

RFI: Building A 21st Century Bioeconomy
Sun 12/4/2011 1:19 PM

Dear White House Office of Science and Technology Policy,

In response to the request for information regarding the 21st century bioeconomy, I offer the following comments relative to question #10:

(10) What roles should community colleges play in training the bioeconomy workforce of the future?

The role of community colleges is emerging as the preferred mechanism for workforce development and initial access to higher education. The 2-year environment offers numerous advantages which uniquely meet the requirements for the bioeconomy of the future; namely, *Relevant Knowledge Now*. A 2-year college setting, or more specifically the technical college setting, has as its mandate to teach the skills necessary to enter the workforce. We therefore offer more than a series of courses designed to deliver course-specific content. Instead, we deliver a program designed to prepare its participants to enter the workforce. The coursework in a program is secondary to the program's collective goal of putting people to work. Program instructors serve as industry advisors grooming participants to become employable.

Numerous surveys identify a bioeconomic industry focus on soft-skills. This serves as a good example of the integrated approach already occurring in the 2-year college setting. We incorporate work ethics, contextual learning, industry-specific curricula and learning communities amalgamated into a college experience designed to deliver a well-trained workforce directly to the industry. This is accomplished for dramatically less cost when compared with other institutions of higher learning. The 2-year college is nimble, effective and measured by the number of students entering the workforce. I challenge the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to find a more effective and well-suited venue for the preparation of tomorrow's bioeconomy workforce.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer information to our country's leadership. If ever we needed effective leadership, it would be now.

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