

KEY STRATEGY

Recognize the North Country's higher education cluster and design and implement incentives for collaborative research and entrepreneurial activity among and between them.

Progress in 2012

Representatives of the nine higher education institutions and two research/development institutes in the seven-county North Country Regional Economic Development Council have met (June 11 and July 12) to discuss the key strategy originally outlined in the Council's 2011 Strategic Plan. Throughout the two meetings and subsequent email exchanges, the colleges have become more receptive to working together for the benefit of the region's residents.

The presidents (or a representative) of the 11 colleges and institutes signed an agreement in July 2012 committing their support of the council's strategic plan by embarking on a new collaboration focused primarily on supporting economic development in the North Country. As a result of the agreement, CITEC submitted a Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to establish the NORTH COUNTRY HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (HEARD). CONSORTIUM

The consortium would identify areas that higher education (public and private) and industry can collaborate together in and serve as a "one-stop shop" for industries and commercial enterprises in the North Country seeking those services available from member institution. The consortium would, among several activities:

- Complete a survey of the nine higher education institutions and two research/development institutes in the region to determine the area(s) of expertise that each institution offers, as well as strategic clusters, and then compile this into one resource database. This would help the consortium to more effectively collaborate by identifying and managing those resources that are available at multiple institutions.
- Undertake a secondary market survey of small businesses and industry within the region to determine services they need that may be offered by the colleges, universities and research facilities in the region.
- Develop a set of metrics for monitoring the effectiveness of this program to make it a sustainable resource. Seek areas of commonality and incentives for partnerships among the higher education institutions to: A.) conduct collaborative research on issues of importance to the region (environmental, alternative energy, etc.) B.) develop joint academic programs for high need professional services (for example, nurse practitioner); and, C.) find ways that communities and local businesses can work/benefit from each other. (*Vision 3, Strategy 1*)
- Facilitate development of a region-wide internship opportunity network with the goal of increasing internships and work experience opportunities throughout the seven-county region for students among the nine colleges and universities. Area colleges could turn to the consortium to seek additional internship opportunities, nursing clinical locations needed for their students and/or provide potential sites for internships. The NCHERDC would also explore a competitive incentive program that would provide incentives – such as living stipends – to graduates awarded internships.
- Develop a center to share and coordinate information concerning faculty members, lecturers, speakers, etc., at area colleges and universities who would:
- Speak on topics, including but not limited to performing arts (music, theater), ecotourism, expeditionary studies, and environmental issues; and/or
- Work in partnership with area non-profits, community organizations, etc.
- Work with business and education partners throughout the region to spearhead important STEM initiatives and other Cradle through Career education programs (example, Thrive in Clinton County).

- Coordinate on-line, web-based and telenet based training programs that could be offered by the colleges and universities to support small-businesses and industries located in the region.
- Explore opportunities to enhance the North Country workforce and population base through recruitment of university alumni (i.e., St. Lawrence University's "Coming Home" initiative).
- Work with the colleges and universities to identify and execute shared services (i.e., purchasing, printing).
- Explore opportunities for community-based learning and inter-institutional study.

The member institutions are currently reviewing action items for the Year 2 and Year 3 of the strategic plan and will be meeting again to discuss establishment of the consortium and startup activities.

Obstacles:

While the institutions would be responsible for some financial support of the activities of the consortium, several of the institutions would have to provide in-kind services because their budgets are either very tight or their mandates make it harder to fund such projects.

If state funding of the CFA is not provided, the member institutions will have to review what activities and services could be offered by the consortium. This could delay implementation while additional funding is sought from the institutions or other state, federal and non-profit sources.

The ruralness of the seven-county region and distances among the institutions do hinder ease of access to education by the region's residents compared to metro centers where several colleges can be found within a 15 mile radius (the exception would be the four colleges located in Potsdam and Canton). The distance among the colleges and business/industry is also an obstacle for colleges to provide services, interns, and faculty support for economic growth.

Differences in state, municipal and local law concerning management/oversight of colleges (SUNY, community colleges) currently make it difficult to pursue certain shared services, reduction in personnel costs, and coordination of some activities.

SART (State Agency Resource Team) Activities

It is premature to determine what NYS agencies will be called upon to assist in moving activities forward other than the State University of New York (SUNY). As the consortium is developed, other SART members may be called upon to provide additional information/support.