

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PIPELINE TO SMALL BUSINESSES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INNOVATION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PIPELINE TO SMALL BUSINESSES

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INNOVATION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m., in Room 2360, Rayburn House Office Building and via Zoom, Hon. Jason Crow [chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Crow, Davids, Bourdeaux, Young Kim, Williams, Tenney, and Garbarino.

Chairman CROW. Good morning. I call this hearing to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

I would like to begin by noting some important requirements. Let me begin by saying that standing House and Committee rules and practice will continue to apply during hybrid proceedings. All Members are reminded that they are expected to adhere to these standing rules including decorum.

House regulations require Members to be visible through a video connection throughout the proceeding, so please keep your cameras on. Also, please remember to remain muted until you are recognized to minimize background noise. If you have to participate in another proceeding, please exit this one and log back in later.

In the event a Member encounters technical issues that prevent them from being recognized for their questioning, I will move to the next available Member of the same party and I will recognize that Member at the next appropriate time slot provided they have returned to the proceeding.

For those Members physically present in the Committee room, in accordance with the attending physician's most recent guidance, Members and staff who attend this hybrid hearing in person will be required to wear masks in the hearing. With that said, Members are allowed to briefly remove their masks if they are being recognized to speak.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. It is great to be joined by representatives from community colleges across the country. I believe that America's community college system is one of the underappreciated strengths of our great education system.

Our university system is widely regarded as the best globally, but a 4-year degree is not for everyone. At the same time, Ameri-

cans must obtain the education they need to embark on good-paying careers that can support a family.

So that is where community colleges come in. These institutions are pillars of their communities, helping to provide affordable and practical education that equip students with the skills needed to contribute to the modern economy. As the U.S. recovers from COVID, the role of community colleges has never been more critical. COVID has radically changed the nature of work in our country and the preferences and desires of the labor force.

Nearly a third of U.S. workers under 40 years old have thought about changing their occupation or field since the start of COVID. We are seeing that right now as there is a massive realignment of the labor force and preferences as people go back to work but in different fields. This has led to high resignation rates and workers hungry for new skills to find different work. For many of those switching careers, community college might be the best place to obtain the skills needed to make that transition effectively.

Community colleges offer many “noncredit courses,” focused solely on building skills applicable directly in the workplace. These efficient, affordable courses are often designed in consultation with local businesses and workforce boards. As a result, the curriculum is hyper-focused on training workers specifically for certain businesses or industries.

In 2020, Americans started 4.3 million businesses, by far the highest in over 15 years. Community colleges can also help these entrepreneurs. Many have created entrepreneurship centers that offer a wide-range of training and technical assistance initiatives.

From developing a business plan to conducting market analysis, these centers can guide students through all the different facets of launching an enterprise. These are just some of the significant benefits that community colleges provide.

I hope that today’s hearing allows us to explore how these institutions can help as we rebuild the American economy and retool the workforce.

So I would now like to yield to the Ranking Member, Ms. Young Kim, for her opening statement.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Thank you, Chairman Crow, for holding this very important hearing. And I would like to thank our witnesses for testifying today. At the same time, I would also like to thank my colleagues and Members who are joining us in person, as well as virtually.

Our country’s greatest asset is our workforce. The economy cannot survive or thrive without the skills, the knowledge, and innovation that the American worker contributes to their local communities.

Unfortunately, our economy is facing a labor crisis that is impacting every small business owner and employee, while also threatening the nation’s long-term economic prosperity.

Employers across all industries are struggling to fill more than 10.4 million job openings to meet the current demand.

And NFIB reports that 51 percent of small business owners have unfilled job openings. And this is the 48-year record high that contributes to be problematic for our nation’s job creators and the history average is only 22.

The pandemic has not only created a labor crisis but it has also accelerated the growing skills gap. The skills gap is the delta between the skills an employee has and the skills they actually need to perform a job.

In September 2021, 67 percent of small businesses reported hiring or trying to hire employees and a staggering 92 percent of those employers reported few or no qualified applicants for the positions they were trying to fill.

While the majority of employers are facing a talent shortage, training programs can address this crisis by preparing a pipeline of workers that have the academic, the technical, and the employability skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

Community colleges play a vital role in supporting their local workforce and regional economy by facilitating workforce development activities, such as the classroom segments of the apprenticeships, as well as general hands-on technical training. Not only are community colleges aware of the needs of the local firms but they can also train and educate students at a relatively low cost compared to that of a 4-year university. Additionally, career and technical education (CTE) and trade schools provide the technical skills, knowledge, and training necessary to succeed in the workforce. CTE prepares students for the world of work by introducing them to the workforce competencies and making academic content accessible in a hands-on context.

The high school graduation rate for students who are enrolled in a CT program is approximately 90 percent. As a comparison, this is 15 percentage points higher than the national average.

I have personally had the privilege of working with a career training program serving constituents in my district, in the 39th Congressional District in Southern California. The ReIGNITE Hope trains students for a career in welding and gets them certified in a system with job placement. They have trained over 700 students for a career in welding and have 100 percent certification pass rate. The ReIGNITE Hope does a tremendous job in giving people a second chance and assisting them with job placement.

As communities continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses can play an important role in providing viable pathways into the workforce and they are uniquely suited to help those, you know, and close the skills gap through the apprenticeships, CTE, and public-private educational partnerships. However, we need to allow our small businesses to prosper instead of hamstringing them with the threat of higher taxes and more regulations.

As we hold this hearing today, small businesses across the country are facing labor shortages, inflation, and major supply chain disruptions. I look forward to hearing all of your testimonies today and I hope to work with my colleagues to find real solutions to support our small businesses and close that ever-growing workforce skills gap.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Ms. Young Kim. The gentlelady yields back.

I would like to take a moment to explain how this hearing will proceed. Each witness will have 5 minutes to provide a statement

and each Committee Member will have 5 minutes for questions. Please ensure that your microphone is on when you begin speaking and that you return to mute when finished.

With that, I would like to introduce our first witness.

Our first witness is Dr. Anne Kress.

Dr. Kress, am I pronouncing that correctly?

Dr. Kress is the president of Northern Virginia Community College where she has served since January 2020. She has more than 25 years of experience in higher education having served as a tenured English professor, department chair, associate vice president, provost, and president of community colleges in Florida, New York, and now Virginia. She serves on the Board of the American Association of Community Colleges, the Executive Committee of the Task Force on Higher Education and Opportunity, Jobs of the Futures Policy Trust and Community College Workforce Consortium, alongside many more.

Welcome, Dr. Kress. I look forward to your testimony.

Our next witness is Dr. Rebeca Corbin, the president and CEO of the National Association of Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE). By her leadership, NACCE has grown by leaps and bounds, serving a vibrant community of more than 300 community colleges and historically Black colleges and universities alongside individual member faculty and administrators driving to ignite entrepreneurship in their colleges and communities. Prior to NACCE, she served as vice president of Institutional Advancement and as executive director of the BCC Foundation at Burlington Community College where she successfully launched a new workforce development initiative. She is also the co-author of the recently published Impact ED: How Community College Entrepreneurship Creates Equity and Prosperity.

Thank you, Dr. Corbin, for being here today.

Our next witness is Mr. Joe Garcia. Mr. Garcia is chancellor of the Colorado Community College System, the largest system of higher education in Colorado which serves over 125,000 students annually at 13 colleges and 35-plus locations across the state. He currently serves on the boards for the National Student Clearinghouse, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative. He is also the Chair of education and training for the Colorado Workforce Development Counsel. From 2011 to 2016, Mr. Garcia served as the lieutenant governor of Colorado and as the executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education where he focused on increasing equity and educational outcomes for all students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds and communities of color.

Thank you, Mr. Garcia. And, also, a close, personal friend of mine and somebody who I rely on to inform me on those issues. So I am really pleased you were able to join us today, Mr. Garcia.

I will now yield to the Ranking Member, Ms. Young Kim, to introduce our final witness.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our fourth witness is Frank Boecker, the human resources manager for Sunwest Electric, who is testifying today on behalf of the Associated Builders and Contractors.

Since 1985, Sunwest Electric has grown into one of the most respected merit shop electrical contractors in California with 240 employees working on projects throughout Southern California. Mr. Boecker has worked in the electrical industry for over 40 years and he started as an electrical apprentice on commercial and industrial projects and later enlisted in the United States Coast Guard to finish his formal electrician training. And after serving 6 years as an electrician, Mr. Boecker left the military and continued working in the field as a journeyman electrician and foreman. Mr. Boecker has served in the role of human resources manager for over 20 years, recruiting all levels and trades in the construction industry. Mr. Boecker believes that providing a great craft and apprenticeship education empowers people to find careers in the construction industry. He has received many accolades for his efforts in helping veterans and employing local Native Americans, economically challenged people, and those deserving of a second chance. He served as the 2020 Chair of the Associated Builders and Contractors Southern California Chapter and has partnered with local universities to help them develop curriculum in construction management and provide career counseling for graduates. Mr. Boecker is an advocate for his local community and his real-world experience will be extremely beneficial to our hearing today.

Thank you, Mr. Boecker, for your service and taking the time to testify before us today.

And Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman CROW. Thank you very much.

Dr. Kress, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF ANNE M. KRESS, PHD, PRESIDENT, NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE; REBECCA A. CORBIN, ED.D., PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP; JOE GARCIA, CHANCELLOR, COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM; FRANK BOECKER, MANAGER OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SUNWEST ELECTRIC, INC.

STATEMENT OF ANNE M. KRESS

Ms. KRESS. Good morning. I am Anne Kress. I am the president of Northern Virginia Community College and I sincerely want to thank you, Chairman Crow, and Ranking Member Young Kim, and all Members of this Committee for really turning attention to America's community colleges.

As you noted, we are probably one of the most unsung secrets in higher education and our connection with small businesses has never been more important. Community colleges across the country skill, reskill, and upskill America's workforce on an ongoing basis and our relationships with the local businesses in our community help our regional economies thrive and individuals prosper.

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) serves more than 80,000 in credit and non-credit programs. We are the largest public higher education institution in the Commonwealth of Virginia and our impact across the state is unequalled. One out of every three individuals in a community college in Virginia attends NOVA.

Ninety-one percent of our students come from our region and 60 percent of our students are students of color reflecting the diversity that you will see in Northern Virginia. These are students who go to college locally, who want to stay locally, who want to work locally. This is the message I want to share with you today. This partnership between community colleges and small businesses, medium businesses, large businesses has never been more important than it is during what we refer to as the Great Resignation.

NOVA strengthens the Northern Virginia talent pool every single year with thousands of career path graduates in associate and certificate programs. These range from automotive tech to accounting, cybersecurity to contract management, HVAC to horticulture. Such programs reflect the diversity of the businesses in our community and the close partnership that we have with local employees. Fifty percent of the individuals serving on our program advisory councils at NOVA come from small businesses.

And the results of that partnership are striking. In just the past 12 months, NOVA has connected almost 600 small businesses to our graduates and current students.

On the noncredit side, Virginia funds the Fast Forward Program. It is an initiative focused on accelerating programs that lead to in-demand industry certifications. Fast Forward students pay only a third of the cost of their programs with the remaining 2/3 picked up by the state in a performance-based model. Because these credentials are tied to real workforce demands in the localities that the colleges reside, they are tied to real wage gains and real jobs that folks can walk into today. On average, Fast Forward programs produce a 24 percent gain in income and an even greater return, 28 percent for those in low-income zip codes.

One of our recent Fast Forward graduates at NOVA was a 35-year-old woman, Arona. Arona came to the U.S. just before the pandemic and the only job she could find was as a nanny. But folks in her church told her that she should try NOVA. They told her that the training at NOVA would be very job specific, it would be fast, and it would connect her to a brand new career. So she gave it a try. She saved up her money and she began the Fast Forward program. She took courses online. She did her labs on the weekends. And 4 months later, Arona earned her medical assistant credential and is working in a pediatrician's office. This is the story about connecting individuals who have hopes and dreams and aspirations to training that connects them to real employment that helps grow our small businesses.

As we come out of the pandemic, this combination of short-term timelines, real wage returns, and jobs in our local communities have made Fast Forward programs more impactful and popular than ever. In just the past year, Fast Forward enrollment at NOVA has grown by over 55 percent, with enrollment by Hispanic students increasing by 80 percent and by Black students growing by a remarkable 233 percent. These are individuals who can see the connection between Fast Forward training, the certificates and credentials they earn, and the jobs they can find within a very short period of time because students enroll in workforce programs for a very simple reason—they are looking for jobs and they want jobs that lead to sustaining careers.

And we can do more to connect learning and earning. Apprenticeships are one way to do that. Students are employees from day one and it is a unique model that we will hear about clearly more later. But NOVA launched our first apprenticeships in the tech sector with Amazon web services. We have now expanded those and have served more than 400 different apprentices.

Earlier this year, NOVA joined the Greater Washington Apprentice Network, recognizing that small businesses often lack the capacity to add these apprentice programs and this will leverage that skillset.

One thing I will just end with is what has already been mentioned. Our recent survey with the Workforce Index with Northern Virginia Chamber has found that a third of all employers have having difficulty finding employees who meet the education and experience. When we see that, we also know that 2/3 of them are looking to expand hiring. NOVA and community colleges across the country offer that opportunity to build that short-term training pathway, those apprentices, and to leverage what we know to help small businesses grow.

I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Dr. Kress.

Dr. Corbin, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF REBECCA A. CORBIN

Ms. CORBIN. Good morning. Thank you for inviting me. It is a pleasure to be here, Chairman Crow and Ranking Member Young Kim. I am pleased to offer a national perspective on entrepreneurship in community colleges.

Community colleges, as you know and as you stated, are a life-line for small business. And what we know from looking at the data is that out of the approximately 1,200 community colleges, approximately 75 percent have an entrepreneurship training or support program of some kind. Twenty percent have a small business development center on their campus. And in the State of North Carolina where NACCE is located, every one of the 58 community colleges has a small business center called an SBDTC on the community college campus which offers somewhat of a national model for other states to take a look at.

One of the things that NACCE prides itself in is really leveraging the talent and the leadership and the enthusiasm of community colleges which puts us in a unique perspective. This year there has been since June, 440,000 new businesses started in this country. While they are suffering from the pandemic and much loss, that is a tremendous opportunity.

One of the things that we do know though from the data from the Kauffman Foundation and Department of Labor is that within the first year, 20 percent of those businesses will fail. By year 5, almost half of them will fail. But it does not have to be that way. We can expand the level of support, the resources, and these new businesses themselves will serve existing larger businesses and help both rural, suburban, and urban communities.

I want to speak briefly about how community colleges support business creation and also startups, things that people may not be readily aware of.

One way are venture labs. Venture labs introduce, inspire, and encourage technical and creative entrepreneurship. Sometimes they are called feasibility labs. What we have seen through the NACCE network in the last couple of years is the introduction of the Everyday Entrepreneur Venture Fund which is a seed fund started by a husband and wife philanthropists, provides seed grants of \$5,000 to \$6,000 where everyday entrepreneurs, women, immigrants, people of color, people without access to capital can get training and support through the community college and just a little bit of funding to buy tools, to buy something to really realize that American dream.

Hillsborough Community College in Florida through the InLab is an exceptional example. We write about this in the book that you mentioned, Mr. Crow, in your introduction, *Impact Ed: How Community Colleges can promote prosperity and equity for all*.

Further, incubators, which have been around for a while, also provide a coworking space, dedicated space. Maricopa Community College District in Arizona has an excellent example that we write about in one of our other books that really shows how a Discovery Triangle, a simple business Lean Canvas can really open up the door for opportunity for people.

Likewise, makerspaces where people can create, these are often diverse communities where they have 3D printers and laser cutters, can really experience the abilities and skills of everyone, those who are gifted and those who struggle to create new things, new opportunities, new inventions, and hope for our communities.

And finally, as Dr. Kress so well stated, entrepreneurship exists in academic and noncredit programs in excellent institutions like hers and many others around the country.

I want to spend the last minute though talking about a couple of case examples in our home state of North Carolina. First was opened up to us by North Carolina State Representative James Roberson through our connection at Wake Tech. He introduced us to a man by the name of Darrell Tennie, who prides himself in hiring Wake Tech students right out of the gate and he specifically looks for students of color, immigrants, people who do not have traditional opportunities, and he invests in them. He gives them titles. He mentors them. His career is flourishing. He is getting ready to open up an office in Las Vegas to expand his accounting practice. This could be scaled widely throughout the United States.

A second case example is another small business in North Carolina called Chapel Hill Tire. NACCE had an opportunity with some community college support to conduct a design thinking session for Chapel Hill Tire. They wanted to transition to a paperless system and they could not figure out how to do it. So they came to the community college and to NACCE and said, would you facilitate this? Help our employees learn how they can use everyday tools to become more efficient. It was so successful that Chapel Hill Tire made a donation which allowed NACCE to bring on two historically Black colleges and universities on to our membership.

I would just like to close with thanking you all for having this hearing. Everyone who is tuning in around the country. I believe and my colleagues believe that entrepreneurship and community colleges are really the gateway. And thank you for allowing us to

have a seat at the table. We stand ready to support you in your work. Thank you very much.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Dr. Corbin.

Mr. Garcia, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Garcia, I think you are muted.

STATEMENT OF JOE GARCIA

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Representative Crow. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. And sorry for that temporary glitch. I really appreciate the opportunity to be with all of you and to talk about the work of our community colleges.

As you noted earlier, our 13 community colleges are the state's largest provider of higher education and career training in the state and we serve about 125,000 students annually at over 35 locations around the state. And our mission is to provide accessible, affordable, supportive and transformative post-secondary education and workforce training to help our students build better lives and stronger communities.

Post-secondary educational institutions, I think we all know, will be key to our recovery from the pandemic by helping us develop a competitive workforce, and it is community colleges in particular that are most accessible to workers and responsive to business and industry needs.

Now, this past year we targeted, enrolled, trained, and supported displaced workers and nontraditional adult students, helping them to reskill or upskill and obtain industry recognized credentials that align with in-demand high wage occupations and in the end lead to meaningful employment. And our colleges have committed to reimagining how best to serve today's adult learner, redefining what success means for this particular group of students and putting less emphasis on traditional degree completion and more emphasis on the development of entrepreneurial skills tied to career-aligned programs that provide family sustaining wages.

And we have deliberately redesigned the time, place, and manner in which we offer our programs to meet the needs of adult learners—increasing the number of courses we offer in the evenings, on weekends, and to online and hybrid delivery. We have even added mobile learning labs that feature portable classrooms with professional grade trainers and instruction stations and customized training tools in areas like welding, machining, and materials testing. And these are labs that can be driven to a worksite so that instruction can be delivered anywhere in the state.

Now, as industries automate and evolve, we know individuals will pursue opportunities in new sectors so our colleges work in partnership with industry to develop curriculum in short-term programs that allow individuals with varying levels of academic readiness an opportunity to quickly shift into new roles based on their actual skills and experiences.

Now, we also deploy customized corporate training in noncredit offerings that allow for lower cost, shorter programs that are aligned with industry standards. For example, we know apprenticeships have proven successful for decades in the skilled trade sector and we now support opportunities in nontraditional sectors like information technology, financial services, and even healthcare. And

that helps students further reduce the cost of their education and decrease time to credential attainment, we have been at the forefront of providing opportunities to earn post-secondary credit from past work experience, from time in the military, demonstrated knowledge, skills, and abilities through what we call prior learning assessment.

Now, these are just a few examples of the ways our colleges provide relevant, cost-effective workforce education and training. And employers know the value of a well-educated employee and they know our programs produce more productive and valuable employees in part because those employees help us design and offer the training.

Now, while our colleges continue to stand at the ready to support the workforce of the future, it is critical that we ensure equitable access for all students, and noncredit and short-term programs are often not financial aid eligible, which results in a debt load to the student and sometimes limits enrollment to those who can afford to pay. Financially, adaptations like short-term Pell could dramatically increase enrollment specifically for low-income, marginalized adult students who are most in need of training.

Additionally, our workforce programs, while innovative and responsive, are frankly, expensive to develop and require more costly equipment and instructors than traditional academic programs. So, for example, programs in information technology, healthcare, in advanced manufacturing are in great demand but are also among the most expensive programs to offer. And in order to maintain our roles as leading providers of workforce training and to maintain affordability for students, it is critical that we make meaningful investments in career and technical education infrastructure at our colleges.

So in conclusion, community colleges—we all recognize—are the key to our nation's economic future and its civic and cultural vitality. We serve the fastest growing student populations, those with limited economic resources, those who are ethnic and racial minorities, those who are refugees, veterans, working parents, and many others who are not well-served in more traditional and more expensive 4-year institutions. So, as our economy relies more and more on those with higher education and skills training, we are the colleges that will equip students for success in the future.

I look forward to answering any questions you have. Thank you very much.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

Mr. Boecker, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF FRANK BOECKER

Mr. BOECKER. Chairman Crow, Ranking Member Young Kim and Members of the U.S. House Committee on Small Business, thank you for the invitation to discuss the indispensable role that community colleges, trade schools and career and technical education programs play in the construction industry, which currently employs 7.4 million craftworkers throughout our country.

My name is Frank Boecker, and I am the human resources manager for Sunwest Electric, a business established in Southern California in 1984 with the goal of providing our customers with a com-

petitive, high-quality, turnkey product. Since founding, Sunwest has grown to be one of the most respected merit shop electrical contractors in California, with 240 field electricians currently working on projects throughout Southern California. I am testifying today on behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national construction industry trade association established in 1950 that represents more than 21,000 Member companies across our country.

Sunwest is a Member of the ABC Southern California chapter founded in 1993. ABC SoCal has become one of the first nonunion apprenticeship programs to be certified in California.

The subject of this hearing is very important to me as I believe a path to a successful career begins in the classroom. Sunwest Electric is proud to offer every employee the opportunity to participate in the many educational opportunities at ABC SoCal or our own programs at Sunwest Electric. As part of our Sunwest in-house educational programs, we offer hands-on experience, computer education, safety courses and construction management classes to help our employees to continue to progress quickly in their careers as electricians. Our company currently has more than 100 employees attending a 4-year workforce development program, with Sunwest paying 100 percent of the cost. These dedicated employees will spend at least 120 hours each year in a classroom and more than 8,000 hours on the job throughout their 4-1/2 year program, gaining the experience needed to succeed in the industry.

It is important to note that most of these individuals will start at about \$19 per hour, and it will grow throughout their time in the program. Once they have completed the free 4-1/2 year education and successfully passed the state's certification program, they are nearly guaranteed to double their salary.

What I have found throughout my time as an apprentice, a journey-level worker and in human resources is that the opportunities available in the construction industry cannot be met through just one talent pipeline. To fill the approximately 430,000 construction craft professionals needed in 2021 alone, the federal government should promote all effective programs and pathways that lead to fulfilling jobs in the construction industry.

The workforce shortage facing construction and many other industries across the country is one that we must continue to address head on. I appreciate the Committee drawing attention to these critical opportunities available to America's workers. For too long, the definition of success messaged to young Americans was that a college degree was a necessary requirement for a good career, ignoring the value and benefits of community college programs, apprenticeship programs and trade schools. We must continue to spotlight the opportunities for young people and individuals looking for a career through more affordable options, and in our case, a free, earn-while-you-learn 4-year education that provide the skills needed for financial independence and a rewarding career.

With more than 40 years in the electrical industry, I have been able to help others gain the necessary trade knowledge and experience to be successful electricians. For 15 of those 40 years, I have taught apprenticeship classes at night while working on projects during the day with some of these students and provide them with the hands-on experience in the field. Part of my promise to my em-

ployees, I will dedicate my time after work to help them prepare for the journey-level electrical certification test.

Of particular relevance to this hearing, I have also partnered with local universities to help develop curriculum in construction management and provide career counseling to their graduates.

In 2020, I served as the Chair of the ABC Southern California Chapter Board of Directors and I continue to serve on the Board of Directors today. Throughout my service on the ABC Board of Directors and in many years in construction, I am proud to be a part of the solution to the workforce shortage issue throughout the industry. Perhaps my proudest moments, however, comes from the individual success stories that can be found in each Sunwest employee or the ABC SoCal apprenticeship program graduates. It is with their testimonies in mind that I address you. I have included some success stories with my full written testimony, which should inform the committee of the impact of the construction industry's educational capacity.

In conclusion, a career in construction has limitless possibilities and now is an ideal time to get into the industry. Congress must continue promoting the benefits of alternate education pathways for successful careers and encourage more of the great partnerships among companies like Sunwest and the organizations and community colleges that help bridge the gaps for seeking employment. I thank you for the opportunity to serve as a witness for this important hearing and look forward to your questions.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Mr. Boecker.

So I will begin by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Right now the House is negotiating and taking up a bill under President Biden's Build Back Better agenda and an essential element of that bill is universal Pre-K and childcare. And what I hear from my constituents back home and back in my district is how challenging it is to go back to work, to change jobs, to reeducate as I think one of you mentioned, to skill, reskill, or upskill—and I love that phrase—if you do not have good childcare. Because so many of the students that the community college system serves as these nontraditional students. They have families. They have young children.

So I would like to start with you, Mr. Garcia. What would be the impact on your system in your schools if we had a better, more affordable, more universal childcare precare—Pre-K rather, for the students that you serve?

Mr. GARCIA. Chairman Crow, Members of the Committee. Thank you. It would be dramatic, frankly. We know that so many of our students are adults. They have caretaking responsibilities. Those caretaking responsibilities have been dramatically impacted by the pandemic as their children are home during the day and they do not have anyone to help them. They cannot go to work. So not only can they not pursue work. They cannot pursue an education. Making childcare more affordable, more accessible, more universal would allow more of our student to come to our campuses, take the classes, even online classes. They still need time to study. They need a quiet place. They cannot always do that if they have got young children at home. We know that that is a very common complaint that we hear from our students. They want to pur-

sue an education. They just cannot do it without affordable childcare.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

Dr. Kress?

Ms. KRESS. It would be transformational to have childcare for our students. Nationally the data suggests that one in five college students is a working parent. So if you think about that in the context of NOVA, we have 80,000 credit and noncredit students. That is 16,000 students.

We are privileged to have a CCAMPIS grant through the U.S. Department of Education. Childcare access means parents in schools. The name is right there. And when you look at the success of those students across the board, one of the reasons why a program like that is so impactful is because it allows student-parents to focus on being students, not to worry about where their children are for short-term and longer-term education.

Another datapoint I will put out there is that fewer than 3 percent of student-parents who are mothers achieve a bachelor's degree. Think about the loss in workforce that you are looking at there simply because we cannot meet a need that they have to help them advance themselves and their families. We also know that poverty is intergenerational. So if we are able to get these student-parents into these short-term programs that yield, again, real wage gains, 24 percent, 28 percent, you are changing not just the life of that individual. You are changing the trajectory of a family simply by supporting childcare.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Dr. Kress.

One follow up question there. Would it be accurate to say that available childcare, universal Pre-K, would dramatically expedite the resolution of some of our workforce labor issues by speeding up that pipeline within the community college system?

Ms. KRESS. Absolutely. When we look at students at NOVA, and this would be the same for Colorado, any community college, what you are seeing is that when students do stop out and drop out, it has nothing to do with their academic abilities. It has everything to do with their inability, inability to manage all of what life throws at them as college students. Community college students on average have an age of about 27. So these are folks who have full lives, who have families that they are trying to juggle. Providing universal Pre-K, providing childcare would enable them to move forward.

Chairman CROW. Thank you.

And Dr. Corbin, one remaining question for you on a different issue. Advanced manufacturing is a key issue to re-onshoring vital industries. We have a supply chain issue that has become very acute under COVID. Obviously, our economic competition with China has underscored the need to bring back key advanced manufacturing. Community colleges are going to be an essential element to that. But we need capital investments in the equipment and the trainers to actually conduct that training for those jobs. Can you touch on how you think those investments should be made and how we address that to ramp up that training pipeline for those industries?

Ms. CORBIN. Thank you. That is an excellent question.

I think that there are a number of different ways that community colleges can do that, as has been discussed. They are very nimble. They can adjust to that but there are equipment needs. And I think really partnerships between government, philanthropy and industry can really drive that. I spoke a moment ago about design thinking. I think that there are solutions that can be created by bringing diverse stakeholders to the table. As we have seen with some of the supply chain challenges, changing scheduling time, sometimes there are small changes that yield great results. I see that as a great opportunity and I feel very optimistic that there is the talent to solve that. And the solutions may not be as complicated as we think but investment is needed and I think a diverse number of players investing in it is probably the best approach.

Chairman CROW. Thank you, Dr. Corbin.

I am out of time so I will now yield to the Ranking Member, Ms. Young Kim, for 5 minutes.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Thank you, Chairman.

I would like to engage with Mr. Boecker who is joining us virtually. In your testimony, Mr. Boecker, you mentioned the challenges the construction industry is facing in finding skilled labor. This is an issue that many small businesses across America also face. So can you tell us more about the 4-year workforce development program that Sunwest is funding for over 100 of your employees?

Mr. BOECKER. Thank you, Ranking Member Young Kim.

The apprentice programs that are throughout our country which as I stated are free, they provide not only the classroom but the hands-on, and they also provide jobs for these individuals. So they are able to work full time, get their education, and be able to provide for their families. And the skills that they gain inside these programs are providing them the skills that are needed to do their day-to-day job and progress further in their careers.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Would you say that this program has helped meet your demands, your labor demands, and bring new employees to your company? And are they only employed by your company or are you able to help them gain employment elsewhere?

Mr. BOECKER. Well, the 100 employees that we have, the 100-plus employees that we have that go to the Associated Builders Programs, the local program here, they are Sunwest employees and they are paid and employed by us during the day and they go to school at night. The pipeline to find skilled, trained workers out there is tough, you know, especially when you look at the population aging out in the construction industry. So associations and programs like ABC, they provide our employees the skills and we provide them with the students.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. You know, as I mentioned in my opening statement, the ReIGNITE Hope provides skills to change their lives and help in the joblessness and sometimes the homeless issues, too. And your company offers similar training. So how can we do better in highlighting and raising awareness of programs like these?

Mr. BOECKER. Well, you know, especially in your district there is a lot of great organizations that help, you know, especially veterans. There is a program in your district called Hope Builders, which I am partnered with that provides opportunities for individ-

uals who are economically challenged or second chancers. And there are programs like that. There are programs in LA, Homeboys Industry, that also helps second chancers and gang members. There are a lot of organizations and associations out there that they have the people. They just need the partnerships with employers and with educational institutions to help get them on the right path and move them forward.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Thank you, Mr. Boecker.

I would like to engage our witnesses in the room today. Some of these programs that we are talking about which are successful, I would like to see how we can replicate these programs across our nation. So can you talk about your partnership with local small businesses? And how do you ensure that you are providing the curricula that will fill those gaps in the local workforce?

Either one of you can go.

Ms. CORBIN. Do you want me to start? Okay. Thank you for that question, Ranking Member Young Kim.

I think I could speak to it from a scaling perspective, and some of the ways that we can take best practices around the country, things that work and expand them and scale them.

One successful way that we have seen that our community colleges themselves engaging in competitions, for example, looking at how can you take skilled trades and other programs and infuse that into the curriculum? So we have done that the last couple of years with the support of the Radcliffe Foundation. So we challenge faculty to say if it is a construction business that is assisting women who are returning back into the community building tiny houses, how can you accelerate and scale that? So I think part of the question that came up previously tied to your question is how do you scale up and how do you get the stories out? And I think it is really through networks of sharing. I think opportunities like today where we can talk about these things deeply in terms of what is being done on specific community colleges but how can we take best practices that are happening at NOVA and infuse them quickly throughout the country and it definitely can be done. Thank you.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Quickly. We ran out of time but I would like to ask Dr. Kress the same.

Chairman CROW. Go ahead, Dr. Kress. You may answer the question.

Ms. KRESS. So I will just give the example really quickly of the Fast Forward program. So this is a program again that is focused on short-term credentials that have local market relevance. So what you are going to see in Northern Virginia is not what you are going to see in Southwest Virginia or in Hampton Roads region. And these programs then are scaled across the state. So they are serving a system that has close to 300,000 students in it. If you look at a program like that that helps support those noncredit students financially and incentivizes completion by telling them you are going to pay one-third but if you do not finish the program we are going to ask you for the second-third as well, you are really looking at a program that meets local needs because they are locally informed by the workforce investment boards and others. It graduates folks right into that regional marketplace. They find jobs

right away. And the word of mouth around that program is incredibly powerful because of the success stories that it generates.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

I would now like to recognize Ms. Bourdeaux, the gentlelady from Georgia for 5 minutes.

Ms. BOURDEAUX. Thank you so much. This is a hearing that is really near and dear to my heart as a college professor and also someone who spends a lot of time talking to small businesses in my community about how we can bring those two sides together.

Georgia is really nationally known for its technical college system and they do a lot of great work partnering with the business community to make sure they are really building that pipeline between businesses and the skills, building those skills that they need. I am actually going to be visiting a local battery manufacturing plant near my district with Gwinnett Technical College in the coming week to talk about how they can partner to expand opportunities.

The challenge though is, and I think many of you are touching on this even in that last question, is it is small businesses. It is often the big guys that are able to come in. They have the equipment. They have, you know, the ability to really create a program at scale. But my small businesses, I have got lots and lots of small manufacturing all across my district and they have huge workforce needs and they just do not have the time or ability to build those kinds of connections with their community colleges. Or in my case, the technical colleges.

So I just thought I would see if you have some ideas or models that we might be able to draw on. And I guess I would start with Dr. Kress. You know, what are things that we can do to bring those partnerships together more firmly? What are things that you all have worked on that have been very successful and really, you know, getting the needs of the small businesses and then creating that pipeline into jobs?

Ms. KRESS. Thank you. It is an excellent question.

One of the challenges that I think many small employers do have is the challenge of scale. And so I will just speak with a couple of specific examples. For example, in a previous role when I was in New York as the president of a community college there, we saw a huge need in heating ventilation and air conditioning but these were folks who really need what we would call ones and twos. Right? They need one employee, they need two employees. So we actually convened them together and we did a visual experiment. We had ping pong balls and we had each one of them pick up the number of ping pong balls that they actually needed for employees. We had a gigantic bowl in the middle and it overflowed. And what the message was was if we could convene you together and develop a set of skills that would benefit all of you, we could build a program that could serve all of you and help you build your capacity. Because what they were doing, and we all have seen this, is that they were hiring each other's workforce over and over again rather than expanding it. So I would say that the convening power of community colleges to bring businesses around the table, have them set their competition to the side, think about the skillsets that they need, the community colleges stand ready to provide that. We can

be the convener. We can be the aggregator. And we can grow that workforce by directly responding to these individual needs as a much larger need across multiple small businesses.

Ms. BOURDEAUX. Thank you. That is a great story.

Dr. Garcia, do you have any insight from your perspective?

Mr. GARCIA. Yes. Thank you for the question.

It is true that small businesses face the greatest challenges because they do not frankly have the resources or the time to train their own employees, but those ones and twos, the issue that Dr. Kress just spoke to, is a challenge for all of us. These programs, frankly, are the most expensive programs for us to offer. Of course, you know, community colleges offer a wide range of academic programs. It is a lot cheaper and a lot easier to offer a class in English composition or English literature than in HVAC. HVAC requires specialized equipment and instructors. The SBDCs can help us by talking to the employers about helping to provide instructors. Often for us we find it very difficult to find instructors who we can pay enough to come in and teach our students even if we have enough students. But teaching very small groups of students, using expensive equipment is a net loss for us in all cases. So we do need more support from the State and federal government to help equip our classrooms and our labs to offer the kind of expensive training that so many employers demand.

And again, the small business development centers can help us by getting the employers together, just as Dr. Kress described, recognizing the collective need and perhaps getting them to agree to help provide instructors, equipment, lab space, even onsite training so that we can deliver in a way that is affordable to us. We still are relying on revenues from tuition and from state funds. Often those revenues are not sufficient to cover the costs of offering these kinds of much-needed programs.

Ms. BOURDEAUX. Okay. Thank you so much. I see I am out of time. I yield back.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

And Dr. Kress, I think I am going to go buy a bunch of ping pong balls because the United States Congress could benefit from that exercise here. I love that.

Now, the gentleman, the Vice Ranking Member of the Committee, Mr. Williams from Texas, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to thank the witnesses for being here today.

This whole thing is very close to my heart. I am an auto dealer in Texas. I employ several hundred people and I have used community colleges for body welding and mechanics for 51 years. It is really important. And when I was secretary of the State of Texas, we lost a billion dollars' worth of improvements to Michigan, if you can believe that, because we did not have enough welders. So that has always set home to me. So thanks for what you are doing.

You know, when I talk to small businesses back in Texas, I constantly hear concerns surrounding the skills gap. And recently, I spoke with a landscaping company in my district who told me they turn down jobs every day because they do not have the manpower, skilled workers needed to complete more complex jobs, even though

they offer to pay for their employees' technical trainings or certifications and offer competitive salaries.

The growing skills gap is something we all need to be concerned about and it is hitting the vocational job industry extremely hard because the younger generations are not necessarily joining at a high rate and that could be because we are making them think that unemployment compensation is a career. And of course now today we have got the vaccine mandates which are not going to help at all.

So Mr. Boecker, my question to you is can you speak more on how the skills gap is affecting small businesses?

Mr. BOECKER. Great question. Thank you, sir.

I think that, you know, the skills—I guess the better way to put the answer to that question is, you know, there is a lot of projects, you know, with the infrastructure and many other large and small projects throughout, you know, the United States that are out to bid, ready to be awarded but contractors throughout the country, they just, like I stated in the beginning, the workforce is aging out and the younger generation is just not energized enough or know about the availability of training programs and that kind of stuff. So, I mean, there is a huge gap and it does prevent, you know, contractors like ourselves from doing a lot of these projects or being able to do these projects quickly because of that shortage. But there are avenues out there to help, you know, the industry grow and that is one of the main things that I, you know, as I brought up is ready to work. We just have to continue partnering them with industry and government and make sure that they are able to get on these projects and help contractors, especially these small businesses everybody is talking about. Get out there and help them.

Mr. WILLIAMS. We have to excite these young men and women that a paycheck is one of the greatest things you can have in this country.

One way that we can work to address the skills gap is by informing and encouraging individuals to join career and technical education, better known as CTE programs. Earlier this year I introduced the Student Debt Alternative and CTE Awareness Act which informs high school students about CTE opportunities before they commit to a traditional 4-year university and take out student loans and that is important. I wrote this bill in response to many of my young constituents saying they did not know what they wanted to do in life but felt compelled to get a college degree. Could not afford it. Instead of forcing our students into years of debt, we should encourage CTE that provides students with a viable, good paying career.

So again, Mr. Boecker, do you think encouraging more students to pursue CTE would have a positive impact on business' experienced, skilled worker shortages? And also, what resources would be helpful to you to assist in recruiting more skilled workers? And I have got a question after that, too, so if you could be brief.

Mr. BOECKER. Great. Great question.

You know, the programs that we are associated with, they are free to young men and women who want to join these programs but I definitely think that there is a lot of opportunities for continuing, you know, showing these young men and women the opportunities

are out there and provide them with paths to these CTEs to get them to jump in and become successful.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you.

Mr. Garcia, as students complete their vocational training, what additional resources do you think would be helpful to these graduates looking to find full-time employment or trying to start their own businesses? And I think if they are trying to start their own business they need to get a hold of their elected official and tell them not to raise taxes. That might be a good start.

So what do you think, quickly?

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Williams, our students need a number of things once they graduate. One, Chairman Crow already mentioned which is childcare. Individuals still have a hard time, especially at entry-level jobs of affording childcare.

But the second thing they need is career counseling. They need help from us to connect them with employers so that they can put those skills to use. A lot of employers want people with skills but they want them with experience as well so they often want them to get a job with somebody else and then they will hire them away from that person once they have a little bit more experience. So we have got to get employers to be a little bit more willing to do some on-the-job training to supplement the educational experiences they have received through the community colleges.

Mr. WILLIAMS. My time is up. I yield back and thank all of you for being here.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

I will now recognize the Chairwoman on the Subcommittee of Economic Growth, Tax, and Capital Access, Ms. Davids from Kansas for 5 minutes.

Ms. DAVIDS. Thank you, Chairman Crow. I appreciate you holding this hearing on what is a really, really important topic. And as a community college graduate myself, and I earned my associate's degree at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas, which is the district I get to represent now. I know how important it is for strong community colleges, you know, to be in communities. They provide affordable and really highly-accessible pathways to all sorts of careers and industries. So I am really glad we are getting to focus on how these institutions are helping prepare folks to be part of the small business workforce. And really to be entrepreneurs themselves.

So my first question, Dr. Corbin, you know, yesterday, we held a full Small Business Committee Hearing on the surprising increase in entrepreneurship that we saw in 2020. And I know that was mentioned earlier. I am curious if that is corresponded with increased interest in entrepreneurship or business counseling at your partner schools

Ms. CORBIN. Thank you for that question, and thank you for your interest. We have seen that. There was a survey that was done earlier in the summer by a Woodrow Wilson scholar that is included in my written testimony that really speaks to that entrepreneurship interest and programming, both on the noncredit side and on the credit side has increased. We have seen that and we expect that to increase. The opportunity is really to thread in mentorship. It was mentioned career counseling and support. If you

have wraparound services to those and enhance those you can be even more successful. So thank you for that question.

Ms. DAVIDS. Yeah. I know you mentioned the Small Business Development Centers. Johnson County Community College also has a small business development center and has been an incredible resource for students and entrepreneurs. We have a really strong entrepreneurial ecosystem in our region.

I am curious if, you know, do you think with the small business development centers, do you think there are things that we could be doing to help make sure that these areas are getting better connected, partnering with federal resources through our community Colleges.

Ms. CORBIN. Absolutely. I think one of the things that we have had the privilege to have are conversations with Administrator Guzman about really infusing entrepreneurship through the SBA. I know there is a lot of good programming that is going on there. I think where you are right now in Johnson County is a leader for that. You have the Kauffman Foundation out there. You have a lot of resources. But really, there are resources everywhere. Some of what we could do is really lean into more ecosystem mapping. Helping people identify assets. Sometimes there are resources and partnerships that are literally right in front of you but you do not see them. And I think the SBA is doing just a fantastic job of doing that but I think we could do more, especially with connecting with, you know, the programs that we are highlighting day.

Ms. DAVIDS. Yeah. That is a great point. I often see folks kind of later in the game saying, oh, I wish I had known about that resource much earlier. And so I know I am always trying to figure out ways that from the Small Business Committee perspective we can be helpful there.

And then, you know, I think the next question, Dr. Kress, I would love to hear from you about how community colleges are staying in tune with local communities in terms of the skills needed. I know we have been hearing a bit about that gap and I am curious what you are seeing with local workforce boards and businesses trying to determine what skills should be taught. Kind of what does that look like in practice?

Ms. KRESS. So thank you. Excellent question.

At NOVA and at most community colleges, every single program needs to have an advisory council. And so that advisory council is typically made up, if it is a transfer pathway it is university partners. Our career pathway programs, those are employers. They are individuals who employ our students on a regular basis. And for our advisory councils, 50 percent of those seats are filled by small business owners or their representatives. So they are directly informing the curriculum of our programs. They are giving us feedback on the performance of our graduates. So that is one way.

And then with noncredit programming, we work directly with the workforce investment boards to identify which programs are necessary in our community, where those skills gaps are, and how NOVA can fill that role in helping graduate a prepared workforce. And that is true across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Ms. DAVIDS. Thank you. And thank you to all our witnesses for taking the time to share your experiences and expertise with us today.

Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

I will now recognize the gentlelady from New York, Ms. Tenney from New York for 5 minutes.

Ms. TENNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Young Kim. This is a really important meeting and I am really proud of the community colleges that are in my region. And they do offer a great opportunity for so many students.

Recent data shows that according to March 2021, the Federal Reserve, over 40 percent of recent 4-year college graduates are employed in jobs that do not typically require such a college degree. It is critical that we support alternatives like community colleges which offer vocational training, apprenticeships, and other forms of job-created learning. And this has been a huge factor in my district. I am not even a mile away from Mohawk Valley Community College which was a shining example of innovation, of learning, of adapting to providing needs for our industries locally and giving students an opportunity to do hands-on learning, empowering students. Even our company has used some of our community college-based students for this. But the current labor shortage shows that there are necessary, well-paying jobs in our economy and that the expensive 4-year degrees are not necessarily the solution. So looking, I mean, I know that we have looked to the community colleges for our industry as well and I know that Mr. Boecker, you answered some of these questions. But in sharing your experiences with workers, and I agree with your testimony, there is sometimes an overemphasis on having a 4-year degree. I am a recipient of a 4-year degree. It has been valuable. But in facing our worker shortage across the country, what would you identify as the core reason for this shortage? And what can Congress do to help bring our workers back using our community college networks, particularly in Upstate New York where we have a fantastic SUNY system?

Mr. BOECKER. Great question. You know, I think that, again, I think when we talk about the shortages and getting people partnered with community colleges and apprenticeship programs, I think it is more of we have heard it time after time that a lot of people are unaware of what is out there for them. I think it is important that we go into high schools. We go into some of these either junior colleges and stuff and talk about some of the vocational training that is available.

Ms. TENNEY. How would you do that? Can I just ask, what recommendation would you have to us as Members of Congress? How can we get the word out in our communities that there are these great opportunities with our community colleges?

Mr. BOECKER. That is a tricky question because, I mean, you know, again, even as parents we look, you know, we encourage our kids to get a higher education. You know, even as parents we do not even progress our kids into those type environments. I think that as far as, you know, as far as, you know, everybody in the government, as far as, I think that we need to encourage some of these high schools to actually have programs like pre-apprenticeship pro-

grams and that kind of stuff to allow these young men and women to actually touch a screwdriver, touch a hammer, touch these tools and see if this is something that would excite them and allow them to, you know, start up, you know, an apprenticeship or a second type of vocational education.

Ms. TENNEY. Yeah. I think that is something we do with our BOCES system in New York State which has been tremendous.

But I want to now just ask Dr. Corbin, you were talking about the surge of new business startups during the pandemic totaling 440,000 as of June 2021. The next challenge is always, all entrepreneurs struggle with surviving and keeping their idea going. And obviously, it has been a huge issue in my community as well. We have a lot of entrepreneurs who have stepped up to try to encourage these programs to match them either with employers or other 4-year colleges.

And so my question is to Dr. Corbin. What can be done from the SBA or the community college side to help facilitate this more so that our entrepreneurs can continue to empower and stay involved in helping these entrepreneurs who own their businesses, to keep them alive. It is a huge challenge in today's post-COVID economy.

Ms. CORBIN. Thank you for that question. I think that is excellent.

We mentioned a little bit earlier about mentoring. Dr. Kress had mentioned about advisory councils. What I saw in my experience as the vice president of a community college is a lot of times college foundation boards are populated with entrepreneurs. Many of them do not have degrees but they are very successful. It is tapping into what is right in front of you and having very simple programs where people can plug in and support one another.

The other opportunity, there are a lot of open-source online tools that are provided by companies. For example, like Intuit. They have a suite of tools that are available to community colleges for free and there is training around it. So I think it is really, like we said, getting the word out, meeting people where they are, speaking sometimes in their language, going into their communities. Who is it that they trust? Do they get their information from churches? Many times communities of color, they have that. So thank you for that question. I think there is so much that we can do.

I would just quickly add as well, in some of the conversations we have been having with the SBA and the Equity Roundtable, they are really leaning into that. They are bringing together association executives and saying, how do we get to the people? As a person on those calls, there is a lot of low-hanging fruit, some simple things that we can do that we can expand and scale.

Ms. TENNEY. Yeah, thank you. I served actually on our Community College Board a number of years ago and it was a great experience. And it is amazing what they do for adult learners and how quickly our community college actually reacts to entrepreneurs and people that need resources, including our company and providing a skillset. And it is really incredible but I think the more that we look at this and facilitating these private relationships also and working with our local community—we have a community of entrepreneurs and small businesses which is unique because it is a

small rural sort of suburban setting. So I really appreciate that and just love our community colleges.

I want to say congratulations to my home community college, which is Mohawk Valley Community College, where they are celebrating 75 years this year. Just like our family business was founded 75 years ago, our partners with the 11 colleges in my district, a number of community colleges as well, have really enriched our communities and made us able to thrive and find great qualified workers. And particularly, a lot of people, a lot of women and others who have left one business and gone to another and have been able to see the resources of a community college. So I think that is a real key place for a small business, you know, business development. I really appreciate all that you have done.

And thank you to our witnesses, also. I really appreciate this. And to the Chairman and Ranking Member, great meeting. I look forward to meetings like this in the future where we can actually help our small business community and help them grow.

I yield back.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

I will now yield to the gentleman from New York, Mr. Garbarino, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARBARINO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the Ranking Member for having this very important hearing. I have to echo the words of my colleague from New York. We have some of the best community colleges. Very proud of my two, Suffolk Community and Nassau Community, because they seem to adapt much quicker through the needs of what the community needs. And specifically, you know, right now we are seeing huge, huge problems with cybersecurity. I am the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee for Homeland and my two community colleges have started a cybersecurity program. A 2-year program to get a degree because people need cybersecurity experts so the community colleges saw the need there and they produced a curriculum so people can come out with a degree and get jobs right away.

I do have a question because Mr. Boecker representing AGC, I had meetings the other day or last week with equipment manufacturers and dealers. They were telling me how they are offering about \$48-50 an hour now for certain equipment jobs and they cannot fill them. And right now one of them said the supply chain issue is actually helping them because if there was no supply chain issues they would not be able to keep up with demand. Granted, they would love to be able to keep up with demand.

Can you go in a little further? I know you touched a little bit on it in your testimony and some other questions. What can we do more? Because I think, you know, with these community colleges we need to get people back into trades. We need to get people back into, like you said, swinging a hammer, doing electrical work, doing plumbing work. Not going and doing these 4-year degrees that at the end people might come out of college with more debt. Well, they are. People are coming out of college making less money than they have in debt.

So what can we do with the community colleges? What can Congress do to help businesses, like yours, like the AGC, like these

equipment manufacturers? I know you touched on it briefly, but can you go into it a little more?

Mr. BOECKER. Yes. Great question.

The association I am with is Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC). ABC is another great organization that I have spent a lot of time with.

You know, probably the one thing that I think that everybody on the Committee and in government, I would encourage you to go to your local apprenticeship programs and tour the facilities. Talk to these students. See and meet these young men and women who are in these classes. I mean, ABC has 69 chapters across the country. They have thousands of students attending these classes every day. I think it is important for community colleges and government to meet these young men and women and see what brings them to the industry. I think that would help you encourage other young men and women to do that because I think if you see these young men and women as we said, swinging a hammer, I think you would be very impressed and I think it would open more doors and avenues to help community colleges form these partnerships with these apprenticeship programs. Who know? Many people have talked about the financial cost of our apprenticeship programs or hands-on skilled training. They are out there. I mean, from A to Z, if you want to learn how to operate heavy equipment, there are amazing programs through the Associated Buildings and Contractors that will teach you how to operate a big bulldozer if you want. Or if you want to be a plumber there are programs to teach you how to be a plumber. They are all there. It is just people are not, you know, I guess again it is not one of those things that is broadcasted out there. I mean, you do not—

Mr. GARBARINO. People do not know about it. They are not being told about them?

Mr. BOECKER. Yeah, they are not. It is one of those secrets that nobody wants to share which is sad.

Mr. GARBARINO. Well, and actually, so I have a follow-up question actually for Mr. Garcia.

So I have heard similar from what Mr. Boecker just said from other groups saying the high school guidance counselors, they are not offering this. They are not offering community college programs like the trade programs. They are not offering these as something that these kids can do. What kind of relationship does your organization have or your community college have with guidance counselors? Do they know about these programs? I mean, are they sharing them with their students in the high schools? Because, I mean, that is how the high school students are going to find out about them.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chair, Representative Garbarino. That is exactly right. High school counselors generally attended 4-year institutions themselves. They know 4-year institutions. They do not know us. We need to help them understand the success rates of our students and the earnings and job placement numbers for our students. There is still a stigma attached to attending community colleges. We all speak about how much we love community colleges but how many of our colleagues, how many of us want our kids to go? We need to understand that a lot of our students are very suc-

cessful and we need to identify those people in the community, in our communities who are seen as leaders but who attended community college and got their start there and we need to ask them to talk about their experience.

But we do need to work with our counselors. Let's say our largest community college, Front Range, invites all the counselors here 4-times a year, buys them lunch, and tells them about the programs that we offer, and importantly, the earnings and job placement rates for those graduates. That helps and yet I think guidance counselors, just like school principals, often are measured in terms of their success by how many students they send to selective 4-year institutions, not by how many students they send to a community college, even if those students are ultimately very successful.

Mr. GARBARINO. I appreciate that answer so much, and I know I am over time so, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. And thank you again for having this great hearing.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

So today this was a remarkable hearing. I always love these hearings. I love this Committee so much because honestly, you cannot tell someone's political affiliation during these hearings because we are just asking questions and talking about policy and talking about really important issues which, frankly, is just incredibly refreshing. I appreciate my continued collaboration and work with the Ranking Member, Ms. Young Kim, as well. Because obviously, we make that possible through our hard work.

So what we know, what we have realized is COVID has resulted in a massive shift in our labor market and changed how Americans work potentially forever. Research shows that as much as 25 percent more workers than previously estimated are going to potentially need to switch occupations in the wake of COVID. But switching, obviously, is not easy. It takes work, specialized skills to gain a foothold in new industries. It takes that skilling, reskilling, upskilling. I am going to steal that from you, Dr. Kress.

So that is why we have to do everything we can to support these workers and make that transition. And what has become so obvious over time and again in this hearing is that the community college system is going to be fundamental to actually accomplishing that.

In Colorado, we have a great system. The Colorado Community College system. I am going to thank Joe Garcia again. In my district, we have Arapahoe Community College and Community College of Aurora, which really is life-changing to so many students. And they do incredible work and I am proud to support them.

So I am going to continue to work on Members of this Committee to pursue the avenues and the ideas we heard about today because our economy will demand it, our families will demand it, our constituents will demand it, and they all deserve it.

And with that I am going to part from normal protocol here and give the Ranking Member some time for a short closing statement as well.

Ms. YOUNG KIM. Thank you, Chairman. It is really an honor and privilege to work with you in a very bipartisan way, especially through our work on the Subcommittee that we both Chair and Co-Chair.

So I want to thank all the witnesses that have provided wonderful testimony and also through some of your examples, I think it was very apparent that the partnership we have with the local community colleges, it is really important to help build that workers' training that we need to fill those unfilled job openings that we have.

I also would like to give a big shoutout to the community colleges in my California 39th Congressional District. In my district we have Fullerton College, Mount Sac Community Colleges, but also nearby we have Cypress and Pomona Colleges. And I know the great work that they do. And I am very proud to also represent Cal State Fullerton in the district. They have a wonderful partnership and provide all of these job skills training programs that are needed. And on their campuses, they also host SBDC offices and work directly with our small businesses in the area to provide them with the advice, counseling, training, and all that that is needed.

So I would like to offer my personal service as well as my offices' resources to work with all of the community colleges and really work together in a bipartisan way to move these programs that we talked about and also do more so we can talk about the programs that work and allow the businesses to take advantage of these resources are out there.

So with that, thank you so much, Chairman, for this wonderful hearing that we have had. I hope we all walk away with some more information than we came with. Thank you.

Chairman CROW. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

And with that, I would ask unanimous consent that Members have 5 legislative days to submit statements and supporting materials for the record.

Without objection, so ordered.

And if there is no further business to come before the Committee, we are adjourned. Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 11:24 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Written Testimony of
 Anne M. Kress, Ph.D.
 President, Northern Virginia Community College
 Pursuant to a Hearing on
 “The Community College Pipeline to Small Businesses”
 Submitted to
 The Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development
 Committee on Small Business
 United States House of Representatives
 November 4, 2021

Good morning. I am Anne M. Kress, President of Northern Virginia Community College, and I would like to thank Committee Chairwoman Velazquez, Subcommittee Chairman Crow, Subcommittee Ranking Member Kim, and all members of the House Committee on Small Business and the Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development for this opportunity to address the significance of the community college workforce pipeline to small businesses. I am grateful that the Committee and Subcommittee have recognized the powerful role that community colleges play in skilling, reskilling, and upskilling America’s workforce, enabling regional small businesses to grow and thrive and providing individuals with much needed on-ramps to economic and social mobility right in their own communities.

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) serves more than 80,000 credit and non-credit students across six campuses and multiple delivery sites—ranging from high schools to military bases—that cover four counties and five independent cities. Even before the pandemic pushed most higher education institutions to offer expanded remote courses, almost 20 percent of our college’s students were enrolled in distance education through NOVA Online. NOVA is one of the largest community colleges in the nation, the largest public higher education institution in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and home to the only stand-alone medical education campus in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). Our impact across Virginia is unequalled: one out of every three individuals enrolled in the state’s community college system attends NOVA.

Ninety-one (91) percent of NOVA’s students come from our service district, and they reflect the diversity of our region. Over 60 percent of enrollment is comprised of students of color: in Fall 2020, 37 percent were White; 21 percent, Latinx/Hispanic; 17 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian/American Indian; 15 percent, Black/African American; 5 percent, Two or More Races; and 5 percent Other or Unreported (NOVA Office of Institutional Research, Fact Book 2021). NOVA is designated by the US Department of Education as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and the college also enrolls a population of international students representing almost 120 different countries.

NOVA is dedicated to expanding access to higher education. Each year over 14,000 of NOVA’s students get their start even before they graduate high school: we provide college credit courses at no cost in our local high schools, increasing affordability and accelerating college degrees and certificates. As a military-friendly community college, NOVA is honored to support those who are serving and have served our country. We work with bases within the region to provide access to NOVA courses, degrees, and staff dedicated to their success; have mapped Military

Occupational Specialties (MOS) to our programs to provide veterans with advanced standing in programs; are a partner in the new Naval Community College, offering our Cybersecurity courses and degree; and in an innovative partnership with the U.S. Marine Corps base at Quantico, Marines are assigned duty orders to complete information technology programs at NOVA. Our college also has an active Credit for Prior Learning initiative that ensures adult learners receive credit for their non-academic experience and can move more quickly through NOVA and achieve their academic and career goals. Each of these innovative on-ramps grows the universe of students who can benefit from all that our community college has to offer, strengthening our region's talent pool.

NOVA is a comprehensive community college, offering both university transfer and career pathway programs. Our career pathway programs are directly related to the needs of our local employers; these include small, medium, and large businesses. NOVA recognizes the significant role that small businesses, in particular, play in our region. According to the Economic Development Authority serving our largest county, Fairfax, over 90 percent of the Fairfax businesses are small employers; the US Small Business Administration (2017) reports that this data point holds true across Virginia. To ensure that the voices of these small businesses are included in the development and review of NOVA's career pathway programs, we make an intentional effort to invite them to serve on the Program Advisory Councils that provide input into all career pathway programs. More than 50 percent of our Program Advisory Council members represent Northern Virginia's small businesses, and their active engagement ensures that NOVA understands their workforce needs and can graduate workforce-ready employees.

Over the past five years, NOVA has graduated an annual average of 6,400 students in career pathway applied associate degrees and an average of 1,300 students in career pathway credit certificates (NOVA Fact Book, 2021). The majority of these students graduated in information technology, health care, and business fields—all directly related to the needs of Northern Virginia employers. But it is the diversity of career pathways represented by these almost 8,000 graduates that speaks to the important partnership between our community's college and our community's small businesses: from HVAC to Horticulture, from Cybersecurity to Contract Management—these programs are demand-driven and reflect the vibrant, vital, and varied businesses across our region.

This year, students seeking these degree and certificate career pathways got an important boost from the Commonwealth of Virginia, a new workforce scholarship program: Get Skilled, Get a Job, and Get Ahead (G3). Students at 400 percent of poverty or below who are enrolled in programs directly connected to regional workforce needs receive last dollar tuition scholarships, and students at the lowest income levels are eligible for additional funding for basic needs to support their retention and completion. The immediate impact of the G3 program in its first year has been substantial. At NOVA, over 5,500 students enrolled in G3 eligible programs in Fall 2021, and in just one semester, our college has already allocated more than three-quarters of the \$4.2M available for G3 funding for this entire academic year. At a time when labor shortages are the topic of the day in every economic development conversation, Virginia's investment in preparing the workforce for regional employers, including small businesses, is certain to yield significant returns for the Commonwealth and the students who are moving into these high-demand fields.

Virginia has also made a parallel investment in non-credit programs that lead to in-demand, industry-recognized credentials: Fast Forward. As the name suggests, Fast Forward programs are short, with most running six to 12 weeks. By design and requirement, all are linked to regional business demands. For example, offerings at NOVA are largely focused on information technology and health care, reflecting the local labor market. In Fast Forward, students are required to pay only one-third of the total cost of the program, and they may qualify for non-credit financial aid through the state (including G3), training vouchers, or employer tuition reimbursement to cover these costs. The remaining two-thirds of tuition in the program is performance-based, incentivizing student completion. The wage gains for completers are significant. An Old Dominion University study of over 4,800 individuals earning credentials through Fast Forward found a 24 percent average increase in wages overall and an even greater return, 28 percent, for those in the lowest income zip codes (“Strong Wage Gains from Short-Term Credentials: Employment Outcomes from Virginia, Louisiana, and Colorado,” Chris R. Glass, December 2019).

The combination of short-term timelines and real wage returns has made Fast Forward a popular on-ramp to workforce readiness for students, especially as we come out of the pandemic and into economic recovery. Enrollment in NOVA’s Fast Forward offerings has grown by over 55 percent from 2020 to 2021 (VCCS Weekly Fast Forward Report, 11/1/2021), with enrollment by Latinx/Hispanic students in these programs increasing by 80 percent over that time, and enrollment by Black/African American students growing by a remarkable 233 percent in this same period (NOVA Office of Institutional Research, 9/16/2021). It is striking that the Northern Virginia populations disproportionately most impacted, personally and professionally, by the pandemic are finding access to new futures through Fast Forward, underscoring the importance and benefit of short-term programs that can demonstrate real wage gains. And, because of the state requirement that all Fast Forward programs be directly linked to local labor market needs, this enrollment growth in short-term credentials provides an accelerated pulse of in-demand workers into the regional talent pool for small businesses.

During the pandemic, at the height of worker dislocation, three local governments in NOVA’s service district—Manassas Park, Manassas City, and Prince William County—turned to our college and to the Fast Forward program to reskill and upskill the workforce. They allocated some of their federal stimulus funding to underwrite the students’ first third of Fast Forward tuition costs in a home-grown program called ELEVATE. Virginia launched a similar statewide effort with a portion of its stimulus funds, Re-Employing Virginians (REV), that supported dislocated workers enrolling in career programs at community colleges. Time and time again, when the need arises for a skilled and reskilled local workforce, community colleges respond. Like NOVA, community colleges across the state and the nation are prepared to partner on workforce solutions that advance regional economies and real families.

Additional examples of such innovative collaborations impacting students at NOVA highlight the importance of finding new sources of support to further strengthen the likelihood of career pathway completion and entry into the workforce. A foundation supported by Virginia businesses, VA Ready, now provides Fast Forward graduates who complete their industry-recognized credentials with a \$1,000 bonus, and Bank of America’s \$1M grant to NOVA is

supporting students of color in attaining career credentials in high-demand fields. Our college has also launched the Achieve Career Excellence (ACE) program. In ACE, NOVA pays the certification exam costs for students in information technology programs, ensuring that these graduates are truly workforce-ready on day one. ACE grew out of our close collaboration with regional employers, including small businesses. Recognizing that many NOVA graduates simply did not have the resources required to sit for the certification exams and many businesses could not afford to provide them, NOVA allocated funds to ensure equity in opportunity for the increasingly diverse population in these programs.

Such local and state programs and public/private partnerships offer models for ways in which new thinking about financial supports for community college students, who are almost always local residents with an incentive to stay local and work local, can strengthen the workforce pipeline for small businesses. The results are tangible: in just the past 12 months, NOVA has connected almost 600 small businesses to our students and graduates through our job and internship boards and career fairs. As federal discussions about possible financial aid changes, such as providing Pell-eligibility for short-term workforce programs, Virginia and so many other states are making investments in demand-driven workforce programs and career pathways students today, spurring post-pandemic economic recovery and supporting inclusive and equitable economic futures. Federal investment in workforce programs and short-term training connected to sustaining wage employment, and federal financial aid for the students who need both has been and will continue to be critical to supporting small businesses.

The students who enroll in workforce programs are seeking fulfilling and sustaining careers. So many truly cannot afford to give up their paychecks to jump full-time into a course of study that might last months or years. So, one key to creating inclusive economic pathways is connecting learning and earning from day one through apprenticeships. The first of its kind information technology apprenticeship that NOVA launched just four years ago with Amazon Web Services created a framework that has been expanded across other technology employers, including AT&T and Alarm.com, and has now served over 400 apprentices. Yet small businesses may have capacity challenges in beginning or sustaining apprenticeship programs, so earlier this year, NOVA joined the new Greater Washington Apprentice Network, which has local small businesses thinking anew about the opportunities this “earn and learn” approach provides. Modeled after the Chicago Apprentice Network, it brings together employers and educational institutions, leveraging best practices, providing support services, and other resources—including the apprenticeship frameworks and expertise found at NOVA. Our active engagement in the Greater Washington Apprentice Network is yet another way that our college supports and expands the workforce pipeline, creating a new on-ramp for sourcing local talent at a time when it is in great demand.

Taking a new approach to hiring will be critical for small businesses. NOVA recently collaborated with the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce on its inaugural Workforce Index (2021). As part of our service to the community, NOVA provides valuable and detailed web-based labor market data and interactive reports at no cost to regional economic development agencies, industry organizations, and small businesses. With the Workforce Index, our college conducted the labor market research that informed this report, and 86 percent of the responding businesses had fewer than 500 employees. Over a third of respondents reported a shortage of

candidates with the required education or experience, even as almost two-thirds anticipated further employment growth. This is one reason why NOVA just launched a community college first: a Business Engagement Center (<https://www.nvcc.edu/bec/index.html>) that provides a front door to a one-stop-shop for local employers, including small businesses. It offers local employers the chance to be first in line to interview NOVA career pathway graduates and find interns and apprentices—and represents yet another way that community colleges like ours support the businesses at the heart of our regional economies.

This powerful relationship—between community colleges and local employers—has also been at the heart of my testimony today. When community colleges work closely, effectively, and successfully with the small businesses that comprise the majority of local employers, lives are changed for the better and futures are brighter. NOVA and our remarkable faculty and staff are dedicated to the important work of skilling, reskilling, and upskilling our students and advancing Northern Virginia's businesses with innovative, flexible, and responsive workforce programs, services, and supports. These on-ramps to inclusive and equitable economic and social mobility have always been critical, but post-pandemic, they are, quite simply, essential if the recovery is to reach those with the greatest need and connect them to the employment opportunities that are to be found in our communities' small businesses. Once again, I thank Committee Chairwoman Velazquez, Subcommittee Chairman Crow, Subcommittee Ranking Member Kim, and all Subcommittee members for their time and their recognition of the transformational impact of community colleges.

Written testimony of Rebecca A. Corbin, Ed.D.

President and CEO of the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE)

Before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce

November 4, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Nydia M. Velazquez and Ranking Member Blaine Luetkemeyer, for holding this hearing and receiving my testimony.

I am the President and CEO of the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE). We are a nonprofit educational association representing more than 330 community colleges and universities across the nation.

I was invited here to discuss how community colleges serve as a pipeline for small business support, entrepreneurship, innovation, and workforce development.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, conducting “business as usual” has been anything but usual for just about every business across the United States. For current and aspiring entrepreneurs, especially those who are members of underserved populations, people of color, immigrants, women, veterans, and socio-economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs in rural areas, it has been an especially challenging experience on just about every level.

At the same time, record numbers of new businesses have been created. To survive and flourish post-pandemic, these entrepreneurs need support. NACCE’s network of community colleges in nearly all 50 states has assets, tools, and models that are accelerating economic recovery and the advancement of equity at scale.¹ Heightened awareness and deeper engagement with federal agencies and programs will accelerate our impact and the success of these invaluable small businesses.

Entrepreneurship Statistics and Trends

Out of roughly 1,200 public, private, and tribal community colleges across the country, approximately 75% offer entrepreneurship training and support. More than 20% boast direct access to a Small Business Development Center; nearly 100% of colleges not already serving as SBDC hosts have a direct pathway to their local office. While our home state of North Carolina presents a strong model for this collaboration,² partnership models vary based on location and community need.

¹ Rebecca Corbin, Andrew Gold, and Mary Beth Kerly, “Impact ED: How Community College Entrepreneurship Creates Equity and Prosperity,” in *Accelerate to Influencing* (John Hunt Publishing, 2021), Ch. 4. Notes that communities need startup, small business owners, and employees (to fill the growing number of unfilled jobs) who are curious, creative, and innovative, and who are willing to learn and relearn new skills. Entrepreneurship education accomplishes this goal.

² <https://sbtcd.org/about-us/partners/>

Many colleges engage in a combination of business, entrepreneurship, and workforce support that is not widely known. The breadth and depth of programs and services successfully exist and co-create new services and supports in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

The robust pipeline community colleges provide to small businesses, would-be entrepreneurs, and employers of all sizes (in need of skilled workers) is connected nationally through NACCE's network of professional development, grant projects, centers of practice, and communication channels.³

In early 2021, a sample of NACCE members was surveyed about current activities. The study was conducted by David Tobenkin, a Woodrow Wilson higher education media fellow, and published as "**Gauging Entrepreneurial Activities at Community Colleges**," reported in the American Association of Community College's *Community College Daily* on August 2, 2021. It states:

Many community colleges with entrepreneurial interests appear to have increased, or at least not reduced, their range of entrepreneurship education and training activities over the past several years despite COVID-19 and resource availability headwinds at some institutions, according to a recently conducted informal national member survey by the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE).

Further, a national surge of new business startups created during the pandemic,⁴ totaling 440,000 as of June 2021, highlights the employment path that entrepreneurship offers people from all communities across the United States.

The challenge and opportunity for NACCE and community colleges is how to increase the survival rate of these startups. Based on an analysis of Labor Market Statistics, Lending Tree has reported from that business failure rates have remained constant, with about 20% of U.S. small businesses failing in the first year, and half failing by the fifth year.⁵ But it doesn't have to be that way.

NACCE's current work through community colleges to foster startups and reduce the failure rate of small business occurs in many ways.

Community College Support Business Creation & Support of Struggling Businesses

Venture Labs: Venture Lab programs introduce, inspire, and encourage technical and creative entrepreneurship. Often seen as "feasibility labs" that provide access to seed grants and guidance to carefully screened teams, Venture Labs serve as a starting point for innovation and learning. A leading example is the InLab@HCC, at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida.

³ Rebecca A. Corbin and Ron Thomas, "Community Colleges as Incubators of Innovation: Unleashing Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Communities and Students," (Stylus Publishing, 2019). This book is a compilation of essays with data and case examples co-written by 18 college presidents, faculty, and policy leaders working in diverse communities. It highlights how community college entrepreneurship programs can help students and communities to thrive in uncertain and ever-changing times.

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/15/1016628762/the-covid-small-business-boom>

⁵ <https://www.lendingtree.com/business/small/failure-rate/>

Throughout the pandemic, dozens of successful businesses – many founded by veterans, immigrants, and other under-resourced women and men – have been launched and supported through InLab@HCC.⁶ In addition to academic entrepreneurship programs and certificate programs, an Everyday Entrepreneurship Venture Fund offers grants to would-be business owners who don't have other access to capital.⁷

Incubators: Designed to accelerate the growth and success of entrepreneurial companies by providing support services including co-working or dedicated space, mentorship and coaching, common business services, and networking connections, incubator services have rapidly expanded due to demand. NACCE estimates that nearly half of our nation's colleges engage in, or plan to engage in, the provision of incubator space and service, whether on campus or via civic/community partnerships. Incubators can also exist virtually. A successful national model was created at Arizona's Maricopa Community College System, one of the nation's largest community college districts, with the launch of the Center for Entrepreneurial Innovation (CEI) on the campus of GateWay Community College. Using tools such as a Discovery Triangle, in which employers and other community stakeholders focus on projecting future needs, business startup and growth is accelerated.⁸

Makerspaces: The makerspace movement was designed to move learners from consumption to creation, providing a place to learn, explore, share, and create using everything from hi-tech to no-tech tools. Makerspaces bring together diverse community segments to create prototypes of innovations through the use of 3D printers, laser cutters, studio recorders, soldering irons, and even sewing machines. Providing hands-on learning, supporting critical thinking skills, and boosting self-confidence, makerspaces sponsor entrepreneurship and can be used as incubators and accelerators for business startups. In 13 Appalachian states, throughout California, and everywhere in between, NACCE has supported the expansion and acceleration of makerspaces to support businesses and would-be entrepreneurs.⁹

Workshops and Seminars Open to All: Whether noncredit workshops stem from an entrepreneurship or business program, these courses are often community-focused and designed to establish relationships and increase awareness of services available. Nearly 80% of community colleges engage in this or similar activities, which may include programming and

⁶ Hillsborough Community College InLab@HCC, <https://www.hccfl.edu/academics/inlabhcc>

⁷ The Everyday Entrepreneur Venture Fund (EEVF) was started by philanthropists Chip and Stuart Weismiller with a \$1 million investment. In 2020, NACCE assumed program responsibility for the EEVF. During the pandemic, an additional \$1.2 million was raised to support the program. As a result, more than 100 new businesses in 11 states have been created. <https://www.nacce.com/cevf>

⁸ Rebecca A. Corbin, Ron Thomas, and Eugene Giovannini, "Community Colleges as Incubators of Innovation: Unleashing Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Students and Communities." in *Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: Innovate and Flourish* (Stylus Publishing, 2019). Explanations of the discovery triangle, the hub and spoke model, and lean canvas are included in this chapter.

⁹ Rebecca Corbin and Amy Schulz. "Community Colleges and the Creation of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems." *Entrepreneurship Magazine*, October 7, 2017. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/300894>

workshops designed for specific communities such as women, veterans, and populations of color.¹⁰

Entrepreneurship Certificate and Degree Programs: More than 25% of our nation's community colleges offer some form of certification in entrepreneurship. These programs include studies in innovation and creativity, business funding, marketing for employment and growth, and more. They are proven tools for instilling entrepreneurial vision and desire, and helping students recognize opportunities, make informed decisions, and stimulate job growth across the nation.¹¹

Workforce Development: Community Colleges Engage with Philanthropy, Government, and Industry

NACCE has been leading in the college entrepreneurship space for the past two decades and has experienced particularly rapid growth since 2016.¹² This growth has been fueled many new partnerships with corporations, philanthropy, and government,¹³ with a focus on promoting workforce development by teaching students the critical thinking skills that employers are demanding and supporting business creation for community economic development.

We also engage with the philanthropic community, including supporting the Philip E. and Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation's Pitch for the Trades. This competition challenges college faculty to come up with innovative ideas for infusing their classes with lessons in entrepreneurship related to manufacturing, agricultural technology, and other skilled trades.¹⁴

Working effectively with government entities including the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for many years, NACCE has increased its expertise in ecosystem mapping and entrepreneurial mindset training that has provided new models of how community and technical colleges can help coal distressed communities.¹⁵ This work in Appalachia sparked a statewide makerspace initiative in California.¹⁶

^{10, 11}NACCE Member Survey, in partnership with the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's ECMC Higher Education Media Fellow David Tobenkin. A summary of this survey can be found online at *CC Daily* in "Gauging Entrepreneurial Activities at Community Colleges." <https://www.ccdaily.com/2021/08/gauging-entrepreneurial-activities-at-community-colleges/>

¹² While NACCE will celebrate its twentieth anniversary in 2022, its growth has accelerated over the past five years, increasing its offerings, resources, and expanding its annual organizational budget from \$1.2 million in 2015 to more than \$9 million in 2021. <https://www.nacce.com/about-us>

¹³ NACCE partners with large corporations, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and small businesses. These partnership leverage strengths and help co-create new resources. <https://www.nacce.com/current-nacce-partners>

¹⁴ The Ratcliffe-sponsored Pitch for the Trades was funded with a three-year grant for \$900,000 that supports faculty innovation and also provides seed funding for startups through NACCE's EEVF program. <https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/2021-nacce-pitch-for-the-trades-presents-panel-of-distinguished-judges>

¹⁵ Amelia Schulz and Rebecca Corbin, "Evolution of Education Ecosystems Applied to Innovation Education," in ISAM (Case Western Reserve University, 2017). Paper No. 071. <https://assets.pubpub.org/um323ct/21584640396578.pdf>

¹⁶ 16 Rebecca A. Corbin and Ron Thomas, "Community Colleges as Incubators of Innovation: Unleashing Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Students and Communities," in *NACCE, A Retrospective* (Stylus Publishing, 2019).

Workforce Development Case Examples: The Tennie Group and Chapel Hill Tire

In early in late 2019, prior to the pandemic, NACCE relocated its corporate headquarters in Cary, North Carolina, leasing space from Wake Technical College.¹⁷ While the pandemic soon shuttered the NACCE offices for several months, the collaboration and innovation in North Carolina accelerated in 2020 and 2021. In part, the growth was due to engagement in the ecosystem of institutions including community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), state government, small and large businesses, and nonprofit organizations such as the Cary Chamber of Commerce.

In the summer of 2021, North Carolina State Representative James Roberson – who was the former Mayor in Knightdale, North Carolina, and a recently retired campus leader at Wake Technical Community College – helped NACCE connect with key entrepreneurs who understood the value of community colleges.

These case examples demonstrate how industry can benefit from engagement with community college students and with best practices offered at NACCE and through community college entrepreneurship programs.

On a Zoom call this summer with Darrell Tennie, founder of the **Tennie Group**, I met his team of leaders who had professional titles and key responsibilities in areas of social media, customer outreach, business development, and operations for his growing multi-state accounting firm. Mr. Tennie hires first-generation and immigrant college students from Wake Tech, mentors them, sets them on a career path, and invests in their career development. He leverages their strengths of being able to speak multiple languages and being resourceful as a competitive advantage. He recently shared with me that he is opening an office in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he plans to use the same business model to grow in that region. This community college workforce approach is scalable across the nation.¹⁸

Performer is a small business that specializes in human resource support for smaller organizations. The company approached NACCE about providing a design thinking¹⁹ session for **Chapel Hill Tire** to engage its employees in designing a business solution to move to a 100% paperless system. I facilitated a 90-minute session, held in an automotive garage (with masks, social distancing, and garage doors open for safety). During the program, executives, sales staff, and the automotive employees engaged in design thinking to identify problems and to ideate about solutions for accelerating their move to be 100% paperless.²⁰ This type of training and engagement with industry and government is available across the United States through NACCE and our network of community colleges.

¹⁷ <https://www.waketech.edu/post/wt-news-story/4444>

¹⁸ The *Making Our Way Forward* podcast launched in February 2021 has listeners in more than 425 U.S. cities and 31 countries. This episode features Darrell Tennie and his work with Wake Tech students.

¹⁹ <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1589815/episodes/9391934>

²⁰ Design thinking is a process in which people work together to define a problem, ideate about solutions, develop and test a prototype, and then iterate until a suitable solution is found. NACCE offers a Design Thinking Center of Practice for colleges and other partners. <https://www.nacce.com/design-thinking-center-of-practice>

²⁰ Mollie Hodl, "Design Thinking Gets Traction at Chapel Hill Tire," in *Community College Entrepreneurship* magazine (A publication of NACCE, Spring/Summer 2021).

Rebuilding the U.S. Economy and Advancing Equity through Community Colleges

Studies have confirmed the benefits of entrepreneurial thinking, such as preparing students for an unknown future and helping develop creativity and collaboration skills. An entrepreneurial mindset also helps students handle changes in technology, business, and society in general.²¹

On October 6, 2021, as part of our annual national conference, NACCE held a Future Building Summit²² in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The goal was to convene innovative thinkers from across the nation, and we brought together community college faculty and leaders from 41 states, along with leaders in government, philanthropy, industry, and the nonprofit sector, to chart a unified course of economic recovery and equity. We will use what we learned, in combination with facilitated ideation and design thinking strategies, to chart a new course of economic recovery and equity by leveraging the assets at community colleges.

In summary, NACCE is committed to developing uniquely collaborative approaches to helping small businesses not simply return to normal, but fully thrive in the “new normal.” We’re proud to help “connect the dots,” leveraging the invaluable tools already in existence at our nation’s community colleges to link both new and existing entrepreneurs with successful business, nonprofit, and government leaders. It’s a proven and powerful way to help these small businesses access the critical services and assistance programs they need to innovate and drive economic growth in their own business, their community, and our country.

²¹ Rebecca Corbin. “Fostering an Entrepreneurial Mindset: Programs and New Ways of Thinking Will Help Community College Leaders and Students Better Navigate Post-Pandemic Challenges,” in *Trustee Quarterly* (A publication of the Association of Community College Trustees, Fall 2021).

https://www.acct.org/files/TQ_2021_Fall_Entrepreneurial_Mindset_NACCE_Rebecca_Corbin.pdf

²² NACCE Future Building Summit includes the agenda, video recordings, and upcoming events planned for 2022. <https://www.nacce.com/nacce-2021-future-building-summit>

*Testimony to the U.S. House Small Business Subcommittee on
Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development*

Joe Garcia, Colorado Community College System Chancellor

November 04, 2021

Introduction

Chairman Crow, members of the subcommittee, my name is Joe Garcia and I am the Chancellor of Colorado's Community College System.

Collectively, our thirteen community colleges are the state's largest provider of higher education and career training, serving approximately 125,000 students annually at over 35 locations around the state. We provide accessible, affordable, supportive, and transformative post-secondary education and workforce training to help our students build better lives and stronger communities.

Importance of community colleges to businesses and the economic recovery

Post-secondary educational institutions will be key to our recovery from the pandemic by developing a competitive workforce, and it is Community Colleges in particular that are most accessible to workers and responsive to business and industry needs.

This past year, we targeted, enrolled, trained, and supported displaced workers and non-traditional adult students, helping them to reskill or upskill and obtain industry-recognized credentials that align to in-demand, high-wage occupations, and, in the end, lead to meaningful employment.

Our colleges have committed to reimagining how best to serve today's adult learner, redefining what success means for this particular sub-set of students, putting less emphasis on traditional degree completion and more emphasis on the development of entrepreneurial skills tied to career-aligned programs that provide family-sustaining wages.

As industries automate and evolve, we know individuals will pursue opportunities in new sectors and occupations, so our colleges work in partnership with industry to develop curriculum and short-term programs that allow individuals, with varying levels of academic readiness, an opportunity to quickly shift into new roles based on their actual skills and experiences.

We also deploy customized corporate training and non-credit offerings that allow for lower cost, shorter programs aligned with industry standards. Apprenticeship programs and other work-based learning gives students the opportunity to "earn-while-you learn" and minimize or eliminate student debt and accelerate career advancement.

Apprenticeships have proven successful for decades in the skilled trades sector, and we now support opportunities in non-traditional sectors like information technology, financial services, and healthcare.

To help students further reduce the cost of their education and decrease time to credential attainment, we have also been at the forefront of providing opportunities to earn post-secondary credit from past work experience, and demonstrated knowledge, skills, and abilities through what we call prior-learning assessment.

These are just a few examples of the ways our colleges provide relevant, cost effective workforce education and training. Employers know the value of a well-educated employee, and they know our programs produce more productive and valuable employees, in part because employers help us to design and offer the training.

Supporting community colleges through funding mechanisms

Though our colleges continue to stand at the ready to support the workforce of the future, it is critical that we ensure equitable access for all students. Non-credit and short-term programs are oftentimes not financial aid eligible, resulting in a debt load to the student and narrowing enrollment to those who can afford to pay. Financial aid adaptations, like short-term Pell, could dramatically increase enrollment specifically for low-income, marginalized, adult students who are most in need of training.

Additionally, our workforce programs, while innovative and responsive, are expensive to develop, involve more expensive equipment, and require more highly paid instructors than traditional academic programs. For example, programs in information technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing are in great demand, but are also among the most expensive programs to offer. In order to maintain our roles as leading providers of workforce training and maintain affordability for students, it is critical that we make meaningful investments in career and technical education infrastructure at our colleges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, community colleges are the key to our nation's economic future, and its civic and cultural vitality. We serve the fastest growing student populations—those with limited economic resources, those who are ethnic and racial minorities, refugees,

veterans, working parents, and many others who have not been well served in more traditional and more expensive four-year institutions. As our economy relies more and more on those with higher education and skills training, we are the colleges that will equip students for success in the future.

I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.



Testimony of:
Frank Boecker
Human Resources Manager
Sunwest Electric Inc.
Anaheim, California
On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors

**U.S. House Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on
Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development
"The Community College Pipeline to Small Business"**

Nov. 4, 2021

Chairman Crow, Ranking Member Kim and members of the U.S. House Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development:

Thank you for the invitation to discuss the indispensable role that community colleges, trade schools and career and technical education programs play in the construction industry, which currently employs 7.4 million throughout our country.

My name is Frank Boecker, and I am the human resources manager for Sunwest Electric, a business established in Southern California in 1985 with the goal of providing a select market of customers with a competitive, high quality, turnkey product. Since our founding, Sunwest has grown into one of the most respected merit shop electrical contractors in California, with 240 field employees currently working on projects throughout Southern California.

I am testifying today on behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national construction industry trade association established in 1950 that represents more than 21,000 member companies across the country. Founded on the merit shop philosophy, ABC and its 69 chapters help members develop people, win work and deliver that work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which its members live and work.

Sunwest is a member of the Associated Builders and Contractors Southern California Chapter. Founded in 1993, ABC SoCal became one of the first nonunion apprenticeship programs to be certified in California, with approvals in the electrical program in 1993, plumbing program in 1995 and Electronics Systems Technician, HVAC and sheet metal programs in 2011. Since then, over 2,500 apprentices have graduated from these programs. This year, ABC SoCal is offering more than 200 continuing education classes, including safety and management courses taught by skilled instructors. ABC SoCal has five master craft instructors, which is the highest NCCER instructor certification available, among our 42 instructors, which offers our apprentices a unique opportunity and a depth of knowledge and experience inaccessible in many other parts of the country.

I believe that the path to a successful career begins in the classroom. Sunwest Electric is proud to offer every employee the opportunity to participate in the many educational opportunities at ABC SoCal or our own program at Sunwest. As part of our Sunwest in-

house education and employee development programs, we offer hands-on experience, computer education, safety courses and construction management classes to help our employees to continue to progress quickly in their careers as electricians. Our company currently has more than 100 employees attending a four-year workforce development program, with Sunwest paying 100% of the costs, including books and tools. These dedicated employees will spend at least 120 hours each year in a classroom and more than 8,000 hours on the job, gaining the experiences needed to succeed in the industry. It is important to note that most of these individuals will start at \$19 per hour, even before they have completed their education requirements. Once they have completed their free four-year education and successfully passed the state's certification program, they are nearly guaranteed to double their salary.

What I have found throughout my time as an apprentice, journey-level worker and in human resources, is that the opportunities available in the construction industry cannot be met through just one talent pipeline. To fill the approximately 430,000 construction craft professionals needed in 2021 alone, the federal government should promote all effective programs and pathways that lead to a fulfilling job in the construction industry.

The workforce shortage facing construction and many other industries across the country is one that we must continue to address, and I appreciate the committee drawing attention to these critical opportunities available to America's workers. For too long, the definition of success messaged to young Americans was that a college degree was a necessary requirement for a good career, ignoring the value and benefits of community college programs, apprenticeship programs and trade schools. We must continue to spotlight the opportunities for young people and individuals looking for a career through more affordable options, and in our case, a free, earn-while-you-learn four-year education that provide the skills needed for financial independence and a rewarding career.

With more than 40 years in the electrical industry, I have been able to help others gain the necessary trade knowledge and experience to be a successful electrician. For 15 of those 40 years, I have taught apprenticeship classes at night while working on projects during the day with some students to provide them with hands-on experience in the field. Part of my promise to my employees is that I will dedicate my time after work to help them complete the application process and prepare them for the journey-level worker electrician test. Of particular relevance to this hearing, I have also partnered with local

universities to help them develop curriculum in construction management and provide career counseling for graduates.

In 2020, I served as the chair of the ABC Southern California Chapter Board of Directors and continue to serve on the Board of Directors today. Throughout my service on the ABC SoCal Board of Directors and in my many years in the construction industry, I am proud to be a part of the solution to the workforce shortage issue throughout the industry. Perhaps my proudest moments, however, come from the individual success stories that can be found in each Sunwest new hire or ABC SoCal apprenticeship program graduate. It is with their testimonies in mind that I address you. I have included some success stories with my testimony, which should inform the committee of the impact of the construction industry's educational capacity.

As a veteran, I have found that military veterans have an incredible opportunity to create a career in construction. Sunwest emphasizes hiring veterans as we build our workforce.

For example, one of our many veterans on staff as a current Sunwest craft trainee is a former U.S. Marine. When Noah exited the military, he knew that college was not for him, and he reached out directly to us for employment. When we hired him on the spot, he knew that we were providing him an opportunity to transition his skills into a trade that will support him and his family in the future.

In the construction employment market, we have seen that many otherwise overlooked individuals are some of the most dedicated and hardworking employees in our industry. I have found this to be the case with formerly incarcerated individuals, like Andrea, a single mom who was involved in gangs in her youth. After going to prison and then being paroled, she reached out to a local program called Hope Builders, which we are proud to partner with, to help her get moving in the career that she wanted. Now a Sunwest employee, Andrea is a great example of someone who has turned her life around as she builds her community.

A career in construction has limitless possibilities and now is an ideal time to get into the industry.

Congress must continue promoting the benefits of alternate education pathways for successful careers and encourage more of the great partnerships among companies like Sunwest and the organizations and community colleges that help bridge the gaps for those seeking employment. I thank you for the opportunity to serve as a witness for this

important hearing and look forward to your questions.

