

**University of Pennsylvania**

**School of Design**

**Department of City and Regional Planning**

**Community & Economic Development Practicum**

**CPLN 720**

**(Pre-requisite: CPLN 520)**

**Fall 2013**

**Wednesdays 9-Noon**

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Office hours: Tuesday 4-6 p.m./Wednesday 4-6 p.m. and by appointment

*\* Please sign up for office hours on the sheet posted on the instructor's office door.*

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This course is an intensive introduction to organizational and systems problem-solving in city and regional planning. It builds students' capacity to work in and with community and economic development-focused agencies and institutions in the public and non-profit sectors by engaging in a defined project for a specific client. Over the course of a semester-long planning process, you will learn and practice organizational development and management skills including:

- co-defining a problem or issue in collaboration with a client
- drafting and refining a scope of work
- devising and maintaining an internal division of responsibility with reference to the scope
- conducting background research
- interpreting data (both conventional data and organizational or "people" data)
- understanding organizational and political systems
- planning and running meetings
- facilitating external and internal strategic discussions
- drafting and presenting an **informed, coherent, client-endorsed, and implementable** strategic plan for responding to the issue or problem originally defined
- creating a funding proposal aimed at securing public or philanthropic resources for implementation

Clients for this course in the past have included both non-profit organizations and government agencies. This year, the project will engage both, focusing on the multiple systems that bear on the transition of secondary school students from School District of Philadelphia (SDP) Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs into (1) the labor market (2) post-secondary education. The client is Philadelphia Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN), a 4-year-old private non-profit organization that invests in, evaluates, and advocates for best practice efforts that narrow the gap between the region's low-skilled workforce and the needs of the region's employers.<sup>1</sup> JOIN's goal in working with the class is to develop a blueprint that will guide its efforts to help distinct public systems (K-12 education, the workforce development system, and the community college system) align with one another and work more effectively together on behalf of CTE

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<sup>1</sup> JOIN is housed at the United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey, an organization that brings diverse stakeholders together to drive systematic change and address our community's most pressing needs in the areas of education, income and health. In Spring 2013, JOIN Director Jennie Sparandara was asked by United Way leadership to help develop clearer pathways between JOIN's work and secondary and post-secondary education. JOIN already invests in partnerships that bring together numerous stakeholders, including providers of Career Technical Education (CTE), the workforce system, and employers.

students – both students who are continuing to post-secondary study and students entering the labor market directly. JOIN’s key question coming into this project is, *‘How can examining post-secondary transitions for career and technical education students inform a broader systems change strategy?’*

### **Background on Career and Technical Education in Philadelphia**

Among the students who graduate from high schools in the Philadelphia School District each year, about 4,300 have been enrolled in a Program of Study at a Career and Technical High School.<sup>2</sup> In CTE Schools, occupationally oriented education, delivered alongside general education, is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act; the term “Program of Study,” emanates from the Perkins legislation and refers to specific occupational course sequences that meet state content and hour requirements and that lead to certification exams. The typical CTE student in Philadelphia takes two occupation-focused courses a year in grades 10, 11 and 12.<sup>3</sup> Programs of Study in Philadelphia CTE schools include the building trades, agriculture, healthcare, information technology and transportation. In January 2013, the School Reform Commission approved a five-year strategic plan for CTE the goals of which include doubling the number of students enrolled in Programs of Study and adding advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, pharmacy technology, veterinary technology and renewable energy as programmatic options.

There are significant changes currently taking place in policy for Career and Technical Education. In the past, CTE was seen as a track for non-college-bound high school students – students who were less able and less promising. But this perception is changing dramatically. As stated in a 2011 publication by the National Center for Education Statistics,

As demand for a high-skill workforce has increased, re-forms have focused on changing high school CTE from an alternative to the college preparatory curriculum to an educational pathway for all students that connects high schools, colleges, and the workforce.<sup>4</sup>

CTE in Philadelphia exemplifies these emerging trends. Six of the seven CTE high schools currently operated by the Philadelphia School District have 4-year graduation rates that exceed the city’s average graduation rate of 64%, and their students score higher than other students in the District on state assessments. This is in some ways unsurprising: entry to CTE schools is done by lottery, but applicants not meeting minimum standards are not entered into the lottery. This makes the CTE high schools more selective than regular neighborhood or comprehensive schools. The District’s five-year strategic plan envisions extending the CTE model to more students, putting in place a district-wide CTE curriculum, and providing more professional development for principals, teachers and support staff; there are also plans to open a new state-of-the-art career and technical high school.

Despite better academic performance and higher graduation rates, there are profound disconnects and barriers for many CTE students between high school and “what comes next.” Data collected for a 2009 report on CTE published by the Philadelphia Youth Network indicated that college-going rates for CTE schools are significantly lower than those of special admission schools in the District and only slightly higher than those of neighborhood or comprehensive high

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<sup>2</sup> In the Fall of 2012, the city had eight CTE high schools. As of this fall, there will be one fewer, as the Edward W. Bok Technical High School was closed in June by the School Reform Commission.

<sup>3</sup> 22 other high schools in the city offer career and technical education options to several thousand additional students. But the majority of these programs do not involve CTE Programs of Study, which are important inasmuch as they lead to state-endorsed occupational certification and tend to be better coordinated and more rigorous.

<sup>4</sup> Vera Bersudskaya and Xianglei Chen, *Postsecondary and Labor Force Transitions Among Public High School Career and Technical Education Participants* <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011234>

schools.<sup>5</sup> Students in CTE programs are also less likely than others to participate in State of Pennsylvania-funded dual enrollment programs (which enable students to take for-credit or non-credit college courses while still in high school, and which constitute an effective bridge between secondary and post-secondary study for many). Another issue is that while CTE graduates do comparatively well on academic assessments, many are still not prepared for college-level work. This is an issue as a larger and larger proportion of jobs in the fields covered by CTE Programs of Study require at least some post-secondary education.

Finally, systems to support students going directly into the job market – to help them make industry contacts, do what they need to do academically in high school be qualified for good jobs when they finish, and perhaps plan for eventual post-secondary study – are chaotic and variable. Many graduating CTE students have not acted to maximize their college or labor market options while in high school. They are not as well-informed as they could be about pathways into the labor force, and they do not receive consistent support in choosing pathways that match their interests and levels of preparation. A 2011 statement on CTE by the organization Youth United for Change underscores students' desire for better-quality instruction, more emphasis on post-secondary pathways, and greater representation on school-based advisory bodies.

### **Project Objectives**

At the start of the course, you will be working with JOIN and United Way staff to more specifically define the problem at hand and to design an appropriate scope of work. The starting point for this discussion is a pair of objectives articulated by JOIN. The organization would like to see the project result in:

1. Definitions/descriptions/maps of paths that CTE students take upon graduation – analysis of the transition points and characteristics of those transitions:
  - Who enters the labor market directly? What are their outcomes? What do we know about the people making this choice? What do we know about their employment? Is it related to their original CTE background? For CTE students who do not enter the labor market directly, what are some possible barriers? Are there clear indicators that can be used to predict who will be successful post-graduation? Are the transition points for CTE students handled well between high schools and post secondary institutions?
  - Who goes on to post secondary? Similar to above
    - Specifically, what role do community colleges and career and technical institutions play here?
    - Are CTE students more likely to complete post-secondary than non-CTE students?
2. A local, actionable systems change agenda/framework for successful post-secondary transitions to further education and career.
3. A series of case studies for United Way's Middleton Investment Projects focusing on the following key questions:
  - How does these investments relate to career and technical education?
  - What evidence base informs these investments?
  - How are outcomes/success defined? Measured? Communicated?
  - Are there systems change implications from the outcomes of these investments? What are they?

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<sup>5</sup> In 2005, the college-going rate among CTE graduates was 43%, compared with 82% among graduates of Special Admission Schools.

**Essential project components/characteristics:**

1. Conventional data analysis to answer questions posed under Objective 1 above;
2. Benchmarking analysis – (how does Philadelphia compare to peer cities?);
  - For cities that are strong, what kinds of initiatives support post-secondary transitions? What are the funding sources?
3. Landscape analysis – which stakeholders in Philadelphia play significant roles in this conversation? (likely stakeholders):
  - School District officials
  - High school principals, teachers and staff
  - Leaders and members of Perkins Act-mandated industry advisory councils for each Program of Study
  - Not-for-profits (such as Philadelphia Youth Network, Philadelphia Academies Inc. and JOIN itself)
  - PhiladelphiaWorks (the city’s workforce development system)
  - Post-secondary institutions, including community colleges (which are good candidates for dual enrollment and which also receive some Perkins funding)

**A data archive on the course Blackboard site contains information on a variety of topics: CTE in the School District of Philadelphia, national CTE policy trends; debates about “vocationalism” and the value of higher education; and Philadelphia workforce preparedness and labor markets. Both students and the instructor will be adding to the archive over the course of the semester.**

**Course Schedule & Readings**

Week	Activity	Readings/Assignment
1 – August 28	Introduction and overview	1) Robert Giloth, “The Local in Workforce Development Politics” 2) Clarence Stone and Donn Worgs, “Poverty and the Workforce Challenge” 3) Laura Wolf-Powers and Stuart Andreason, “Aligning Secondary and Postsecondary Credentialization with Economic Development Strategy”
2 – September 4	First meeting with clients; define problem, scope, and objectives.	Familiarize yourself with the data archive and find one item to add (e-mail to me and to Teaching Assistant Eileen Divringi -- <a href="mailto:ediv@design.upenn.edu">ediv@design.upenn.edu</a> ); Read John Kania and Mark Kramer, “Collective Impact” and “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work” ( <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review</i> , Winter 2011, Winter ) 2012)

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3 – September 11	Discuss findings from Data Archive; Form task teams; lay out research agendas	Read more deeply in data archive (make notes for class discussion); selection from <i>Thinking In Systems</i> by Donella Meadows
4 – September 18	Landscape-mapping exercise and task team work	Selections from <i>The Beginner's Guide to Doing Qualitative Research</i> by Erin Horvat
5 – September 25	Data-gathering (external research and meetings) – may take place at any point during this week	Detailed research notes due from each student by Monday, September 30 <sup>th</sup>
6 – October 2	Reconvene, report, strategize	Task team presentation and contextualization of field research
7 – October 9	Task team strategy session, followed by all-class strategy session	
8 – October 16	Mid-semester presentation and feedback from clients – map out next steps	
9 – October 23	Discussion of readings (perspectives on organizational and systems leadership); team work time	Selections from Peter Drucker, <i>Managing the Nonprofit Organization: Principles and Practices</i> , Jim Collins, <i>Good to great and the social sectors : why business thinking is not the answer</i> and Peter Senge, <i>The Fifth Discipline</i>
10 – October 30	Discussion of readings (backbone organizations; government innovation); team work time	Shiloh Turner, Kathy Merchant, John Kania and Ellen Martin, "Understanding the Role of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact;" Peter Boumgarden and John Branch, <i>Collective Impact or Coordinated Blindness? Stanford Social Innovation Review Winter 2013</i> ; "Unleashing Breakthrough Innovation in Government," <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review Summer 2013</i> .
11 – November 6	Discussion of readings (impact measurement); team work time	(various authors) "Advancing Evaluation Practices in Philanthropy," <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review Summer 2012</i> ; Kevin Starr and Laura Hattendorf, "Real World Impact Measurement," <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review Fall 2012</i> ;

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		Matthew Forti, "10 Years of Performance Measurement" <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review</i> Spring 2013; Elyssa Back for Job Opportunity Investment Network, <i>ROI 360</i> (Fall 2012)
12 – November 13	Discussion of readings (grantseeking); team work time	Mundel and Kiritz, <i>Program Planning and Proposal Writing: Introductory Version</i> ; Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania and Delaware Valley Grantmakers, <i>Pennsylvania Philanthropy Briefing Book</i>
13 – November 20	Integration of task team work; Work on final presentation	
14 – December 4	Final presentation and feedback from client	

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### Assignments

Date	Assignment	% of final grade
September 3 <sup>rd</sup> (Tuesday)	Reading response combining commentary on Week 1 readings with insights from your initial review of the data archive (focus on one folder) – submit by e-mail	10
September 30 <sup>th</sup> (Monday)	Individual research notes (submit by e-mail)	15
October 16 <sup>th</sup>	Mid-semester presentation to client	20
October 22 <sup>nd</sup> , October 29 <sup>th</sup> , November 5 <sup>th</sup> (Tuesdays)	Reading responses (submit by e-mail)	5 each
December 4	Final presentation to client	20
December 6	Written presentation summary to client and instructor	15
December 11	Individual funding proposal	15

As per Department of City and Regional Planning guidelines, the significance of letter grades is as follows:

A+	Exceptional
A	Outstanding
A-	Excellent
B+	Very Good
B	Good
B-	Competent
C+	Fair
C	Acceptable
C-	Marginal

