

Shipyards College: Building a Consortium to Deliver Workforce Education and Training

**Raymond Yannuzzi, Delaware County C.C.
Robert Bowman, Shipyards College
Bradshaw Kinsey, C.C. of Philadelphia
Edward McDonnell, Camden County C.C.**

Abstract: Shipyards College, created in 1994 to help retrain workers after the closing of the Philadelphia Navy Yard, is continuing to operate as an innovative education and training consortium and has become a partner in economic development efforts at the site now known as the Philadelphia Naval Business Center.

In the past three years, three community colleges and Drexel University have created cooperative procedures for program development, publicity, promotion, recruitment, student registration, course scheduling, faculty assignment, and revenue sharing in order to deliver courses, certificates and degrees to former Shipyards workers, as well as to employees of new Naval Business Center companies.

This paper will describe the evolution of Shipyards College model; discuss the attitudes necessary for a successful training partnership; and describe the lasting benefits to the four institutions of the consortium.

Si in consortio, si in societate reipublicae esse licet.

--Livy

Introduction--The Roots of Consortium: In his History, Livy examines the processes, events, and underlying changes in people and institutions that transformed a fractious group of local tribesmen into the "consortium," or "partnership," that became the Roman Republic.

While the conditions of metropolitan Philadelphia in the mid-1990's differ from those in ancient Rome, an exploration of the root meanings behind the Latin word for "partnership" can help illustrate some of the changes in institutional attitudes and practices that enabled Camden County College, Community College of Philadelphia, Delaware County Community College and Drexel University to establish the unique education and training organization known as Shipyards College (with support from TRP-NSFCA EEC 940910).

In the past three years, Shipyards College has served more the 2,500 former and current workers at the 1,100 acre South Philadelphia facility. Operating with the combined resources of the partner schools, Shipyards College can draw from a bank of more than 3,000 faculty and 6,000

courses leading to 300 occupational certificates and degrees at associates, bachelors, and graduate levels.

City officials have hailed the consortium as a unique asset in their efforts to attract new companies to locate along the four miles of waterfront or in one of the more than 300 available Naval Business Center buildings. Administrators at the four partner institutions have credited Shipyard College with enabling them to introduce innovative training programs and student services that would have been much more difficult, or even impossible, to put in place by any college acting alone.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning awarded Shipyard College its national service award for 1996. And the Ford Foundation/Harvard University Innovations in American Government Awards Program has selected Shipyard College as a 1997 semi-finalist.

But the road to consortium is not always smooth. The lessons learned and the changes in institutional attitude required to form this "virtual" college can perhaps assist other groups seeking to expand their role in regional economic development through pooled resources and joint activities.

"Consortium" is derived from the Latin root word "sors," which in the work of Roman authors has a range of related meanings, including "a casting of lots," "an official duty," "a share or a part," "money or capital out at interest," "an oracular response," and "fate, fortune, destiny."

Each of these meanings offers an interesting starting-point to illustrate the challenges, responses, and outcomes for the four institutions who joined in 1994 to answer an emergency call for workforce re-training, and who remain allied in 1997 in a productive educational consortium.

Casting Your Lot with Partnership---Shipyard College could never have been launched if each partner had not been willing to take a chance and risk some element of its institutional identity on the outcome of the joint venture. Community College of Philadelphia, which had for years offered courses at the Shipyard, had to agree to invite other "competitor" institutions onto its "turf." Delaware County Community College, from the suburbs, had to agree to manage a grant and provide administrative support for a project where it would enroll fewer than one-third of the students. Camden County College, across the river in New Jersey, had to agree to share its technology programs and facilities with students from another state. Drexel University, a leader in engineering and technology research, had to adapt to the short-term delivery modes and applied technology programs needed for workforce retraining.

At each of the four schools, the attitude of "But why should we...?" had to be resisted and overcome by those committed to the partnership. Fortunately, after initial agreement at the presidential and vice-presidential levels, and six-months of working meetings between affinity groups of administrators in the institutions, the deans directly responsible for Shipyard activities developed a close working relationship. As the Shipyard College director and his assistant engaged in intense "shuttle diplomacy" between the schools, joint procedures and services began

to emerge which would have seemed impossible a year before.

Because of the need to provide a wide range of courses and programs for a large number of non-traditional students in a short time, the usual processes for scheduling and enrollment had to be modified. The three community colleges agreed on a common tuition and fee structure for all courses taught at the Shipyard regardless of a student's residency, with a single Shipyard College application form and admissions process. Once admitted, students could take credit courses offered in a jointly developed schedule by any of the three colleges. Credits were transferred by Shipyard College staff to the program in the partner college that the student chose for a certificate or degree.

Within a year, each college began to see returns that justified the risks of entering the partnership. Philadelphia greatly increased its enrollment in Shipyard courses. Delaware and Camden, offering courses at the site for the first time, found new students for specialized programs and attracted additional students from the Shipyard to campus-based programs as well. Drexel began to develop a career path and transfer opportunities for two-year graduates in applied technologies.

Building a consortium requires taking a risk and a willingness to examine and perhaps change established attitudes and ways of operating. "Working together" often means "working differently" and accepting the possibility that doing things in another way (like scheduling, admissions, credit transfer) can lead to favorable results. The Shipyard partners took a risk and learned that what they gained was far greater than anything they might have lost.

Consortium as a Duty---Since the laid-off Shipyard workers were about one-third New Jersey residents, one-third Philadelphians, and one-third suburbanites, the community colleges were almost forced to develop a unified response to a problem that effected workers and families across all of their service areas.

A major crisis, like a war, always makes it easier for people to put aside their differences and focus on what they can contribute together to the greater cause. The abrupt layoff of more than 5,000 workers on a single day, though it was known months in advance, provided the dramatic event that made the consortium not just a good thing to do, but a necessary response if each college was to fulfill its mission of service to students.

A spirit of cooperation and partnership at all levels of each institution has made Shipyard College a success. As the highest administrators continually emphasized the centrality and importance of the consortium to their institutions, it became more likely that those engaged in day-to-day tasks like correcting class rosters, processing purchase orders, and applying financial aide to tuition bills would respond to unique and sometimes troublesome Shipyard details as a part of their duty, not an extra headache.

Over the past three years, the partners have come to realize that the agreements they reached and the cooperative programs they developed perhaps, in part, because they had to, revealed a pattern for institutional interaction that would work even when a crisis was not staring them in

the face. The incorporation of the "Shipyard model" into the operations of the community colleges has enabled them to recognize other areas where their students and supporters are better served by programs and services developed and administered together.

Working with WHYY-TV, the regional public broadcasting station, the Shipyard partners created a distance learning consortium that enrolled more than 5,000 students in telecourses during the past year. The kinds of joint registration, scheduling and program offerings used at the Shipyard are currently being examined by a larger consortium of Philadelphia colleges as a model for a "retail college" operating at the area's mammoth King of Prussia Mall. Industrial development groups in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley region have called for educational institutions to form more partnerships like Shipyard College, with each other and with businesses, in order to address the short and long-term issues involved in worker training and economic development.

Building a consortium can't be a peripheral or "extra" activity for a college that wants partnership to succeed. It must become central to the mission and a duty accepted at all levels of the institution.

Sharing the Tasks of Partnership---Probably the greatest benefits derived from the consortium effort, both for students and the institutions themselves, have come from the sharing and pooling of faculty, staff, equipment, facilities and ideas in the team-based methods of Shipyard College operations.

In the early stages of the project, teams of faculty and practitioners from industry conducted monthly informational meetings with Shipyard workers to explain the educational activities and job opportunities connected with occupational programs offered by the community colleges. Counselor teams conducted hundreds of individual advisement sessions, guiding workers through the processes of selecting a program and enrolling in Shipyard or campus-based courses.

In an example of institutional teamwork, each community college contributed some of its strongest programs and services to be shared by students enrolling from the other counties or through the other institutions. Delaware's faculty and counselors with extensive experience in granting credit through prior learning helped more than 500 workers prepare portfolios and earn credit for certification and experience they had gained through years of Shipyard work and get a start on technology degrees and certificates at all three colleges.

Philadelphia provided credit classes in general studies and computers, as well as specialized programs such as environmental health and safety, enrolling students who transferred credits to the other two colleges. Camden contributed faculty and equipment from its CAD and optics programs, delivering training previously available only in New Jersey.

As the needs have arisen for new programs and services, new teams from the consortium have been formed to share the work. Faculty and staff from the community colleges and Drexel developed an award-winning entrepreneur training program by selecting the best parts of courses and services offered at each school. The "Business Incubator," combining instruction by the

consortium with financial support and incentives offered by the City, has trained three groups of former Shipyard workers and spawned several successful small businesses.

The Shipyard "Business Response Team" brings together administrators and faculty from partner schools to provide prompt and detailed education and training plans that supplement City economic proposals to companies considering a move to the Naval Business Center. Philadelphia officials believe Shipyard College gives them a unique training resource that is particularly attractive to the large international firms that have long considered worker training and education as a key component of their operations.

The emerging new role for the Shipyard site as a regional center combining rail, air, sea and road transportation has led the consortium to develop curriculum responses in which each member has a share. The three community colleges jointly operate a new Truck Driving Academy at the Shipyard, to answer a pressing demand for qualified drivers. Philadelphia has created new programs in railroad maintenance to support activities in the acres of Shipyard rail lines now available for commercial use. Delaware has adapted its HVAC courses to include transport refrigeration, while Camden is applying its laser technology in courses related to transportation guidance systems. Shipyard College is also ready to train workers for the new technologies of ship building and repair as the former Navy facilities are converted to civilian production.

The synergy of three community colleges and a research university focused on the issues of workforce training and economic development has resulted in courses and programs that would have never been created by these same institutions operating separately, or by one institution operating at the Shipyard by itself.

Building a consortium requires a sharing of resources and ideas. The separate value of faculty efforts, equipment, and services put "into the pot" by any of the three partners has been far exceeded by the combined value of the education and training programs that have emerged to serve more than 2,500 workers in the past three years.

Return on Consortium Investment---In addition to the goodwill and psychological benefits of partnership, however, any responsible institution must also consider the financial return on the time and effort invested in joint activities. Shipyard College is not a charity, and the members of the consortium have been able to realize a significant amount of "interest" in the form of increased income from courses taught at the site.

More than three million dollars in tuition revenue was generated in the first three years of the project. These funds, when combined with the state formula per-student aid, provided almost five million dollars to the participating colleges. Revenue from some projects was shared equally, while the community colleges benefitted from other courses in proportion to their investment of time and staff, or the number of students from their service areas enrolled. Drexel, offering upper-division and graduate courses and engineering certifications, enrolled far fewer students but benefitted from the administration, research, and curriculum development portions of the overall TRP grant, of which Shipyard College received about one-third.

Technology Reinvestment Project funds (TRP NSFCA EEC 940910) have supported start-up costs and paid for most of Shipyard College's administrative overhead. As the grant winds down and the consortium continues, the colleges have begun to put aside money from current revenues to provide for staff salaries, administrative operations and an increased classroom space. In 1998-99 when the current TRP funding ends, the Shipyard College should be self-supporting and providing income to each partner.

In addition to increased tuition revenue from Shipyard activities, member institutions have credited the consortium with helping to solidify support from their respective state and county sponsoring agencies, which see the effort as the kind of education and training that should be funded in the annual budget and through special grants and incentive programs..

Building a consortium requires putting aside some of the competitive spirit between institutions that says, "I'll get mine and I'll take yours." But the financial bottom line of the partnership must make sense, and each member must get what it needs in return from its investment.

Ambiguities of Partnership---In classical Greece, the Delphic oracle would deliver ambiguous responses to questioners who wanted to know the future. Many went away believing what they wanted to hear, only to find out that the oracle's answer meant exactly the opposite. The general who heard, "A great army will fall today," and went away confident of victory later realized that the army defeated was his own.

Building and maintaining a consortium requires a toleration of ambiguity and willingness to allow some things to "work themselves out" as an activity progresses. If members have the degree of trust and the commitment to sharing the vision and work of the partnership, they can work together without always knowing what will happen.

The future of the Shipyard College is not completely clear. The Naval Business Center holds tremendous promise to grow into as great a force for regional economic life as the Naval Shipyard was for the 200 years of its existence. The consortium is ready to play its role in workforce training and education, but the companies and job skills needed at the site have yet to be determined.

Consortium as Destiny---What has been determined, however, is that the four institutions of the partnership were able to join in a productive relationship that provided a much needed service and benefitted each school in the process.

Community College of Philadelphia has enhanced its role as the City's leading institution for worker training and its value to future efforts at city revitalization. Delaware County Community College and Camden County College have shown how large-scale economic conditions with regional impact can be addressed by suburban and urban institutions working together. Drexel University has developed more flexible course options and applied technology programs as a result of its work with community colleges at the Shipyard.

As a way to meet economic and political challenges and to address rapidly changing needs for education, institutional partnerships allow colleges to pool resources and create programs and services that would never be possible otherwise. The example of Shipyard College can reveal characteristics that can cause such partnerships to be created and to flourish.

RAYMOND YANNUZZI is Dean of Off-Campus Centers and Distance Learning at Delaware County Community College.

ROBERT BOWMAN is Director of the Shipyard College.

BRADSHAW KINSEY is Dean of Continuing Education at Community College of Philadelphia.

EDWARD MCDONNELL is Dean of Continuing Education at Camden County College.