

AirPark Columbus College Campus

IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE · PURDUE UNIVERSITY · COLUMBUS

GREEN 2 GOLD

How Strategic Collaboration Saved and Expanded Local Access to a Nationally Ranked Engineering Program

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CASE STUDY OF HOW COMMUNITY, EDUCATION, AND BUSINESS PARTNERS COLLABORATE TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS IN SOUTHEAST INDIANA

Community Education Coalition



An Unexpected Split

HOW WE SAVED A VITAL PROGRAM

Manufacturing is the cornerstone of our regional economy, employing 22% of our workforce — well above the national average of 8%. The Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus (IUPUC) engineering program, in place since 2010, is vital to meeting local employer demand for engineers.

When Indiana University and Purdue University at IUPUC amicably separated in June 2023, our community faced a significant challenge. The mechanical engineering bachelor's degree program offered at the AirPark Campus was on the brink of elimination in the Columbus campus. It would only be available at Purdue University's West Lafayette and Indianapolis campuses, creating a substantial barrier for many local students. To ensure continued local access to prestigious Purdue engineering degrees, AirPark Campus stakeholders collaborated to develop a solution that would support our region's students, employers, and the future of our economy.

AirPark College Campus: Three Top Institutions. One Campus.

The AirPark Columbus College Campus exists to provide equitable access to postsecondary credentials directly aligned with regional workforce needs. Supported by the The Community Education Coalition, and shared by three of Indiana's top post-secondary institutions (Ivy Tech, Purdue Polytechnic, and Indiana University Columbus), the AirPark Campus is a key strategy for growing and retaining local talent.

Students at the AirPark Campus can pursue degrees and certifications in a vast array of career-focused subject areas, but one program is particularly vital to our region's workforce development: the mechanical engineering bachelor's degree.

The mechanical engineering bachelor's degree offered by Purdue University is among the nation's top programs, attracting students from across the globe. Admission to the West Lafayette and Indianapolis campuses is highly competitive, making it difficult for local students to secure a spot. In contrast, our Columbus campus provided a more accessible pathway for students to earn a four-year degree, allowing them to study close to home. This option was not only financially beneficial but also ensured that these students remained within our community, supporting the needs of our manufacturing sector and bolstering the local economy.

Our Systematic Approach to Collaboration

WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER THAT NONE OF US CAN DO ALONE?

It's a systems thing, not a single thing. By redesigning a system, it's possible to "dissolve" a problem by changing the underlying conditions that caused it in the first place. Following this wisdom, The Community Education Coalition's CivicLab Stakeholder Engagement Process (SEP) is both a way of thinking and a disciplined way of working together. The five-step process creates a kind of "community operating system" that guides and shapes a collective conversation among a diverse group of cross-sector stakeholders. It provides a common language and a common approach that enables people to develop a shared understanding of a problem and co-create solutions together at a systems level.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY (WHO?)

BRINGING STAKEHOLDERS TO THE TABLE

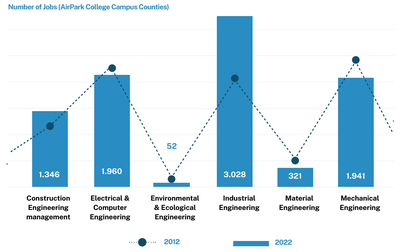
A system is a set of relationships; the "system" is the way we work together. Thus, transforming a system is about transforming relationships. To ensure the program's survival, the CEC acted as convener, uniting representatives from local manufacturing employers, Ivy Tech, Purdue, and the community. Over eight months, this group coalesced into a powerful, cross-sector guiding team (ore on guiding team in Step 4).



STEP 2. UNDERSTAND (WHY?)

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT STATE

The team set out to validate the demand for a Mechanical Engineering program in Columbus, considering both student interest and job opportunities. Data analysis revealed a high demand in the region for graduates of Purdue Engineering degree programs, particularly four specific programs, with a significant increase in demand over the past decade. The region also demonstrated sufficient student interest to make local Purdue Engineering degree programs viable and a robust pipeline of local students with strong foundations in math.



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Lightcast

GUIDING QUESTION

How might we work collaboratively to develop and implement a K12-to-postsecondary pathway designed to increase access for local students to high-quality Purdue Engineering programs at the AirPark Columbus Campus connected to careers with regional employers?



CIVICLAB

Learn more about CivicLab's Stakeholder Engagement Process at **educationcoalition.com/civic-lab**

Nation-wide application of the Stakeholder Engagement Process

- 350 communities served
- 20K+ leaders and community stakeholders trained
- Partnering and serving since 2012

STEP 3. CO-CREATE (WHAT?)

IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES

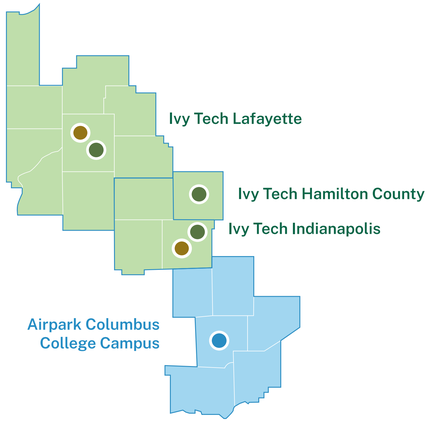
The desire to provide broader access to Purdue's engineering program led to the creation of Green2Gold, a collaborative program between Ivy Tech Community College and Purdue University. This program allows students to start with an associate degree at Ivy Tech and seamlessly transition to a bachelor's degree in engineering at Purdue. It features:

- **Cohort model:** Students remain in the same group throughout the first two years, providing a built-in support network to improve student success.
- **Assured admission:** Green2Gold students will have assured admission to Purdue's College of Engineering if they meet certain predetermined criteria
- **Shared staff member:** A staff member shared by the two institutions will support students through to completion and help coordinate work & learn opportunities.
- **Opportunities:** Students receive personalized career coaching throughout the program, ensuring they are well-prepared for the workforce.

STEP 4. REDESIGN (HOW?)

REFINEMENT THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

The initial objective of this work was to continue making the mechanical engineering program accessible to local students. To achieve this, the guiding team was divided into three working groups: one collaborated with employers to develop work-and-learn programs, another focused on student recruitment, and the third worked on streamlining the transition from Ivy Tech to Purdue. Through collaboration, the team not only achieved the initial goal but also expanded the program to offer assured admissions to nearly all of Purdue's engineering bachelor's degrees. This experience highlights the power of collaboration in transforming challenges into opportunities, resulting in a program that exceeds the original expectations. The program is now set to expand to three more Ivy Tech locations in 2025.



STEP 5. REPEAT

GO AROUND THE WHEEL AGAIN

This work is iterative and circular in nature, allowing us to continually follow the process as the work evolves. This approach can be applied to any community issue, whether big or small, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation.

Community Education Coalition

We collaborate with business, education, and community partners to increase educational success aligned with high-quality jobs for all learners in Columbus, Southeast Indiana, and nationally.

FOCUS AREAS

Stakeholder Engagement

Promote collaboration among educational, community, and employer partners to achieve collective outcomes.

Equity in Education

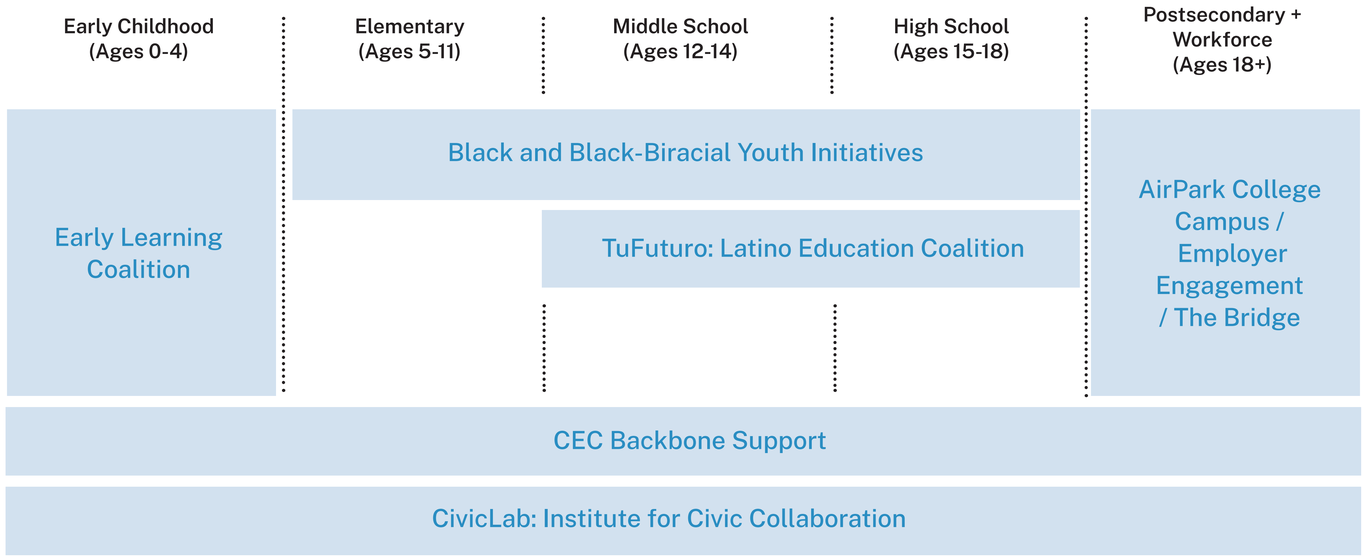
Advance educational success and equity for all students with a focus on disparities by income and race/ethnicity.

Alignment Between Education and High-Quality Jobs

Align the education system with high-quality jobs across the education continuum.

OUR APPROACH

Cradle-to-Career



CIVICLAB

Led by a team of pragmatic practitioners, CivicLab creates the tools and frameworks that form the underlying foundation of all our work. Since its founding in 2012, we have partnered with and served more than 375 communities across the country and have trained more than 20,000+ leaders and community stakeholders.

Workforce: Employer Engagement

Complementing our efforts across the learning system, we partner with education partners and employers to create seamless pathways from K-12 to postsecondary education and directly into high-quality jobs aligned with our regional workforce needs.

AirPark Columbus College Campus — Ivy Tech Community College, Purdue University, IU Columbus

We directly support the AirPark Columbus College Campus, home to three of Indiana's top postsecondary institutions: Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana University Columbus, and Purdue Polytechnic, by fostering collaboration among the campus institutions and operating two shared campus buildings. The Bridge, located at the Columbus Learning Center is a student success and employment center which is a shared resrouce for all campus students.

TUFUTURO LATINO EDUCATION GROUP — **Black and Black-Biracial Youth Initiatives**

At the K-12 level, our efforts focus on two targeted equity strategies: TuFuturo and Black & Black-Biracial Youth Initiatives. Through deep cross-sector collaboration, our aim is to enhance education outcomes ultimately leading to high value jobs for Latino and Black or Black-Biracial youth and families, ensuring access to vital information and support services.

Early Learning Coalition

Our early learning work brings together providers, community partners, and systems leaders to collectively and collaboratively build a quality early learning system for children in Bartholomew County that is accessible for all families and sustainable for early learning programs.

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THE WINS THAT FOLLOWED

The Green2Gold program serves as a powerful example of how systematically and collaboratively approaching complex social issues can strengthen educational pathways, communities, and economies.

Saved and Enhanced the Local Engineering Program

Successfully preserved the local Mechanical Engineering program and expanded its scope, providing assured admission to nearly all of Purdue's 15 engineering bachelor's degrees for local students.

Ensured Stronger Student Support

Created a robust support system to better assist students and bolster the local workforce and economy.

Expanded Access to Engineering Pathways

Plan to launch the pathway program at three additional Ivy Tech locations in 2025, increasing accessibility for even more students.

Key Takeaways

- **A BACKBONE ORGANIZATION, SERVING AS A NEUTRAL PARTY,** is crucial for ensuring that efforts are aligned and moving forward toward achieving a common goal.
- **CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS** expand the reach and impact of initiatives, uniting diverse strengths and perspectives.
- **USING A STRUCTURED PROCESS FOR COLLABORATION** ensures alignment and effective engagement among stakeholders.
- **INTENTIONALLY NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS** is essential for building trust and fostering a spirit of collaboration, setting a fertile ground for future opportunities and ensuring a state of readiness for action.