SUCCESS STORY

Ivy Tech Community College, Sellersburg Campus

An Affordable Solution for Workforce Development

SNAPSHOT
Each year Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana helps 200,000 students develop their professional skills. With 32 campuses spread throughout the state and 150 academic programs and concentrations, Ivy Tech is committed to providing its students with an affordable, quality postsecondary education. The Sellersburg campus in Southern Indiana supports the workforce needs of nearby Louisville, Kentucky, offering career-focused degrees at the affordable cost of $3,860 per year for a full-time student.

CHALLENGES
Some Ivy Tech students come straight from high school, some are adults returning to school in hopes of switching careers, and others are professionals who want to build upon what they have learned on the job and advance their skills. But every student “is in a hurry to get whatever it is they want—the credential, the certification, or the degree,” explains Robert Mark Kinkle, Dean/Assistant Professor, School of Health Sciences. They are eager to enter or return to the workforce to put their new skills to work and start earning income.

Local employers also look to the college to help with their training needs. For example, a major healthcare company recently purchased local physician practices in large numbers. As part of the purchase, the buyer agreed to retain all the employees but soon learned that not all medical assistants, lab technicians, and front office staff had the same training or job responsibilities. The employer looked to Ivy Tech to help standardize training across similar jobs.
To meet these challenges, Ivy Tech has implemented a program of intrusive, prescriptive advising. In the past, the school offered a lot of support programs but found that community college students do not take advantage of optional counseling programs. In the current program, students are asked more upfront questions about their career goals, strengths and weaknesses, and financial and time limitations to help students define an educational plan that meets their needs.

For students looking to build on existing skill sets obtained through on-the-job training, Ivy Tech offers several ways to obtain Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). Some students are aware of Ivy Tech’s CPL program, which is detailed on the college’s website, and ask about it during the admissions process, registration, or meetings with their advisor. To raise additional awareness of CPL, the school is considering adding a question to its online application asking if the applicant has previous work experience, training, or education that they might be able to receive credit for.

The CPL process is pretty straightforward for students with industry certifications. The certification is “crosswalked” to specific courses based on recommendations from the American Council on Education (ACE). Within the School of Health Sciences, for example, paramedics can have a lot of hands-on, job training that can translate into up to 47 credit hours of course work.

Students can also prepare a portfolio demonstrating their on-the-job training and its relation to the objectives of a specific course. Although it is a time-consuming process that requires documentation (job description, performance evaluations that reflect the core competencies, letters of recommendation, etc.), employer verification, and an evaluation fee, students who can demonstrate that they meet 75% of the course objectives can earn course credit. Since relatively few students take advantage of this option, the school is looking into the feasibility of developing a freshman portfolio class to help students work through the process.

“Credit for Prior Learning could significantly reduce the amount of time that it takes them to get their degree,” concludes Kinkle.

Learn more about how your institution can offer Credit for Prior Learning at www.pearsonhighered.com/credit-for-prior-learning and acenet.edu/CEAI.