RMC and AARO publish a report about the Workforce Potential Project, topic of article in Austin American-Statesman

An article by Dan Zehr describing a collaborative report between the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO) and the Ray Marshall Center (RMC) was printed in the Austin American-Statesman on Easter Sunday. In the article, Principal Investigator Dan O’Shea, explains that workers deserve the opportunity for upward mobility; "we have a local supply, rather than depending on in-migrant workers, and that's where a social equity piece comes back in - people who live here already are participating more equitably in the overall growth of the economy."

The Workforce Potential Project (WPP), an initiative of the Social Equity Committee of AARO, would strive to align local labor supply and projected industry demand in support of economic growth in Central Texas. WPP would target area residents 25 years and older with some postsecondary achievement to obtain an associate’s degree or certification that will enable them to qualify for high-demand, high-wage jobs offering opportunities for stable employment and career advancement.

AARO engaged the Ray Marshall Center to conduct in-depth labor market research. The initial report, "Workforce Potential Project: Analysis of Labor Market and Provider Capacity", presents the results of this collaborative research effort and provides a basis for
advancing WPP toward implementation.

Dr. Chris King, Director at RMC, explains in the Statesman that "...what we forget is most of the people that we need to be getting better jobs and better skills for are already in the workforce." He goes on to explain, "you need a little nudge to get a few more credits and that credential - that's low hanging fruit."

RMC and AARO produced a press release announcing the publication of this report.

Dr. King presents findings in Washington, DC

On Thursday, February 28th, RMC Director Chris King flew to Washington, DC, to participate in the conference titled, "Workforce Intermediaries Sector Strategies in an Uncertain Economy; A Decade of Research and Practice", convened by the Aspen Institute and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The purpose of the meeting was to bring contributors of this work-in-progress together to discuss the chapters they had drafted as a group. Experts on workforce economics and sector strategies took advantage of this opportunity to sit together and discuss their research. Questions raised during the meeting included; "How did the writing process shape how you think about your topic? Were there things you wrote about that you didn’t expect? What is the main takeaway you hope a reader will get from your chapter? What is the issue you are still thinking about or reflecting on?"

Authors also presented findings and observations from their chapters. King gave a presentation titled, "Sectoral Workforce Strategies: What We Know....and What We Need to Know." He spoke about training strategies and reviewed the evidence on sectoral strategies, career pathways programs, and bridge programs. The volume is being edited by Bob Giloth with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Maureen Conway with the Aspen Institute. The book is scheduled to be published late this fall.

Dr. Prince makes observations about Texas bill in Austin American-Statesman

Dr. Heath Prince, Associate Director and Research Scientist at the Ray Marshall Center, was quoted in the March 7th edition of the Austin American-Statesman. Commenting on the Texas Fast Start
King recognized for his work on two generation studies
Dr. Chris King, Ascend Fellow, was mentioned for his work on the Jeremiah Program's two generation model. More about the program can be seen on the Aspen Institute's Ascend website.

Austin has a good job market....for the young
Dan Zehr, writing for the Austin American Statesman, wrote a piece in March describing the difficulty that well-educated older workers encounter when trying to get hired in Austin.
In his article, Zehr quotes King, "Austin is the hipster place, we put a premium on youth. If you're an older worker and you lose a job, it's really tough to get back in."
The author goes on to explain the multiple reasons for why older Austinites have trouble finding good jobs; you can read the article here.

Ray Marshall Center Hosts the 2013 Central Texas FERPA Conference
On Friday, April 12, 2013, the Ray Marshall Center hosted the Central Texas FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) Conference at the Austin Convention Center. Heath Prince welcomed a full hall to a day of information sharing and discussion about the various applications of this federal law to the work of state and local agencies and the research community.

Representatives from the U.S. Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) provided an overview of how FERPA has changed over time, and walked the audience through key provisions and interpretations related to data sharing.
From issues as focused as drafting FERPA compliant agreements and data transfer security to broader topics such as the value of longitudinal data systems, the conference touched on themes that privacy officers, educators, and researchers deal with in their every day lives.
Perspectives on FERPA and data sharing were provided by representatives from Ohio and Washington, as well as multiple Texas-based initiatives.
A lively keynote address was delivered by Jay Pfeiffer, a consultant on state longitudinal data systems and a former deputy commissioner in Florida's Department of Education. The day concluded with a question and answer session.
The agenda and the presentations and reports can be found here.
Ray Marshall, former US Secretary of Labor, speaks at the LBJ School

Ray Marshall, former Secretary of Labor under President Carter and RMC's founder and namesake, spoke to a packed house at the LBJ School on Wednesday, April 3rd.

The event was entitled, "Adopting a Skill-Based Immigration Policy for the US: Promise and Prospects," and was sponsored by RMC and the LBJ School's Public Affairs Alliance for Communities of Color (PAACC).

Introduced at the event by RMC Director Chris King, Secretary Marshall spoke of the need for immigration policy in the United States to shift from a family-based to a skills-based immigration policy. Marshall said that for decades US leadership has approached the immigration debate as a law enforcement issue, while other OECD countries adjusted their immigration laws to accommodate demands in the workforce.

According to Marshall, once US leadership recognizes that immigration is an economic policy issue, the country can focus its efforts on developing policies that consider the economic needs of the country, while providing legal status and workers rights to immigrants. Marshall explained that international wage competition should not be used as an excuse to lower salaries and avoid employee training for workers. Marshall has been at the forefront of this debate in recent years, as his policy ideas have gained traction. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI), co-founded by Dr. Marshall, recently discussed how he has influenced the debate, referring to his 2009 book "Immigration for Shared Prosperity; A Framework for Comprehensive Reform." The EPI article cites this work as a contributing source for an important agreement between the AFL-CIO and the US Chamber of Commerce to establish a foreign worker program.

Immigration reform is expected to be enacted in 2013.
Evaluation Conference (WREC) will be held on May 29 - 31, 2013 in Washington, DC. WREC is a leading forum for family self-sufficiency and poverty researchers, State and local administrators, practitioners and program operators and Federal officials and policymakers to network with peers and discuss cutting-edge research on family self-sufficiency and social welfare programs and policies.

Researchers will Travel to Tulsa in May
RMC researchers will spend May 13th-15th in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where they will undertake participant focus group sessions. The CareerAdvance® Program has 6 cohorts who have graduated or are in the program.

Student Futures Presentation in San Marcos

Greg Cumpton presented recent Student Futures Project research to San Marcos personnel on Thursday, April 11th. This link directs you to the powerpoint that Greg presented.

RMC Hires Staff

RMC welcomes Shaun Alexander as Desktop Support Specialist. Also new to the team are Amye McCarther and Judy Chen, who will be working as Student Technician and Graduate Research Assistant, respectively. Anthony Muñoz has been promoted to IT Coordinator, congrats!

RMC Researchers Visit Tulsa

Center director Chris King and research assistant Laura Stelling visited Tulsa on February 25th and 26th to discuss the CareerAdvance® Program. They met with Community Action Project staff, local employers, and local workforce experts. With CAP leadership and stakeholders, they discussed project processes, funding, sustainability, and suggestions for the future. Local employers and workforce experts expressed their positive impression of CareerAdvance® and provided insights on job trends and prospects.

Project Updates

RMC has been awarded TRENDS contract

Training for Regional Energy in North Dakota (TRENDS) is a consortium of five community colleges that are collaborating to address labor shortages in the state’s energy sector. Leaders from these institutions are equipping workers with post-secondary certificates and credentials in order to meet employers’ needs for a skilled workforce, as well as to help ensure that workers can access and succeed in this rapidly expanding sector. To this end, TRENDS will pursue the following strategies:

1. Develop new and enhanced curricula and credentials to help
students find jobs in oil and gas, transportation and building and construction trades in North Dakota;
2. Redesign the program development and delivery systems provided by the colleges to support more flexible and technology-enabled learning; and
3. Offer enhanced student support services and career navigation to increase retention and placement.

The Ray Marshall Center (RMC) has joined with the **Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)** as an external program evaluator for this project. In order to determine how TREND is implemented, as well as its outcomes, CSW and RMC have proposed an integrated evaluation approach that includes both an implementation and an impact evaluation. This grant is funded by the Department of Labor and will run through 2016.

**Project focuses on Post-Secondary Employment in Austin**

The Ray Marshall Center is evaluating **Austin Community College's Adult Basic Education Innovation Grant (ABE-IG)**. ABE-IG aims to prepare unemployed and underemployed adults for career-path employment and post-secondary education in high-demand or targeted occupations. ABE-IG prioritizes its services for lower-skilled, Adult Basic Education students who may or may not have a GED or high school diploma, serving them through integrated entry-level job skills training and Level 1 certificate training. ABE-IG focuses on four distinct career tracks: HVAC, Accounting/Bookkeeping, Nursing, and PC Tech. The ABE-IG model is modeled on Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program, incorporating both a content instructor and a basic skills instructor in the classroom. RMC researchers will share lessons learned with ACC administrators and ABE-IG staff on an ongoing basis, serving a vital continuous program improvement role as well as an evaluative one.