CHARLESTON YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM
CHARLESTON, SC

HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

INSTRUCTIONAL ALIGNMENT: SUBSTITUTED
PROGRAM ARTICULATION: FULL

BACKGROUND

Overview

The Charleston Youth Apprenticeship Program, coordinated by Trident Technical College (TTC) in Charleston, South Carolina, is a two-year youth apprenticeship that is registered with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Launched in 2014, the program enrolls 52 participants in multiple Career Clusters, including manufacturing, information technology, health science, contracting services (i.e., construction), and hospitality and tourism. Although this profile primarily focuses on the Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship program, the core design elements are largely the same across all five industry areas.

The Charleston Youth Apprenticeship Program is open to juniors, seniors, and recent high school graduates from 26 high schools located throughout the Charleston metropolitan area. All related technical instruction for the youth apprenticeship is delivered at TTC, and the college’s program can serve as a substitute for secondary CTE programs, particularly for students who do not have access to such programs at their high schools. Students who complete the two-year program earn their high school diploma, a technical certificate from TTC that articulates with a TTC Associate of Applied Science degree, and a national journey-level certificate from DOL. After completing the program, employers may choose to offer youth apprentices the opportunity to transition into either an adult apprenticeship program, if available at the company, or a full-time position. Additionally, employers with adult apprenticeships decide whether and how much advance credit the youth apprentices are awarded once they matriculate.

History

TTC has offered and supported adult Registered Apprenticeship programs since 2007. In 2013, TTC was approached by German-based automotive parts manufacturer IFA Rotorian about the possibility of partnering to create a youth apprenticeship program for high school students. That year, leaders from TTC and IFA Rotorian hosted a meeting with other manufacturing companies in the region to determine the level of interest in such a program. TTC also engaged the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, which had an existing career education-focused initiative—Accelerate Greater Charleston 2.0—that aligned well to the youth apprenticeship concept, and they agreed to provide scholarships to cover students’ TTC tuition and supplies. In the 2014-15 school year, TTC launched the first youth apprenticeship program in manufacturing with a total of six local manufacturers and 13 high school students.

Soon after the launch of the manufacturing program, employers from other sectors across the Charleston metropolitan area approached TTC for guidance in replicating the youth apprenticeship program in new Career Cluster fields. As of 2016, just two years after its launch, the youth apprenticeship program has expanded to nine pathways across five

[17 See http://www.charlestonchamber.net/accelerate-greater-charleston/.

Program Snapshot

- Participants (2015–16): 18
- Placement rate: First cohort expected to complete in 2017
Career Clusters—manufacturing, information technology, health science, contracting services (i.e., construction), and hospitality and tourism (see text box). Across all of the pathways, as of April 2016, a total of 30 employers were providing training to 52 youth apprentices drawn from a pool of 26 area high schools.

The successful implementation and expansion of the youth apprenticeship program was due, in part, to existing organizational capacity within TTC. The college’s Office of Apprenticeship Programs conducts outreach to secure employer engagement and coordinate adult apprenticeships. The Office of High School programs, also housed within TCC, is responsible for building relationships with the region’s high schools to offer students opportunities for dual enrollment and college visits. After being approached by IFA Rotorian to launch the youth apprenticeship program, leaders from these two TTC offices decided to partner to combine and leverage resources to design, deliver, implement, and scale the youth apprenticeships.

Implementation was reinforced by the engagement of TTC’s president, who was an early champion of the youth apprenticeship program. Under her leadership, the college has built administrative capacity to expand the existing apprenticeship and high school partnerships necessary to grow this program. For example, the Office of High School Programs has since added another full-time employee, paid through institutional funding, who is dedicated to supporting the youth apprenticeship program. At the direction of the college leadership, the youth apprenticeship program also was added to the college’s existing insurance policy to circumvent any legal or liability issues that might undermine high school students’ involvement.

Program Structure

The Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship program, which was visited for this project, partners with local restaurants and major hotels to provide a pipeline of qualified employees for the city’s in-demand hospitality industry. The program, which began in the 2015-16 school year with 18 students and 14 employers, offers students training in two pathways: Hospitality Management and Culinary. Program participation is open to junior and senior high school students, and recent high school graduates from throughout the Charleston metropolitan area. During their two-year youth apprenticeship, students work for an employer part-time, between 5 and 15 hours each week, with participation differing by pathway focus and based on the agreement between the employer and student. Youth still enrolled in high school take classes at their home high school to finish their graduation requirements, attending TTC for their related technical instruction. Students also participate in two full-time paid summer internships.

“Too often, we get students ready for anything anywhere, but fail to provide meaningful futures. We are able to correct that with the youth apprenticeship program... So rarely do we get something completely right in terms of education, but this is one thing we have gotten completely right.”

Mary Thornley, President, Trident Technical College, Charleston, South Carolina

Trident Technical College Youth Apprenticeship Programs
(as of 2015-16 school year)

| Career Cluster: Health Sciences | Pathway: Medical Office Assistant | Established: 2015-16 school year |
Generally, students take their academic requirements at their home high schools in the morning and then either attend TTC or go to their worksite for on-the-job training in the afternoon. At TTC, participants take classes as a cohort, although those classes may also include full-time TTC students who are not in the youth apprenticeship program.

While the Hospitality and Culinary coursework at TTC is standardized for all students, the on-the-job experiences and expectations are personalized based on the employers’ needs. As a competency-based program, there is no set number of required hours that youth apprentices must clock on the job. Rather, each sponsoring employer designs their own task lists of competencies, which are approved as part of the process of registering the youth apprenticeship. When apprentices demonstrate proficiency in all of the required competencies, as validated by their employer sponsors, they have completed the on-the-job component of the youth apprenticeship. All sponsoring employers within the Career Cluster have agreed to a consistent wage structure for youth apprentices, starting at $8.00 an hour, which is above South Carolina’s minimum wage of $7.25 an hour. After approximately six months or 200 hours of work, the wage increases by 50 cents.

Most youth apprentices who are also enrolled in an associated high school culinary or hospitality program of study are able to place out of specific courses within the TTC certificate program. This allows them to start the program with up to six postsecondary credits, which accelerates their progress toward an associate’s degree. The educational component extends over two years and bridges secondary and postsecondary education, culminating in the award of a postsecondary certificate and credits that articulate toward an Associate of Applied Science degree.

**On-the-Job & Classroom Instruction**

As a registered youth apprenticeship program, employers develop training plans that are approved by the DOL. Each industry has its own set of employer-identified task or competency lists, which are tailored to the employer and registered with the DOL by Apprenticeship Carolina, a statewide intermediary that is operated by the South Carolina Technical College System.

These lists, which are often drawn from actual job descriptions that are used for hiring in the field, document what apprenticeship program completers should be able to demonstrate upon completion of their apprenticeship. As noted above, every placement is different based on the employers’ needs and opportunities. However, all apprentices do complete rotations—be it a rotation of different prep stations at a restaurant or departments within a hotel—so that they understand all facets of the particular business. Sponsoring employers are required to assign students an individualized mentor. This mentor acts as their supervisor, creating their rotation schedule, overseeing their day-to-day work, and validating students’ competencies on the task lists.

The youth apprentices benefit from being enrolled fully at TTC, taking the same instructional coursework as adult students. That coursework is largely informed by TTC’s advisory committee members for their certificate and degree programs, some of whom also serve as sponsors for the youth apprenticeship program. One outcome of such overlap: employers, faculty, and students interviewed all noted that classroom instruction was reflective of and reinforced the on-the-job experience, and vice versa.

**Curriculum & Assessment**

In both pathways—Hospitality Management and Culinary—apprentices earn a postsecondary certificate, which counts toward an Applied Associate of Science degree at TTC. Both programs are structured so that all students, regardless of their participation as a youth apprentice, earn stackable credentials that culminate in an associate’s degree.

In Culinary, students earn 27 credits to receive their culinary arts certificate as well as the ServSafe industry credentials. In Hospitality Management, students earn a 27-credit hotel operations certificate as well as additional credits toward other relevant certificates, such as event management or food and beverage.
TTC is currently working with some four-year colleges to create 2+2 programs, allowing students to transfer into a four-year program with two full years’ worth of credit earned through the associate’s degree. Postsecondary faculty and program administrators encourage youth apprentices to complete the full associate’s degree after finishing the apprenticeship, with the stackable credential format being one way that the college is supporting efforts to help students finish. The first Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship cohort had not yet graduated at the time of the site visit, so none have yet completed their associate’s degree.

TTC also is working to formalize articulation agreements with secondary schools. At this time, there are no formalized articulation agreements between the sending high schools with relevant CTE programs and TTC that automatically award CTE students postsecondary credit for the introductory courses taken in high school, such as Introduction to Hospitality or Introduction to Culinary Arts. Despite the lack of a formalized policy, some students who had successfully passed certain culinary courses at their high schools were granted up to six credits for the introductory postsecondary courses because the TTC instructors were familiar with the high school’s curriculum. The future goal is to make these dual credit articulations automatic.

Program Funding

The Hospitality and Culinary program is funded through a range of sources. The administration of the program is largely managed by TTC, with staffing supplied by the offices of apprenticeship and high school programs.

The region’s Chamber of Commerce provides funding for all youth apprentices’ college tuition, books, and other supplies, which totaled $208,050 over the first two years of the program for the 52 students enrolled across all of the youth apprenticeship programs. For the Hospitality and Culinary program alone, the Chamber has provided more than $35,000 to cover tuition, textbooks, and supplies for the 18 students during 2014-15.

South Carolina provides additional program funding to Apprenticeship Carolina, a statewide intermediary organization housed within the South Carolina Technical College System that helps employers across the state register their programs and develop their competency task lists. The state also offers a $1,000 tax credit for companies for each apprentice they hire each year, irrespective of whether the individual is a youth or adult.18 Altogether, the state provides approximately $1 million annually in support of Apprenticeship Carolina and the employer tax credit.

Key Partners

Employers

All of Charleston’s youth apprenticeship programs are employer-driven—a key element repeatedly cited by TTC leaders, high school staff, community leaders, and the employers themselves. Employers initially approached TTC to develop the program, helped recruit other employers to join the effort, created the task lists used to structure curriculum, set the number of open apprenticeship positions for students, and collaborated to take on students as youth apprentices.

The number of employers who have signed on to take youth apprentices as well as the breadth of industries represented is one of the program’s early strengths, especially given that TTC is not actively recruiting employers in new industries, but rather working with existing partners. TTC has used a sector partnership strategy—working with groups of employers representing an industry—which has proven to be replicable. In fact, some of the participating manufacturing employers were the ones to jumpstart the information technology youth apprenticeship program, citing a need to fill those positions, as well as machinists and technicians, within their companies.

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For the Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship, there are 14 employer partners representing local restaurants and groups, as well as local resorts and a national hotel chain. Although not all of the employers were ready to take on apprentices in the first program year, all wanted to help inform the program as it began and are likely to hire youth apprentices in future years.

Hall Management Group, which operates six fine dining restaurants in downtown Charleston, was the first local restaurant group to sign on. In its first year, the company took on two high school-aged youth as apprentices. The state’s youth apprenticeship coordinator worked directly with the executive chef at Hall Management Group to create the competency task lists for its youth apprenticeship. These task lists have since become a template for other culinary youth apprenticeships in the state. The involvement of Hall Management Group offered students a unique opportunity to gain work-based experience, since most higher-end restaurant kitchens are staffed with graduates of prestigious culinary schools. For the company’s leadership as well as head chef, the reason for participating in the youth apprenticeship was twofold: leaders wished to be good community partners and to provide interested youth with an opportunity to explore a career in the culinary field.

Secondary Partners

Through TTC’s Office of High School Programs, TTC partners with 26 high schools from across five districts, as well as a few local charter and private schools to recruit potential youth apprentices. The five districts are Dorchester 2, Dorchester 4, Charleston County, Berkeley County, and South Carolina Public Charter School District.

Career advisers and CTE teachers both play a role in students’ applications for the youth apprenticeship by writing the required letters of recommendation and reviewing the applications before submission. The participating districts’ CTE directors also play a key role in promoting and recruiting for the youth apprenticeship program, particularly providing information to teachers and career advisers across the 26 public high schools in the region.

As noted during interviews, the high school CTE teachers and career advisers’ knowledge of and ability to promote the youth apprenticeship program is continuing to evolve as the program becomes more established. However, the previously existing relationship between these schools and TTC provided a strong foundation for communications. For example, many TTC instructors and administrators in the culinary and hospitality management programs regularly partner with high schools—from serving on advisory committees to being teacher or student mentors. At least one of the region’s high school culinary arts teachers serves as an adjunct at TTC.

South Carolina does not have statewide articulation agreements between its secondary and postsecondary systems, let alone formalized articulation agreements between TTC and the various culinary and hospitality programs across the region. To support the youth apprenticeship, district leaders negotiate dual enrollment and articulation agreements individually with TTC for the necessary courses.

Community Partners

In 2012, the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce in South Carolina launched Accelerate Greater Charleston, an initiative to ensure that the region’s employers had a skilled workforce. The Chamber began with a major investment in high school career academies, which use a school-within-a-school model to deliver college preparatory instruction along a career-oriented theme. When the youth apprenticeship program was being created, the Chamber recognized how the program fit well within its Accelerate Greater Charleston 2.0 scholarship program and agreed to give participating students a full scholarship covering all of their classes, fees, and textbooks, for a total of $383,250 since 2014. In 2015, SunTrust Bank contributed an additional $25,000 to help expand the program. Notably, these investments contribute to all of TTC’s youth apprenticeship programs, not just hospitality and culinary.

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Program leaders called the Chamber’s commitment “a game-changer,” because otherwise students would have been required to pay the cost of the dual enrollment courses, books, and other supplies, such as costly knife sets, but now can complete the program debt free.

**Student Recruitment and Supports**

**Entrance Requirements**

Students interested in the youth apprenticeship program must meet TTC’s existing placement requirements, which differ by program area. For the culinary arts program, students must achieve minimum scores in reading and math (including pre-algebra and algebra) on college placement exams. For the hotel operations program, students must meet score thresholds in English or reading on the COMPASS, Accuplacer, SAT, or ACT. The cut scores align with the institution’s placement requirements for any individual wanting to participate in the program.

For enrollment consideration, students must complete and submit an application packet to TTC, which includes:

- a cover letter describing the student’s interest in the youth apprenticeship program and how his/her career interests align with the opportunity;
- a resume;
- two recommendations from school-based or community-based individuals;
- a release form signed by the student and his/her parent or guardian;
- a media consent form; and
- evidence of qualifying placement scores.

TTC reviews the applications, screens them, and refers qualified applicants to employers with whom they have indicated an interest in working. Employers then decide if they want to schedule interviews, either in person or by phone. Employers will make offers to the students they wish to hire. Students may have multiple interviews, making placements competitive. Ultimately, students with multiple offers will select the place they would like to work.

**Recruitment Challenges**

The youth apprenticeship program is completely employer driven, meaning TTC will continue to recruit students as long as there are open positions. Since students begin their youth apprenticeships at the beginning of the school year, TTC has established an application deadline in April of the preceding school year. However, in practice, the college continues to recruit students so long as youth apprenticeship openings exist. As one program leader noted, “the deadline is when the last position is filled.”

The Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship program had a pretty even supply of interested and eligible students and open positions in its first year. Most of the employers hired one or two apprentices each. For other TTC youth apprenticeship programs, however, there are more open positions than students that apply, something TTC is working hard to overcome through outreach with high schools.

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To help recruit students, TTC organizes information nights at area high schools, typically in the winter of each year. These events are designed to provide information to parents and students who may wish to know more about the program. Employers often participate in these events and will offer interested students tours of their work sites.

TTC, program leaders, and the Chamber of Commerce host an annual “signing day” to celebrate the newest youth apprentices across all of the industry sectors. The ceremony brings together students, employers, parents, and even the media to create a sense of accomplishment and excitement around the event. Many of those interviewed during site visits—including college faculty, students, parents, and employers—said the signing day was a special event that helped bolster pride and prestige in the youth apprenticeship program. For the college and its employer partners, the signing day also serves as one of its most successful recruitment activities. The visibility of these signing days not only helps efforts to recruit students, but also attracts the attention of other employers, some of whom have subsequently involved themselves in the program.

The most significant barrier to student participation is the requirement that students provide their own transportation. The size of the Metro Charleston region and distribution of schools and employers can complicate placements. Sponsoring employers may be located downtown or as much as a 45-minute drive away, often in locations without access to public transportation. Consequently, it can be difficult for students to arrange transportation to the worksite.

Another barrier has been the strict placement requirements, primarily because first-year students did not receive information in time, missed the deadline, or failed to achieve the minimum requirements for program entry. To combat this, TTC has ramped up its communications about the placement tests and cut scores, and offers the opportunity for students to take COMPASS and Accuplacer on campus on a rolling basis. A number of high schools also offer COMPASS and Accuplacer testing one day each month, with no restrictions on who takes the test.

**Program Benefits**

The overall benefit for students is the ability to simultaneously earn a high school diploma, a postsecondary certificate that articulates into an associate’s degree, and a journey-level certificate while being gainfully employed and earning an above minimum wage salary.

Because the coursework is offered through the postsecondary institution, participation in the youth apprenticeship program is not contingent on being a CTE student at their home high schools. By offering a sequenced concentration of CTE coursework at the community college, TTC is opening access for more secondary students who did not take—or did not have the opportunity to take—a concentration of culinary arts, hospitality, or other CTE courses at their home high school. One student interviewed had decided to attend an early college high school, which did not offer CTE courses, but was able to gain access to CTE courses through the youth apprenticeship.

However, one current policy barrier is that South Carolina does not recognize dual enrollment credits toward a secondary student’s CTE concentration, and only one work-based learning credit can apply toward high school graduation requirements. This means students participating in the youth apprenticeship program are not able to be counted by their sending districts as “CTE completers.” The local CTE directors are advocating to the state to change this policy.

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21 Video of a signing ceremony for the manufacturing youth apprenticeship program: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGxvAtfkSo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGxvAtfkSo).
State Support

The primary way in which the state provides support is through Apprenticeship Carolina, which is part of the South Carolina Technical College System. Apprenticeship Carolina acts as the intermediary to broker relationships with employers and help them establish apprenticeship and youth apprenticeship programs. Once TTC recruits a new employer, TTC connects the employers with Apprenticeship Carolina to help them through the registration process, including creating training plans, providing guidance to employers, and helping complete the paperwork to establish a Registered Apprenticeship with DOL. In some instances, Apprenticeship Carolina will help address legal concerns, such as liability and insurance, although TCC is actually carrying participating students under its workers’ compensation policy.

The goal of Apprenticeship Carolina is to make employers’ participation as easy as possible and at no cost to the employers. As of 2016, there are over 100 youth apprenticeship programs established in more than half of the state’s counties, including the Charleston youth apprenticeship programs, all of which receive support from Apprenticeship Carolina.

Administrative

The youth apprenticeship program is largely administered at the local level and works within the state’s established policy environment. One key area where the state provided policy support was by removing an unintentional barrier. South Carolina used to limit the number of dual credits high school students could earn, but because of the growth of youth apprenticeship and early college high schools, the state now allows students to earn unlimited dual credits.

Financial

South Carolina offers a $1,000 tax credit for every apprentice an employer takes on each year. While tax credits may not sway a larger company to participate, this strategy was cited as a successful way to convince management in smaller businesses that participation would be, at a minimum, cost neutral.22

Outcomes

Given that the program is so new, there are limited outcomes data to report at this time. Students participating in the Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship program were in their first year when the site visit was conducted. TTC is currently collecting and will be able to report on students’ completion and post-program placements for the Hospitality and Culinary youth apprenticeship with its first graduating cohort in 2016-17.

Lessons Learned

Program staff and partners identified some lessons learned, including the following:

- Use intermediaries to be the connectors between schools, students, and employers and make their entry into the programs as smooth as possible.
- Leverage sector partnerships, or groups of employers within an industry, as a strategic way of recruiting smaller companies to participate in a youth apprenticeship program.
- Build and leverage existing relationships between secondary and postsecondary education in developing and scaling the youth apprenticeship program.

• Have a supportive administration that is willing to be flexible to make the program work by tackling issues such as scheduling and advisement, providing financial support, and removing barriers such as insurance coverage for students.

• Use public events like the signing day to celebrate the students and sponsoring employers, and to recruit future participants.