

Four Pa Community Colleges Are Joining Forces To ADVANCEPA With A Technology And Trades Workforce Consortium

By NCC

BETHLEHEM, PA – Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro announced on June 9 that Amazon is planning to invest at least \$20 billion to establish multiple high-tech cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI) innovation campuses across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Amazon's investment will create at least 1,250 high-paying, high-tech jobs. The first communities identified as sites for these future campuses are Salem Township, Luzerne County, and Falls Township, Bucks County. Several additional Pennsylvania communities are under consideration for data center development.

Bucks County Community College President & CEO, Dr. Patrick Jones, stressed a vision as more hyperscale data centers are planned.

"Through a unique, consortium approach, we will be able to better focus on the needs of data centers and help ensure students are prepared with the knowledge and skills required for this unique sector," Dr. Jones said. "We will collaborate to determine industry needs and share expertise and resources so that no matter where someone lives, one of our colleges will be able to help them attain the skills they need for success in this growing industry."

Under the lead of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges (PACCC), Luzerne County Community College, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Northampton Community College and Bucks County Community College are joining forces to partner on a Technology and Trades Workforce Consortium in an expanded Northeast Region of Pennsylvania.

The PACCC collaboration will bring together these four community colleges to address workforce needs during the construction of hyperscale data centers and the jobs needed once they are built. As more hyperscale data centers are constructed, other community colleges across the Commonwealth will join to expand the ADVANCEPA Technology & Trade Workforce Consortium.

"There is no sector of higher educator better equipped to adeptly respond to the changing workforce development demands of the technological revolution that is driving historic economic growth than Pennsylvania's community colleges," said John Yudichak, president of Luzerne County Community College.

Three pillars planned by the Technology and Trades Workforce Consortium are:

A Career & Technology Academy

An innovative regional partnership formed by community colleges and career and technical center high schools to create new pathways for career and technical center students to earn post-secondary credentials in technology and the skilled construction trades. The goal of a Career & Technology Academy is to serve underserved student populations in career and technical center high schools to build a consistent workforce pipeline of entry-level technicians and skilled trade workers.

A MicroCredential Academy

This will rapidly develop post-secondary credential programing that makes upskilling career credentials for Pennsylvania workers efficient, cost-effective, and accessible. The goal of the MicroCredential Academy is to serve Pennsylvania workers where they live and work by identifying high demand industry clusters and providing online, mobile, and campus based microcredential programing that empowers workers to advance to a high-wage, high-demand career.

A Construction & Trade Pre-Apprenticeship Academy

The Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trade Unions will build a pre-apprenticeship pipeline of students who will learn from a foundational curriculum that will prepare them to enter union registered apprenticeship programs and secure employment in the skilled building and construction trade industry. The goal of the Construction & Trade PreApprenticeship Academy is to promote, educate, and drive interest in students pursuing union apprenticeship programs to meet the growing demand for skilled trade workers in the Pennsylvania economy.

"This approach, under the direction of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, speaks to how our sector is lockstep with the Governor and General Assembly in moving the Commonwealth forward," PACCC President, Dr. Tuesday Stanley, said. "This effort speaks for our larger strategy of Advancing PA through its community colleges."

Pennsylvania's 15 community colleges collectively serve nearly 240,000 students annually through academic programing and workforce development training programs that focus on high-demand and high-wage jobs. Pennsylvania community colleges fuel regional economic growth and serve as the central workforce development pipeline in the Commonwealth with 90% of community college graduates going on to live and work in Pennsylvania after graduation.

Pennsylvania's community colleges partner with over 2,000 industries in the Commonwealth to align their academic and workforce development programing with a rapidly changing economy driven by technological innovation.

"We are so honored to advance Pennsylvania in economic development, workforce development, and even quality of life," said Lehigh Carbon Community College President, Dr. Ann Bieber. "The community college sector is pleased to serve in this capacity."

The Technology and Trades Workforce Consortium will strategically coordinate resources, avoid duplicative investments in equipment, and foster innovative college and industry collaborations that will streamline a fragmented workforce development system to deliver the highest quality workforce in Pennsylvania history. The Consortium will work with the State Board of Higher Education, federal and state agencies, Career and Technical Centers, high schools, Pennsylvania Construction & Trade Unions, and employers to ensure that curricula remain current and aligned with workforce needs to establish clear educational and career pathways for students.

"Our long history as a sector of partnering and collaborating is key to this Consortium," said Northampton Community College President, Dr. David Ruth. "Pennsylvania's community college sector has a long history of collaboration and educating our citizens in various ways."

