

Executive Summary:

We have an opportunity to benefit from a new approach to vocational education that will change the face of Fayette County and beyond. While there are some signs of growth in Fayette County, the potential exists for additional economic development and an increase in availability of higher paying technical jobs. Our community leaders are working on various fronts to make this a reality.

One thing that is necessary to attract new companies and technological industries to our county is a trained, skilled workforce. We simply do not have the necessary pool of skilled workers to satisfy the companies of today...companies like Advanced Acoustics, B.A.E. Systems, United Dairy, Casteel Electric, PTC Solutions Center, Argon ST, Sensus, and Shumar Welding are interested in hiring local, well trained technical talent. It is obvious development, in preparation for the 21st Century workforce, is essential to our region's future.

How can we get to where we want to be? We need a new philosophy, a new approach. We need to create the workforce of tomorrow and prepare students to succeed in their careers and their lives. We need to ensure that each student's unique personality and skill set is matched with career opportunities to maximize their potential. In short, we need to help students achieve Real Success and help create Real Jobs that pay Real Sustainable Wages.

Currently, Fayette County Area Vocational Technical School students gain hands on experience in fields like Healthcare, Carpentry, Computers, Auto Body, Graphic Arts, Hotel Management, Culinary Arts, Cosmetology, and Welding. Our plan is to continually enhance these programs to meet the needs of the workforce of today and tomorrow. We started a new Pre-Engineering Program this year designed for students interested in post-secondary engineering. Other new initiatives include Tabula Digita (math tutor) and the PAES Program, a hands on curriculum for students in middle and high school that provides complete instruction in basic fundamental vocational skills. Consideration is also being made to add the following programs, which must be listed on the State and Local High Priority Occupations List:

- *Radiology
- * Pharmacy Technician
- * Robotics Academy
- * Alternative Energy
- * Pre-Engineering/Biometrics

We are building and offering some of the programs necessary for the workforces for the 21st Century. We have also received grants for corporate and adult training programs totaling nearly \$113,000 dollars. We are working diligently to develop and are seeking

funding for the programs Fayette County needs to create Real Jobs paying Real Wages and offering our students Real Success.

The challenge we face, though, involves the deterioration of our current facility located on Georges Fairchance Road in Uniontown. Some of the building's problems include power outages, fires (electrical, on the roof, and in the kitchen), twenty-six gas leaks over the past eight years, as well as boiler and venting problems. Our repair expenses for a recent gas leak cost thousands of dollars. Overall, our repair expenses are expected to reach or exceed a million dollars or more in the next year and will continue to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in the future.

We knew we had to develop a strategy to keep our kids safe and to help our students achieve Real Success. Our sending school districts are in the starting phase or completion phase of building projects and at the same time developing a plan to pay for repairs and most likely a new facility. After our feasibility study identified the overall cost it was obvious that alternative funding must be gained to realize the completion of this project. We met and discussed our situation with Fayette County Commissioners Vince Vicites, Vince Zapatosky, Angela Zimmerlink, Allegheny County Councilman Matt Drozd, State and Federal Officials like Pa. Senator Richard Kasunic, U.S. Senator Robert Casey, U.S. Rep. John Murtha, U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, Pa. Rep. Tim Mahoney, Pa. Rep. Debra Kula, Mike Krajovic, Fred Lebder, and Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak, D.Ed. We also had a September 22, 2008 meeting in Washington, D.C.

We continually meet with our four participating school districts (Albert Gallatin, Brownsville, Laurel Highlands, and Uniontown) and we have had discussions with Connellsville and of course Frazier school districts. After studying the situation and discussing things with these key parties, we realize there are three options:

First, we can do nothing. This would mean we would continue to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on repairs and maintenance of a broken down, old building. I believe we would also be putting our students and staff at risk and that the building and school would eventually close, probably within five to ten years.

Our second option is to renovate the existing building to enable the school to continue operating for the next ten years or so. This would involve nearly a \$22.3 million dollar investment into construction and other costs. The actual estimate is \$17.4 million after reimbursement.

Our third option involves a new facility called the Innovation Workforce Development Center. This center would cost about as much as renovating the existing, old building. The cost estimate to build the new 104,900 square foot building is \$26.0 million.

Our fourth option involves a new building, The Innovation Workforce Development Center, which would cost about as much as renovating the existing, old building. The cost estimate to build the new 115,000 square foot building is \$28.0 million. Option four b includes a \$5

million grant, bringing the cost to \$17.0 million. And option four c includes a \$10 million grant, bringing the cost to \$12.0 million.

Obviously the costs appear to be high, but the reasons for building the new Innovation Workforce Development Center surpass costs.

At The Innovation Workforce Development Center, business, industry, workforce, and education will come together. The new center would house and offer advanced technical training, partnerships with Higher Education and the Community College, Keystone Innovation Zone, Adult Training, a Business Incubator, and National STEM Institute, business partners, Technical and Vocational Training Programs, and Administration/Faculty offices of FCAVTS as well as the college courses for local technical advancement.

Our community would gain the skilled workforce it needs and students would receive training and education to prepare them for life in a safe life long learning environment. The new school would serve all of the school districts in the area and make a positive impact on our region now and into the future.

We hope that your school district would support building the Innovation Workforce Development Center. We believe this is the best opportunity for our region, our students, and our businesses.

We are requesting that after you review/discuss the options presented, that you will agree that the Option 4B, 115,000 square foot, \$28.0 million with the guarantee of at least the \$5 million dollar grant, will be the obvious choice. Recognizing that should the \$5 million dollar grant not occur, the support for Option 4B would be dropped and we would revisit all other options.

Dr. Edward D. Jeffreys
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