

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PARKLAND COLLEGE RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE IN WORKFORCE EDUCATION

CHAMPAIGN – Today, Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), visited Parkland College to recognize the college's Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) program as a statewide model for aligning workforce education with employers' needs. The visit was part of a statewide tour to unveil the ICCB's Workforce Education Strategic Plan and highlight best practices across the state in workforce training.

Anderson was joined by college president Dr. Tom Ramage and other college administrators and faculty who shared the innovative approach taken through ICAPS to align the school's industrial welding program with employer-defined career pathways and industry credentials. The program provides adults without a high school diploma with an opportunity to earn a high school equivalency certificate and post-secondary credentials that are the gateway to family-supporting wages.

"Here at Parkland College, our mission is to engage the community in learning," said Ramage. "When I see our adult education and Career and Technical Education (CTE) units collaborate and align with local industry partners to develop and implement our ICAPS program, I cannot think of a better example of fulfilling the community college mission."

"Employers want education and training to be better aligned to their needs, standards and expectations," said Anderson. "Parkland College's ICAPS program works directly with employers to accelerate individuals through training and to attainment of competencies and credentials in employer targeted industries."

The Workforce Education Strategic Plan is the culmination of regional meetings held in each of the state's ten economic development regions with partners from across the education, economic development, and workforce sectors. The resulting plan identified four priority areas to be addressed over the next five years. These areas are:

1. Increase Early Career-Related Education and Exposure
2. Address Essential and Occupational Skill Gaps
3. Align Education and Training Programs to Employers' needs
4. Strengthen Connections Among Public Partners and Engagement and Alignment with Business

"The Plan will expand and enhance Illinois' ability to attract, retain and grow business and develop educational opportunities to support students' success in the workforce," said Jennifer Foster, ICCB Deputy Director for Adult Education and Workforce.

For more information, including a copy of the Workforce Education Strategic Plan, visit www.iccb.org/workforce. For more information on the ICAPS program visit www.icapsillinois.com.

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