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Community Colleges: The Secret Sauce

by [Secretary Tom Perez](#) on September 29, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

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Motlow State Community College in Tennessee is working with Bridgestone Tire Company and other employers to expand their mechatronics program, creating a training facility on-site at Bridgestone to prepare students to move quickly into high-skill jobs.

Estrella Mountain Community College is leading a consortium of five Arizona colleges to develop the workforce and talent pipeline required by the region's energy and mining industries.

Bellevue College in Washington state, together with eight other schools, is launching a program to train veterans and their eligible spouses in the high-demand, high-wage field of health information technology.

All three of these efforts – and many more – are the result of a bold, [unprecedented investment](#) the Obama administration has made to expand job-driven training at community colleges nationwide.

The program is called [TAACCCT](#) – that stands for Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training. As acronyms go, I'm not going to say it's our very best work. But as a commitment to building a 21st century workforce, as a tool to prepare people for the jobs of today and tomorrow, it is second-to-none.

Today, I joined Vice President Biden at the White House for the announcement of the [fourth round of TAACCCT grants](#) — 71 of them in all, worth a total of more than \$450 million. That comes on top of the nearly \$1.5 billion awarded in the first three rounds. With today's announcement, roughly 700 colleges nationwide have received TAACCCT funding since 2011.

TAACCCT Awards by State and Round 4

Select a state to view the total TAACCCT Awards given or select a point to learn more about a round 4 winning project.



I've seen these grants and the [programs they support in action](#). I saw it last year with Dr. Jill Biden when we [traveled](#) to a community college in North Carolina to tour their state-of-the-art program in critical infrastructure. The same day we hopped down to South Florida where another TAACCCT grantee has a top-notch aviation institute.

Most importantly, these grants change lives. Joining us at the White House today was Gary Pollard, a former Army medic who is starting a \$60,000-a-year job thanks to cyber technology instruction he received through TAACCCT-supported programs at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) in Maryland. Last year [when I visited the college](#), I met both Gary and Ginny Quillen, a woman who's faced considerable challenges in her life. Ginny was abused as a child; she was involved with drugs and served time. But through hard work and resilience, she's overcome the adversity. And with the Information Assurance and Security certificate she earned at AACC, today she makes \$52,000 a year in a job she loves and a field she's passionate about.

No one receives a TAACCCT grant without putting industry partnerships front-and-center. The idea is to align curriculum with the needs of businesses – so ready-to-work Americans can move right into ready-to-be filled jobs. When employers go to hire graduates of these programs, they can have confidence in the relevance of the credential...because they helped design the credential.

What we're doing is creating a foundation with a lasting impact. This is a Dwight Eisenhower moment — TAACCCT is to our skills infrastructure what the interstate highway system was to our physical infrastructure. President Eisenhower took the long view some 60 years ago and invested in the building blocks that continue to power our economy to this day. And decades from now, our grandchildren will benefit from the on-ramps to college and the off-ramps to middle-class jobs that we're constructing today.

Community colleges are incubators of innovation and opportunity. They are the secret sauce of workforce development, empowering communities, strengthening businesses and invigorating local economies. Today, we're not just investing in new facilities, technologies or classroom tools; we're investing in people's highest and best dreams. And we're investing not just in today's needs, but in American prosperity for generations to come.



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