

Tech Talent Advisory Committee Special Meeting

Meeting Notes

Department of Economic and Community Development

May 27, 2020

3:00 – 4:00 PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendance

- Committee Members Present: Glendowlyn Thames, Jessica Dodge, Sanguthevar Rajasekaran, Gilda Doria, Matt Mervis, Jennifer Widness, Dan Viens, Lisa Jacobi, and Gary Scharf
- Quorum: Yes
- Absent: Josh Geballe, Bill Moschella, Pedro Bermudez, Julio Mansilla, Mike Silvestrini, Jeff Wihbey
- Presenters: David Salinas and Al Bhatt (Holberton School), Suzanne Fleece and Beth Koback (Tech Talent South), Mickey Slevin (General Assembly), Garrett Moran (Gov. Workforce Council), Kelly Vallieres (Gov. Workforce Council), Nick Simmons (Governor's Office)
- DECD Staff: Carmen Molina-Rios, Alvetta Spencer, Beth Trenchard

Welcome & Introductions

Glendowlyn Thames, Deputy Commissioner and Chair opened the meeting at 3:02 PM with roll call. Ms. Thames stated the importance of convening the Advisory Committee amidst the global pandemic to receive updates by our current program training providers and bring everyone up to speed with new opportunities and activities in the pipeline.

Tech Talent South

Suzanne Fleece stated that an additional cohort was added in April and May based on the demand they are seeing in the market due to COVID-19. The Graduate Accelerator Program has been very active. This program specifically looks at graduates from Liberal Arts colleges who want to become skilled on the Tech side. The demand for this has increased dramatically since many students have found themselves in remote-learning environments since university programs have ended early. The program is being conducted virtually at this time.

Further, due to the increase in demand Tech Talent South is well over their enrollment goal of 200 students by the end of year 2. On the graduate side, they are 44% toward the target of 180 students graduating by the end of year 2. 73% of the graduates from the first 2 cohorts have been placed within the first six months of graduation. Hiring partners are still hiring but the process has slowed down due to Covid-19. An additional challenge has been conducting background checks due to the closing of the courts throughout the state.

Holberton School

David Salinas introduced Al Bhatt who joined the District Innovation & Venture Center (DIVC) as its' new Executive Director. DIVC runs the Holberton School.

Mr. Salinas stated that they have had over 3,000 hours of student training to date. They have received over 1,400 applications and feel they need to quadruple the number of new applications in order to reach the enrollment goal of 180 students by end of year 2. They are working in various ways to find additional resources for their pipeline. There are currently 83 students enrolled - drawing heavily from CT. CT numbers are up from 68% to 72% and there are also students participating from New York, New Jersey, Florida, Utah and Massachusetts. The turnover rate has reduced from 19.5% to 14.4%. One of the major

goals was to increase the number of female students - which has risen from 12% to 16%, The ambitious goal is to get to a 30% female participation rate by 2023. High school diploma only students remains at 54%. Students that identify as people of color are 54%, and 20% of students participating have bachelor degrees. The application process continues to work, but there have been challenges in the marketplace.

General Assembly Space

All cohorts were completed that were running as part of the year 1 deliverable. They decided not to pursue the year 2 engagement due to what they projected as lack of demand of students and leads coming in through marketing channels. There are plans to submit a proposal to DECD to restructure the program for year 2 but this has been delayed due to Covid-19.

2019 final results for cohorts are: three cohorts for Software Engineering immersive and one cohort for Data Science immersive across all 4 cohorts. 73 students were enrolled, just shy of the 80 target goal. Graduated 65 students. The diversity metrics were met; however, they would have liked to see a higher Latino and African American population in terms of meeting these numbers. The placement goal of five CT employers was also met.

New Opportunities

Garrett Moran spoke about his new role as the Chair of the Governors Workforce Council. The Council has announced the Remote Learning & Workforce Training Program to assist CT's unemployed and post-secondary remote-learners amidst the outbreak of COVID-19. Through the program, the Governor's Workforce Council and related partner agencies are seeking to make available a broad array of free, market-tested online course offerings.

There are two providers of the online-learning content – Metrix Learning/Skillsoft and 180 Skills. Metrix/Skillsoft is available for those approved for unemployment insurance in 2020. 180 Skills is offered to any individual approved for unemployment insurance in 2020, post-secondary students, and incumbent workers in the manufacturing space. Skillsoft focuses on providing IT, business analysis, and project management certificates, while 180 Skills focuses on providing credentials in entry-level manufacturing and basic employability skills.

Skillsoft will help workers who are currently furloughed, looking to upskill within industry, or change careers by offering free and unlimited access to more than 5,000 high-quality online training courses.

The Workforce Council's Vice-Chair, Kelli Vallieres, provided an overview of the 180 Skills program. The program is an online learning platform offering over 900 courses focused on manufacturing and basic employability credentials for both students and workers in the state. Custom career badges have been created that focus on building skills for entry-level manufacturing jobs as well as opportunities to upskill incumbent and unemployed manufacturing workers. Discussions are currently underway to evaluate 180 Skill badges as for-credit credentials for students currently pursuing an associate's or bachelor's degree. 180 Skills is a catalytic opportunity to upskill technology-focused workers in order to directly address a projected shortage of qualified employees in the advanced manufacturing industry in Connecticut.

A discussion ensued amongst committee members.

Portfolio

Glendowyn Thames provided an overview of the current Tech Talent fund and highlighted the additional funding requests in the pipeline.

Meeting Adjourned

Glendowyn Thames closed the meeting at 4:07 PM