

Morgan Community College/Cargill Meat Solutions Workplace Education was named one of five exemplary and leading-edge programs in the nation. The designation is the result of a Lumina Foundation for Education grant awarded to the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) to identify successful programs between employers and community colleges that



are working to strengthen the educational attainment of the Hispanic workforce. Spokesperson for CSW, Mary Gershwin, said at her site visit on November 10th, “The MCC/Cargill program is at the top in terms of success for students, industry and the college. Congratulations!”

Gershwin’s visit coordinated by MCC Director of Workplace Education Shirley Penn, provided an opportunity to interview workplace students, Cargill management and supervisors, and MCC staff members who work with the program.

MCC/Cargill Meat Solutions Workplace Education program strengths are the personal attention given to each student, the variety of classes that are offered, and the sensitivity to scheduling practices so there are classes held before and after shift changes at the plant. Cargill employees and their families are encouraged to participate. Employees are compensated at one-half their hourly wage to pursue workplace education. Support for the program that is thoroughly integrated into the employer site is very strong from both sides--Cargill and MCC.

Cargill does not promote workplace education as a way to leave meat-packing, but to provide career paths within the industry. This concept is a more cost effective way of doing business for the company because the current employee, who may have opportunity for advancement as a result of his/her increased skills and language competency, is already familiar with industry procedures. Increasingly, Cargill management is being made up of graduates of workplace education classes. When the program began, 95% of supervisory positions were held by non-Hispanics; today that number is 45%. Besides promotion considerations for the employees and increased retention for the industry, another one of Cargill’s goals is to help employees successfully assimilate into the community.

“We measure everything, but we don’t measure this (program) in terms of the hourly cost of labor,” said general manager Mike Chabot. Management prefers to use a more

informal measurement, such as improvements in job performance. The consensus among management is that the program works and as long as there is good participation of employees, it is important that Cargill makes the money part work. It isn't always quantifiable in the company's bottom line, but it is part of being a good corporate citizen. A major benefit of participation in the program is in confidence boosting--students are more confident in their meetings with management, in their jobs, and in their interactions within the community.

MCC has a strong sense of ownership/commitment to the community of which Cargill is the major employer with a workforce of 2000. Workplace education is an integral part of college's goal to be a force in the community for economic and workforce development. The program also serves as a bridge to the college for students to pursue further their studies, beyond GED completion, in college level ESL, math and reading. MCC provides college advising, placement and enrollment services on-site. These services are not only helpful for workplace education students but also for employees as parents who want to help their own children get into college.

According to Jeannine LaPrad, President of CSW, "The selected exemplary programs will provide communities and policymakers across the nation with promising models of practice." The other four programs cited were Lockheed Martin Aerospace Corporation and Cerritos College (Palmdale, CA), Advanced Technology Consortium and El Paso Community College (El Paso, TX), Florida Power and Light and Miami Dade College (Miami, FL), and Automotive Consortium and Hennepin Technical College (Minneapolis, MN).

CSW is a national, non-profit policy organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Founded in 1991, the Corporation's mission is to re-imagine everything about work and learning in the global economy for the prosperity of people, firms and communities. The organization assists educators, business leaders, human services providers, community planners, economic developers and elected officials to increase their ability to support individual and employer success.

Other partners in the project are the Center for Workforce Success (of the National Association of Manufacturers), *Excelencia* in Education, and the National Council for Workforce Education.