



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Commonwealth Technical Institute (CTI) at Hiram G Andrews Center (HGAC) Ad hoc Committee Meeting Minutes for September 11, 2023 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)
Paul Fogle (P)

Julia Grant Barol (P)
Lorie Brew (P)

Lynn Heitz (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: James Whitonis

Hiram G Andrews Center (HGAC) Staff Present: Jill Moriconi, Chris Zakraysek
Christopher Miller, Jim Marker

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. William Del Toro Vargas called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Ms. Lorie Brew suggested the additions of Commonwealth Technical Institute (CTI) Student Surveys and requesting Return on Investment information.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Lorie Brew for approval of the agenda with additions and past meeting minutes. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

Discussion / Follow Up from the June 20th PaRC Member Tour of CTI at HGAC Campus

- Members agreed that the visit to CTI at HGAC was a very positive experience. It was great to see the commitment to all students by the HGAC trainers, educators,

and other staff. Members commended HGAC for their work to help students and families adjust to the individuation of living away from home for the first time as that can often be difficult for college students and their families to cope with. Members thanked HGAC for taking the time to share in detail the work being done, appreciate the welcoming environment they have created, and applaud their efforts to bring in mainstream students from the community to provide an inclusive setting for all students.

- Members explained that they appreciate the efforts to continue to improve the facilities and services such as displaying photos and art depicting students and the important work they do, improvements to the dormitories, the efforts to provide opportunities for blind students to participate in more programs and making the curriculum more accessible to all students.
- Members requested that HGAC provide a copy of past legislation in regard to the founding and naming of the school. Inquired if there was flexibility to make changes to pamphlets and other materials referring to the school as Hiram G Andrews Center. The word 'Center' is often misconstrued as a place that is institutionalized and changing that branding would be important. Members suggested dropping the word "Center" and referring to the school as the Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G. Andrews. Members discussed the benefits of officially putting into writing, the referring to 'students' of CTI and 'customers' of OVR so that changes to language regarding students and customers could not be changed in the future without review. Members inquired if they could be of assistance regarding student settlements for school districts within different agencies. Members will connect CTI with leadership from Hispanos Unidos para Ninos Excepcionales (HUNE), PEAL Center, and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Inquired if CTI accepts students that don't have a high school diploma. Inquired if there were any barriers for students who graduated based on their IEP to enter accredited programs at CTI.
- Ms. Jill Moriconi informed members that they will provide that legislation requested. Further discussion will be held regarding the name and branding of CTI at HGAC with OVR Leadership and the Secretary of Labor and Industry. The member's support is appreciated regarding branding. There has been progress in determining the use of waivers and would appreciate any guidance members could provide regarding the use of settlements. Diploma requirements depend upon which program the student will enroll in. Non-accredited programs do not require a diploma. CTI accredited programs do require a diploma or GED with one rare exception that would require proving the student would benefit from the training. CTI does have a program that would provide a student instruction to attain their GED. Workforce Development programs are similar to Adult Education and are the non-accredited programs. Not aware of any problems with students that graduate based on their IEP / alternate diploma entering accredited programs at CTI.

CTI at HGAC Updates

- Ms. Moriconi reported that enrollment has increased by 15% for this Fall Term. There are over 130 students currently enrolled in the CTI programs, 40 or more are enrolled in Center for Occupational Readiness (COR) programs, 11 enrolled in the

Cognitive Development Skills Enhancement Program (CDSEP), there are approximately 24 students brought in each week for evaluation, and there are always approximately 200 students enrolled in the Center for Assistive and Rehabilitative Technology (CART) program, and there are currently 500 students enrolled in the CART program. September 20th HGAC is holding their OVR staff orientation and that will be held 3 times per year beginning in 2024 which will become mandatory for all OVR staff. September 27th CTI is hosting 32 students for the Fab Lab with the Carnegie Science Center, the Johnstown District Office, and Greater Johnstown School District. The PA Broadband and Digital Equity event is being held September 28th to conduct focus groups with CTI students. CTI is hosting their Annual Career Fair in October. PaRC members are welcome to attend that event which is typically attended by about one thousand individuals. OA recently visited to discuss efforts for obtaining Commonwealth Internships or placement for graduates. A position to fill the Childcare Development Training Program will be posted soon. There has been progress with BBVS on the accessibility of equipment and training for the CART program. A Facility Safety Manager has recently been hired which will oversee physicality of the campus along with processes, student services, and training to increase safety. There are now three active shooter response trainers and instructors on campus.

Updates on Progress of Accessibility Efforts

- BBVS made some recommendations and equipment has been updated. This Fall BBVS will be providing training to the CTI CART staff on accessibility. Next steps include further research into identifying programs to increase accessibility regarding equipment, curriculum, and training for individuals who are blind.
- Good Maps is being explored by procurement. The Commonwealth already has a contract in place with the navigation software CLUE and they have the ability to extend that contract to external and internal navigation which should speed up that technology's availability for the campus.
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will be visiting the campus to discuss hiring students who are blind or have low vision. The IRS has technology in place to enable students to answer calls. CTI will discuss offering that training.
- Ms. Heitz explained that IRS training used to be run in Missouri and personally knows people that are still currently employed with the IRS doing those jobs.
- Ms. Julia Barol inquired if there was financial information available for Return On Investment (ROI) data per student. Would like to know about the amount of dollars that go into programs and the outcomes, number of students served, students that attained employment, and student satisfaction rates.
- There is data available for student wages but not data specific to budget, outcomes, and how it relates to ROI for each person served but that is something they can work on. The data requested can be provided separately as has been provided during past meetings including satisfaction rates, placement outcomes, number being served, and similar data. Alumni members are employed at HGAC and include a recently retired instructor, employees in food services, and employees in the maintenance department. HGAC is well above the recommended 7% of employees

who have disclosed their disability.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.