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News Release



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Economic Development Summit Focuses on Gateway Region's Workforce Development Opportunities and Education-Industry Collaborations

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NORWALK, Calif. – March 6, 2020 – Cerritos College hosted its second Economic Development Summit on March 6. The one-day conference brought together industry leaders, businesses, organizations, and educators from across the Gateway region to engage in a dialogue focused on exploring solutions to meet the growing workforce demands and economic development opportunities for the area.



Erin Baird and Sterling Smith, guest speakers

Guest speakers Erin Baird, Account Manager, Higher Education, and Sterling Smith, Consulting Economist with labor market analytics firm Emsi, led a data-rich discussion about the importance of closing the workforce gap by aligning skills taught at community colleges to market needs. The speakers shared data that forecasted a growing demand for middle-skilled workers in areas, including accounting, childcare, culinary arts, electricians, health services, and nursing, among others. The speakers also pointed to employment gaps and opportunities that will rise as workers reach retirement age in the region. The presentation focused on the strong need to link education with workforce training to meet labor demands.

"At Emsi, we're working to connect people, educators, and employers through a common language of skills. The language of skills align these three worlds; allowing people to find the right employment, employers find the right talent and educators successfully bridging the gap between business and people with the needed skills," said Baird.



Jessica Ku Kim, guest speaker

Jessica Ku Kim, Senior Director of Workforce Development from the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), served as the lunch session speaker. Kim is LAEDC's lead for the Center for a Competitive Workforce, a collaboration between the LA19 Community Colleges, LAEDC, and the Los Angeles/Orange County Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research. Her main discussion points included the Center for a Competitive Workforce's effort to build

a robust regional infrastructure to be demand-driven and industry-responsive in a rapidly evolving labor market. She underscored the important role community colleges play in developing a strong workforce for the region.

“Collaboration between education and businesses is crucial to foster an agile education and workforce training system that responds to the ever-changing market needs in real time,” said Kim.

Two panel discussions featured participants from Bizfed, Futuro Health, Gateway Cities Council of Governments, Jobs for Future, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Northrop Grumman, Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board, Southern California Council of Governments, and Southern California Edison. The panelists examined ways to connect Gateway communities to future growth and development opportunities, and explored strategies to attract better employment candidates, the impact of transportation and infrastructure across the region, and ways to train the existing workforce for growth.

“We must strengthen ties with the area businesses and organizations to align our educational offerings to meet industry and community needs and enhance our workforce development efforts,” said Cerritos College President/Superintendent Dr. Jose Fierro. “The outcome and recommendations from this summit will help us improve our curriculum to ensure that our students gain crucial knowledge and skills to become more competitive for the global marketplace. Education is key to improving the lives of our residents, and it is our goal to provide them with affordable, quality programs.”

“The summit provided great information. As a K-12 representative, it’s important to learn the latest trends in labor demand and supply. It helps us develop curriculum and programs that better prepare our students for a smooth transition to postsecondary education and training,” said a participant Joanne Jung, College & Career Pathways Director, Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District.

The event was made possible thanks to the generous sponsorship of Southern California Edison and Sabio.

For more information about the summit and to view the presentations, visit www.cerritos.edu/economicsummit.

About Cerritos College: Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college’s district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs and South Gate. Cerritos College offers degrees and certificates in more than 180 areas of study in nine divisions. Annually, more than 1,200 students successfully complete their course of studies, and enrollment currently averages 23,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.

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