

The Public Policy  
and Civil Society

S E R I E S

# DELAWARE PATHWAYS

*by* Larry Nagengast



The R Street Institute's Public Policy and Civil Society Series is a collection of case studies that demonstrate how policy can be used to energize non-governmental bodies. Each report will spotlight how government leaders turned to a diverse array of individuals, community-based organizations, nonprofits and/or local businesses to solve a social challenge, which differs from the traditional approach of creating a new centralized initiative run by a government bureaucracy. In total, these studies show how a variety of policy tools—including reduced regulations, new enabling language, tax credits and competitive grant programs—can be used to activate non-governmental bodies, which create an array of solutions tailored to local conditions. We would like to thank the Walton Family Foundation for its support of this series.

# FOREWORD

In most of the studies in this series, a new or reformed government policy mobilized non-governmental actors to tackle a social challenge. In this excellent report, Larry Nagengast tells the story of how business leaders and philanthropists took the initiative to improve workforce development in Delaware and how public policy, including public funding, then supported that work. The new “Pathways” approach to career-oriented high-school coursework helps align the labor needs of employers with the curriculum and instruction in secondary education. This obviously requires a major role for businesses—for example, to determine what jobs will be available in the future, what skills are needed and how to train young people for the workforce. But, it also requires a range of governmental activities, including new approaches by the state board of education, the state departments of labor and education, the workforce development board and the state legislature. In total, Nagengast’s paper demonstrates that even if civil society plans to replace the government as the lead actor in a reform project, an array of policies—funding streams, regulations, statutes, licenses—may need to be adjusted. That is, the policy environment needed to enable public-sector bodies to succeed may be quite different than the policy environment needed to enable private-sector bodies in the same domain.

— Andy Smarick





# INTRODUCTION

Delaware has long taken pride in its public- and private-sector leadership: it was the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution, and is known both as the “corporate capital of the world” and the birthplace of the modern poultry industry. Wilmington, its largest city, is considered “the chemical capital of the world.”

In terms of education, Career Pathways, a program launched in 2015, is demonstrating how the state government and nongovernmental bodies can collaborate to make Delaware a national leader on education reform and workforce development. Although the government will always play a major role in public education initiatives, Career Pathways shows how the business community, whose long-term success requires skilled employees, can engage in preparing young people to become productive participants in the workforce.

Pathways is still very much a work in progress. The first students to complete the high school program received their diplomas in 2019, so there is no data available on how many have entered the workforce or continued their studies in a two- or four-year degree program. And, with the program still evolving, much work remains to be done to develop a sustainable infrastructure.

However, even with those caveats, the Delaware initiative is a model for others to study and emulate. “We think of Delaware as the poster child for Pathways nationally,”<sup>1</sup> says Robert B. Schwartz, co-author of a 2011 Harvard Graduate School of Education report<sup>2</sup> that called on educators, employers and governments to create support systems so that “by the time they reach their early 20s, every young adult will be equipped with the education and experience he or she needs to lead a successful life as an adult.”<sup>3</sup>

After working on that report, Schwartz teamed with the Boston-based Jobs for the Future to start forming networks of states and cities interested in developing “Pathways” systems. The Jobs for the Future network has grown to include Pathways programs in 15 states—nine of these are statewide, two are in large cities and the others are regional.

While details vary based on location, Pathways is a collaborative effort among the education, government and business sectors to offer a curriculum that spans middle and high school to help ensure students become productive employees in growth professions after graduation.

“Delaware is distinctive,” Schwartz says. “It put together a coalition that cut across agencies—public, private and nonprofit. In most states, it’s a government activity only.”<sup>4</sup> And this shows how civil society can play a significant role in solving social challenges.



Career Pathways shows how the business community, whose long-term success requires skilled employees, can engage in preparing young people to become productive participants in the workforce.

<sup>1</sup> Author interview with Robert B. Schwartz (telephone), July 26, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Schwartz and Ronald Ferguson, “Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century,” Harvard Graduate School of Education, February 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Rothman, “The Role of Strategic Partnerships in Scaling Delaware Pathways,” Pathways to Prosperity Network, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Schwartz interview.



# GETTING STARTED IN DELAWARE

In January 2009, when Jack Markell began the first of his two terms as Delaware's governor, the national economy was still mired in the Great Recession and the state's employment base was crumbling: General Motors and Chrysler had shut down their auto assembly plants; an oil refinery was on the verge of closing; the DuPont Company was shrinking and MBNA, which had inherited DuPont's corporate lodestar, had been acquired by Bank of America.

Markell's quest to support the manufacturing sector was only partially successful: his administration located a buyer for the refinery, but the auto industry was not coming back. He knew he had to do things differently, both in economic development and in education.

During his two terms as governor, Markell says he made about 2,500 visits with employers, both with local businesses and national firms that had operations in Delaware. "My question to them was 'what can we do to facilitate your success?' And 95 percent of the time the answer was, 'do everything you can so we can hire skilled workers.' That's more important than lower taxes, more important than regulatory reform."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> [Author interview with Jack Markell \(in-person\), July 11, 2019.](#)

As for education, like many other governors, Markell had adopted the theme of “college and career ready” as his mantra. During his first term, Delaware’s public schools made significant advances on the “college-ready” side but the “career-ready” component needed more attention.

As he researched the subject, Markell learned about Schwartz and Ferguson’s 2011 Harvard report and was intrigued by what he read. Meanwhile, Schwartz and his colleagues at Jobs for the Future had already helped launch Pathways programs in four states.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the economy—both nationally and in Delaware—was slowly recovering. Unemployment rates were dropping steadily, but businesses could not fill all their openings due to a lack of workers with twenty-first century skills.

Early in 2014, more by coincidence than design, Schwartz and Markell were invited to speak at a panel discussion on the Delaware economy sponsored by *The News Journal*, the state’s largest media company. Schwartz’s presentation resonated with the governor, who immediately envisioned Pathways as a means to achieve his goal of guiding more of Delaware’s students into postsecondary education. A Pathways program, Markell thought, would also make high school graduates more career-ready, while delivering to employers the trained workers they sought.<sup>7</sup>

After the panel discussion, Markell guided Schwartz over to two of his aides and asked them to arrange a follow-up meeting. If Delaware wanted to get started quickly, Schwartz told Markell’s aides, the best approach would be to assemble about 15 movers and shakers in the state and let Schwartz make a presentation.<sup>8</sup>

The planning for Delaware Career Pathways was about to begin. Markell’s staff began making phone calls and arranging preliminary meetings to gauge the interest level of leaders in the business community, the nonprofit sector and state government. In early fall of 2014, Schwartz arrived in the conference room in Markell’s Wilmington office to make his pitch. His audience included: Mark Brainard, president of Delaware Technical Community College; IT entrepreneur Mark Stellini, a Delaware State

<sup>6</sup> [Tennessee, Illinois, Massachusetts and North Carolina.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Markell interview.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Ibid.](#)



Chamber of Commerce leader who was also a Delaware Tech trustee and a member of the New Castle County Vocational-Technical Board of Education; Gary Stockbridge, president of Delmarva Power and chair of the state's Workforce Development Board; business executive Ernie Dianastasis, chairman of the Vision Coalition, a statewide education reform initiative; Paul Herdman, president and CEO of the education-oriented Rodel Foundation (since rebranded as Rodel) and a former student of Schwartz at Harvard; and leaders of several key departments within state government, including Education, Labor and Economic Development.

According to Stellini, the meeting “was not completely positive. One thing we all seemed to agree on was we didn’t want another new program. Maybe we could put some existing programs together, but we didn’t want another new one.”<sup>9</sup> But Schwartz persuaded the business and government leaders that this was something different.

“I made the presentation, and half an hour later, they said they wanted in,”<sup>10</sup> Schwartz recalls. Rodel and the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee, a volunteer consortium of corporate leaders, each put up \$25,000, matching similar contributions from Markell's office and the Department of Education, to cover the \$100,000 participation fee for Jobs for the Future. The public-private partnership had been launched.

To get a better feel for how the program might work, Stellini, Herdman and Luke Rhine, the newly appointed Chief of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in the state Department of Education, traveled to Switzerland with Schwartz and a group of other Americans, where they spent a week in October studying that nation's career and technical model. In Switzerland, after sixth grade, students split into professional

<sup>9</sup> Author interview with Mark Stellini (in-person), July 10, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Schwartz Interview.

<sup>11</sup> Author interview with Luke Rhine (in-person), June 24, 2019.



and career tracks. Those on the career track spend two years choosing a trade and then move into an apprenticeship phase that combines academics with gradual increases in workplace experience. Swiss business and trade leaders have a key role in structuring the curriculum so students are career-ready when they complete their academic program.<sup>11</sup>

In January 2015, Markell made Pathways the centerpiece of his annual State of the State address to Delaware's General Assembly, explaining:

*To thrive in this new era—to seize the opportunities of the future—we must expand our workforce, and rethink how we train Delawareans [...] Manufacturing jobs created today—building fuel cells, airplane parts, and other high-tech products—require a much higher skill level than the jobs of generations past. By 2025, at least 65 percent of our jobs will require training beyond high school, but only 40 percent of our workers have that today [...] For too many years we have relied on a strategy known as 'train and pray'—train people and pray that they'll find a job. That isn't meeting the needs of our business community or our workers.*<sup>12</sup>

Markell set a goal, the "Delaware Promise," that 65 percent of the state's workforce would earn a college degree or professional certificate by 2025, and that all students would graduate from high school prepared for continuing education and a career. He described how what he labeled "Pathways to Prosperity" would provide students with hundreds of hours of specialized instruction and hands-on training leading to industry-recognized certificates and college credits.<sup>13</sup>

But that was only the start.

<sup>12</sup> Jack Markell, "State of the State address," State of Delaware, Jan. 22, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.





# THE PIECES OF PATHWAYS

As conceived, Pathways offers something valuable to each of its stakeholder groups. For the education system, it is the prospect of making learning more work-relevant to students who have been turned off by the traditional classroom setting. For the student, it is the chance to earn an industry-recognized certification in his or her chosen field, as well as college credits, while earning a high school diploma. For businesses, the creation of an employment pipeline, with the opportunity to shape a curriculum that makes those future employees job-ready is the draw. For the state, it is an economic development engine, creating a pool of workers to meet current employers' demands and to attract new businesses into the state. As Vision Coalition leader Dianastasis explains: "Workforce development. A farm system for talent. It checks all the boxes. It's hard to find a stakeholder group that can't believe in the message."<sup>14</sup>

For much of 2015, CTE chief Luke Rhine was consumed with two tasks: developing the Pathways strategic plan while working with school district and business leaders to launch the new culinary/hospitality and computer science pathways for the start of the fall semester. Three moves that had already occurred made his task a bit easier. Two years earlier, Delaware Tech, in partnership with the Red Clay Consolidated

<sup>14</sup> Author interview with Ernie Dianastasis (in-person), July 16, 2019.

School District, launched a pilot program to train small groups of at-risk students in the construction trades. Partnering with different schools, Delaware Tech developed a pilot pathway in advanced manufacturing. “This first pathway with the Seaford and Woodbridge school districts allowed students to jumpstart their careers and graduate with national certifications and industry credentials, college credit, and significant work-based learning experience,” said Delaware Tech President Mark Brainard. “It’s a win-win for everyone involved [...] the students and local employers.”<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, William Penn High School, serving a largely blue-collar population in New Castle, was in the early stages of a curriculum revamp. A key component in the changes was the replacement of the traditional home economics program with a culinary arts curriculum that focused on cooking for restaurants rather than preparing meals for the family.


These developments were helpful for two reasons. First, they gave several of the state’s K-12 school districts hands-on exposure to career and technical education, which had long been primarily the domain of three county-wide vocational technical districts. Also, they gave Delaware Tech the opportunity to build new relationships with the K-12 system.

The Pathways strategic plan, formalized in a partnership agreement signed in February 2016 and updated three years later, set the following five goals and put a different stakeholder group in charge of each one.

1. Build a comprehensive system of career preparation that aligns with the state and regional economies. (Delaware Department of Education)
2. Scale and sustain meaningful work-based learning experiences for students in grades 7-14. (Delaware Technical Community College)
3. Integrate our education and workforce development efforts and data systems. (Delaware Department of Labor)
4. Coordinate financial support for Delaware Pathways. (United Way of Delaware and Rodel)
5. Engage employers, educators and service providers to support Delaware Pathways. (Delaware Workforce Development Board)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Author interview with Mark Brainard (e-mail), Sept. 6, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Delaware Pathways Initiative Partnership Agreement, Feb. 29, 2016 (amended March 15, 2019).



This alignment of responsibilities brought everyone to the table: K-12 education, higher education, state government, the nonprofit community and the private sector.

It is worth noting that Delaware is not New York or California. It is a small state whose large-scale projects would be dwarfed by similar ventures in many other parts of the country. Also, at the heart of the state's culture is something called "the Delaware Way," the willingness of leaders in government, business and nonprofits to put aside their political and philosophical differences to sit around the table and hammer out mutually beneficial solutions. (It does not always work out that way, and critics sometimes see "the Delaware Way" as a euphemism for back-room dealing, but the one-degree-of-separation proximity that pervades the small state indisputably facilitates collaboration.)

One of the first steps in the process—and actually part of the third objective in the strategic plan—was to identify industries that had strong growth prospects in the state and that would offer "middle-skill" positions (those that require a high school education plus a professional certification but not a college degree and that offer compensation that enables a middle-class lifestyle). Market information compiled by the state Department of Labor served as a compass for making selections. Some choices were obvious: culinary and hospitality, which employs about 10 percent of Delaware's working population; finance, with JPMorgan Chase, Citibank, Barclay's and Capital One, among others, having significant operations in the state; health sciences and information technology, both with anticipated double-digit job growth through 2024. Also in the mix: agriculture, engineering, manufacturing, energy, environmental science and K-12 teaching.

As Delaware's Department of Education developed pathways, the first goal of the strategic plan, it attempted to achieve a balance between standardization and flexibility. In some areas, the state adopted a nationally recognized curriculum. For the culinary pathway, it uses the ProStart curriculum developed by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. For engineering and biomedical sciences, it uses the activity-, project- and problem-based curriculum developed by Project Lead The Way, a national leader in developing learning packages in the STEM fields.

For other areas like agriculture, it built upon the curriculum established at the schools that already offered these programs. In fields where there was no established curriculum, the state has begun developing industry councils comprised of business owners and managers who identify the skills needed to qualify for middle-skill jobs



in their industry, and then work with the education community to design a curriculum that focuses on those skills. Three industry councils—for healthcare, information technology, and engineering, manufacturing and energy—are up and running under Delaware Tech’s oversight, part of the second goal of the strategic plan. Units for construction trades, banking and finance, hospitality, business and education, and arts and media are scheduled to be phased in by the end of 2021. With each pathway, “we established a common foundation for knowledge and skills—benchmarked to education standards and employer needs,” Rhine says.<sup>17</sup>

To ensure that standards would be met, the Department of Education produced two crucial documents. The first, a manual titled “CTE Programs of Study Policies and Procedures,” details all of the steps involved in establishing pathways, including essential definitions, administrative and academic requirements, and the steps involved in the development, implementation and continuous improvement of each pathway.<sup>18</sup> The manual also includes details on how to access essential data from the state Department of Labor and other sources to demonstrate the need for new pathways.

The second document, the “CTE Program of Study Application,” is the form used by local education agencies (school districts) when they desire to introduce a pathway, regardless of whether the curriculum was developed by the school district, the state or an industry-affiliated organization.<sup>19</sup> The application requires, among other things, that the local education agency provide the names of all the classes in the Pathway, the sequence in which they would be offered, the applicable standards used in developing the curriculum, what students would be expected to learn in each class, the professional certifications and college credits to be earned by students who complete the Pathway and the assessment methods to be used to determine student achievement.

While the typical pathway runs through a student’s sophomore, junior and senior years of high school, the first exposure may come in middle school through participation in a job fair, a career day or a service learning project. “We feel strongly that you cannot start career and college exploration in ninth grade,” says Brian Erskine, an administrator in the Colonial School District. By middle school, he says, “they’re

<sup>17</sup> Rhine interview.

<sup>18</sup> Career and Technical Education and STEM Office, “CTE Programs of Study Policies and Procedures,” Delaware Dept. of Education, Career & Technical Education, August 2017.

<sup>19</sup> “State Model Programs of Study,” Delaware Dept. of Education, last accessed Jan. 14, 2020.

old enough to start understanding that different careers exist, old enough to start connecting careers to their own interest, and about ready to start connecting those interests to their academic careers.”<sup>20</sup> Some students get a first glimpse into career options in fifth or seventh grade, through field trips to Delaware’s Junior Achievement center in Wilmington. As students simulate real-life work and finance experiences there, they are assigned jobs that align with the pathways offered in their local high school.

Most pathways include three two-semester classes that cover the same content no matter what school they are delivered in. Gone are the days, Rhine says, when 11 school districts offered culinary programs and no two were alike. Schools have the option of spreading the pathway curriculum over four years, and they may create a fourth class that more specifically addresses local needs, Rhine says.<sup>21</sup> Options in the junior and senior years include dual-enrollment classes, which enable students to earn college credits (usually at Delaware Tech) in their pathways concentration. Work-based learning opportunities are integral to the program, with students able to earn while they learn, either after school in their junior and senior years or in the summer between their junior and senior years. In almost every pathway, students who complete the program earn an industry-recognized certification. In finance, for example, students earn NAFTrack certification, which provides special consideration in hiring by major accounting firms and financial institutions.

All of the classes offered in high schools are taught by certified teachers, but some of these teachers possess what is known as “Skilled and Technical Science (STS) Certification,” which is offered to individuals who have a minimum of six years of experience in the subject area they are teaching and who commit to completing the requirements for a standard teaching certification within six years. When classes are offered at a Delaware Tech campus, they are taught by college faculty. Delaware’s State Board of Education and the Department of Education’s Professional Standards Board developed the STS certification guidelines in responses to the needs of the Pathways program.

Development of the computer science pathway offers a different example of responsiveness to the needs of business. At the start, students could earn a certification in Java programming by passing the Advanced Placement computer

<sup>20</sup> Author interview with Brian Erskine (in person), Oct. 3, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Rhine interview.



science exam, but Rhine explains that employers still did not have a strong interest in high school students. For the 2018-19 year, using part of a \$3.25 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies, a pilot class leading to Oracle/Java certification was developed through Zip Code Wilmington, a coding boot camp underwritten by many of the state's large financial and IT businesses. For 2019-20, computer science is moving in a different direction, with training in Amazon Web Services (AWS) taught by Zip Code Wilmington staff at three high schools. "Employers feel that AWS provides a better transition into direct employment than many other certifications," Rhine says.<sup>22</sup>

As the program has changed and expanded, enrollments and school participation has increased steadily. In the 2015-16 school year, five pathways, with 1,850 students participating, were in operation: culinary, computer science, advanced manufacturing, biomedical sciences and engineering. In 2016-17, six more pathways were added: finance, a K-12 teacher academy, allied health, nurse assisting, Cisco networking and manufacturing engineering technology.


Student participation nearly tripled, topping 5,000 students. In 2017-18, a pathway in environmental sciences and natural resources was added, and enrollment grew to more than 8,300 students. In 2018-19, six more pathways came online: agricultural power and engineering; agricultural structures and engineering; architectural engineering and structures; business information management; an early childhood teaching academy, and public and community health. Pathways enrollment figures for the most recent year have not yet been verified, but Rhine estimates participation at 12,000 students.<sup>23</sup> For 2019-20, six new pathways are being added: animal science, natural resources, plant science, digital communication, automotive technology and hospitality management, bringing the total to 25. Rhine estimates that participation will grow to 15,000 or more students and officials have set a target of 20,000 students—one-half of the state's public high school population—by the 2020-21 school year. And, with well-established pathways growing in popularity and additional grade levels being added to the newer ones, that goal is well within reach, Rhine says.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Rhine interview.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.





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— Luke Rhine

The implications of this growth for Delaware’s economy are significant. Rodel’s Herdman explains:

*As health care and pharma continue to grow, having over 6,000 students in STEM coming up is huge. As Delaware looks to diversify and expand its teaching force, having over 2,000 potential teachers, half of whom are non-white, is a game changer. And since Delaware is now nationally recognized as an emerging tech hub, having over 1,000 young people in IT or computer science pathways will continue to build the state’s stature in the national landscape.<sup>25</sup>*

Since its inception, Pathways has grown to become truly statewide. The 42 participating high schools encompass all 19 of the state’s public school districts (16 comprehensive and three vocational-technical), eight charter schools and two schools for at-risk youths operated by the state’s Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. The computer science pathway is the most widely available, offered at 22 schools; next come culinary and hospitality management and the K-12 teacher academy, at 18 each; then finance and engineering, at 15 each.

An essential ingredient in the growth of Pathways has been the use of both government and private funding streams, the fourth of the five goals in the strategic plan. This truly has been a public-private partnership. Although the plan has designated United Way of Delaware and Rodel as the funding coordinators, their efforts have focused on seeking grants from the corporate and philanthropic sectors. For the most part, state agencies in the Pathways partnership have taken the lead in filing applications for federal grants and making budget requests to Delaware’s General Assembly. For example, in applying for grants from the U.S. Department of Education, proposals developed by the state Department of Education must be approved by the State Board of Education before being sent on to Washington.

<sup>25</sup> Author interview with Paul Herdman (in person), May 29, 2019.

Some of the state funding through the Pathways' first five years includes:

- » \$2.8 million from the state Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education in grants to school districts and charter schools to expand their pathways.
- » \$1 million from the same office to support teacher professional learning, operational routines, data capacity/development/exchange and other items.
- » \$250,000 from the state Department of Labor to expand the advanced manufacturing pathway and to build engagement with the Delaware Manufacturing Association.
- » \$50,000 from the state Department of Health and Social Services for aspects of program development and alignment.
- » \$450,000 from the state Office of Higher Education for college and career counseling.

Private sector funding includes:

- » \$3.5 million from Bloomberg Philanthropies and \$2 million from JPMorgan Chase to support all aspects of the program, especially the development of the Office of Work-Based Learning at Delaware Tech.
- » \$720,000 from Delmarva Power to support efforts of the Department of Education and Delaware Tech, and to expand the advanced manufacturing pathway.
- » \$245,000 from Strada Education to support the alignment of academic and technical content and reduce postsecondary remediation rates.
- » A total of \$145,000 from the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee, Capital One and Bank of America to promote employer engagement and partnership.
- » \$100,000 from Barclays for aspects of program development and alignment.
- » \$25,000 from PPG to support teacher professional learning.



# FACING THE CHALLENGES

As the Pathways program grows, one of its greatest challenges is finding internship and employment opportunities for high school students.

For years, the state's three countywide vocational-technical school districts have been developing these relationships because co-op employment has long been an integral part of their curriculum model. But the creation of Pathways meant that the state's 16 K-12 school districts and the charter high schools, which had not been running career-oriented programs on a large scale, had to build relationships with their local businesses. To handle these responsibilities, some districts have hired an additional administrator and others have reassigned personnel from administrative or counseling positions. Four other complicating factors also had to be considered:

- » In areas like computer science, finance and engineering, employers were accustomed to grooming college students for future employment; high school students were not on their radar, and not in their business model.
- » Large employers—primarily banks, healthcare providers and utilities—were eager to support the program but were wary of the work involved in screening large numbers of candidates for short-term, part-time employment.



- » In some fields, particularly manufacturing and healthcare, minimum age regulations and credential requirements could limit the number of positions available.
- » The number of prospective employers is limited in small and rural communities, and transportation between schools and work sites can be an issue in some areas.

Overcoming these complications would require both educators and business leaders to think in new ways and break some of their old molds.


At the school district level, personal contact with owners of small businesses is often a key to arranging work-based learning experience. “We started making connections. It’s still a small community feel,” says Matt Burrows, superintendent of the Appoquinimink School District in rapidly growing lower New Castle County. “Our local businessmen are sending their kids and their grandkids to our schools. One connection leads to three or four.”<sup>26</sup> Julie Johnson, owner of a group of childcare centers and a former member of the Appoquinimink school board, is also the workforce development chair of the Delaware Early Childhood Council. She jumped at the opportunity to hire participants in the early childhood learning pathway as student interns. “In early childhood, we are in a workforce crisis. We don’t have enough personnel,” she says. “If we don’t engage and provide job experience, we’re not building the pipeline for future employment in our industry.”<sup>27</sup> Pathways students work with childcare teachers and teacher assistants during play periods, help with planned activities and learn the basics of routine care, such as feeding, diapering and potty training, as well as receiving instruction in maintaining a safe classroom and providing positive interaction and support to children.

At Indian River High School, in the southeast corner of the state, far from Delaware’s major banking institutions, business teacher Jeff Bunting built on an existing relationship to arrange a work experience for students in the school’s finance pathway. Officials at the Del-One Federal Credit Union, who had previously spoken at career days at the school, agreed to transform a classroom into a bank branch. Del-One staff trained the students, Bunting served as the branch manager, and students and faculty could make deposits and withdrawals without leaving campus.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Author interview with Matt Burrows (in person), July 15, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Author interview with Julie Johnson (telephone), July 25, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Larry Nagengast, “Banking on Success,” *Delaware Beach Life*, September 2018, pp. 64-71.



In the Colonial School District, which includes William Penn High School, longtime counselor Clayton Washington was assigned as workforce development coordinator. He has built a network of some 300 businesses that support the district in a variety of ways, not only in offering internships but also by participating in career days and job fairs, mentoring and even donating supplies and equipment. One of the first things Washington does when he makes a connection is invite the potential business partner to visit the schools. “When they see the teachers and meet the students, they really open up,” he says.<sup>29</sup>

Washington has placed some culinary students in jobs at a local McDonald’s, which is perhaps not a big surprise—but he has also placed students in the kitchen at the Hotel DuPont, a landmark in downtown Wilmington. Business students are placed in internships at a nearby Discover Card processing center.

Washington has also built a relationship with Dassault Falcon Aviation, which repairs and upgrades private planes at its maintenance facility at the New Castle County Airport, about a mile from William Penn. Cliff Perry, the training supervisor at the Dassault Falcon shop, got his start in aircraft maintenance through an internship opportunity when he was in high school, so he knows the value of getting an early start in the business. William Penn students in the engineering pathway work half-day shifts, earning \$10 an hour for eight to 16 hours a week. They gain exposure to the various maintenance and repair operations and some use their technical skills to clean up documentation in computer files. “Their attitude and motivation is phenomenal,” Perry says.<sup>30</sup>

Dassault Falcon also takes in co-op students in various pathways from a vocational school, Delcastle Technical High School, under a slightly different arrangement. These students alternate between spending two weeks at school and two weeks at Dassault Falcon, where they work in different maintenance shops, for example, paint, sheet metal, woodwork or parts. All of the Delcastle students who have worked there the last two years have subsequently enrolled in an associate degree program in aircraft mechanics at Delaware Tech. Working with different groups of students requires flexibility at Dassault Falcon. Unlike the Delcastle students with a 40-hour work week, the William Penn students are part-timers who have to get out of school an hour early to fit their hours into the shop’s schedule.

<sup>29</sup> Author interview with Clayton Washington (telephone), July 15, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Author interview with Cliff Perry (telephone), July 19, 2019.

While these examples show the success that school districts can have in building relationships with local businesses, the challenges associated with scaling up require the involvement of an experienced partner, in this case, Delaware Technical Community College. Throughout its 50-year history, Delaware Tech has built a strong reputation for working with businesses throughout the state, building training programs to meet the needs of the state's largest employers. Delaware Tech is different from most of the nation's community colleges and that's a good thing, Harvard's Schwartz says. "They are really clear that their mission is workforce development. Many other community colleges are more focused on students transferring into four-year programs than on preparing students for the workforce."<sup>31</sup>

With its experience in developing career-oriented curriculums in technical fields and its connections throughout the state's business sector, "it made a lot of sense for us to be the intermediary" between the K-12 system and the business community, says Paul Morris, Delaware Tech's associate vice president for workforce development and community education.<sup>32</sup> Delaware Tech was instrumental in developing the industry councils, often drawing on contacts created through Morris' other responsibilities and the interactions of the college's other academic departments with the business community. "We know what industries have traditionally looked for," says Morris, "but we also have to learn how to meet their needs for the future."

Ideally Delaware Tech's Office of Work-Based Learning would like to see more business participants like Christiana Care Health System, the state's largest nongovernmental employer. "We're actually like a city. All the jobs you would find in a small city, you can find here—healthcare, engineering, IT, security, environmental engineering," says Dr. Neil B. Jasani, the system's chief people officer.<sup>33</sup> For years, Christiana Care and Delaware Tech have been partners, with the college regularly turning out enough graduates in a variety of health-related academic programs to meet Christiana Care's ongoing needs. Through Pathways, and several other collaborative programs, Christiana Care is offering high school students exposure to many of the career options available in its "small city." "Healthcare is one of the fastest growing industries for job growth. We're helping students find good-paying jobs with benefits," says Dr. Janice

<sup>31</sup> Schwartz interview.

<sup>32</sup> Author interview with Paul Morris (in person), July 8, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Author interview with Neil Jasani (in person), July 10, 2019.



Nevin, Christiana Care's president and CEO. More importantly, she adds, Pathways participants put themselves on track to earn associate's degrees at Delaware Tech and to earn additional credentials and degrees as they pursue their careers. "A lot of our jobs may be entry level, but there are a lot of opportunities. You don't have to stop learning if you come through the Pathways program."<sup>34</sup>

As the Office of Work-Based Learning continues to pursue partnerships, it will explore pathways with employers such as Walgreens, the national pharmacy and retail chain with nearly 40 sites in Delaware. "Imagine if every Walgreens in Delaware had a Pathways intern," Morris says. "It could be in IT, a pharmacy technician, logistics, management. And if Walgreens can sign on, how about CVS?"<sup>35</sup>

"We're not there yet, but we're developing plans," Morris says. "We're all beginning to find our space. It's a heavy lift." Part of that heavy lift includes working around the complexities of corporate HR departments, corporate requirements for employee certifications and, in some cases, age limits established through either company policy or state law. The workaround to overcome many of these issues involves participation by Goodwill Industries, a nonprofit with a long history of providing training to individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment. A temporary employment agency operated by Goodwill frequently serves as the bridge between student interns and their employers.

In one example provided by Colleen Morrone, president and CEO of Goodwill of Delaware and Delaware County, Kuehne Chemical Co., a bleach manufacturer, wanted to hire some William Penn students as summer interns. Rather than have the students go through Kuehne's HR process for a short-term job, Goodwill placed the students at Kuehne through its temp agency. "We process their payroll and take care of all the other requirements," Morrone says. "All the students do is fill out their I-9 [employment eligibility] forms and their timesheets."<sup>36</sup>

In working with employers, Morrone and Morris say they have frequently heard about another need: familiarizing students with the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Many students, especially those from less privileged backgrounds,

<sup>34</sup> Author interview with Janice Nevin (in person), July 10, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Author interview with Paul Morris (in person), July 8, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Author interview with Colleen Morrone (telephone), July 15, 2019.



“Companies are eager to participate, to make Pathways work. They just need to know how.”

— Colleen Morrone

are not aware of the importance of dressing appropriately and getting to work on time, of making eye contact, and developing good communication and customer service practices. Heeding requests from employers, Morrone and Morris pushed for development of a soft-skills curriculum that will be piloted at several schools during the 2019-20 school year.

United Way of Delaware, whose prime responsibility with Pathways is on the fundraising end, has found another way to address the soft-skills issue. The nonprofit hires more than 20 high school students each summer, including some who are 14 or 15 years old, too young for Pathways internships, to do filing, research and other basic office work. Soft-skills development is a hallmark of the program. “We can’t send them off into the corporate world until they’re prepared,” says Michelle Taylor, United Way’s president and CEO. “We’re trying to walk what we talk,” she adds, saying she wants to see other organizations that hire youth as summer workers put an emphasis on development of good work habits.<sup>37</sup>

To address issues associated with summer employment, Delaware’s Workforce Development Board has realigned its planning documents under the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 to incorporate Pathways objectives. The board has made similar adjustments to its WIOA plan as it relates to in-school and out-of-school youth programs. “Companies are eager to participate, to make Pathways work,” says Cerron Cade, Delaware’s secretary of labor. “They just need to know how.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Author interview with Michelle Taylor (in person), July 8, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Author interview with Cerron Cade (in person), July 11, 2019.

# MOVING FORWARD

Gary Stockbridge, the Delmarva Power president and chairman of the Workforce Development Board, acknowledges that it is too early to tell whether Pathways is making significant progress toward its long-term goals. On the front end, he says, it is clear that schools are doing well in curriculum development and finding jobs for their students. However, he adds, the program is still scaling up, so success will depend on how well Delaware Tech does in bringing more businesses willing to provide students with job opportunities.<sup>39</sup> “We’ve made tremendous progress in a few years,” says Dianastasis, the Vision Coalition chair, “but we need another three to five years of data gathering to better assess our outcomes.”<sup>40</sup>

As promising as Delaware’s effort seems to be, Schwartz says the state has to step up its efforts to link businesses and students. He compares Boston, with more than 50,000 high school students, to Delaware, which has 40,000, and points out that the city’s Private Industry Council has a staff of about 25 working on these linkages, while Delaware Tech is relying on a very small staff. More work needs to be done to get employers to “map backwards” from new hires to high schools, Schwartz says. “Employers see the value of [college] summer interns, but it’s hard to get employers to invest in high school. They see high school students as too far away from employment.”<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, Pathways offers promise and potential: the promise of making high school more relevant to Delaware’s career-minded students and the potential to provide a pipeline of workers trained to meet employers’ needs for the next generation. “Pathways professionalizes what we do,” says Xavier Teixido, owner of Harry’s Hospitality Group, a prominent restaurant and catering business in Wilmington and a past chairman of both the National Restaurant Association and its Educational Foundation. “Students realize that if you’re going to be in this field, you’re going to have to learn science and math, and you’re going to have to learn to work with others. It’s all very positive.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Author interview with Gary Stockbridge (telephone), July 12, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Dianastasis interview.

<sup>41</sup> Schwartz interview.

<sup>42</sup> Author interview with Xavier Teixido (telephone), July 26, 2019.



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By the time they reach their early 20s, every young adult will be equipped with the education and experience he or she needs to lead a successful life as an adult.







# CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF POLICY

Just as former Gov. Jack Markell took the lead in bringing the business community on board with Pathways, his successor, John Carney, continues to promote the program, meeting with employers about how to strengthen it, working with his cabinet to align training efforts for youth and adult learners, and encouraging his cabinet to seek additional public and private funding.

The significant growth that Pathways has enjoyed is due in part to new policies and policy changes that have either been developed with input from the private sector or brought the private sector into partnerships. The executive order from Gov. Markell and the partnership agreement that launched Pathways were followed by policy revisions by the State Board of Education and the state Departments of Education and Labor to incorporate Pathways within their administrative structures. In addition to hiring or realigning instructional staff as new pathways were added, school

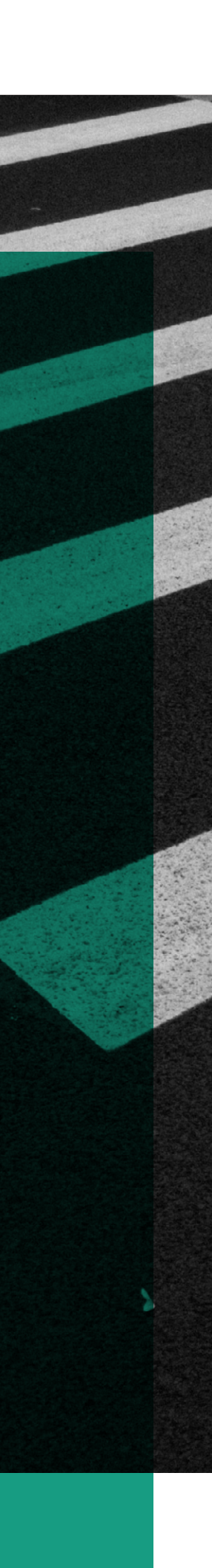
districts have also had to adjust their management and counseling teams to assume new responsibilities associated with developing business partnerships. Likewise, Delaware Tech has had to develop closer working relationships with the public school system and is now looking to expand staffing in its Office of Work-Based Learning, an essential step in developing even more links to business partners. With new Pathways fields under consideration, and several more industry councils being developed, it will take a minimum of three more years, and more likely five or six, for the Pathways program to build out to its full potential.

In the next few years, the state and its private-sector partners will have to take additional steps to ensure the sustainability of the program. Some steps that have already been taken demonstrate a willingness to adjust long-standing policies and procedures in order to get Pathways up and running. For example, the state has gotten some employers to make exceptions so Pathways students could begin learning certain skilled trades on job sites before completing high school. The state is also urging postsecondary institutions to consider completion of a Pathway as a plus factor in competitive admissions situations. And the state has benchmarked knowledge, skills and program credentials within Pathways programs to align with employer hiring practices.

As operations solidify and program managers become more familiar with their added responsibilities, policymakers should have fresh opportunities to address numerous issues, the resolution of which could have a significant impact on the long-term success of Pathways in Delaware. Here are several areas that will merit consideration:

- » Transportation can be an issue for students in completing work-study requirements within a Pathway. While most high school juniors and seniors in the state have completed a driver education class, they do not necessarily have access to a car. This is especially true of students from low-income families. Travel distance to work-study opportunities can also be a factor. For example, students interested in banking and finance careers that live in rural areas of Sussex County might be able to secure an internship at a local bank branch, but it would be difficult for them to access positions in New Castle County, where the state's major players in the financial sector are located.

- » Employees in certain fields, such as childcare, are required by law to be fingerprinted and undergo background checks. Many employers require similar checks as part of their hiring procedures. While a background check, in most cases, would not be an impediment to a student being hired, having to travel to a police station that provides fingerprinting services can be an inconvenience, especially if transportation access is a concern. Until now, there has been no significant discussion among state officials about amending state laws or suggesting that employers adjust their policies to facilitate participation in work-study programs by Pathways participants. But, it might be appropriate to make some adjustments when the expectation is that the student will be employed by the business for no more than one semester.
- » Supplemental funding for work-based learning coordinators, both at Delaware Tech and at high schools, is also worthy of attention. Due to an inconsistent year-to-year economic outlook in the past decade, Delaware's General Assembly has been reluctant to add new expense items to the state budget. Delaware Tech could argue, with considerable justification, that its role in supporting what is primarily a program for the K-12 public education system represents an extension beyond its primary function of postsecondary education and therefore merits additional state funding. On the other hand, since Pathways is designed to serve as a pipeline for employment (primarily) in the private sector, it could be argued that hiring of additional staff at Delaware Tech should be underwritten by the business community. In the K-12 sector, some school districts have determined that Pathways students would be better served by assigning an administrator or counselor to have primary responsibility for developing employer partnerships and matching Pathways students with the most appropriate opportunities. Some districts, however, might not have the flexibility or resources to make such an assignment. Under Delaware's current school finance system, state funding for counselors is based on an annual enrollment count, so the formula provides no allowance for additional counselors unless there are significant increases in enrollment. While there may be merit to the concept of providing additional state funds for counselors dedicated to the Pathways program, the likelihood of that occurring is slim, especially with a lawsuit now pending in the state's Court of Chancery that challenges the fairness of the state's entire school finance system.

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- » Within the business sector itself, there is a need to address human resources policies and procedures as they relate to the hiring of high school students for short-term employment. Several business leaders interviewed for this report noted that, while the business community is generally enthusiastic about the potential for Pathways as a valuable pipeline to future employees, they would like to see a streamlining of procedures within HR departments. While some businesses, such as restaurant and hospitality, are accustomed to heavy turnover because many employees work part-time and change jobs frequently, HR personnel at larger businesses in the fields of banking and manufacturing, for example, typically hire for the long term and may consider processing short-term student employees more of an inconvenience than a benefit. This is one of the reasons that Goodwill Industries has stepped in with its temporary employment service to place students with businesses that would rather not deal with paperwork for short-term workers.

If Pathways achieves its goal of enrolling 20,000 students in the 2020-21 school year, that would likely mean that between 7,000 and 10,000 youths would be employed during the summer or the school year and those employment levels would continue for the foreseeable future. For Pathways to grow in a sustainable fashion, the private sector, in collaboration with the Department of Labor and the Workforce Development Board, might consider expanding the relationship with Goodwill Industries, establishing a nonprofit unit as a temporary employment agency for students or developing statewide standards for short-term student employment.

Jack Markell, the governor who started it all, sees Pathways as a major investment in Delaware's future, and one whose value cannot be calculated in the short term "All the time, businesses make investments that don't yield an immediate return on their money," he says. "Pathways is like those investments, and it will make a strong return over time."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> [Markell interview.](#)



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