

Title: Leading Transformative Partnerships at the Confluence of

Community Engagement, Economic Development and Advanced Technology

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Gulf Coast State College's approach to the planning of its new Advanced Technology Center (ATC) is an ideal candidate for publication in the online Southern Association of Community, Junior and Technical Colleges. The addition of an Advanced Technology Center represents a major commitment of the college mandating unprecedented support of area business and industry, as well as integrated planning with workforce and economic development entities. From the outset, this planning initiative focused on offering educational pathways for students and veterans leading to lucrative careers and employment in advanced technology fields. A series of over 50 community meetings with stakeholders representing all sectors was preceded by an environmental scanning analysis to result in significant support for this unique endeavor. The result is a one-of-a-kind facility focused at the confluence of CTE (Career and Technical Education), STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), and economic development. Thanks to the input and support of our community, the ATC stands at over 100,000 sq ft, \$35 million, with over \$5 million of equipment and resources supporting "idea-to-market" and technical training and programs.

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Less than 20% of Florida's 9th graders receive any type of postsecondary certificate after they finish high school. The ATC breaks barriers by targeting students who do not fit "traditional" higher education pathways, offering online and hybrid access to industry certifications and associate degrees, critical in today's modern workforce. It provides new opportunities through dual-enrolled high school career academy pathways, sustaining talent chains to attract new business and industry. With occupations in STEM fields expected to double the rate of growth in non-STEM occupations, the ATC will bridge the gap between needs in the workforce and student skills. The ATC houses the regional Small Business Development Center, and the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurialism to accelerate the creation of new jobs through innovation and "idea-to-market." The commercialization support assets within the ATC will expand entrepreneurial activity in conjunction with our credit and non-credit programs and training in this critical area. Within this lies an untapped source of future revenue for state and community colleges in technology transfer to offset the rising costs of education and the decline in state and federal support. The center also reflects our goal of encouraging research and development and STEM education to ensure that Florida, and our nation, can remain a strong competitor for high value-added jobs. As a LEED certified facility offering programs in Alternative Energy, Sustainable Technology, Cyber Security, Prototyping and Fabrication, Digital Media, and much more, the ATC opens doorways to new "green" and IT careers. At half the tuition of nearby universities, an open-door admissions policy, and the student support driven culture of a community college, accessibility to ATC programs and services extend the long tradition of access and success to all.

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In short, the GCSC ATC is a transformative facility embracing a philosophy grounded in innovative partnerships across the key sectors of business, industry, government and education within a "future-forward" framework. This premier facility will be the tipping point of the region, harnessing the intellectual capital of the brightest minds in business and academia to create a truly synergistic system grounded in innovation and the formation of knowledge and technology clusters. To create such a center necessitated a new approach to engaging partners from the earliest stages. The result is a unique national asset and replicable model of innovation. We welcome the opportunity to share this exciting project and its history through the Community College Futures Assembly, and potential recognition by the Bellwether Award.

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