



**RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE**

**Building New Partnerships  
in Support of America's Rural Communities**



**A Ford Foundation Supported Initiative**

Report Submitted by  
North Central Regional Center for Rural Development  
Southern Rural Development Center

**January 2005**



## **Introduction**

The second phase of the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) is comprised of 21 college-based teams involving a total of 27 community/tribal colleges. Of this total, 14 teams (20 colleges) are completing the planning and capacity building work begun in Phase One and are entering the action phase to effect positive social and economic change. During Phase Two, we added six new teams to the Initiative. In addition, the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) is working with the Texas Rural Community College Network to examine potential partnerships with the land-grant system. This partnership will focus on creating opportunities for rural community colleges in Texas to expand civic engagement in order to increase access to education, create jobs and diversify rural economies. Nebraska has also shown interest in a statewide initiative.

Furthermore, the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) has significantly leveraged the Ford Foundation funding with investments from the National Rural Funders' Collaborative (\$71,760) and the Lumina Foundation (\$150,000). These funds provide RCCI with a unique opportunity to:

- Engage tribal and native-serving colleges in uncovering promising practices related to equitable economic development, increased access to education, and enhanced civic engagement;
- Harvest the wisdom of college staff and participants in creating positive change; and
- Develop a learning community dedicated to fostering local initiatives to support the goals of RCCI.

In this report, we outline progress toward goals described in the Round Two application, challenges we face in moving the RCCI forward, and the evolution of a sustainable institutionalization of RCCI.

## **Ongoing Communications and Organizational Development**

To begin the Phase Two cycle, we invited the reconstituted RCCI Advisory Council to meet during the 2004 RCCI Institute. This opportunity for representatives from the LGUs, community colleges, and tribal and native-serving colleges to discuss opportunities for collaboration was extremely valuable. The discussion served to cement administrative support and increase the knowledge level of land-grant administrators regarding ongoing efforts related to the RCCI. The Advisory Council will continue to meet by quarterly conference call unless issues arise that require additional meetings. The RCCI Coordinating Team continues to rely on the Council for advice and support, particularly in regard to institutionalization strategies for RCCI and for strengthening the emerging partnerships among the RCCI colleges and the land-grant universities with regard to their Extension and outreach mission.

During Round One, we developed a number of efficient and cost-effective strategies to increase networking and project development opportunities. We are continuing these efforts to keep the Advisory Council, RCCI team personnel and land-grant partners informed of RCCI happenings via the following channels:

- RCCI website;
- Monthly conference calls with coaches and team leaders;
- Quarterly conference calls for president, provosts, and directors;
- Electronic listservs for information sharing;
- Monthly RCCI e-newsletter;
- Bi-monthly grant and training opportunities newsletter;
- Electronic policy and research briefs; and
- Site visits by Coordinating Team members.

In addition, we will continue to improve electronic opportunities for sharing experiences related to the planning efforts of the college.

**Progress toward Goals:**

**GOAL 1: Continue to expand the network of rural community and tribal colleges actively engaged in the RCCI program.**

- **Select six additional rural community/tribal colleges from three new states and our current states**

This goal was revised based on the advice of Priscilla Salant. Her report to the Ford Foundation focused on funding levels, activity plans, and evaluation needs and indicated a concern that the Centers were over-extending themselves in terms of personnel commitments. As a result of this report, the SRDC decided to invite North Florida Community College and Louisiana Delta Community College to become a part of the Initiative. Because LDCC's institutional capacity was stretched due to their accreditation process and other commitments, its administration has initially declined the invitation to participate. The SRDC then launched a statewide discussion on the RCCI program and partnering opportunities between the Center, Louisiana State University and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

However, as a result of new investments from the National Rural Funders' Collaborative and the Lumina Foundation, the NCRCD decided to add two new tribal colleges in North Dakota (one is taking the place of UTTC), two native-serving institution in Alaska and Hawaii (one in each state), a tribal college in Nebraska and a community college in Nebraska.

In keeping with the proposal outline, we have worked hard to engage Extension personnel in the development of college applications from the outset with varying levels of success. The SRDC has been particularly successful in integrating Extension and other land-grant outreach programs into the Southern RCCI teams' activities.

- **Maintain the active involvement of Phase One sites by continuing to provide training, technical assistance and coaching to these RCCI teams**

Our continued support for the Phase One teams includes:

- Support for teams to attend the 2004 RCCI Institute;
- Limited support for team members to attend the 2005 RCCI Institute/RCCA Conference;
- Site visits for technical assistance and additional Coordinating Team support;
- Ongoing support for participation in conference calls, newsletters and other conferencing opportunities;
- Some colleges are just completing their planning process and are now accessing funds for site visits, technical assistance and additional training;
- Continuing coaching support; and
- Additional training for all RCCI coaches (scheduled for January 26-28, 2005, in Albuquerque).

**GOAL 2: Increase the capacity of rural community and tribal colleges to be agents of innovation in their service areas, especially as it relates to sustainable economic development, educational access, and civic involvement strategies in distressed rural areas.**

- **Continue the National RCCI Institute**

The second RCCI Institute was held in Nashville with Phase One and Two teams participating. Phase Two teams had an opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges faced by Phase One teams. In addition, sessions on practices related to civic engagement, increasing access and equitable economic development were available to all. A revised Vision-to-Action planning process was presented to Phase Two teams, and a workshop on using the Community Capitals Framework in evaluation processes was offered to all teams.

- **Organize and deliver RRDC sponsored training and specialized assistance**

To date, the SRDC has offered a training session on civic engagement attended by several RCCI team members and leaders. In order to minimize time and travel costs for such trainings, the SRDC is exploring the use of tele- and video-conferencing as a low-cost alternative. In addition, teams may request specialized assistance from the RRDCs to address unique challenges facing the teams. The Coordinating Team is working on setting up several of those opportunities particularly in regard to evaluation, leadership and civic engagement tools. To the extent possible, we refer such specialized requests to the land-grant schools in their states. If these universities are not able to respond to a particular request, the RRDCs are able to access the large pool of Extension educators or past RCCI participants that may be best positioned to provide expertise.

- **Provide planning assistance resources to Round Two teams**

In order to support the planning efforts of Round Two colleges, support funding is provided to Phase Two teams. These funds can be used for meeting costs associated with the following:

- Engagement of a diverse group of local citizens in information gathering phase of the Vision-to-Action process;
- For securing technical assistance on topics central to the planning activities of the team;
- For participating in training programs that can further strengthen their community capacity-building skills;
- For taking part in sites visits to past RCCI sites or other model community efforts; and
- For strengthening their communication activities with RCCI team and community members.

As teams complete their planning processes, several have tapped these funds for field trips to other colleges and successful economic development projects. In fact, several Round Two schools are looking at visiting Round One schools to learn more about how their planning process succeeded. In addition, the SRDC has developed a small competitive grants program to facilitate further action strategies that are associated with the Vision-to-Action process.

- **Provide communication ties with teams by supporting an electronic community of practice for both Phase One and Phase Two colleges and conducting targeted site visits with RCCI teams**

Throughout the RRDC-coordinated round, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that successful RCCI colleges rely on ongoing communication and support. Conference calls offer a cost-effective means of communication among colleges. Monthly calls for team leaders and coaches continue to play an important role in this process. In addition to opportunities for people to learn from one another with project updates, these calls provide just-in-time information and in-depth discussion on topics specifically tailored to the unique needs of RCCI teams. Conference calls for college core teams to meet with Coordinating Team staff have also been implemented. Finally, we are specifically targeting the face-to-face visits with the RCCI teams to help maintain a high level of energy within the teams and as a mechanism for observing the progress colleges are making in the planning process.

**GOAL 3: Increase the ability of land-grant institutions to work in collaboration with rural community/tribal colleges in providing important coaching support and technical assistance to these colleges.**

- **Work with land-grant partners to provide coaching and technical assistance to Phase Two colleges**

In earlier rounds and phases of the RCCI (the MDC, Inc. managed and the RRDC coordinated programs), coaching served as a critical ingredient for building college and community capacity. In order to provide the best coaching possible to Phase Two colleges, we have:

- Revised the coaching curriculum developed in Phase One.

- Recruited a new set of coaches using the insights from Phase One implementation and interviews of the experienced coaches. This practice has resulted in the selection of Phase Two coaches from state and area Extension specialist ranks. This further encourages local Extension educators to participate as active members of the RCCI core team (although there are some that want to serve in the coaching role). We continue to work with Extension Program Leaders and other administrators to identify local, regional or state-based Extension educators who wish to embrace the role of coach for designated RCCI teams.
- Revised the coaches' training curriculum to enable early preparation for the coaches' retreat and for implementation of an electronic community of practice to support the coaching role. We have not succeeded in developing an electronic community of practice beyond conference calls and broadcast email.
- Provided educational programs to Phase Two coaches designed to assist them to assume a more meaningful role with the RCCI teams.
- Identified and provided funding for additional training opportunities in the coaching role to assist coaches in developing essential advanced skills and insights. This includes an Advanced Coaches Institute to be held in January 2005.
- **Establish coaching as a key role in Extension programming for the areas of community capacity building and rural development**

Coaching as an alternative to technical assistance is gaining prominence among many organizations that support local capacity building and community development activities. Coaches report that this tool offers them a new and powerful technique they can use with their more traditional audiences as well as with their RCCI teams. The Coordinating Team is in the process of gathering and assimilating information on the RCCI process so experiences can be shared with the land-grant system.

- **Continue to build professional links among RCCI colleges, RCCA and land-grant institutions**

Many land-grant faculty members have participated in previous RCCA conferences and a significant number are expected to take part in the joint RCCI Institute/RCCA Conference will be held in September in Duluth, MN. The RCCA conference is a forum through which Extension faculty can develop an understanding of the challenges faced by the community/tribal college faculty and administrators as well as a way for community/tribal college faculty and administrators to understand the extent of Extension's educational and technical assistance programming expertise in community and economic development. These experiences have created strong linkages among these groups, particularly with regard to community college programs and federal policy activities. To further expose Extension and community/tribal college faculty to new educational programming opportunities, the RRDCs are talking with Stuart Rosenfeld (Regional Technology Strategies, Inc.) about linking one or more of his organization's cluster projects to the conference.

**GOAL 4: Institutionalize the RCCI community and tribal college and land-grant university partnership as a catalyst for helping advance the sustainable economic development, educational access and civic engagement challenges facing rural communities.**

- **Develop and implement a plan to incorporate the RCCI into the RRDCs' plans of work**

The RRDCs currently are working closely with Sally Maggard, National Program Leader in the Economic and Community Systems Unit of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) in USDA. Together, we are spearheading an effort to secure USDA funding in the FY 2006 federal budget to support and sustain the RCCI program through the auspices of the RRDCs. This effort is also maintaining an eye toward seeking additional avenues for securing resources to build on the RCCI model, including a commitment to continue building strong ties between rural community/tribal colleges and land-grant institutions. We are also working with the new Western Rural Development Center Director on identifying opportunities to expand RCCI to the Western states.

The SRDC, the NCRCD and RCCA members are also working with the Rural Policy Research Institute on a policy initiative designed to expand the role of community/tribal colleges involved in programs addressing rural distress and poverty. These initial activities have already had far reaching effects, particularly with regard to the Mid-South Partnership for Rural Community Colleges.

- **Continue to build bonds between community and tribal colleges and their land-grant colleagues to receive educational and technical assistance via their land-grant colleagues**

The use of e-mail and numerous land-grant system web sites has greatly increased our ability to alert teams to training opportunities and to solicit suggestions from RCCI teams on assistance needed by the teams. In addition, Extension educators working with the RCCI college teams have augmented the existing team networks by utilizing the expertise of other land-grant faculty and previous RCCI team leaders who are able to offer specialized technical assistance to the teams.

For example, University of Minnesota Extension specialists, in cooperation with faculty from other parts of the university, are developing a field day for community college economics faculty. Community colleges in the Northeast Minnesota Higher Education District are taking advantage of Extension's Internet-based curriculums in their emerging tech-prep centers. In Howard County, Texas, the partnership between Howard College and Texas Cooperative Extension has resulted in funding for an Extension position focused on community development to serve the college's service area. Finally, the coach for the Carteret Community College team has linked the college to invaluable sea-grant program resources for their local seafood branding project.

- **Work with the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI), RCCA and the Mid-South Community College Partnership for Rural Community Colleges to secure funding for the RCCI Program**

RUPRI, the RCCA, the Mid-South Community College Partnership Program for Rural Community Colleges (hosted by Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University), and the SRDC continue to seek expanded support by the federal government for the work of rural community/tribal colleges. The SRDC and NCRCD could be key in advocating authorization and appropriation for this proposed support. A critical element of this request is permanent funding of the RCCI program at a level comparable to that being provided by the Ford Foundation. Now that the election cycle is over, we anticipate more activity under this goal.

- **Provide support to the RCCI teams to build on their local assets to mobilize additional resources to increase educational access for under-represented populations, to contribute to equitable economic development, and to increase the civic engagement of under-represented people**

The Coordinating Team continues to work with the teams and coaches to increase their strategic readiness in responding to opportunities that will leverage their assets. By helping the teams think strategically, the RCCI coaching process assists them in taking advantage of appropriate funding opportunities. We will continue to:

- Provide timely updates to the RCCI teams on grant opportunities that exist from various sources that address community improvement activities. This is accomplished in two ways – the *Grant Connections* electronic newsletter published by the SRDC, and the grant updates included in the RCCI electronic newsletter authored by the two RRDCs.
- Develop and deliver “grantsmanship” training programs to the RCCI teams at regional institutes.

## **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies**

In addition to working on the project goals, the RRDCs take seriously their responsibility to document and demonstrate the effectiveness of the RCCI program in advancing the well-being of rural people and places. We have developed and are implementing an effective and meaningful evaluation strategy that includes the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data to determine how well we have achieved our major goals. Moreover, we want to secure additional information on the coaching process to determine how well this role is fitting into the work of land-grant educators and what skills have proven most useful in guiding the work of the RCCI teams.

Our monitoring and evaluation strategies include pre-assessments of the relationships between community colleges and the land-grant system; data collection on the basic demographic features of the targeted service areas; assisting the colleges with creating and implementing a participatory approach to project design, implementation, and evaluation, ongoing monitoring via phone, email, conference calls and site visits; and interviews with

coaches. In addition, the SRDC is providing financial support to enable two New Mexico coaches to carry out a formative evaluation of the Phase One colleges' planning processes using the Appreciative Inquiry methodology. Getting colleges to respond to our requests for data may be our biggest challenge to date.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

Several years into this program, we see several areas that continue to challenge the RCCI teams:

- Lack of interest and participation in the evaluation process creates a major challenge to the RRDCs in collecting the data they need to argue for ongoing funding. In the day-to-day struggle of many of the colleges, there is a perceived lack of time and energy for data collection.
- Life happens! Working with under-staffed and over-worked institutions means that illness or staff turnover can wreak havoc with the best-laid plans.
- Finding and securing support from pivotal people in the land-grant and community college systems remains a challenge in some of the targeted states.
- Working with the community colleges to address the lack of resources, in particular the lack of time, of dedicated faculty and staff that frustrate the college teams and the RCCI staff.
- As with many community development projects, encouraging ongoing shared and entrepreneurial leadership goes hand-in-hand with the challenge of fostering participation from diverse voices within the community. In many cases, it has been difficult for the teams to realize the benefit of either.

## **Individual College Reports**

### ***Carteret Community College***

The Carteret College team has developed an ambitious plan to effect change in its service area. The team has primarily focused on the following areas:

- Facilitating a local seafood branding project in order to provide higher profit margins to local fishing enterprises.
- Exploring opportunities with East Carolina University to develop a preventative community health and wellness program.
- Exploring educational access opportunities remains a top priority of the team leader and is seen as an integral part of the RCCI process by the rest of the team. The college has employed a new Community and Corporate Education Director whose primary responsibility is in the areas of Adult Basic Education and General

Equivalency Diploma. Several additional potential delivery points and methods have been identified, and their feasibility is in the process of being explored.

The Carteret team has determined that, for the RCCI effort to become sustainable, the effort within the college must reconstitute itself. Also, in a core team meeting held on December 10, the college president, Dr. Joe Barwick, stated that a shortfall of the effort has been a lack of leadership development instilled in the process and that leadership components should be included in the reconstituted process. To this end, the following areas are under consideration:

- Working with the currently existing Leadership Carteret committee to adopt a prominent leadership development curriculum within its current program structure.
- Piloting the Community Voices leadership development curriculum in a Down East community to more fully engage these citizens in civic processes.
- Reconstitute the current RCCI core team. This team will continue to partner with current RCCI-related projects and will continue to seek new projects that coincide with various interest groups in the community.
- Reduce the frequency of the expanded team meetings and build upon the successes of the expanded team by introducing leadership development components and other civic engagement tools that proved successful in early team meetings.

### ***Coastal Bend College***

The Coastal Bend College team continues to make significant progress on moving to the project implementation stage of the RCCI process. The college's core team has successfully regrouped and is more focused on the needs of the individual communities within the service area than in the past. The team has undertaken two efforts that promise to have a tremendous effect on the communities involved.

First, the core team, along with representative expanded team members from each of the four college campuses, took a field trip to Brownsville, TX, to determine how Texas Southmost Community College and the Brownsville economic development entity have used an abandoned mall to create an economic development center that currently houses the Brownsville Economic Development Corporation, the U.S. Import Export Bank, numerous college training programs and a business incubator. It is the core team's belief that a portion of an abandoned naval air base (currently owned by the Bee Economic Development Authority) could be utilized for this type of project.

Second, the core team has made arrangements with Ron Hustedde and Tammy Werner of the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute to present their program to the core and expanded teams. Dr. Hustedde has been instrumental in adapting the Sirolli process for use in rural areas, and the core team feels that this type of program can be successfully implemented in the college's service area.

In addition, each college campus is in the process of either developing or implementing individual projects. These projects include:

- *Alice Campus*  
The Alice campus is currently focusing on providing public transportation for college students who otherwise would be unable to attend classes. The RCCI team has secured the funds need for the program's infrastructure but are still in search of operating monies.
- *Beeville Campus*  
The Beeville campus team has re-examined the data that was collected in the initial phases of the RCCI process. This has led to a determination of two primary projects that will be undertaken by the group. These include an examination of the feasibility of a central economic development facility such as the one visited in Brownsville and an Entrepreneurial Coaching program such as the one that will be presented in February.
- *Kingsville Campus*  
The Kingsville campus team is focusing on adult literacy problems in the area and has made substantial progress in developing and implementing an educational program to address these problems. As a result of funding from the Community Development Block Grant program, the team has assembled a true working partnership to make this program a success. The key members of this partnership include Coastal Bend College (providing space to hold the classes), the local public school system (providing instructors for the classes), and the local housing authority (providing childcare and transportation services). John Ford, Texas Cooperative Extension County Extension Agent and President of the Kingsville Chamber of Commerce, has been very involved with the development of this project and is also working with the campus-based team to apply for a Barbara Bush Literacy Program Grant.
- *Pleasanton Campus*  
Due to personnel turnover, the Pleasanton campus has had difficulty in getting started. However, as a result of his participation in the Brownsville field trip, one of the local county commissioners has become very excited about the possibilities that the RCCI process presents for the community and has pledged his support to the process. Also, Gene Theodori and Donnie Montemayor (coaches for the Coastal Bend College team) have committed to working with the Pleasanton campus director, David Pearse, to guide the campus team through the Vision to Action process.

### ***East Central Community College***

The East Central Community College team has made tremendous strides in partnering with the Mississippi State University Extension Service and Mississippi State University Academic Outreach and Continuing Education. After a meeting with MSUES Family & Consumer Sciences and Enterprise & Community Resource Development state program leaders and the Continuing Education Coordinator with MSU-AOCE, the core team has identified several opportunities to partner with the land-grant system.

### ***Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell***

Recently the NCRCRD nominated the Roswell RCCI team for a national leadership award for their efforts in addressing long-term workforce and poverty reduction strategies. Their work in these areas resulted in a pilot project grant from the state to address the concerns of out-of-school youth. Participation in RCCI has not only helped them launch several outstanding projects, it has also offered them numerous opportunities to leverage additional funds.

### ***Eastern New Mexico University – Ruidoso***

A change in leadership at Ruidoso means that the RCCI effort there is currently on hold. The team plans to return to the communities with which they have worked to present information from the regional meeting and at the same time gain commitment from community members to continue the RCCI effort.

### ***Fort Berthold Community College***

Fort Berthold Community College will use the RCCI process to strengthen its preparation for the accreditation self study process. New players to add to the team have been suggested and discussion on how best to take the planning process out to the various districts has focused on including as many voices as possible.

### ***Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College***

The process at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College slowed down this last semester when team leader Dawn Newman resigned to take a job with the University of Minnesota Extension Service. Plans are underway to revisit and renew the project next month.

### ***Hawaii Community College***

The Hawaii Community College postponed their start up until several key positions at the college were filled. The team has met several times and is working on framing their planning project to be as inclusive as possible, particularly in terms of involving Native Hawaiians. They are also looking at ways of sharing the model with several community colleges on other islands.

### ***Howard College***

The Howard College team continues to make progress in the RCCI program by continually seeking out new and innovative ideas and methods through which the college can make a positive difference in its community. The core team took advantage of an economic and community development conference held in Tupelo, MS, and hosted by Dr. Vaughn Grisham, Director of the George McLean Center for Community Development. This conference showcased five rural communities that Dr. Grisham has assisted over several years and highlighted the creative methods they used to effect economic, social and educational change.

In addition to participating in the conference, team members met with Lewis Whitfield of the CREATE Foundation (other Howard College RCCI team members participated in this meeting by conference call) to discuss the formation and structure of Tupelo's Community Development Foundation (CDF). The CDF is an umbrella organization for activities and programs that would normally be associated with Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development and Industrial Development Authority Boards that might be found in other

areas. The Howard College RCCI team feels that an exploration of this type of strategy would be beneficial to the Howard County area and would serve to facilitate the progress of the four RCCI subcommittees (Community Image, City/County Partnerships, Education, and Jobs and Economic Growth).

The team is also planning to host a mini RCCI Institute for several former and current RCCI schools (Southwest Texas Junior College in Texas, Mid Plains College in Nebraska, and Coastal Bend College in Texas will be invited). In addition, a contingent from Morrilton, AR (the host of the Howard College RCCI team's field trip) is also planning to attend. This mini institute is indicative of the types of relationships that are being formed among the community colleges in the current phase of the RCCI program.

### ***Little Priest Tribal College***

The Little Priest team has met several times to begin outreach plans for the Winnebago community. They believe that modifying the Appreciative Inquiry approach will help them generate enthusiasm for a college expansion.

### ***Louisiana Community and Technical College System***

The SRDC has begun a conversation with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) to develop an RCCI effort in the state of Louisiana. These conversations have yielded two results. First, the LCTCS has committed to participate in the RCCI program by working with the SRDC to find one member institution or a set of institutions within a specific geographic definition that are eager to go through the Vision-to-Action process and enhance the development of their community.

Second, an open dialog between the LCTCS and the Louisiana State University AgCenter has been established. After an extremely frank conversation, the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of the AgCenter and the President of the LCTCS agreed that a partnership between the two institutions could greatly enhance the educational and outreach missions of both. In fact, many joint efforts are currently taking place between the Louisiana Extension Service and various LCTCS member institutions mainly due to the existence of a statewide high-speed Internet connection maintained by the Extension Service. To facilitate future efforts, a point person from the LCTCS was appointed as a liaison with Extension administration.

While there is every reason to believe that the RCCI process will become a successful reality, the institutionalization of a partnership between the Louisiana land-grant system and the LCTCS has already taken place.

### ***Mesalands Community College***

After several false starts, Mesalands is reforming its core team. New players, including a connection to New Mexico Extension, will refocus and revitalize the RCCI effort.

### ***Mid-Plains Community College***

Mid-Plains Community College serves a vast area of central Nebraska. In designing their RCCI planning process, they have chosen to focus on one small community served by a college outreach site. An initial meeting of the team with representatives of Broken Bow

convinced all involved that the college can help the community move forward on their goals and aspirations through the RCCI process. Mid-Plains plans to visit with Howard County College and Williston State to share their model of youth entrepreneurship while learning about how the RCCI process unfolded in those locations to make a valuable contribution to both college and community. Finally, the college has shared their enthusiasm for the RCCI process with other Nebraska Community Colleges and will also involve the Rural Development Council in these efforts.

### ***North Florida Community College***

Even though the North Florida Community College team has just begun the RCCI process, the administrative team determined that reorganization was necessary in order to successfully fulfill the RCCI mission. A new team leader has been recruited and has made tremendous efforts to initiate the process. The team leader has formed a core team and is currently holding meetings with this team to determine the most practical route to pursue. The land grant coach has become intricately involved in the process and sees a tremendous potential for this effort.

### ***Northeast Higher Education District***

The Northeast Higher Education District has launched tech-prep centers in three locations and is working on creating these opportunities in two more locations. Individual campuses use the RCCI process to engage community organizations in a collaborative effort to support the tech-prep centers as a critical community resource. The team leader will lead a discussion on their successes at the next team leaders' conference call, and they are also planning a pre-conference tour featuring these efforts at the next RCCA conference.

### ***Piedmont Community College***

The Piedmont Community College team has almost completed the facilitation of a Vision-to-Action exercise for Caswell County and is currently in the process of developing a strategy to initiate this process in Person County. The RCCI effort has successfully sponsored an Alternative Agriculture conference that targeted tobacco farmers in the service area. The team is also exploring the possibility of initiating the Sirolli Institute Process of Entrepreneurial Coaching in the service area.

### ***Rochester Community and Technical College***

Rochester Community and Technical College has reached a point in their process where they are reflecting on what steps will help them move forward in a positive manner. Their focus on manufacturing indicates a real need to address workforce issues and the potential to build clusters around specific geographic areas and manufacturing interests. They will review several strategies for field trips or guest speakers as a way to spark interest in new models increasing jobs and community prosperity.

### ***Texas Rural Community College Network***

A unique aspect of the current phase of the RCCI program is the developing relationship between the SRDC, Texas Cooperative Extension, and the Texas Rural Community College Network (TRCCN). The Texas legislature has designated 19 community colleges in the state as being "rural," and a strong movement is underway to implement an RCCI-type program to assist these colleges in becoming more involved in the economic development of their service areas.

A subgroup of this network (South Plains College, Coastal Bend College, Frank Phillips College, Paris Junior College and Wharton County Junior College) is acting as a pilot for this effort. Under the leadership of Dick Walsh, South Plains College Provost, Perkins money has been secured to begin a planning process to implement this program. Major activities associated with the planning process include a discovery survey to determine the readiness of the community colleges to enhance the economic development activity of their service areas as well as Vision to Action workshops to be held at the Texas Association of Continuing Educators and the TACTE conferences (these conferences will be held in March and April 2005). These workshops will utilize the new RCCI Vision-to-Action process developed by Gene Theodori of Texas A&M University. Dr. Theodori has committed to teaching the workshops and working with the participating colleges to guide the Vision to Action programs in their respective service areas. This is another example of the RCCI institutionalization activities that the RRDCs anticipated would happen when they began coordinating the program.

### ***Turtle Mountain Community College***

The Turtle Mountain Community College faces a unique challenge as they endeavor to blend their planning efforts with the Ventures Community Planning process sponsored by the Northwest Area Foundation. Their team has met several times and explored the experiences of other tribal colleges in engaging the community a planning. As a result they plan to work with a consultant who can facilitate their process. In addition, Turtle Mountain and Little Priest Community College are taking the lead in collecting information about promising practices within the tribal and native-serving learning community.

### ***United Tribes Technical College***

United Tribes Technical College remains supportive of the RCCI efforts at Fort Berthold. Complications related to personnel have limited their participation in recent months, but we expect to see them more active in the future.

### ***University of Alaska Fairbanks Northwest Campus***

The Northwest Campus group is coping with some changes in personnel and institutional support. We remain optimistic that the process will provide the Campus with great opportunities to strengthen their connections to local communities.

### ***Western Carolina Partnership***

The Front Line/Bottom Line Project undertaken by the Western Carolina Partnership (WCP) has made tremendous strides in the past several months. The consultant has completed the development of the Qualla-T Customer Service Training Program curricula and they are ready to enter into the implementation phase.

The Cherokee Preservation Foundation has been a partner with the WCP throughout the development of this curricula and has encouraged the Partnership to push on with the project by providing specialized training to an enrolled member of the tribe who would be more readily accepted by the tribe's inner council. It is hoped that this person will become the primary conduit to deliver this program in the boundary.

While the WCP project has experienced tremendous progress, and the land-grant system coaches have been involved in the planning process, a remaining challenge concerns the development of a working, rather than planning, partnership between the community colleges and the North Carolina land-grant system faculty and specialist staff. The SRDC has urged the WCP to involve the tourism development faculty at North Carolina State University in a substantive review process and to assist in making the curricula more adaptable to various tribal settings across the country.

***Williston State College***

In March, Williston State College will host a site visit from Mid-Plains Community College. They will showcase their Vision-to-Action process and the fruits of their regional planning process. Currently, Williston continues to work on their objectives to increase their social capital by linking to key organizations in the State and region.

**The NCRCD, SRDC and RCCI do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.**





# RCCI

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