

President Obama launch of Skills for America's Future

Written by

Thursday, 07 October 2010 13:37

Program will create Job Training Partnerships in all 50 States

President Obama recently launched *Skills for America's Future*, a new, industry-led initiative to dramatically improve industry partnerships with community colleges and build a nation-wide network to maximize workforce development strategies, job training programs, and job placement.

President Obama said, "We want to make it easier to join students looking for jobs with businesses looking to hire. We want to put community colleges and employers together to create programs that match curricula in the classroom with the needs of the boardroom. *Skills for America's Future*

will help connect more employers, schools, and other job training providers, and help them share knowledge about what practices work best. The goal is to ensure there are strong partnerships between growing industries and community college or training programs in every state in the country."

Building on the success and example of the "Educate to Innovate" campaign to increase science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning, *Skills for America's Future* will facilitate industry partnerships with community colleges and other training providers in support of the President's goal of 5 million more community college graduates and certificates by 2020.

Skills for America's Future

will build high-impact partnerships with industry, labor unions, community colleges and other training providers in all 50 states.

In addition, the President also announced the establishment of a federal *Skills for America's Future* Task Force, co-chaired by top-level administration policymakers, to coordinate federal efforts and ensure the private sector is best poised to work with and leverage federal training and education efforts.

Skills for America's Future already has the commitment of leaders, such as Penny Pritzker (Chairman/CEO, Pritzker Realty Group) and Walter Isaacson (CEO, Aspen Institute), to advance this effort. In addition, leading companies, including PG&E, Gap Inc, McDonald's, United Technologies and Accenture, are ready to be part of *Skills for*

America's Future

and expand their efforts.

On Tuesday, Dr. Jill Biden will host the first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges, which will highlight the critical role that community colleges play in developing America's workforce and reaching our educational goals. On that day, leaders of *Skills for America's Future* will lead a breakout session with industry leaders, community college representatives, organized labor and workforce training experts to highlight best practices and key factors of such robust, successful partnerships.

In an increasingly competitive global economy, America's economic growth and competitiveness depends upon the education and skills of its workers. As part of his American

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Graduation Initiative, President Obama has called for an additional 5 million community college degrees and certificates by 2020, and to develop new steps to ensure that those credentials will help graduates get ahead in their careers.

The President's leadership has already made a difference. Under the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, over \$2 billion in competitive funds will be made available to community colleges over the next four years. The initiative, housed at the Department of Labor and implemented in close cooperation with the Department of Education, will build career pathways with businesses, advance the teaching of basic skills, establish education partnerships with other institutions, and support new online, open-source courses so that community colleges across the country can offer more classes without building more classrooms.

As part of this effort, the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board conducted outreach to private sector employers, labor leaders, philanthropy organizations, and policy leaders within the Administration to solicit views on workforce development challenges, publicly-financed programs, and more effective public/private partnerships. Employers identified public/private partnerships as one of the most effective ways to improve the skills and credentials of American workers and students. At the conclusion of those meetings, it was clear that private sector employers are eager to work on a national action plan that would make American workers more competitive and meet employers' needs for skilled workers. In response, the PERAB recommended the establishment of *Skills for America's Future* to harness this interest and energy.