Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network  
Alignment of Standards Work Group  
April 15, 2015  

Emerging Workforce Needs  

The Alignment of Standards Work Group is charged with identifying both current and emerging workforce needs and devising new certificates and degree programs to meet anticipated needs. At this point, the work group has received, fine-tuned, and disseminated reports on current workforce needs.  

The next challenge is to identify emerging workforce needs. NIU’s Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) has suggested a robust approach to identifying future workforce needs with programming implications. The CGS proposal will serve a number of purposes — data collection, sharing responsibilities among the partner institutions, increasing the accuracy of the data, and involving employers in each community college district in the Regional P-20 Network. Here is the proposal.  

1. CGS will collect data from state and national databases about projected needs by community college district and for the region as a whole. The report will be delivered in time for the work group’s May meeting.  
2. CGS will also prepare a survey for review in May that could be emailed to major employers identified through the data as well as to a representative sampling of smaller employers. The instrument could be administered face-to-face if colleges have job counselors who routinely call upon employers. Either way, the colleges will be able to share the data generated by CGS, ask employers to validate or modify it, and then ask about areas of job growth and new occupations that are emerging.  
3. The work group will compile the data, post on the P-20 Network website, and report to their institutions.  
4. The work group will analyze the data looking for areas where additional, targeted programming is needed according to market demand.  

This approach will encourage the colleges and high schools to share information they have already collected and also engage with their employers to find out what they think their needs are. The resulting data would be much more meaningful and relevant and could also help to strengthen the referral relationships. Job projection data is always sketchy, not always reflective of employers in smaller geographies, and vulnerable to economic fluctuations. The personal, local approach will help to ground occupational information in local realities and improve the quality of the data. The resulting information will benefit the region as well as the districts.  

This activity will set the stage for involving employers in the P-20 Network meeting starting September 10, 2015. 