Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College
Community Member Forum Questionnaire Results
September, 2008

WITC President Bob Meyer conducted community forums at WITC campuses in September 2008 to seek community member input into key questions that would help develop and prioritize the strategic goals and direction of WITC for 2009 and beyond. Community members were given the opportunity to complete a Community Member Questionnaire in written or online format.

A total of 21 community members responded to the questionnaire according to the campus closest to their location. The New Richmond and Rice Lake campuses were not represented by comments in this data collection.

Community members were asked for their responses to three questions. Each question is noted, with individual responses listed below and are sorted according to campus.

**Question 1. What are you willing to share about your community’s plans for the future (that might impact WITC’s planning)?**

1. **Renewable Energy**
   a. All three bay towns have passed eco-municipality decrees. Therefore it would be useful if WITC graduated people with skills to move into a fossil fuel free future. (A)
   b. We manufacture solar heating panels in Duluth, MN and believe the renewable energy products sales and service will greatly impact our area economy. (S)
   c. ESSAR Steel Minnesota, LLC in Naswauk, MN. Cleveland Cliffs Alternative Fuel Plant in Orr, MN. Related spin-off industries. Possible expansion of Murphy Oil USA in Superior, WI. Biofuel plant construction at Paper Mill in Park Falls, WI. (S)

2. **Collaboration or Integration with Industry and Community**
   a. 1. Community comprehensive plan implementation. Every community in your region is doing it!
      2. K-12 doing project-based education (charter schools). (A)
   b. Call and we can talk about the rural community school alliance, NWECs and Tech Prep. (A)
   c. In the last ten years, WITC has opened its doors to offer the youth of the public schools in Superior such a wonderful preview to what educational
options are available to them. As one of the staff at SHS who has been a part of this transition education, I can earnestly say that we would like to continue this indefinitely, the effects have been so very positive. We have students who have made life career and education choices based on the experiences provided by these ‘transition’ days. As the expansions have taken place, WITC has simply increased the chances for our students to imagine even more. That alone has been a magnificent addition to the education for our kids and we would only hope to continue and expand with new ideas. (S)

3. Educational and Training Needs
   a. We are in a very difficult position in Superior. We must compete with Lake Superior College who keeps adding programs every year. What is your plan for the Superior Campus?

      The other issue is a very much needed expansion of our Conference Center. Will we be seeing an expansion in the near future? (S)
   b. Increase the quality and availability of K-8 after-school programs in our community while helping youth develop life-long skills. (S)
   c. Continuing in a general contractor capacity, working with and directing ALL trades related to construction. (S)
   d. Community Impact focus; children and literacy; early childhood programs. (S)
   e. Continue a solid base of people to run fire and EMS training. (S)

4. Technology and/or Skills Needed
   a. With a possibility of Murphy Oil expanding, are there any trades/skills that can be taught that would make an expansion more attractive. (S)

5. Additional Expansion or Employee Needs
   a. Manufacturing growth, both assembly and fabrication. (S)
   b. Transportation services are and will continue to be a major employer in our area. (S)

6. Miscellaneous
   a. "The Plan" with fourth dimension. (A)
   b. Anything necessary! (S)
   c. We are a community based human services agency providing a variety of vocational, adult day services, residential services and recreational services. Long Term Care is changing, and we will need to develop more individualized offerings in the future. (S)
   d. The current Student Success Center staff have been wonderful to work with. Give them an extra 'thanks'. (S)
Question 2. What educational, training, or recruitment issues do you face in accomplishing those plans?

1. Renewable Energy
   a. Marketable skills related to sustainable infrastructure (wind power - biofuel retrofitting, etc.). Marketable skills related to the non-profit sector. (A)

2. Collaboration or Integration with Industry and Community
   a. Get to know the business sector personally (maybe sponsor a business luncheon). (A)
   b. Networking between WITC and UWRP, K-12, Northland College and UW Madison. (A)
   c. Not sure about this question. As far as I can see, WITC is/has been doing a great job within our community!! (S)

3. Technology and/or Skills Needed
   a. Curriculum development in the distance education environment. Instructional strategies in the use of technology and distance education. Technology skills. WITC has gone through, or is going through, the one college concept. What can you share regarding that process with five small K-12 districts that are working on the idea of five working as one? (A)
   b. Career oriented recruits for building trades apprenticeships. (S)

4. Educational and Training Needs
   a. Employing 160 staff, we continue to have high demand for graduates of your Certified Nursing Assistant and COTA programs and would be interested in individuals with at least an associate degree in human services / supervision. (S)
   b. After-school programs struggle to find well-trained, qualified staff that can teach youth meaningful skills. If WITC had a non-formal education/teacher training program, adult learners could work with the after-school programs to learn to plan, implement, and evaluate educational youth programs. (S)
   c. Innovative and rapid training programs. (S)
   d. The staff at WITC has been helpful in so many aspects of infusing educational plans into our students’ outlook. When we have asked, the WITC staff has answered with ideas, offered programs, and assisted us with materials and expertise. They have even come into our building to do instruction during our Career Fairs. Simply, to accomplish what we plan for our students is to continue what has already been established by the amazing staff (and their vision) at WITC. (S)
   e. Training seems ok. (S)

5. New Trends
   a. Would you be willing to look at an aviation program for WITC Superior? (S)
6. Aging Workforce
   a. An aging work force, but also finding and keeping people with a good work ethic, responsible attitude, and over-all high ethical standards. Being teachable is critical in addition to having training. (S)

7. Student Needs
   a. Have more time available for the WITC counselors to address concerns of future and current students. (S)

8. Additional Expansion or Employee Needs
   a. We will need installation, servicing and sales people. (S)
   b. We are continually hiring drivers. We currently have about 20 employees who live more than 100 miles away. (S)

Question 3. In your view, how can WITC best serve your community?

1. Educational and Training Needs
   a. It is likely that a large percentage of your graduates will end up working in the non-profit sector or working on grant driven programs. More of those skill sets should be integrated into the curriculum. (A)
   b. Offer freshman college academic courses so local students with limited resources can test the water and transfer to bachelor’s degree opportunities! (A)
   c. We offer a State certified training program for staff of Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRF). The fire safety component is offered at our facility by a WITC-Ashland instructor. A direct link with WITC classes has been limited by small class sizes, but we would like to develop a mechanism for our students to receive credits through WITC for completion of the required 60 hours of classes. The credits would be a concrete sign of advancement for our staff, who may then seek further education at WITC. (S)
   d. More 'short-term' programming to assist with very entry-level employment, e.g. janitorial training, dietary aide training, food service training. (S)
   e. By offering classes that would help people who have to make a career change, due to job lay-offs and unemployment. (S)

2. Collaboration or Integration with Industry and Community
   a. 1. Don't accept loss of population as our future. Instead, work to reverse it!!
       2. Continue community development philosophy.
       3. Get students involved in community projects.
       4. Organize entrepreneurship 'team' with others.
       5. I think WITC is doing an excellent job of serving the communities AND students. That's why they stay in the region! (A)
   b. Continue developing partnerships with K-12. (A)
   c. Being active, as it is now, within community organizations, etc. (S)
d. Reach out to industry and be responsive! (S)
e. I can speak as a teacher, educational event/program organizer and parent...WITC has recently looked at the economic conditions, the job market and the needs/demands of our area and added, changed and built what programs were reasonable and positive for people and our area. An example is the nursing program that gives people who are interested in this career an option beyond the 4-year colleges. WITC should continue to assess the community to build and offer just as it has been doing these last 10 years. (S)
f. Keep your hands on the pulse of the community. Watch the economic trends of the area, hire instructors who are familiar with the community and its needs and pay a wage comparable to the private sector! Look to the future in a practical, not idealistic, sense. (S)
g. WITC could take on a slogan "we improve the community" and work to find the services in short supply in the local community and then offer the courses needed to fill those needs. (S)
h. Keep your courses in touch with community growth and needs as well as reasonable cost. (S)

3. Student Needs
   a. I'd look to add a more comprehensive placement office (like the universities) to grow the student center concept. (S)

4. Renewable Energy
   a. Establish a major in renewable energy with training in solar, wind, and geothermal energy harvesting as well as conservation measures and green building technology. (S)

5. New Trends
   a. I believe we need to be far more proactive than has been the case in the past. Are you willing to proceed in that direction? (S)

6. Technology and/or Skills Needed
   a. Continue with being ahead of the curve for skills/trades so that we have students graduating right into jobs. Follow the blueprint for the nursing program by identifying future needs and getting programs started or expanded. (S)
b. Continue current welding, HVAC, industrial maintenance, construction industry, etc. courses. (S)