New Jersey Passes Law Linking Apprenticeship with College

Since 2004, New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJ PLACE) has worked to remove the wall that traditionally separates vocational and academic courses of study. We do this by valuing the skills that people attain through apprenticeship and reward the attainment of those skills with the possibility of earning college credit. Together, our stakeholders developed a statewide model to award college credit for graduates of six participating registered apprenticeship programs throughout New Jersey.

On January 14, 2010, our program reached a new milestone as Acting New Jersey Governor Steven Sweeney signed bill A4327 into law, formally establishing NJ PLACE in the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development under the direction of the State Employment and Training Commission. The act directs NJ PLACE to continue working with our current apprenticeship partners, who are largely in New Jersey’s building and construction trades, while also expanding our federally-registered apprenticeship partnerships into new industries. NJ PLACE is already working with the New Jersey State Director at the US DOL ETA’s Office of Apprenticeship to identify potential partners and encourage new industries to offer college-level apprenticeship programs.

Beyond establishing the program and codifying our mission, the act also amends the New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Transfer Agreement to include NJ PLACE participants. Beginning September 1, 2011, all public institutions of higher education in NJ will be required to treat each Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Technical Studies degree awarded to an NJ PLACE participant in the same manner as an Associate in Arts (AA) or Associate in Science (AS) degree with respect to credit transfer. Practically speaking, this allows NJ PLACE a way to create much-needed bachelor degree pathways for our participants. Apprentices in New Jersey will now be guaranteed a seamless way to transfer credits from their apprenticeship to an associate degree and on to a bachelor degree.

This law is a significant step forward for NJ PLACE, establishing our presence in the state and paving the way for bachelor degree pathways without our students sacrificing their apprenticeship-related credits during transfer. Passing this bill was a team effort, and each one of our program partners deserves credit for its success. A copy of the act can be found at http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/AL09/200_.HTM.