



CULTIVATING TECH TALENT

As Delaware tackles
unemployment,
business leads on tech

BY PATRICK CALLIHAN

THIS SUMMER, a group of business leaders joined Governor John Carney and Delaware Technical Community College president, Mark Brainard virtually, to kick off a newly formed IT Industry Council.

The Council was formed to play the important role of bridging information and opportunity between education and industry. The competition for tech talent is fierce and this Council is meant to help Delaware build on its reputation as an emerging tech hub.

Part of this is building the “farm system.” One idea behind forming this, and other councils, is to build career pathways. In this case, pathways to careers in technology. Not only will the council help to inform educators and workforce development providers with the requirements from industry, but it will also work to provide work-based learning opportunities for youth through internships, apprenticeships, and jobs.

Governor Carney, who kicked off the first meeting of the IT Industry Council, shared why this is so important: “Building a coordinated strategy to strengthen our tech talent pipeline is critical. We have most of the elements in place to be a national leader, but we need deliberate efforts to ensure a diverse supply of skilled IT specialists right here in Delaware. I look forward to this IT Industry Council collaborating with companies, higher education institutions, training organizations and the K-12 system to develop the next generation of IT professionals, engineers, and leaders to fuel innovation in our State.”

The concept behind industry councils is not new. In partnership with Paul Herdman, CEO of Rodel, a nonprofit that partners with public and private-sector leaders to drive educational improvements — Delaware leaders connected with national experts like Jobs For the Future in Boston and got a chance to learn from peers in countries like Switzerland and Germany that have been doing versions of this for decades. As part of developing

career pathways for students to explore in the secondary education system, the Office of Work-Based Learning was established at Delaware Technical Community College, under the leadership of Bryan Horsey. It is this office that is responsible for launching industry councils statewide.

The timing couldn't be better. As Delaware's Pathways efforts have grown from 27 to nearly 20,000 students — or half of Delaware's high schoolers, the Delaware Prosperity Partnership (DPP) worked with a national consulting firm to develop a coordinated statewide strategy to build an inclusive tech talent pipeline. That report and Charles Madden of DPP shared, “DPP has worked closely with Tech Impact Delaware during this research project and is excited to see a group of leaders is coming together to help implement this plan to nurture and support the tech sector. We look forward to partnering with the Council and others to grow a more vibrant Delaware economy.”

Now that the Council has been established, the work is just beginning. The executive committee will be working to develop a governance structure, leadership for the Council itself, and a vision for the broader Council that may include subcommittees, programming, and advocacy. The importance of this work was highlighted last fall through the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce's forum, Developing Delaware, and the State Chamber continues to highlight the need for this and other workforce development initiatives in our state.

The ultimate success of the Council will be in the ability of our state to build a pipeline of tech talent. This will take some fresh thinking. We cannot fill all the jobs available here by just relying on our colleges and universities. While we need them, and all our training partners to reskill and upskill thousands of adults already in the workforce, we also need to start as early as middle school in helping young people explore their

While our higher education system plays an important role, we will need to embrace alternative pathways to meet the growing demand.

passions. Our high schools have built new computer science pathways that allow students to gain professional certifications prior to leaving high school – and they need to expand.

While our higher education system plays an important role, we will need to embrace alternative pathways to meet the growing demand. To get people the training they need quickly, we need more bootcamps where a candidate can learn some high-demand skills in 3-6 months.

Nationally recognized certifications in areas of need should be expanded so that a student can gain a certification in a marketable skill and then “earn and learn.” That is, be able to use that training to get a job while they continue their education. And apprenticeships, which have been around for centuries, should be re-imagined for the information technology age.

Governor Carney signed an executive order in August that will infuse millions of dollars of CARES Act funding into a Rapid Workforce Training and Deployment Initiative. Through the leadership of Delaware’s Workforce Development Board, under Gary Stockbridge’s leadership, and the Department of Labor, Secretary Cerron Cade is authorizing up to \$2 million dollars toward strategic training in IT. The Industry Council will play an important role in helping to frame the most strategic training initiatives that will result in filling the needs of Delaware’s employers and building a robust pipeline of talent.

To be successful, the Council will need continued partnership from government, community partners, higher education, Delaware Pathways, and employers.

All Delawareans are poised to benefit from Delaware’s tech economy as business leaders see the wisdom in developing a diverse talent pool, including more people of color, women, and learning differences. And with thousands of dislocated workers in the current economy needing to upskill or reskill, the timing could not be better. You can help. As we build out the tech talent pipeline in Delaware, you can play an important role. Become an employer, advisor, mentor or become one of the new recruits into a certificate program or apprenticeship. Help us find and grow the talent that is already here and help Delaware become a destination point for tech talent across the U.S. As a first step, join the movement by being a member of the IT Industry Council. Learn more at: www.techhiredelaware.org. ■



Patrick Callihan is the executive director of Tech Impact, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower communities and nonprofits to use technology to better serve our world.

IT SOLUTIONS

CUSTOM SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

IT MAINTENANCE & SUPPORT

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT & HOSTING

SYSTEM MODERNIZATION

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT

DATA ANALYTICS

DASHBOARD DEVELOPMENT



CNTinfotech

Innovative Solutions | Creative Thinking

(800) 939-6690
SALES@CNTIT.COM
WWW.CNTINFOTECH.COM

**SERVING DELAWARE AND THE
TRI-STATE AREA FOR OVER 20 YEARS**