



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## COLLABORATION THROUGH SYNERGY

As educators, we feature ourselves as change catalysts and have learned that collaboration is essential in our process to find ways to help students succeed. Today's success solutions include guiding students to find their interests, explore career options, experience different types of work, and bond together to create a synergistic system. Synergy is a state in which the whole is more than the sum of the parts, according to Steve Covey. This principle can be demonstrated through actual learning situations by forming partnerships where all parties can benefit—mostly, the student.

### The Machinist Partnership

The three partners involved in this particular learning situation are GEC Corporation, a manufacturing tool company with 625 employees located in Wellington, Kansas; USD 353, situated in the same town of 9,000 people; and Cowley County Community College/Area Vocational Technical School (CCCC/AVTS). The change catalyst is our School-to-Careers, nationally known as School-to-Work. The coordinator is responsible for establishing partnerships with business and industry, and linking them to teachers and students through job-shadowing experiences and student internships; and assisting teachers with developing classroom connecting activities that link school with careers.

To set the stage for the partnership, 20 high school juniors who wanted to attend CCCC/AVTS and earn dual credits for their senior year were identified. About 10 of these students were interested in the machine tool program. In addition, GEC was concerned about attracting machinists from the area, since most machinists were driving 30 miles each day to work for a major aircraft manufacturing firm that paid more per hour. USD 363 and CCCC/AVTS were also searching for ways to serve community and workforce needs.

The partnership began in fall 1998. GEC interviewed eight prospective students and chose four for the pilot

program. A non-binding contract was signed by both the student and a GEC representative before classes started. GEC paid for students' books and tools, and USD 353 covered students' tuitions. After the first year in the program, GEC employed students for a summer internship. For the second year, CCCC/AVTS paid tuition for students earning at least a 3.0 grade point average, and again GEC paid for books and tools. After the second school year, students then interned again at GEC for a year. Upon completing the 33-month program, a student did not have to remain employed at GEC, and the tools and books belonged to the student. We hoped that a bond would develop with the corporation and that students would go on to complete their Associate of Applied Science degree.

### Benefits from the Partnership

- Students earn a free education.
- Students are "semi-skilled" after completing this program and have work experience.
- Students receive "work-based" mentoring.
- GEC hires an experienced employee who is already familiar with its culture.
- GEC sees firsthand what students' capabilities and work ethics are before offering full-time positions.
- USD 353 and CCCC/AVTS help provide educated students for our local workforce.
- The community keeps productive people in the local area instead of losing them to jobs elsewhere.

### The Boeing Drafting Partnership

Other examples of our creative partnerships include "senior projects" and internships with Boeing. Every year, our sophomore drafting students, who we call seniors for this project, can choose to work on a simulated Boeing assignment. The Boeing staff has developed five projects from which the students choose. One of the projects is available through an IGES translator. Students can download the project through a modem. The design starts in a CATIA format and is translated into CAD 14 which the students' computers can read.



Written instructions and dimensions are given at the beginning, and the outcome features a finished three-dimensional drawing to specifications.

The final part of the project is an oral presentation. The students meet at Boeing with 10 to 15 supervisors. Students explain and demonstrate how they arrived at their end results. These ventures are designed for five or six students who each work 80 hours towards completion.

In addition to developing their drafting skills, students learn how to work in teams. Students are required to work together and decide among themselves who draws what and how the drawing will be constructed. If the students have questions, they can ask their instructor or FAX, e-mail, or telephone a designated Boeing associate.

According to one instructor, "Boeing contacted us about this project. In order to get to this point, you have to set the stage. For several years before the project began, I had invited Boeing drafters to come to campus and speak to the students about careers and what it's like working for Boeing. I included a Boeing representative on my advisory board. I learned that if a company calls you, react to any request or idea quickly."

Boeing also offers summer internships to any CCCC/AVTS drafting student. Until last year, Boeing had offered these internships only to students working on bachelor's degrees. Students can earn generous pay, plus living or driving expenses.

#### **Benefits from this Partnership**

- Prospective employees have some Boeing procedural experience.
- Boeing has the opportunity to better evaluate prospective employees.
- Students gain experience with some of the types of drawings required by industry.
- Students' team-building and oral presentation skills are refined.
- CCCC/AVTS partnership incentives are highlighted for recruitment purposes.
- Student placement is enhanced by a company, Boeing, that pays higher salaries.

Partnering is the name of the game. If community colleges do not make these connections, someone else will. Matching student needs with business and industry expectations can make winners of everyone.

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