias or any assumptions the researcher has at the outset of the study (Creswell, 2012b). Potential biases in this study have previously been delineated in the positionality statement in Chapter 1. Sharing the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge and experiences of community college workforce education and training allows readers of this study to consider the data that is presented through the researcher’s lens. This is important because pre-existing knowledge can impact the questions asked, the way data is coded, the memoing process, and conclusions drawn (Finlay, 2002).

**Ethical Considerations**

When asked to participate in this study, participants were informed of the intent of the study: to promote knowledge of how a community college has worked with its stakeholders in the area of workforce education and training. The study is in no way meant to portray any participant, group or organization in a negative light or to create any conflict among stakeholders.
Participants were asked for permission to record the interview so that the most accurate data possible can be gathered. This permission was sought whether the permission of all parties being interviewed was explicitly required under state or federal law, thus furthering the ethical merits of the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The participants interviewed for this study were professional educators and business people. The study does not pose any risk to their physical health and it is very unlikely it will pose a threat to their mental well-being. The most important elements that are protected for these groups are their professional reputations and personal/professional relationships. This was secured by maintaining confidentiality of the identities of the subjects (Patton, 2002). The thoughts shared by the participants were also protected by allowing the participants to review the transcripts of their interviews. This allowed them to amend those comments to accurately express their views.

Protecting the anonymity of participants is an important feature in qualitative analysis (Patton, 2002). It displays a measure of respect for the people being interviewed and the site under consideration (Creswell, 2012b). Pseudonyms and coded references are used for all participants in the study. The college being studied is referred to by a pseudonym. The area where the study is being conducted is only referenced in broad geographic/demographic terms.

Securing permission to interview and providing participants with a clear understanding in what they are being asked to participate is an important ethical consideration (Creswell, 2012b). To clarify this understanding, all participants were provided a written consent to participate in the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The informed consent of the interview subjects was obtained before the interviews were conducted through email. Each participant received an email containing the contact information of the primary researcher, details on the purpose of the study, the procedure that will be used to generate the data for the study, any risk to participants
associated with the study, clarity that they are participating voluntarily and can withdraw their participation at any time, benefits of the study, and an assurance of their confidentiality in the process. It is the role of the institutional review board (IRB) process to protect the integrity of the study and the ethical protections for participants (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). IRB approval was obtained from Northeastern University prior to the collection of data in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined by the university. In addition, consistent with the policies set forth by Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic Community College, IRB approval was obtained from the institution being studied. Sufficient time for these requests to be considered and approved were factored into the time table for collecting data. These approvals are included in Appendix F.
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of the study is to understand how a community college engages with key external stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities. The study was focused on welding, a specific area of workforce development important to the region. This chapter will describe the central findings that came to light through the data gathering process. Data was gathered through interviews with six individuals, the review of relevant documents related to the community college being studied and the economic and workforce development of the region, and electronic materials related to workforce and economic development that were suggested by some of the interview participants.

Stakeholders internal and external to the college were chosen for participation in this study. The interview participants were selected based on their knowledge of the subject matter on which the study focuses, as well as their roles in their respective organizations. The interview participants were Daniel Johnson, President of Mid-Atlantic Community College (MACC); Gary Bennett, Vice President of Academic Affairs at MACC; Peter Wilson, Welding Program Director and faculty member at MACC; Cynthia Collins, executive director of a regional economic development entity; Steven Jefferson, human resources manager at a fabrication company (ABC Corporation) that is a major employer in the area; and Larry Davis, an engineer for a major employer in the area (XYZ Corporation) that designs and manufactures precision equipment.

The interview questions were structured to gather data surrounding how the stakeholders interacted with one another and viewed the atmosphere around them. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995), the theoretical framework of this study, guided the development of the interview questions. This framework was explored in Chapters 1 and 2.
of this study. Five themes were identified through the coding and analysis of the six interviews and augmented and reinforced through the use of the documents and electronic materials. These themes are 1) awareness of community needs (with subthemes of industry initiation and formal and informal communication), 2) collaboration to meet programmatic challenges, 3) institutional commitment/strategic approach, 4) engaged partnerships (with the subthemes of awareness of multiple stakeholders, structured stakeholder partnerships, and MACC partnering one-on-one), and 5) distinction of roles.

**Awareness of Community Needs**

All participants agreed on the importance of having a skilled welding workforce in the region. The development of programs to generate workers with these skills is a key component in providing for the success of businesses as well as individuals in the region. It allows businesses to meet their organizational missions, and for individuals to fulfill their personal goals and provide for themselves and their families. Having a qualified welding workforce is a statewide as well as a local need. Said Vice President Bennett, “Right now, our governor, and everybody up and down the line, is calling for more welders.” The state Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission conducted a study on the state’s workforce development programs and noted that employers frequently reported challenges in filling positions in a variety of fields, welding among them.

All of the stakeholders is deeply rooted in their community. As such, they not only recognize what the need is in the community, but they have a personal as well as professional commitment to meet that need. The organizations they represent also have a longstanding commitment to the region.
Industry initiation. The local economy needs a strong welding workforce to support its business base. Cynthia Collins said,

…by employment percentage, manufacturing remains the largest [industry] throughout the valley, and obviously there are inherent welding needs throughout those manufacturers that are located here. So, we think about the welding workforce pipeline that needs to support this employment sector. Welding is an increasing focus.

Ms. Collins’ organization has launched a marketing effort in partnership with a local television station and other stakeholder partners to highlight in-demand careers through three-minute television spots that aired on the local news. The first of these spots focused on the availability of careers in the welding industry and highlighted the work being done at MACC. Ms. Collins views MACC as a key partner to help her organization expand economic development activities in the region because, “the community college is…nimble and flexible, so for us, for them to be able to mold a program to an employer or industry, and us being able to filter that information to the employer is a great relationship.”

Steven Johnson is interested in getting skilled welders into his company and communicates directly with the college to help fill some of his openings. During the interview, he shared that he would be calling MACC later that day to find out if they have any students who “are coming out that are interested in working with stainless steel tig welding. That’s a niche that I need to fill at an entry level position.” Johnson uses the college to help find this type of employee and then the company can help them acquire higher-level skills as their employment progresses. Larry Davis, another external stakeholder who works for a large manufacturing company, also expressed the need to find welders of various skill levels for his company. “We
have in-house training and then we also use the college” to help the company get the skilled workers they need. He elaborated further

…by working together with the college, if we are getting more people that are trained…that’s just getting us that farther ahead when a person comes in the door toward making our production goals sooner, rather than having to spend, say, three months training an individual who just comes off the street and has no welding experience.

MACC recognized the need for a skilled welding workforce because of their deep connections to the business community. The college acknowledged that there were multiple businesses in their area that needed a strong welding workforce. According to President Johnson, the college looks outward when considering what workforce development programs have to offer. “My primary motivation is, ‘What does the business community need us to be doing?’”

**Formal and informal communication.** Various methods of communication are used among the stakeholders to share information, needs, and concerns, and to help clarify roles and responsibilities. Open and honest communication mitigates uncertainty and develops and executes mutually desired objectives. Vice President Bennett described their communications outreach by saying,

We reach out as much as we can using our continuing education contract people, but also our advisory committees, to say “What do you need?” I mean, we are always asking, “What do you need that you’re not getting right now?” When we do that, we hear some things that are fairly minor, “You need to add something to one of your courses,” or something major…I think the communications that we are doing with them is always
important. I think they see us [as] a strong partner. They’re not looking to go other places. When they need something, they come here and start talking to us.

Mr. Wilson takes this philosophy of open communication out in the community when he is speaking with stakeholders as well. “I just made a point to go out and personally speak to the different companies and company owners out here in the valley and say ‘What should we be doing? What do you need?’”

The external stakeholders agreed with this notion of open communication and dialogue. Larry Davis pointed out that he is a key communications conduit for his company with MACC. He says he is

…that fact finding person, so that I can make recommendations, or I can bring back meeting notes to our group here, our management here, to tell them “Here’s what MACC is doing. Do you want me to take any ideas to them? Do you want me to share my ideas? Here’s the ideas they have.” Really, I’m kind of the facilitator between the plant and the team, for any ideas that we want to share with each other.

Vice President Bennett described the college’s efforts to be responsive to community need. “When we talk to employers, and we have regular big meetings that we bring a group of employers together, we can say ‘Okay, we have these programs in this area. What else do we need? What other certifications?’ Things like that. If we’re able to check off and say ‘Yep, okay, we got that, we got this,’ we’re feeling good that we are meeting those needs.”

President Johnson had worked at MACC in various roles over two decades before he became President
Over the years, I got to understand the great need in the region for qualified career and technical education graduates. When I saw that need, and when I saw the transfer program was a default program for many students [that] they could go into without thinking about it, I thought, “We need to concentrate more on the career technical to make sure we’re doing what industries need.”

This notion of providing a path for people in the community that is not just an academic degree track was also noticed by Cynthia Collins. She said that the public awareness campaign and videos developed by her organization in partnership with the local television station helped to guide the community toward workforce development programs, including welding:

…the very first spot highlighted a welder who went through Mid-Atlantic Community College’s program, found a job at an existing employer in the valley, and is able to tell his story about how basically he didn’t know that the opportunity existed, he didn’t know that it was that easy, and he definitely didn’t know his earning potential.

Mr. Jefferson also sees the importance of reaching out to the community to assess their needs and make them aware of the different paths to success. The Career Hub website uses a video entitled Success in the New Economy to make the community aware of opportunities. It stresses the availability of learning technical skills and maintains that education combined with technical skills is a way to succeed.

As a partner of the college, Steven Jefferson also sees MACC’s interest in the needs of the community:

They see themselves as a key partner in meeting community needs, the business needs, and basically saying they weren’t working in a vacuum; they are assisting the
unemployed and assisting the community, particularly the business
community...President Johnson is taking it to another level in his community outreach. I
think it’s very much in his DNA; it’s been part of the DNA of Mid-Atlantic Community
College for a lot of years.

The behavior of the stakeholders and their organization seems consistent with the values
of the community in which they live and work. It is described as a community of hard working,
community-oriented individuals. “..It’s a head down, do a good job, go home kind of area,” said
Ms. Collins. Mr. Jefferson noticed the spirit of collectivity that embodies the community:

I don’t see the territorialism; people don’t see themselves in a silo. It’s where people start
to be self-centered and “me first”…that a lot of that happens. It’s a community-first
mentality, “what’s best for the community,” because with collaborations, you aren’t
always going to be on the winning side of a collaboration, and if you have a “me-first”
and “only what’s best for me [mentality]”, nothing’s going to happen.

President Johnson shared that the college has positioned itself to be able to “offer
customized on-site training for a company, or we can offer open enrollment training that they can
send their employees to.” The college also acts as a conduit to help connect their welding
students with employers. Mr. Perry gets contacted regularly by businesses, asking if he has any
students who might fit a particular need they have. He said, “I don’t exactly work as a placement
person; what I do is make the people that have contacted us available to the students.” This
meets the needs of students as well as businesses.
Collaboration to Meet Programmatic Challenges

There were challenges in establishing the welding program that needed to be navigated by all stakeholders. The interviews did not just address the challenges faced. In analyzing the interview data and documents, the solutions to these challenges became apparent as well. Some of these solutions were initiated by a single stakeholder, but overwhelmingly the solutions to challenges were a result of collective action around common priorities.

The first challenge, the shortage of welders, was the impetus to starting the welding program. Mr. Davis said, “I know that as time has gone on, it’s becoming more and more troublesome to find welders, specifically welders that have some sort of training before they come on.” Mr. Jefferson also noted that the turnover of the existing welding workforce is fairly high so that there is a constant need to bring in new welders. Ms. Collins agrees. “I think welding shortages are an issue everywhere.” This need was reinforced in one of the documents examined for this study, an analysis of the manufacturing workforce in the region. The study points out the need to have welders in the workforce and that technology advancement makes it necessary for new entrants of these positions to acquire an associate’s degree or complete a professional certificate program. The occupations…are likely to be either expanding at an above-average rate over the next five years or are in current short supply in the region relative to demand, or both.

Once the college decided to start the program, there were challenges that had to be overcome. First was the need to find qualified instructors. “It’s always a challenge to find qualified instructors” said Mr. Wilson, whose statement was reinforced by Vice President
Bennett. “Probably the hardest challenge was personnel. Finding the right instructor, or finding *an* instructor. It was difficult finding an instructor.”

Vice President Bennett elaborated, saying that a second challenge to getting the program off the ground was acquiring the right equipment on which to train students. “The funding. The equipment. There’s funding available if you look in different pots and put in different requests…” But it will be an ongoing process to make sure the program has state-of-the-art equipment. President Johnson said, “I do worry about welding in particular, and workforce in general, about the sustained ability to acquire state-of-the-art equipment. We were able to get grants to get the initial equipment, but the college is going to have to work to make sure it will always be state of the art.”

Vice President Bennett shared that finding a location to house the program was another challenge to be overcome:

We didn’t have the space that would be appropriate here on campus that we could put it. It had to be an off-campus location, and then trying to find an off-campus location and find one that we could afford…we found a warehouse and worked with a company that is a great supporter of the college [to be able to acquire the necessary space for the program].

Even after finding the facility, the college was faced with the challenge of acquiring equipment to outfit it, installing the appropriate electrical infrastructure, and building out offices. MACC was able to use a combination of college operating dollars and other funds to meet these needs. However, as President Johnson related, these needs will be ongoing if the college is going to
maintain a state-of-the-art facility that is of optimum benefit to students and the businesses that hire them.

In starting the welding program, initially there was a concern that a welding program at MACC would duplicate the services of an established welding school. The area vocational technical schools, a branch of the public school system, already offers welding programs. President Johnson explained the initial hesitance to offer welding programs. “In this region, historically, we tried to protect taxpayers’ money, and so we tried not to duplicate their offerings. So, if they had welding, we didn’t feel the need to.” Vice President Bennett noted that from the college perspective, if the vocational technical centers were providing what the community needed, the college did not feel the need to do so also. This approach by the college also took into account the political realities of wanting to minimize competition or conflict between the college and vocational technical centers, two entities that work together on a variety of issues. The factor that led them to offer the program was the need of area employers to find welders. There was enough need for training different types of welders, from entry level to those with more advanced skills sets, that the college and the vocational technical centers could both offer programs. Welding instructor Peter Wilson said, “They [the college] felt that there were more than enough people seeking welding training, actually more than the two tech centers could take care of.” Mr. Jefferson explained one aspect of how the relationship has worked.

The high school programs, technical centers, is giving people the baseline, and then students really see what they’re passionate about, what they’re interested in pursuing further. Then you get down to the students who are really motivated and focused on those skills. They seem to go at a much faster rate, and can go to a greater depth of knowledge, but we want them to have a broader knowledge than just welding and
fabrication. They need good print reading skills, and they don’t get that in the high schools. They have to have a better idea of metallurgy.

**Institutional Commitment/Strategic Approach**

The interviews and organizational documents show that each organization is deeply committed to having a skilled workforce through the execution of workforce education and training. This commitment is thought out and deliberate, as evidenced in the documents that detail strategic plans and missions of several of the stakeholder organizations and in the direct descriptions relayed during the interviews by the participants about how they conduct their activities related to the welding programs.

MACC shows a formal commitment in connecting to its community through its strategic plan, which establishes the broad approach of the college. President Johnson explained that:

The college has a strategic plan, but years ago we changed it to strategic directions. More recently we revised it and changed it to strategic questions. Our foundational documents include mission, vision, values and strategic questions which, as a whole, constitute our strategic plan (personal communication, January 5, 2016).

Addressing the demonstrated workforce needs of the community is inherent in the mission of MACC because MACC’s mission statement says that “Mid-Atlantic Community College meets the educational needs of the community” through the offering of programs and workforce development opportunities. The college’s values statement shows its commitment to provide the quality educational products the community needs through the institution’s desire to “demonstrate the highest standards of performance and value continuous improvement.”
The interview data showed that this continuous improvement is carried out through the individual work of the leaders of MACC and the connections with stakeholders. President Johnson pointed out that this strategic direction is not created by the college alone. The workforce mission in particular is tied very clearly to the strategic goals established by the statewide community system office. Their six-year strategic plan strives to “triple the number of credentials that our students earn by the year 2021.” This credential attainment is tied directly to the college’s desire to establish workforce programs, including welding.

Connecting to the strategic plan, there are individual goals developed for the staff. As Vice President Bennet explained when asked about plans meet the college workforce goals, “We have our strategic plan. That certainly addresses it. Then we have goals and plans that the President, Dr. Johnson, does, that I do, and I pass it down to continuing education staff.” Strategically, the college does not just focus on meeting the needs of one program, but as Bennett said, “How can we meet the needs overall?...We are always trying to dig for information.”

The President strategically targeted how he would connect the college with the community:

When I became president, I very intentionally joined the board of the regional economic development partnership of the area. I joined Rotary and a couple other key committees focused on making sure that I was in the middle of what was going on in the business community, so that I had a direct line of communication with business leaders, so I could talk to them directly about what needed to be started and what needed to be shut down. That has been extremely helpful and very influential in starting new programs in particular.
The college foundation board and board of trustees also exhibit a belief in the workforce mission of the institution. This commitment allows the president and his staff to move aggressively on workforce issues. When asked about the influence of those boards, President Johnson answered,

They’re highly supportive of workforce as a concept. I don’t think they are engaged in the day-to-day of it. They understand the direction I’ve taken the college and they are extremely supportive of that direction and largely agree that it needs to be done.

The institutional engagement of MACC is apparent to those in the community. Mr. Jefferson stated,

You’ve got to have people with the right vision; it’s a community-centered vision. There are not too many meetings that I’m at that are dealing with economic development, or workforce development, or community involvement that I don’t see the president of MACC there. He has a personal stake and belief in it and he invests his time and energy into it.

Ms. Collins, the head of the economic development agency, also recognized the commitment of MACC when asked how the college has been engaged in workforce development:

I knew how engaged the community college was…but my expectation has been exceeded…I didn’t expect them to be at the table with [business] prospects, and they are. And that has been one of the most helpful things to us, is bringing in a potential business and putting education providers around the table in the first meeting.
The engagement of MACC helps the economic development agency meets its goals, which includes “business attraction, business expansion, and workforce development for new and existing employers in our region.” Ms. Collins pointed out,

One of the really strong benefits of MACC, and this is seen through the welding program and seen through the success of some others, is that they’re really engaged in the community. And I think that’s so important because they realize that they have a leadership role in the region. They understand that they need to be engaged in economic development partnership, in the chamber [of commerce], in any kind of local role that’s necessary…a local or regional economic development-based role…So just stamping out graduates is not their full mission, it’s being truly engaged; and having that relationship and perception with companies allows them to have more successful programs.

Larry Davis helps advance the goal of his organization to have a qualified workforce by cooperating with the staff at MACC to provide the perspective of his company. “My involvement with MACC specifically is that I was asked to be part of a team that looked at the welding curriculum at the school to see if it was meeting our needs.” In his role on the advisory board, he acts as a liaison between his company and the college so that there can be an open flow of communication allowing each entity to share ideas or questions with the other.

External stakeholder organizations also strategically focus on the workforce needs of their employees and community and the importance of working with others. The regional economic development agency headed by Ms. Collins relocated their office in a move that was “strategic as well as practical.” Their office headquarters is described in their annual report as “collaborative” and “provides great opportunities for strengthening local and regional partnerships that contribute to a strong workforce development program.” The prospectus of Mr.
Jefferson’s organization, ABC Corporation, reinforces that they have the ability meet the needs of their customers, in part through their ongoing ability to improve the skills of their workers. The approach his business takes in accomplishing its goals is not an impersonal corporate view of the world:

…we built our business on relationships, and found that customers like what we do. Our strategy has always been to provide value, be a trusted provider. Our mission statement is to be the most trusted provider of fabrication design services, and that trust and value, I think, has been the recipe for growth.

Mr. Davis’ company, XYZ Corporation, strives for “seamless collaboration” as one of their core values to meet their goals. His company got connected to MACC because they knew it would be beneficial to their company to find a partner who wanted to collaborate and help them meet their need to find a provider who could help them develop “a curriculum to teach welders how to weld based on our processes.”

Operationally, the college has created advisory boards dedicated to understanding the needs of its community. President Johnson said, “We try to equally reach out to any and all companies that are willing to talk to us and advise us, and, of course, the advising board process is one of the principal ways we do that.” The Welding-Machining Advisory Board has representatives from seven companies in the college service area. This committee is designed so businesses can share their needs directly with college staff. While the president and vice president are engaged with these business leaders, the advisory board is a vehicle that demonstrates the institution-wide commitment to understanding the business community. Staff from the college who are tasked with welding or machining programs are required to attend advisory board meetings. This helps the college develop more layers of relationships with
businesses if need be and allows the college staff to directly understand the needs of business. Vice President Bennett said, “I tell our...people for the program that a good advisory meeting means we talk less than 50% of the time. If we’re just telling them about our program we’re not providing advice.”

The institution also showed their commitment to welding by hiring a program manager and investing in adjunct faculty to provide welding training. The program manager, Mr. Peter Wilson, provides the individual commitment that has been a key component in helping MACC expand its welding program. It is Mr. Wilson’s role to “investigate and recruit qualified people [to be instructors].” He does that by being out in the community and meeting with people in local businesses who have the career experience as well as the skills to work part-time as adjunct faculty members. Wilson further explains his path and role at MACC thusly:

Well, I first came to the college as an adjunct instructor and as a consultant, initially teaching welding classes. And as the program began to gain speed and gain momentum, it was obvious that it needed a full-time program manager. Shortly after I was given the position of program manager, I took it upon myself to go out and just visit the companies out in the valley.

The organizations of the stakeholders external to the college have strategic objectives that intersect with the work done by MACC. Mr. Jefferson said that his company has a strategic focus to help its workforce access lifelong learning opportunities. “If we have people who are looking at additional education and training, they come to me and I act as a career coach…and say ‘Okay, where do you want to go? What’s the best resources you can find? Here are the courses you can take.’” While those types of conversations do not always lead the individual to Mid-Atlantic Community College, MACC is an important provider and long-time partner for Mr.
Jefferson’s company. “From a human resources standpoint, I’ve been involved with MACC…about 25 years; been using them as a resource for training and development… We’ve used them for workforce services in the past; We’ve had specialized training, [and] they’ve been a good provider of that.”

**Engaged Partnerships**

**Awareness of multiple stakeholders.** A topic that came up throughout the interviews was how stakeholders work with one another. The deep and multilayered partnerships that were discussed provide strong evidence as to how the stakeholders and their efforts around workforce development are strongly integrated with the welding workforce. These relationships demonstrated a shared focus on the value of developing a skilled welding workforce and the importance of working together to help all stakeholders reach their goals. Mr. Jefferson spoke of this shared focus. “I think it’s easy to get into [the mindset that] you’re competing for resources. I can’t put my finger on when it started, but historically there hasn’t [been that competing for resources].” He emphasized that there “is a collaborative spirit” in the region. Mr. Davis sees that connection as well. “I think for the most part, if people reach out--If the school reaches out to us or we reach out to them--there’s a pretty good willingness to help.”

President Johnson said, “Historically, in this region, we’re known for our cooperative nature across workforce providers.” He identified several entities as stakeholders and partners in their workforce development efforts, including the local workforce development board, the regional economic development authority, individual businesses, and the State Community College System (SCCS). The SCCS provides funding and strategic direction for the colleges. President Johnson was chair of a group that developed the strategic plan for the SCCS. “We wanted to focus more than we have in the past, strategically, on workforce development and
certifications.” The SCCS report on workforce credentials emphasizes the importance of middle-skills jobs, which can be economically fulfilling careers, including the value of developing credentials for the welding workforce.

**Structured Stakeholder Partnerships.** Formal relationships are in place through the various boards that exist in the MACC service area. As Vice President Bennett pointed out, “I think we’ve worked well with different groups in the area. We have a regional economic development coordinating group…then we have economic development offices in the six areas of our responsibility. We work well with the WDB [Workforce Development Board].” The WDB brings in partners from across the region who are interested in bettering the workforce and economic development climate of the area. They are a convener of ideas, but also help to be a convener of resources. President Johnson believes one of the many positive influences of the WDB is that they “have been extremely adept in getting federal and department of labor grants” which helps the community collaborate around workforce issues.

The WDB is one of several bodies, the college advisory boards and economic development entity being others, that help create synergy among the stakeholders in the area. Mr. Jefferson said,

I think the Workforce Development Board is one of the entities that brings all the stakeholders together. You’ve got service providers, you’ve got educational institutions, you’ve got economic development, and you’ve got business at the table…there isn’t anybody who you need who isn’t there.

Mr. Jefferson serves as chair of the WDB in addition to serving on the MACC Welding-Machining Advisory Board, providing him multiple lenses and platforms to interact with MACC
and others who have an interest in the welding workforce. Ms. Collins also spoke of the diverse membership among her partnership organizations. Her agency has a 28 person board with representatives from higher education, local government, and private sector companies, with President Johnson serving on the executive committee and as the chair of the education and workforce committee.

The Welding-Machining Advisory Board meets several times each year to deal with various issues. Mr. Davis is on that board and can provide advice on curriculum and other issues. Mr. Jefferson and his organization are also involved. “When MACC was considering the welding program, we got involved with an industry group of manufacturers in the area that use welding services to help direct and formulate the program.” The advisory board can also be called on to address more macro issues. Mr. Wilson said that “There have been many times where we have requested an advisory board meeting when we have new things coming aboard, or you know, we are thinking about buying some new equipment or something; we would get their take on it.”

The collective spirit of the community manifests itself in the work of the advisory board. On some level, the companies in the area are competing against each other to have the best workforce and find the highest-skilled welders so their companies can succeed. Vice President Bennett was asked if this type of corporate competition can be a problem for the advisory board. He replied:

We have not found that in welding at all. The people that have shown up from [industry]…very much competitors, very much looking for the same people. I think they have been open to what they need. That’s what we want to know, “What does your
company need? What does your company need?” Let’s find out where they come together so that we can provide that.

**MACC Partnering One-on-One.** The acquisition of equipment, funding, and the welding facility itself are also products of partnership. State government has proved to be a useful partner in this respect. The state provides financial aid directly to support students. This is important because Vice President Bennett noted that “the students that are coming to us need that financial aid in order to get into welding…” Bennett remarked that some financial aid for the program is also provided through the local workforce development board.

MACC tapped an equipment trust fund in the amount of $300,000 from the State Community College System, which allowed the college to purchase equipment to outfit its welding lab. The state also has a trust fund colleges can request for training equipment. “We spent all the money on that for welding,” Bennett said. As described in the MACC Educational Foundation report, these funds were then augmented with an additional $150,000 from the MACC Educational Foundation. The welding facility itself, where all of this equipment is located, is a product of partnership. According to President Johnson, the college made a deal with a local company that builds warehouses and was able to acquire a 4,000 square foot facility in a prominent location in the service area that provides ready access for students. President Johnson also discussed the equipment in the facility. While some of it is donated by companies, “Most is purchased on the basis of grants we got” because it is important that students train with “state-of-the-art equipment.”

President Johnson also emphasized that partnerships have helped the college address its need to find qualified adjunct faculty. It was Mr. Wilson who was directly involved in recruiting the adjunct faculty that expanded on this notion. Because of the partnerships and positive
relationships he has built, he has been able to find many instructors who have real world experience in doing the technical work, have professional certifications, and can help students connect to local employers. He has made a strong effort to recruit adjunct faculty “because of their background and because of their work experience.”

**Distinction of Roles**

The data provide examples showing that the stakeholders understand their roles as part of the workforce system. It is also clear that they understand their roles relative to the roles of others in the system. As previously discussed, these stakeholders serve on the boards of other organizations, thus providing advice to one another, but also providing a deep insight into the vision and goals of each organization. According to Ms. Collins, the head of the regional economic development authority, the employers that need to hire welders can engage through organizations like ours…we have two regional chambers, we have a workforce development board that covers essentially the same footprint we do. They are able to interface through them as well and kind of connect resources. So the manufacturers in the region are usually coordinated informally just from having good relationships through umbrella organizations like ours.

The interviews revealed that the economic development entity, headed by Ms. Collins, the workforce development board, chaired by Mr. Jefferson, and the MACC Welding-Machining Advisory Board are key organizations that help the local community coordinate with one another on workforce development training, including welding. However, there are other groups mentioned by interview participants that provide more connections between stakeholders. The Mid-Atlantic Consortia, made up of local businesses, public schools, and the college, develops
pathways that combine academic training with technical training. This entity is facilitated by MACC, but each partner organization has a role to play whether it is providing education or training, advice on curriculum development, connections to apprenticeships or full-time jobs, or funding support. The workforce development board made it a priority to fund career counselors in the high schools as part of this effort. Mr. Jefferson reinforced that this is an effort to help the high school students understand that they have many paths that can lead them to fulfilling careers:

almost every high school has a full-time career coach now that can really help students see that maybe college isn’t the only way, but there are lots of opportunities. Get kids into the community college system or credential process, that [they understand] that there has to be something after high school to succeed.

The collaborative work the Mid-Atlantic Consortia is doing is being recognized on a statewide level. The statewide study of workforce development programs specifically noted how the consortium is using the strengths and respective roles of high school administrators, local employers, and community college representatives to develop programs and engage the community.

The stakeholder organizations are also connected through the Career Hub. This is another entity that focuses on workforce development and education and training. Career Hub is “a collaborative effort among the business, education and economic development communities…to broaden awareness of high-demand, high-growth, high-wage careers in our region and promote local training opportunities for those careers. Through the Career Hub website, individuals can easily access information about careers, education, and training options,
and directly access assistance and advice from career professionals at colleges, high schools, or state and local workforce and economic development agencies.

Despite so many individual organizations and consortia being involved in education and training, interview participants indicated that working together, not competition, allows them to move forward in meeting their individual and collective goals. Ms. Collins said, “We do a really good job at not stepping on each other’s toes because we collaborate so much. We understand what everyone is doing. So it’s easier to have a clear path on who does what.” Mr. Jefferson noted that there are multiple education entities, including multiple community colleges, on the workforce development board, but “what is unique is that those community colleges aren’t competing; they’re collaborating.”

Summary

This chapter detailed the themes and findings that were produced through the coding of six interviews, the examination of multiple documents, and a review of electronic media associated with welding and workforce development in the service area of Mid-Atlantic Community College. The themes that emerged were awareness of community needs, collaboration to meet programmatic challenges, institutional commitment/strategic approach, engaged partnerships, and distinction of roles.

The data showed how the participants view actions and relationships through various perspectives, including their own organization, others’ organizations, and their obligation to the needs of the community. These lenses can be related to the descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects of stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). These concepts will be examined more deeply in Chapter 5 of this study.
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how one community college in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States engaged with its primary stakeholders as it designed and implemented workforce education and training activities. More specifically, the study delved into an examination of the college’s welding program. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995) was used as the theoretical framework of this study. Freeman writes that, according to stakeholder theory, a successful business must create value for all the stakeholders with which it deals and that one cannot look at the stakeholders in isolation because the interests of all the stakeholders are linked. Donaldson and Preston further refined the theory to identify three strands of the theory. Descriptive stakeholder theory looks at relationships from the perspective of one’s own organization. Instrumental stakeholder theory looks more intently at the relationships between stakeholders and how organizational objectives can be achieved through stakeholder management and relationships. Normative stakeholder theory focuses on the critical element of the moral or ethical basis of stakeholder relationships (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Analysis of the data in this study produced five themes. These themes, considered through the various lenses of stakeholder theory, provide a context with which to understand the relationships between the stakeholders in this study. This allows us to answer the central research question of the study: How does Mid-Atlantic Community College (MACC) engage with key external industry stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities?
Themes and Major Takeaways

The themes that were developed as a result of the analysis of the interviews, document reviews, and digital materials review are expressed in the following chart, which also includes major highlights that arose from each theme. This portion of the chapter is then broken down into a discussion of each theme in the context of stakeholder theory, with a consideration of the descriptive, instrumental, and normative lenses of the theory. Some of the themes and descriptions as culled from the data lend themselves more clearly to one of these three particular aspects as described by Donaldson and Preston (1995). The subsequent pages of the chapter will include thoughts on implications for practice and research, limitations of the study, possible areas of future research associated with this topic, and a conclusion.

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<th>Themes</th>
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<td>Awareness of Community Needs</td>
<td>• Stakeholders are deeply rooted in the community</td>
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<td>• The community benefits from multiple education and training possibilities</td>
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<td>that can enhance their careers</td>
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<td>• Behavior of stakeholders is consistent with values of the community</td>
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<td>Collaboration to Meet Programmatic Challenges</td>
<td>• A skilled welding workforce is critical to the community</td>
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<td>• Starting the welding program</td>
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<td>• Finding Instructors</td>
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<td>• Other training providers</td>
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<td>Institutional Commitment/Strategic Approach</td>
<td>• All stakeholders are strongly committed to the welding program</td>
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<td>• Stakeholders look at the issue strategically</td>
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Strategic needs of stakeholders intersect with each other

Engaged Partnerships
- Partnerships are deep and multilayered
- Stakeholders strive to cooperate
- Partnerships are formal as well as informal
- Stakeholders work together to overcome challenges

Distinction of Roles
- Stakeholders understand and agree on the role each stakeholder plays
- Each stakeholder has some form of leadership role at various times

**Awareness of Community Needs**

The interview data showed individual stakeholders and organizations that are firmly rooted in their community. The stakeholders who were interviewed show a dedication to the needs of individuals. They also invest their time and energy in projects that enhance workforce education and training as a means to bolster economic development. These actions are designed to enrich the quality of life of their community. These activities harness the *normative* aspect of stakeholder theory whereby there is an emphasis on the moral or ethical foundation of stakeholder relationships to consider as an organization works to implement its goals (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

A corporation does not exist only to make a profit, but it also has a social responsibility (Roberts, 1992). The stakeholders external to the college epitomize this ideal. Mr. Jefferson emphasized the importance of providing life-long learning for the employees of his company, which contributes to a stable workforce. Jefferson said, “With that stability I think we’ve been able to develop a lot of our people, get them in early and grow them internally. That’s always been our best strategy.” This approach to maintaining a stable workforce helps the company
maintain and enhance profitability, but it also fosters an environment of the business investing in and taking care of its own people. Ms. Collins’ regional economic development corporation also stresses the needs of individuals as it develops the public awareness videos run on the local television station. This effort shows a focus on individuals in the community, to help them understand the breadth of opportunities available to them; it is not primarily centered on helping companies become more profitable. This is also true in the establishment of the Career Hub website project, in which all stakeholder organizations are active.

While the college being studied is a public institution and was not created to earn a financial profit, the normative aspect of stakeholder theory can be considered from the college perspective because normative stakeholder theory considers “how managers should attend to the interests of their organizational stakeholders” (de Bussy & Kelly, 2010, p. 291). The interest of its stakeholders is at the core of the mission of Mid-Atlantic Community College. According to its mission statement, the college exists to meet “the educational needs of the community, empowering students through comprehensive programs and services, within an environment of academic excellence.” Dr. Johnson stated the college’s goal most succinctly in an opinion column where he expressed his belief that “education is the great economic equalizer and our best hope for prosperity and community development.” He continued by stressing that education provides “all citizens with the opportunity to establish a better life for themselves through hard work and perseverance.” All of the stakeholder partnership activities enjoined by the college and presented in this study are at the core of how the college works to reach this obligation to its community. This value is embodied in President Johnson joining various boards with the goal of improving college programs, with Vice President Bennet working to ensure the key stakeholder partners are participating on the Machining and Welding Advisory Board, and in Mr. Wilson in
providing the infrastructure and curriculum to deliver welding programs and in helping to connect students to businesses.

The data painted a picture of people who feel positive about working together and encouraged about the community they are building and the atmosphere being created to provide education and training for the welding industry. These efforts support students and the industry in which they will be employed. When discussing the students who are completing welding training, President Johnson said, “They absolutely stay in the area, and there’s a huge demand in the area.” While he pointed out that there are welding jobs throughout the state and throughout the country, the preponderance of people tend to stay. “People, generally, who live here like to live here…we don’t have an exodus of people getting trained here and going elsewhere. Most of them stay here and get good jobs.”

All participants viewed the creation of the welding program as critical to the needs of their community, which includes businesses, individuals, and the college. Based on the interview data, the actions of the external stakeholders exemplified descriptive stakeholder theory as they attached themselves to the idea of creating a welding program by looking at the situation from their own perspective--they needed a skilled welding workforce to meet the goals of their organizations. This was true for Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Davis as they discussed the need to have skilled welders so their companies could create the products their consumers desired. It was also true for Ms. Collins at the regional economic development authority. The goal of her organization is to help businesses within the region to grow and prosper. As she shared in her interview, the large manufacturing presence in the area requires skilled welders to be successful.

Under this theme, the comments from the college participants can be interpreted with the instrumental aspect of stakeholder theory. The college strongly considered the relationship
between stakeholders as it decided how to approach developing a welding program. Vice President Bennet spoke of the influence of the governor’s office and his call for the state to produce more welders as a way to provide jobs for individuals and create the workforce for businesses to grow. President Johnson spoke of the relationship between the college and another stakeholder (the area vocational centers), as an influence in the initial choice not to create a welding program. He pointed out that since these institutions already offered the program, there was not a strong need for the college to become involved. However, examining the issue from the point of view of the college’s relationship with another set of stakeholders (the business community), convinced him that there was a role to play for the college in offering these programs in which the college could serve the needs of business without negatively impacting the product of the vocational schools. Mr. Wilson, the welding instructor, emphasized the importance of the connectivity of two stakeholders (his students and their future employers), as a driving force for the college to become involved.

**Collaboration to Meet Programmatic Challenges**

As the findings and analysis chapter of this thesis showed, many of the challenges faced by the stakeholders were solved by collective action. Given this collective approach to addressing challenges, the *instrumental* approach to stakeholder theory was evident as the college worked to address these challenges. MACC identified institutional challenges around finding instructors, the cost of the program, creating curriculum, and finding space for the program. It became an organizational objective to address these challenges in order to establish the welding program. The interviews showed that MACC addressed these challenges through stakeholder relationships and stakeholder management. The challenge of finding qualified instructors was met, as instructor Wilson shared, by reaching out to local companies to get their
seasoned employees to serve as adjunct part-time faculty members in the welding program. President Johnson and Vice President Bennet talked about building relationships with state and federal government and other grantors to secure the funding to establish the program. They also pointed out how creating a strong relationship with a local business allowed them to acquire the space needed to house the welding program. A final challenge to address was the presence of another training provider of welding services, the vocational technical schools.

**Institutional Commitment/Strategic Approach**

Since the outlook of an organization impacts whom the organization views to be stakeholders and how those stakeholders impact institutional plans (Savage, Nix, Whitehead & Blair, 1991) the institutional commitment and strategic approach of MACC can be understood through the instrumental aspect of stakeholder theory. In developing the strategic direction of the college, MACC considered their stakeholders relative to their mission to provide education and training and how those stakeholder relationships can help MACC meet the college’s objectives. These efforts were described in the interviews with President Johnson and Vice President Bennet. This includes how the college linked their strategic plan to the strategic plan of the state community college system and its desire to have stronger licensure and certification programs, the needs of students to learn skills for jobs in their local economy, and the needs of business and industry to have qualified workers. The stakeholders had direct impact on MACC and how they sought to execute their strategic priorities relative to welding through the work of the college’s Welding and Machining Advisory Board. Therefore, President Johnson made a concerted effort to seek out workforce stakeholders that are “focused on the problem of [building a] workforce” by reaching out to the community through the regional economic development authority board, Rotary, the workforce development board, and other local organizations.
The stakeholders external to the college also looked outward, identifying the college as a stakeholder with which they needed to work in order to create a qualified welding workforce. Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Davis spoke of the deliberate effort to work with the college to develop curriculum and priorities of the Welding and Machining Advisory Board to ensure their companies had access to the welding workforce necessary for their companies to meet their strategic goals. Ms. Collins spoke of the value of having a “collaborative” approach to strengthening the business community, and how the strong relationship with MACC helps her organization reach its strategic priorities.

**Engaged Partnerships**

The relationship between stakeholders, the *instrumental* aspect of stakeholder theory, is clearly displayed in the discussion of the partnerships established between the stakeholders. Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2011) described the principle of stakeholder cooperation, the belief that value is created between stakeholders because they assist one another through willingly working together. This cooperation was evident among and between all the stakeholders throughout the course of the interviews. It was described in broad terms by several of the participants. President Johnson referred to the “cooperative nature” of the community. Mr. Jefferson referred to the “collaborative spirit” of the area and the desire to work together rather than compete.

More specifically, the stakeholders voluntarily serve on one another’s boards. Vice President Bennet made a point to reinforce the fact that even though Machining and Welding Advisory Board companies are on some level competing for the same workforce, when it comes to the advisory board work they “have been open” in sharing what they need, which works to the benefit of multiple stakeholders. The participants also work together to acquire financial
resources to support the welding program. President Johnson spoke of the strength of the workforce development board in securing funding from which the college programs benefit. The stakeholders also work together to leverage the human capital needed to run the program. This is epitomized in Mr. Wilson’s efforts in acquiring adjunct faculty from local businesses to be engaged in teaching welding classes.

**Distinction of Roles**

An extension of the stakeholder partnership theme is the roles of stakeholders. This theme delved a little more deeply into the relationships between the stakeholders. It is also indicative of the *instrumental* aspect of stakeholder theory, as the interviews of the participants drew out examples of how the stakeholders interacted with one another.

The various roles stakeholders play is an aspect that strengthens the ability of stakeholders to partner. The participants spoke of the aptitude the partners have in taking a leadership role in certain workforce education activities while being able to play a more supporting role in others. Ms. Collins’ organization takes the lead in identifying companies that may be interested in relocating to the area, but the college is an active participant, selling the benefits of relocating to the area once conversations about the specifics of workforce education and training options begin. The workforce development board, chaired by Mr. Jefferson, takes the lead in developing and submitting the local area workforce development plan, but the college and other stakeholders are active participants in helping to develop the content. MACC takes the lead in facilitating the work of the Mid-Atlantic Consortia, but all stakeholders are members.

Various roles also contribute to the ability of the college and the vocational schools to provide welding services without creating an abrasive relationship between the two providers.
As multiple participants described, the vocational schools are capable of providing education with a firm foundation of entry level welding skills as well as preparing many students with fundamental workplace skills. The college has the ability to provide education and training for higher order welding skills as well as more advanced skills needed in the workplace such as reading blueprints and managing projects.

**Implications for Theory**

Flexibility is necessary in developing workforce programs because the balance of partner cooperation, funding, and community interest and need is almost never the same for any two programs. Therefore, colleges cannot take the exact same approach every time they build the stakeholder coalitions necessary to successfully implement a program. The three aspects of stakeholder theory illustrate how the college approached stakeholders when developing and implementing the welding program at Mid-Atlantic Community College. It also showed how stakeholders approached one another. The data revealed these different approaches and influences. The data, through the three lenses of stakeholder theory, showed that the stakeholders view their interactions with other stakeholders from different perspectives depending on the situation. Often the instrumental aspect of stakeholder theory was dominant as stakeholders worked together to address challenges and accomplish institutional priorities. The normative aspect of the theory was also evident and gave us a lens to understand the obligation the stakeholders felt toward their communities. The descriptive aspect was the least engaged approach in this community.

The lens of *descriptive* stakeholder theory presents stakeholders acting in their parochial interest, focusing primarily on the needs of their own organization as they identify stakeholders and establish relationships with them. This was evident in the approach of the stakeholders
external to the college, as they explained their desire to have a welding program so the businesses could have access to qualified employees to augment their welding activities.

The lens of *instrumental* stakeholder theory appeared as stakeholders described the interconnectedness of the stakeholders and how they worked with one another to accomplish shared goals. From the college’s perspective, this showed in how the college worked with external stakeholders to acquire resources, obtain faculty space and equipment, serve on the boards of external stakeholders, and in their overall approach in looking externally to find expertise that could help them with the program. The external stakeholders also demonstrated actions that fit instrumental stakeholder theory. They too joined boards and worked with entities outside of their own organizations and, at various times, acted as leaders in convening of stakeholders and other times were content with allowing others to lead.

*Normative* stakeholder theory looks at the moral and ethical element. As noted previously, the description of normative theory can extoll the importance of organizations looking at the needs of their stakeholders as the context of considering its moral or ethical obligations (de Bussy & Kelly, 2010). This approach to normative theory is applicable to this study. Mid-Atlantic Community College, through the college’s mission and vision, and the emphasis placed on which programs to develop, considers the needs of its stakeholders. In this case, they are focusing on the needs of businesses for skilled employees and of individuals for access to education and training that will allow them to have the skills they need for a career.

**Implications for Practice**

Understanding the factors that contribute to maximizing the performance of a community college in executing its workforce education and training mission will be of significance to
multiple stakeholders. This understanding will have implications for college practice, public policy, regional economic development, and individual businesses.

**College Practice**

Colleges can use all or parts of this study as a promising practice to communicate with, partner, and leverage their relationships with various stakeholders. It will also allow them to more fully consider the roles various stakeholders can play as the college works to execute its workforce education and training mission. Specifically, college education and workforce leaders can consider the following actionable recommendations to enhance what they are doing in the workforce education and training arena.

Colleges can make sure that various levels of employees are reaching out to stakeholders. Building stakeholder relationships is not just the job of one person or office at a college. MACC showed how the efforts of the President, the Vice President, staff attending advisory board meetings, and faculty and program directors can build multiple bridges to stakeholders. The staff at MACC was constantly asking the community what it needed, not just sitting back on campus and assuming they understood the needs.

Colleges should be engaged in their community on multiple levels. As an active part of Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corporation, the Workforce Development Board, and other community organizations, MACC can develop relationships and an understanding of important issues. As an active participant in these types of organizations, it has a twofold benefit; it is aware of the needs of the community and it has a platform to make others aware of the education and workforce capabilities of which the community might not
otherwise be aware. Colleges cannot assume that everyone in the community understands the workforce mission and priorities of their institution.

Related to working with various stakeholders in shared endeavors, colleges should be aware of the distinction of roles in organizations. Specifically, colleges need to understand that they do not have to take the leadership role in every partnership arrangement. As the MACC experience showed, sometimes it is more advantageous for the college to take the lead; other times the lead is best taken by others. This will help the college maximize the efforts of their human and financial resources so they can engage in these partnerships without neglecting other parts of the college mission. Having different leads for various projects will also help build camaraderie between stakeholder organizations, as there is an understanding that all organizations are invested enough in outcomes that they are willing to take a leadership role.

Colleges should be assertive and proactive about finding out what their community needs. Most colleges have advisory boards of some type in the workforce area, but they have to be sure to use them effectively. MACC shared their philosophy of having college personnel doing much more listening than talking in advisory board meetings. College staff must listen to their stakeholders in these, and other, environments so they can learn about needs, not just “talk at” stakeholders. Talking at stakeholders without regard for their input could alienate partners. They may view one-way conversation during meetings as an indication that the college is not really interested in what the business representative knows or can contribute to the college.

Another proactive way to learn about community need is to use documents and data that other organizations have produced to support the case for establishing a program. A college does not need to carry the burden alone of producing data or conducting environmental scans of the local economy. In addition to their own research, MACC successfully leveraged documents
produced by the state community college system, state government, and the local economic
development entity to better understand the need around welding. This information is readily
available, and college workforce education and training leaders should ensure that there is staff
at the college dedicated to mining this type of external data and sharing it with the appropriate
people at the college.

Colleges should identify multiple sources of funding to begin to build a program. It is
not always possible to acquire all the needed funding from one source or at one time. A lack of
funding cannot be the reason to walk away from filling a community need. MACC showed how
colleges can leverage funding from federal and state government, the workforce development
board, the college foundation board, and others to acquire the resources needed to establish a
workforce education and training program. Colleges should have staff dedicated to finding these
funds and stakeholders with whom to partner when necessary to access specific pots of money.
This is especially important in trying to strategically access government and private foundation
dollars. Colleges should not go after a funding source simply because it is there. The potentially
available funding must fit the strategic vision of the college and needs of the community.

Colleges need to be strategic not just in how they go about funding a program, but in how
they build the components of the program. Program development needs to be systematically
developed. Colleges need to identify the right program directors, faculty, space, curriculum, and
initial and ongoing funding before instituting a program. Starting a program small and then
building on its success can be the most effective way to build a program. If initial program plans
are too grand with a lack of infrastructure, the program may not be successful.
Policy Makers

For policy makers, this study can be instructive in writing workforce policy. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (the current federal law overseeing workforce policy) and the Carl D. Perkins Career Technical Education Act (the federal law overseeing career technical education) both strive to create partnerships in delivering workforce education and training programs. The lessons learned from the interactions of these study participants can inform them when making changes to these laws. This case study can also be instructive for state and local policy entities as they consider programs that may be created or improved upon to enhance workforce education and training. The literature review showed how several states successfully leveraged the education and training capabilities of the two-year colleges to help their states have a skilled workforce. State and local leaders should look carefully at how they can adopt policies to make their two-year public colleges the preferred provider of education and training for their businesses and citizens.

A second area for policy makers to consider is funding. This study shows the challenge of funding in two ways. The first is colleges having access to funding so they can purchase equipment, hire faculty, and create the spaces needed to conduct training. The stakeholder partners in this study showed how they benefited from state and federal resources to get the welding program functional. The second funding impact is related to student affordability. The college participants in particular spoke about the challenges of affordability of programs for students. At a time when so many states are considering free community college tuition (Smith, 2015), the importance of a technical program like welding should be a reminder to policy makers to consider the affordability of workforce education and training programs, not just degree programs, when considering measures to provide free or strongly discounted tuition to assist
community college students in getting the education and training they desire. Policy makers should also make efforts to ensure that funds are available for community colleges to start programs for which there is a demonstrated community need.

**Regional Economic Development Entities**

Ms. Collins spoke of the benefit to her region in having the college available to discuss training options when talking to businesses about expanding or relocating to the region. Other economic development professionals can learn from the activities around MACC’s experiences and choose to actively integrate the community colleges in their area as strong partners in the courting of businesses. The uneven use of community colleges in training has been written about for years (Dougherty, 2003; Desai, 2012). This case study shows the strength of leveraging the abilities of a community college to reach workforce and economic development goals. State and regional economic development entities should court community college leaders to play an active role as they solicit businesses to expand or relocate in their area.

**Individual Businesses**

The business in this study showed how they can make the most of the resources of their local community college to improve their bottom line and make their organization and community stronger. Businesses in other regions can look to this study as an indication of how workforce development can be enhanced by working in collaboration with their local community college. More specifically, community colleges do sometimes conduct cold-call outreach to local businesses. Business leaders should be receptive to this type of call from their local community college so that they can learn of the types of programs the college offers that can
help their business. In addition, business leaders should not hesitate to be proactive in reaching out to their community college to build relationships that can help them grow their workforce.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations that may impact the applicability of this study to other jurisdictions:

- It only examined one community college
- The community studied was a small rural community
- The bulk of the participants had been in the community and with their organizations for many years
- It only focused on a single industry

**Future Research Possibilities**

The findings of this study can be used to provide the basis for further study to better understand how a community college interacts with its stakeholders to deliver workforce education and training. Findings from other studies composed of different stakeholder participants can be compared to this study or to each other, to see how the three aspects of stakeholder theory manifest themselves in stakeholder relationships in other environments. The question of whether there are similar or contrasting stakeholder dynamics to the case of Mid-Atlantic Community College can be studied by

- Conducting the study at a large community college
- Conducting the study at an urban community college
- Examining a workforce cluster other than welding, for example, a white-collar industry
- Studying a college that has a less veteran leadership structure in place
• Seeing if the geographic region where the study is conducted has an impact on how stakeholders relate to one another

Further research can be conducted to overlay stakeholder theory on some of the literature identified in Chapter 2 of this study. Amey’s (2010) analysis of how community college leaders approach partnerships can be revisited to explore how the three aspects of stakeholder theory identified by Donaldson and Preston (1995) can influence the types of relationships colleges establish when building partnerships. Furthermore, Lattimore, D’Amico and Hancock (2012) identified three categories of stakeholders: those with governmental authority, those from within the college, and those that are neither government nor college. The aspects detailed by Donaldson and Preston can be used to evaluate how these three categories of stakeholders behave. It can be studied to see if one group is more predisposed to embrace, for example, the descriptive stakeholder aspect more so than other aspects. A third area of study can be based on Tekniepe’s (2013) paper on how external stakeholders can influence the ways in which a college president establishes priorities. A study can be conducted using the theoretical framework of stakeholder theory to look more deeply into the relationships between external stakeholders and college presidents to understand how their embrace or rejection of any of the aspects of stakeholder theory impacts the relationships between external stakeholders and a college president.

Conclusion

Developing relationships with stakeholders and working to understand their needs will allow organizations to build lasting relationships with stakeholders rather than just short-term contractual arrangements (Jones, 1995). This is the case for the stakeholders in this study. The interviews established that the stakeholders, both as individuals and as organizations, are not
looking merely at short-term solutions to shared challenges; they have established relationships over time. As described by President Johnson and Mr. Jefferson, in some cases these personal and professional relationships have been in place for decades. The trust and shared commitment over time between the stakeholders provided the foundation that allowed Mid-Atlantic Community College to establish a welding program that served the needs of many stakeholders.

There were several commonalities between stakeholders that enhanced their ability to come together around creating a welding program. All stakeholders approached the need for welders strategically and deliberatively. Stakeholders considered how the creation of a welding program fit in with the needs of the community as a whole, as well as serving their own needs. Stakeholders took on challenges together instead of working in silos to address them on their own. Finally, stakeholders shared a belief that there was more to what they were trying to accomplish than just making a profit or being in charge of a process or project; they recognized that there is a societal benefit to creating the welding program. When writing of stakeholder theory, Crane and Ruebottom (2011) stated that relationships must be looked at not only from an economic perspective but also from a social perspective. The stakeholders in the case of the welding program at Mid-Atlantic Community College did indeed consider the social as well as economic aspect of their actions.

Working with stakeholders is a way for organizations to reach their goals (Mellahi & Wood, 2003). The leadership of Mid-Atlantic Community College was able to capitalize on their stakeholder connections to create a viable welding program. MACC leadership built relationships, understood the strengths of their stakeholders, and leveraged those strengths to create the welding program which is now firmly in place to serve organizations, businesses, and individuals in their region.
References


doi:10.1080/10668920500433025


doi:10.1080/10668926.2013.878260


-becomes-office-of-career-technical-and-adult-education/


Appendix A: Request to Participate to College President

Dear President,

My name is David Buonora. I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University working on my thesis as part of the requirements to earn an ED D degree in Higher Education Administration. The title of my study is The Community College and Stakeholder Engagement in Workforce Education and Training: A Community College Case Study. Given the demographics of your area, the active role your college has taken in workforce education and training, and the makeup of the local business community your institution is a good fit for my case study. I write to ask for your personal involvement in agreeing to an interview on this subject as well as your assistance in helping to identify others at the college and some members of the external stakeholder community to participate.

To gather data to conduct my research I am interviewing selected members of the college community and stakeholders external to the college to answer the research question: How does a community college engage with key external stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities? I hope to gather interview subjects through snowball sampling; that is getting recommendations for people to interview from interviewees such as yourself and your appropriate staff.

You are being asked to participate in this study because your experience at the college provides a unique perspective to understanding the actions of the college and connections with the community that have allowed your institution to be aggressive in providing workforce education and training programs. Your participation is purely voluntary and you can withdraw your participation at any time.

Your active participation in this study will take at most three to four hours. I ask that you sit for one interview, which will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to ensure that I capture an accurate account of your comments. Additionally I request that you review the transcription to ensure that you are comfortable that your comments are accurate and clearly convey the information you wish to share. I may also need to conduct a shorter follow-up interview if some topics need further clarification as a result of the data gathering process. I also ask that you identify two or three members of your college staff and three or four external stakeholders who are knowledgeable about the college’s role in workforce development who I can ask to interview as part of my research. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of the interview, a draft copy of which is attached to this email. I will also submit my proposal through the institutional review board at your institution prior to conducting any interviews.

As our economy becomes more and more dependent on having a skilled workforce to allow businesses to be competitive, the role of community colleges in providing this training is becoming more prominent. This study will help inform our understanding of how community colleges and their communities work together to ensure the development of a high quality workforce.

Again, if you are interested in participating, please email me at buonora.d@husky.neu.edu. If you have any questions you can reach me by email or call me at 301-300-0421.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dave Buonora
Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University
Appendix B: Request to Participate to Internal and Industry Stakeholders

Dear Participant:

My name is David Buonora. I am contacting you upon the recommendation of [redacted] I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University working on my thesis as part of the requirements to earn an ED D degree in Higher Education Administration. The title of my study is The Community College and Stakeholder Engagement in Workforce Education and Training: A Community College Case Study. To gather data to conduct my research I am interviewing selected members of the college community and stakeholders external to the college to answer the research question: How does a community college engage with key external stakeholders while designing and implementing workforce education and training activities?

You are being asked to participate in this study because your experience provides a unique and valuable perspective to understanding the connections between the college and the community that lead to the development of workforce education and training programs. Your participation is purely voluntary and you can withdraw your participation at any time.

Your active participation in this study will take at most three to four hours. I ask that you sit for one interview, which will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to ensure that I capture an accurate account of your comments. Additionally, I request that you review the transcription to ensure that you are comfortable that your comments are accurate and clearly convey the information you wish to share. I may also need to conduct a shorter follow-up interview if some topics need further clarification as a result of the data gathering process. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of the interview. A draft copy of which is attached to this email. If you agree to participate in this study I will email you to arrange a time to meet that is convenient to you. Participation is entirely voluntary. Pseudonyms and coded references will be used for all participants in this study. The college being studied will be referred to by a pseudonym. The area where the study is being conducted will only be referenced in broad geographic/demographic terms.

As our economy becomes more and more dependent on having a skilled workforce to allow businesses to be competitive, the role of community colleges in providing this training is becoming more prominent. This study will help inform our understanding of how community colleges and their communities work together to ensure the development of a skilled workforce.

Again, if you are interested in participating, please email me at buonorda.d@husky.neu.edu. If you have any questions you can reach me by email or call me at 301-300-0421.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dave Buonora
Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University

Northeastern University - Human Subject Research Protection
Rev. 4/21/2015

APPROVED

NU IRB #:
VALID THROUGH
Appendix C: Interview Questions

Questions to College President

1. Can you describe how the college strategic goals around workforce development developed?

2. In looking at the strategic goals I noticed that one of the college’s strategic goals is to “leverage resource support from workforce partners”. Could you describe how you identify the workforce partners who you work with and how those relationships evolved over time?
   
   ○ Prompt: how has this organization influenced what you provide with regard to workforce development?

3. Can you describe another partner in the industry and your relationship with them?

4. What was the impetus for the college to become strongly engaged in workforce development and with the welding industry in particular?

5. As the college president, can you describe your role in workforce partner outreach relative to workforce development and welding?

6. Do any of the external workforce partners you identified have a more pronounced influence on the college approach to workforce? If so, in what way?

7. How do you manage the competing needs of the various external workforce partners?

8. Could you describe one of the challenges you had to overcome to engage workforce partners around the idea of providing welding programs?
9. Can you describe a way in which being part of a centralized community college system impacts how you approach workforce development and workforce partner relations.

10. Is there anything else about the college’s involvement in welding programs that we didn’t discuss that you think is worth mentioning?

11. Other than yourself, what other college personnel or members of college boards are engaged in workforce partner relations?

Questions to College Vice President

1. What impact have changes in the local, regional, or state economy impacted the institution’s focus on workforce development and how the college approaches workforce partners?

2. Can you tell me about any operational or strategic plans the college has developed detailing how to approach its workforce mission in addition to the “Achieve 2015” strategic objectives?

3. How do you measure the value of your workforce development programs?

   ○ Prompt: follow-up on welding if not specified

4. Why did the college think it important to provide training in welding?

   ○ Prompt: How long have these been active programs at the college?

5. How do you think external workforce partners measure the value of the college’s training program?
6. Could you describe one challenge the college had to overcome to engage workforce partners around the idea of providing welding programs?

   o Prompt: Could you describe another example of this?

7. How have your relationships with external workforce partners relative to welding program progressed over time?

8. How does the college prioritize the needs and relative influence of the various welding partners?

   o Prompt: how do you think the relationships among your external stakeholders in welding have changed since the college became actively engaged in this area?

9. Is there anything else about the actions of the college relative to welding that we did not cover that you think is worth mentioning?

Questions to College Welding Director

1. Why did the college decided to focus on offering welding programs?

   o Prompt: How did the college decide which types of welding programs and degrees to offer?

2. Who do you think the colleges key partners are relative to your welding programs

3. Tell me about how you develop the curriculum for your welding programs?
4. Tell me about a challenge you had around engaging partners around the idea of providing welding programs?
   
   o Prompt: can you tell me about another challenge?

5. How does the college prioritize the needs and relative influence of multiple welding partners?

6. Could you share with me how the college identifies the students who enroll in welding?

7. How are external workforce partners continually engaged in the welding program?

8. Is there anything else about the actions of the college relative to welding that we did not cover that you think is worth mentioning?

Questions to External Industry Stakeholders

1. How long has your business been located here, and what made it attractive to locate in this region?
   
   o Prompt: ask about workforce needs if it doesn’t come up

2. Tell me about how you initially came to be involved with the college?

3. Could you describe your relationship with the college?
   
   o Prompt: are there formal contractual relationships or informal relationships, short term needs vs. long term needs

4. Could you describe a program run by the college that directly impacts your business and in what way?
5. What were your initial expectations of your relationship with the college and have those expectations changed over time?

6. What is it about the college that makes them an important partner to you?

7. How does your business interface with the economic development and or workforce investment authorities in the region?

8. Is there anything else about your relationship with the college relative to your working relationship that you think is worth mentioning that we did not cover?

Questions to External Economic Development Official

1. Why has welding become an important focus for this region?

2. Can you describe for me any operational or strategic plans your organization has developed detailing how to approach the training needs of your area?

3. What formal and informal connections do you have with the college that help you reach your organizational goals?

4. What were your initial expectations of your relationship with the college

   o Prompt: have those expectations changed over time?

5. How do the different entities in the area who need access to a skilled welding workforce engage with one another?
6. How does your organization manage the needs and relative influence of different stakeholders in the welding industry?

7. Describe one benefit of the relationship between the college and your organization?
   - Prompt: ask about workforce role if not fully developed in the response.

8. What do you see as the impact of the college on helping to fill welding jobs?
   - Prompt: why do you think this has occurred?

9. Is there anything else about your relationship with the college relative to your working relationship that you think is worth mentioning that we did not cover?
Appendix D: Informed Consent

UNSIGNED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR COLLEGE PERSONNEL

**45 CFR 46 117(c)** In certain instances, an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects. In cases in which the documentation requirement is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide subjects with a written statement regarding the research.

Only the IRB can waive or modify the consent process. Researchers are not authorized to make this decision. When *a signed informed consent is not required, this consent form may be given to participants to keep. Please modify the following information as necessary.*

Northeastern University, Department of: Graduate Programs in Education
Name of Investigator(s): Tova Olson Sanders, Principal Investigator, David Anthony Buonora, Student Researcher

Title of Project: The Community College and Stakeholder Engagement in Workforce Education and Training: A Case Study

Request to Participate in Research

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to explore a community college engages with its primary stakeholders as it designs and implements a workforce education and training program. The study will focus on the college’s welding programs.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

The study will take place at Mid-Atlantic Community College. Your active participation in this study will take at most three to four hours. I ask that you sit for one interview, at a location of your choice, which will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to ensure that I capture an accurate account of your comments. Additionally I request that you review the transcription to ensure that you are comfortable that your comments are accurate and clearly convey the information you wish to share. I may also need to conduct a shorter follow-up interview if some topics need further clarification as a result of the data gathering process.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about how a community college interfaces with its community stakeholders in the development and implementation of workforce development programs.

Your participation in the study will be handled in a confidential manner. Only the researchers will know that you participated in this study. Pseudonyms will be used to describe you and all other participants in the study as well as the institution being studied.

You have the ultimate say in your level of participation in this study. You are under no obligation to participate and you can refuse to answer specific questions if you so desire. You have the right to stop your participation in this study at any time.

There will be no financial compensation as a result of your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call David Buonora at 301-300-0421, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Tova Sanders, the Principal Investigator at 202-549-3240.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.

David Anthony Buonora
UNSIGNED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR COLLEGE PRESIDENT

45 CFR 46 117(c) In certain instances, an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects. In cases in which the documentation requirement is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide subjects with a written statement regarding the research.

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There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about how a community college interfaces with its community stakeholders in the development and implementation of workforce development programs.

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If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call David Buonora at 301-300-0421, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Tova Sanders, the Principal Investigator at 202-549-3240.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.

David Anthony Buonora
UNSIGNED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

45 CFR 46.117(c) In certain instances, an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects. In cases in which the documentation requirement is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide subjects with a written statement regarding the research.

Only the IRB can waive or modify the consent process. Researchers are not authorized to make this decision. When a signed informed consent is not required, this consent form may be given to participants to keep. Please modify the following information as necessary.

Northeastern University, Department of: Graduate Programs in Education

Name of Investigator(s): Tova Olson Sanders, Principal Investigator, David Anthony Buonora, Student Researcher

Title of Project: The Community College and Stakeholder Engagement in Workforce Education and Training: A Case Study

Request to Participate in Research

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to explore a community college engages with its primary stakeholders as it designs and implements a workforce education and training program. The study will focus on the college’s welding programs.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

The study will take place at Mid-Atlantic Community College. Your active participation in this study will take at most three to four hours. I ask that you sit for one interview, at a location of your choice, which will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to ensure that I capture an accurate account of your comments. Additionally I request that you review the transcription to ensure that you are comfortable that your comments are accurate and clearly convey the information you wish to share. I may also need to conduct a shorter follow-up interview if some topics need further clarification as a result of the data gathering process.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about how a community college interfaces with its community stakeholders in the development and implementation of workforce development programs.
Your participation in the study will be handled in a confidential manner. Only the researchers will know that you participated in this study. Pseudonyms will be used to describe you and all other participants in the study as well as the institution being studied.

You have the ultimate say in your level of participation in this study. You are under no obligation to participate and you can refuse to answer specific questions if you so desire. You have the right to stop your participation in this study at any time.

There will be no financial compensation as a result of your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call David Buonora at 301-300-0421, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Tova Sanders, the Principal Investigator at 202-549-3240.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.

David Anthony Buonora
Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Dave Buonora successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 04/13/2013
Certification Number: 1162186
Appendix F: Institutional Review Board Approvals

Northeastern

Notification of IRB Action

Date: September 15, 2015  IRB #: CPS15-08-12

Principal Investigator(s):  Tova Sanders
                           David Anthony Buonora

Department:  Doctor of Education
            College of Professional Studies

Address:  20 Belvidere
          Northeastern University

Title of Project:  The Community College and Stakeholder Engagement in Workforce Education and Training: A community College Case Study

Participating Sites:  Blue Ridge Community College approval in file

Informed Consent:  Three (3) unsigned consents

As per CFR 45.46.117(c)(2) signed consent is being waived as the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required.

DHHS Review Category:  Expedited #6, #7
Monitoring Interval:  12 months

Approval Expiration Date:  SEPTEMBER 14, 2016

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. Informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nag C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
RRC Summary Form

Date submitted to OIRE: 8/25/15
Date reviewed by RRC: 9/4/15

After review, the RRC finds that the submitted project does not meet federal guidelines. (If the submitted project does not meet the federal guidelines please outline reasons below)

Additional concerns/comments: recommend that "snowball" recruitment letter include the confidentiality info (pseudonym, etc.) found on p. 7 of the NU IRB.

The RRC recommends does not recommend the approval of this project.

Susan C. Crosby 9/4/15
RRC Chairperson Date

The Vice President recommends does not recommend the approval of this project.

John D. Conway for Dr. Young 9/4/15
Vice President of Instruction and Student Services Date

Date investigator informed of final action: 9/8/15

Protocol Number: 16-2 Buonaro