Equity-Focused Employer Engagement

A preview of JFF’s resource to be published this October

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JFF’S MISSION

Jobs for the Future drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all.
OUR PARTNERS

JFF works with:

- Policymakers & government
- Employers
- Education & workforce development providers
- Philanthropies & nonprofits
- Investors & entrepreneurs
- Investors & entrepreneurs
The problem we’re trying to solve

 Millions of people are unfairly shut out of quality jobs and the chance for a better life. Our education and workforce systems are broken. They are inequitable, disconnected, hard to navigate, and filled with barriers to economic advancement.
Our solution

Jobs for the Future drives transformation of those systems so every person can secure a quality job and the chance for a better life. We are reimagining what’s possible—leading public, private, and nonprofit sector changemakers to new ideas, promising innovations, and equitable ways to help millions more people advance.
Funded by Lumina Foundation

WEI + ICCB

Support short-term credential attainment targeting Black learners that results in employment earnings at least 30% above the standard MIT Livable Wage rates.

Jobs for the Future

Learn what the WEI colleges are doing to achieve such success in employment outcomes and use these insights to update the 2015 Employer Engagement Toolkit.
Overview of timeline

- Began working with WEI colleges last May
- Surveys & Listening Sessions
- Workshops, Office Hours, Symposium
- Writing and editing this summer
- Publish date tentatively set for October
Content of the Field-Guide

- Institutional goals – Why partner?
- Internal collaboration and coordination
- Field Work
- Setting everyone up for success centered in equity
- Sustainability
- Action planning
Institutional Goals

Why partner with employers?
Definitions
Starting with a broad institutional goal for DEIA in Employer Engagement
Understanding the college within the local workforce ecosystem
Knowing your institution

Anchoring your employer engagement strategy and practices in your institution’s DEIA goals and strategy is crucial to both programmatic success and sustainability.

Everyone at your college is in the business of successful student outcomes; one of which is employment.

Why should this employer invest in an ongoing collaborative partnership with my college?

Community colleges are in the business of developing the very thing employers value and need.
DEIA EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

DEFINING DEIA

**Diversity:** The representation and proactive valuing of varied identities, differences, and perspectives, honoring our lived experiences collectively and individually.

**Equity:** Intentional distribution of access and resources to remove the predictability of success or failure that correlates with entrenched outcome disparities in our society.

**Inclusion:** The creation of a culture of belonging that prioritizes the contribution and participation of all people in executing an organization’s mission, values, and goals.

**Accessibility:** The facilitation of full and independent access for all people to employment, facilities, services, and information through intentional design, development of accommodations, and respect for the wide range of human ability.
Employer Engagement Model

To

Be

Decided
Internal Collaboration & Coordination

Key stakeholder identification
Targeting employers for reciprocity
Labor market analysis
Value proposition
Coordinating mechanism
What Employers Value Most

Foundational to any good, sustainable relationship is proper reciprocity

Value of college to employers is directly related to effectively understanding and meeting their needs

Employers value:

• Cost-effective, reliable source of talent
• Flexible & nimble training solutions
• Diverse workforce / DEIA support
• Effective communication & mutually beneficial partnerships
How colleges benefit

- Increased placement rates and good quality jobs
- Attract career-oriented students
- Update and improve the relevance of existing curricula; develop curricula for emerging occupations
- Access employers’ latest technology, equipment, process innovations, and expertise
- Develop practical experience for lecturers
- Access in-class presenters and/or adjunct faculty with real-time and hands-on experience
- Employer ambassadors speak at events
LABOR MARKET INFORMATION
THE POWER OF LMI IN PATHWAYS

PROGRAM CREATION AND RIGHT-SIZING
Prepare students for careers that are growing, offer advancement and living wage
Ensure that the local economy can support trained graduates

PROGRAM DESIGN
Develop programs of study that align with in-demand credentials
Develop curriculum and WBL to address competencies/skills of value to labor market

EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS
Understand current and future needs of employers
Arm yourself with information when developing partnerships (including demographics of specific industries and employers)

INFORM STUDENT / FAMILY DECISION-MAKING
Incorporate LMI into advising and counseling practices, so that students and families make informed choices
Effective utilization of data
Align with other regional engagement efforts
Sales cycle activity
Talking with employers in the field
DEIA conversations with employers
Language employers understand
Sales 101

Generate Leads

Initial Contact

Follow-up

Discovery

Close the Deal

Handle Objections

Present Solutions
The Five Stages of DEI Maturity

**Aware:**
- DEI is new to my organization, and we are just becoming aware of its importance

**Compliant:**
- DEI in my organization is focused on compliance with EEOC and other legal requirements

**Tactical:**
- DEI has been connected to business initiatives and outcomes in pockets of the organization

**Integrated:**
- DEI is part of everything we do as an organization, we have both internal and external efforts on DEI

**Sustainable:**
- DEI efforts are best in class and remain strong over time through our efforts to continuously improve and evolve

Make it easy for students and employers to understand what is in it for them

Equip completers with the ability to articulate the skills they have gained through their college courses.

Consider offering a skills inventory to students that can evolve as they return for additional courses in the future.

Competency-based assessments

Speak to employers about how their participation will impact their bottom-line.

Don't use terms such as "program of study, learning objectives, college completion rates, academics, the quarter system"
Setting everyone up for success

Provide structure and support to advance DEIA recruitment and retention efforts
Recruitment strategies for people of color
Retention strategies for people of color
Addressing bias in hiring
Professional social capital
JFF’S QUALITY JOBS FRAMEWORK

Structure
- Workplace health and safety, including anti-discrimination and anti-harassment
- Proper classification of workers and contractors
- Fair, consistent, and predictable scheduling
- Job security

Compensation
- Pays a living wage
- Comprehensive benefits
- Fairness and transparency
- Paid leave (including family leave & vacation)

Agency & Culture
- Belonging and psychological safety
- Transparent HR function
- Ability to organize
- Opportunities for worker input
- Meaningful commitment to DEI

Advancement
- Skills-based practices
- Transparent career pathways
- Career coaching and training
- Inclusive internal mobility
Professional Social Capital

A Key to Black Economic Advancement

Elevate current assets.
Focus on participants’ strengths & existing networks, rather than what they lack.

Build relationships.
Connect learners & workers to people for sustained supportive relationships.

Make connections & introductions.
Help learners & workers meet people who can assist them with specific immediate needs.

Formalize career onboarding.
Demonstrate next steps in learners’ & workers’ career journeys matching individual needs.

Enable a continuous learning journey.
Enable people to continue building professional social capital throughout their lives, benefit from networks, and resources at every stage.
Sustainability

Building relationships for success in 1 year, 3 years, 5 years and more
Partnership management
Personnel transitions
Using outcomes data to tell your story
Strategies for influencing policy and systems change to promote equity
Lasting Relationships that continue to add value

What does success look like in the short term and in the long term? What are the differences?

Continuous Quality Improvement – a cycle of routine engagement to ask partners:
- What is working well?
- What is not working?
- What can we do to make the program better?

How will the partnership thrive without this one person or even this program?
Outcomes = Value

- Partnerships
- Signing Day Photo Op
- Completion rates
- Social Media Posts
- Human Interest Stories / Impact
- Numbers
- Value
Sector Strategies Support Sustaining Employer Relationships

- Deepen relationships with the workforce and economic development organizations in the area
- Deepen relationships with employers
- Provides clear roadmaps for interested students
- Supports clarity on responsibility
- Coordinates regional activities within a particular industry
- Opportunity for the college to take a leadership role in convening stakeholders for continued conversations
Action Planning

Reflection questions guide action planning

Each section of the new Equity-Focused Employer Engagement Field Guide will be followed by questions colleges can answer for themselves that will build a plan of action.
College Plan of Action

Guiding statements & self reflection
Marketing plan
Operational plan
Team
THE JFF TEAM

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