For Immediate Release  
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2015 Eastern CT Healthcare Conversation: Responding to Changing Workforce Needs

The Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and Eastern Connecticut State University partnered with area community colleges to reach out to the region’s healthcare workforce. Twenty-four attendees from nineteen healthcare organizations participated. Attendees represented all aspects of the healthcare field and came from geographically dispersed areas of EWIB.

“Attendees were very vocal about their needs.” Virginia Sampietro, Director of System Development at EWIB noted. “They also seemed to value the interaction with colleagues in other aspects of healthcare, such as hearing the skill sets of military personnel from the US Coast Guard Academy. Nearly 70% of the attendees indicated a strong interest in follow-up sessions.”

After brief welcoming remarks from Dr. Mary Ellen Jukoski of Three Rivers Community College, Dr. Carmen Cid of Eastern Connecticut State University, Dr. Carlee Drummer of QVCC, and Ms. Virginia Sampietro of the EWIB, Alice Pritchard shared trends in healthcare. Attendees split into groups to participate in facilitated conversation exploring questions such as:

- Where do you expect to see the greatest job demand in the next three to five years?
- What skills and credentials will be needed for these jobs?
- What job losses (if any) do you foresee?
- How are employee needs different in Eastern Connecticut?

Summaries of these discussions are being compiled into a report for all participants. Preliminary findings highlight the growing need for a variety of licensed clinical and behavioral therapists, physical therapists, nurses, primary care physicians, medical coders, and employees versed in electronic medical records. However, workforce representatives also emphasized the need for employees to have soft skills, including a strong work ethic and a passion for the field.

Workforce leaders discussed the challenges they face dealing with steady or growing demand for services at the same time they are experiencing funding and staffing cuts. Participants also raised the issue of a shortage of experienced healthcare professionals in medical and behavioral care, and the demand for multi-lingual employees.

Area colleges also benefited from participating in this event, using the results to guide development of programs in the colleges. Paul Rossitto, Assistant Director at the Center for Internships and Career Development at Eastern felt the event provided some useful information for the Center to use when working with students. Rossitto noted,

“Medical employers emphasized the need to find candidates who are willing to learn on the job, are open to new ideas and processes, have a positive attitude, a good work ethic and an ability to be flexible. Employers raised the concern that many new workers have a sense of entitlement, which does not work well in the healthcare workplace.”

He continued to remark that, “employers also emphasized the need for candidates with an IT background as the medical fields transition to electronic medical records (EMR). I’m pleased that
Eastern’s - BIS major/Health Informatics minor is well-positioned to meet the demand for workers in this area.”

The Healthcare Conversation was held at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT in late February. Quinebaug Valley Community College and the American Job Center’s Business Services Team also participated in planning the event. Discussions are underway to explore the possibility of creating an industry group to continue addressing the needs of this growing and changing field.

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