



Transcript of Conference Call Presentation

Industry Sector Approaches to Reach out to Employers

presented by

Peter Joyce, National Alliance of Business Vice President and staff liaison to the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC),

Vincent Spera, Program Manager, National Alliance of Business

Kim Baker, Program Manager, Information Technology Association of America (ITAA)

May 27, 1999

Esther Hong: Welcome, everyone. My name is Esther Hong and I am with the National Alliance of Business. You are all on the National Transition Alliance's audio conference call entitled *Industry Sector Approaches to Reaching Out to Employers*.

Today we are going to look specifically at the information technology sector. Our first speaker will be Peter Joyce, who is Vice-President at the National Alliance of Business, but today he will also be representing the National Employer Leadership Council.

We also have Vincent Spera, who is Program Manager at the National Alliance of Business, and he will be talking about the Techforce Initiative, which is a national initiative to engage employers in the information technology industry in partnerships with education.

And finally, we have Kim Baker, who is Program Manager with the Information Technology Association of America. She will be talking specifically about a program called PASS IT ON (Plan for Achieving Self Support with Information Technology Opportunities Nationwide), which works with youth with disabilities in the information technology industry. Peter?

Peter Joyce: As Esther said, I'm Peter Joyce, and I'm at the National Alliance of Business. There was a group that was started a couple of years ago called the National Employer Leadership Council. It was put together in conjunction with the passage of the school-to-work legislation. It's a group of employers that helped support the legislation. Not only did they help support the legislation, but they carried on to try to promote employer involvement in school-to-careers. You may know the organization because one of the first tasks that they tried to spend some time wrestling with was the idea of what roles employers can play in local programs. The result of that discussion was a piece referred to lovingly as the Employer Participation. We also just released a report that looks at the benefits of school-to-work, both from the employer perspective and the student perspective.

We are now in the midst of reconstituting this organization. One of the things that we have done tactically is to look at how we can use business organizations and trade associations with a particular industry focus to try to engage employers. We are currently working with the school-to-work office and four sectors have received funding to

support this notion. We have initiatives in manufacturing, information technology, retail, and the utilities industry. There may be communities that you are involved with that are participating in those efforts. If not, it's probably worth at least finding out more about what is going on in those initiatives and what some of the tools or products and opportunities might be for local communities.

The best way to get information, both on the NELC and the industry sector initiative, is to look at our web site, which is new and live and hot at www.nelc.org. You can find information on all of the initiatives.

The purpose of today's call, though, is to take a look at one particular industry sector, and that's information technology. Vinny Spera is going to give an overview of what's happening in the industry and what kind of opportunities there are for career opportunities and for folks working with young people. Then, Kim Baker is going to talk specifically about an initiative that the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA), one of the partners in the IT project with NAB, has in some communities servicing youth with disabilities.

Vinny, I'll turn the phone to you.

Vinny Spera: Thanks, Peter. I'm Vinny Spera from the National Alliance of Business, and I'm on the school-to-careers staff here at NAB.

As Peter said, we are partnering with the Information Technology Association of America and the Education Development Center on a national initiative called the Techforce Initiative, which is designed to promote IT employer involvement in school-to-careers nationwide. What I would like to do in the next couple of minutes is —

1) Address some of the issues and challenges facing the industry;

2) Talk about some of the responses on the employer side and from communities around the needs in the IT workforce;

3) Show how our project is supporting those activities;

4) Highlight a couple of examples of things that are happening out in the field and in communities across the country; and

5) Give you some ideas for next steps that you can take within your own organizations and in your own communities.

Setting the stage as far as the IT industry goes, it's pretty clear just in everyday life that there are a tremendous and growing number of opportunities to engage the IT industry in partnerships with education, communities, and government organizations all across the country. It's clear that IT is growing critically important in all aspects of life.

As a quick way to highlight this, a survey last year out of MIT was conducted of three hundred high school students and their parents. About 80% of the parents said that the antibiotic was the most important invention of the Twentieth Century and 75% of the students said the computer was the most important invention of the Twentieth Century. So, you're really seeing a shift in emphasis towards technology in everyday life, not just in industry or IT companies.

But IT really is everywhere: all companies and individuals in this country are required to be users as well as suppliers of information technology. That's reflected quite clearly in the demand for IT workers. Last year, a study from ITAA and Virginia Tech called Help Wanted documented that there were 346,000 vacancies in the IT industry and that number was growing. Also, Price Waterhouse

Coopers has shown that 63% of companies can't find enough IT workers, and that's not just the big IT companies like the Microsofts and the Ciscos. It's every company that relies on IT from retail industries to railroad companies. Companies all across the country are relying on information technology.

There are different reasons why they can't find workers: some can't find qualified workers, many are losing workers to other companies, and many businesses are outpacing the demand for information technology workers. The shortages are really becoming quite drastic.

We are seeing a lot of different responses from these companies in the short term, medium term, and long term. In the short term, companies are desperate for workers and are doing anything they can to get workers from any source possible. We are seeing incredible bonuses from IT companies trying to take workers from other companies that can't afford to invest in the training or can't keep up pace with the salaries. We are seeing a lot of foreign workers coming in to work in these IT companies. There is also tremendous marketing in the industry to get workers from any possible source.

In the medium term, probably what you could call that six- to eight-month bubble, a number of companies, IT companies in particular, are investing in very specific skills training for direct entry into careers as engineers, systems analysts, and programmers. In IT companies, places like the DeVry Institute are offering six- to eight-month training courses. You hear things on the radio all the time for companies and training organizations in your own communities. Companies like Cisco and Microsoft have invested heavily in community colleges, trying to really cut off what they call the

bleeding in the workforce, the real need for workers.

But in the long term, a lot of these companies are really looking at what we would call the school-to-careers model — that connection between a classroom-based experience, a work-based experience, and some sort of activities to connect those two — to start focusing not just on those specific skills but to make sure that all students, particularly in secondary education, have the basic skills that they will need to consider and possibly pursue careers in information technology. This includes skills like communication, teamwork, and the basic math and science skills that they will need to go on into college or perhaps enter IT careers now and in the future and then, more importantly, to be users of information technology to support the continued growth of the industry.

At the national level, we are partnering with ITAA and EDC on the Techforce Initiative. The purpose of the Techforce Initiative is to highlight and expand IT employer involvement in school-to-careers by facilitating, supporting, and promoting the efforts of organizations and individuals that are already going on in the country.

I just talked very quickly about some of the things that are going on with some companies and in some communities. Our focus is really to highlight what they are doing and try to expand it. We are doing that in a number of different ways. The part I really wanted to highlight is what we are calling our Learning Network of Centers of Excellence. We have identified to date twenty-six communities — rural and urban — all across the country that are either committed to building or are already building partnerships between the IT industry and the education community to help

students develop those basic skills. We'll be bringing them together over the next eighteen months and beyond through primarily an electronic learning network or virtual network. It will be an interactive space on our web site where they'll be able to share ideas, resources, and strategies for how they are engaging IT employers in their own communities and what types of tools and resources are out there that can be shared and used by others.

On that site, we have profiles of different communities that are doing different things around employers. The reason for highlighting that on this call is that there are opportunities for any community, any individual, any organization, or any IT company to get involved in those activities and raise any types of issues that would be important to youth. So, I think there is a lot of room in that project to bring out the issue of individuals with disabilities and see what type of strategies are being implemented in communities across the country and how we can share those lessons more broadly.

I wanted to just quickly direct you to our web site. If you have a moment, I would encourage you to visit the site at www.techworkforce.org/programs/stw.htm. At this point, I'll turn it over to Kim, who will talk specifically about an ITAA initiative focused directly on individuals with disabilities in information technology.

Kim Baker: Thank you, Vinny. This is Kim Baker. I am the Program Manager for Workforce Development at the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA).

I don't want to go into too much of the background about ITAA and who we are, but basically, when I first started working here in the education department, we were a lobbying firm. We weren't really doing too many programs or management-

type things, as far as actual put-in-place programs, like we are doing now. The changes that we have undergone and the way we are getting involved on a grass-roots level are really exciting.

Our members came to us sometime in 1997 complaining that they could not find qualified workers. As a result of those complaints and as a public policy piece that we could present to Congress, we initiated Help Wanted 1997, which came up with some of the figures that Vinny mentioned before. We repeated it again in 1998, which produced the most recent figure 346,000.

We used that information, first of all, to do a lot of public policy initiatives, because that's what we do here at ITAA. We are a national organization and represent the interests of IT businesses, such as tax credits, loans and grant programs for students, curriculum development, policy initiatives to enhance K-12 education, regional skills alliances, government involvement through workforce investment in the 21st Century Workforce Commission, and things like that.

After we went to public policy, we started looking nationally and said, "Okay, how can we get the word out to all these different sectors?" We convened a national PR campaign together with Microsoft, with Jimmy Smits as our spokesperson, to make IT hip, happening, and cool for the kids out there. We have a yearly convocation that brings people together across the country that have put together IT programs that have been successful and that can be replicated in other communities. We have also developed a web site which helps students, educators, and industry alike bridge this gap between school and work. And then, finally, we got into grant programs where we really started getting involved at a grassroots level. Vinny talked already

about the Techforce Initiative. We also have a grant which is called RITA that encourages low-income women to get into IT careers. I am here today to talk to you about PASS IT ON, which is directed specifically towards people with disabilities and encourages them to get into IT careers. It also gives them actual hands-on direct training and placement.

The reason we went in this direction with disabilities is, for one thing, that we heard a statistic. I was at a congressional hearing and there was someone there from the President's Council on the Employment of People with Disabilities. I heard him say that only 30% of working-age adults with disabilities are employed, and that includes full-time and part-time; while 80% of non-disabled people are employed. We also went back and looked at a National Science Foundation statistic that looked at the breakdown. When you just simply say employment, what does that mean? Are they janitors or are they doctors? That number, 30%, drops dramatically to 6% when you look at careers in science and engineering.

We had a need in the industry and thought, what a perfect pool of people to tap, especially considering the technologies that are available today to help people with disabilities to be a part of IT and work very productively with very few accommodations.

We had one of our convocations and had someone from Denver Community College talk about their training program for people with disabilities. It is a program that was put together seventeen years ago. It's a one-year, intensive, five-days-a-week, forty-hours-a-week program. Students at the community college choose between network administration or programming, which is high level

IT work. We're not talking about secretarial skills (i.e., learning how to use a computer, type using WordPerfect, or do a spreadsheet using Excel). These are actual hands-on, exciting, high paying, long-term career growth areas. So, this is really exciting for us.

We found that they train students with a variety of disabilities. They could be blind, deaf, paraplegic, or epileptic. It could be any myriad of things. One of the great things about the program was their 90% placement rate for their graduates and starting salaries ranging from \$28,000-\$38,000, which is huge for people who are currently now on disability and not working at all. It was just a win-win situation for everybody.

I wanted to go into how we decided to replicate the project in other areas. We teamed up with an organization called Community Options which is in the Washington DC area with us. I'll start with who the participants are and how we get them into the program. Participants must, of course, have a documented disability. They don't necessarily have to be on disability, but most of the referrals do come from Vocational Rehabilitation. They can also have a disability that is shown by a doctor, a learning disability, etc. A high school diploma, tenth grade reading and math skills, and good cognitive ability are also important because this type of work is not going to be appropriate for someone who has cognitive problems. They also need an IT aptitude. This, again, is important. I know I'm sort of a behavioral social scientist person and I'm not even sure I could get through these programs because I'm not math-science oriented.

The next thing that Community Options and ITAA did was to look at areas where we had mutual regional support. We picked three locations: New

Jersey, Austin, Texas, and Northern Virginia. Because we are a national organization, we are affiliated with local regional associations at each of these sites. Community Options also works with service providers in each state.

Allow me to explain what the disability provider does. They recruit and refer the students. They take care of all of the assessments: their eligibility, basic skills, adaptive needs, and things like that. They support the students, both while they are in the classroom and out of the classroom and for ninety days after we place them into a job, which is a huge selling point for the employer. I think an employer can get scared that, "Here I'm going to hire this person and what if something happens and I can't handle it? What do I do? I'm not going to have anybody there." The disability provider tends to alleviate a lot of those fears.

Now, in their role as representatives of the businesses in each of these areas, the ITAA are forming and have formed business advisory councils (BACs). The business advisory council does school-to-work activities. They help with the development of the curriculum, assist in selecting the students, set up mentoring and internships, have guest speakers come in, organize job shadow days, and arrange tours of different plants and technology institutes. They also help the students get ready for jobs. They help them with mock interviews, test them on their skills, and help them develop some strategies for finding appropriate employment. That's sort of the basis of it. It's the most important thing and the most helpful to you guys if you want to try to put this in place in your organization.

I just wanted to go through the lessons that I learned over the last year or so since I've been doing

this. The first one is what I call "the realities of the Denver model." Like I said, they tout a 90% placement rate for their graduating students. Unfortunately, what we didn't realize when we got into it was that they have a 50% attrition rate. If they started with twenty-five people and only half graduate, we need to do something about the other half of those people. In addition, because Denver Community College wasn't really a community service provider, if the students failed out, they were not really tracked after that. We are now putting into place a sort of "what if?" If the student doesn't get through the entire program, how can we help them get employed?

They had told us when we went to Denver that they had students coming out of their ears, they had to turn people away, and the employers were just begging them to hire them. The only thing I have to say is that they have been in operation for seventeen years and it certainly won't start that way. It's more of a challenge for several different reasons.

I'll get back to a couple of those things, but I just wanted to move on to a couple of things as far as the Department of Labor is concerned. We are funded by a Department of Labor grant. We put in the grant application that we were going to get twenty-five students in and twenty-five students out and twenty-five students employed. Instead, we had a 50% attrition. We started off with a problem right away. As far as the DOL is concerned, the you are funded, you are supposed to be up and running. You should have students in the classroom. When you're in your first year, that's just not going to happen. We had to hire staff and figure out what we were going to teach at each site.

If I was going to do another grant application, I would either (1) add in a planning year or (2) phase

in the numbers that we serve. Rather than starting out at twenty-five, maybe start out at ten and have it go up after a couple of years. The main thing to remember if you are dealing with multiple sites is to do only one site a year. Get one site right and then move on to the next one. We didn't have the luxury of hindsight.

I think it's also really important to realize the importance of the three-pronged approach. The three prongs are: industry, the disability provider, and the training provider. The first thing we realized is that we all have totally competing agendas. We fought each other like crazy, which was great because we ended up with a great program.

The IT industry is looking for qualified employees. The disability provider is looking for jobs for these people so that they can get off of disability. And, frankly, it doesn't so much matter to them whether or not this is a great job or just a job. Not to say that they don't care about their customers, but the way that they are "graded" is the number of people they get off assistance and employed. Academia's goal is to see the students graduate because that's the way their numbers are "graded." If we have a 50% attrition rate, that really messes with the school's numbers. This is a problem.

There is a fourth prong that we didn't think about at first and now we definitely have to consider, and that is Voc. Rehab. The Denver Community College said that VR was just giving them people and giving them people and they had to turn people away. We didn't find that. We walked up to them and said, "Look, we have this great program and we're going to get these people employed and get them these great jobs." And they said, "Yeah, that's nice." And we were sort of booted out the door. It took a lot of salesmanship because

most of these rehab counselors have places that they go to already that they feel comfortable with. They don't really understand IT and why this is such a good program. So, industry really needs to get involved in the recruiting of the students and going to VR and making them understand the opportunities in IT. Again, the cost of these programs are going to be more than programs that they generally send people to that teach them basic computer skills so that they can be secretaries. So, again, it's very important that we make them understand the opportunities and how they need this good base of knowledge.

Just two final things: first, we need a good filter at the front end and a very strong business community on the back end. You have to have a good assessment. We didn't have a good assessment the first time around and we had even more than 50% attrition. We had a very, very bad success rate.

The second thing is the interview process. Because we didn't have the BACs available and we were already recruiting students, they weren't able to ask the students pointed questions. As they were going through the program, I had students tell me, "Well, I didn't even want to be here, but my counselor told me I had to go or they would cut off my disability because I'm not trying to get a job." The individual has to have motivation because this is not an easy curriculum. It's a very difficult curriculum. It has to be someone who is motivated and dedicated and truly, truly wants a career.

One thing that I wanted to note is that when ITAA did our study and found the vacancies, they weren't really at the entry level point. So, business is looking at our graduates and saying, "Yeah, but we really need somebody with ten years of experience that really practically knows how to use these tools

that you have given them.” It’s a valid issue.

One of the things that we are doing in our school-to-work activities is trying to promote the idea that employers must invest in their employees. They must create some kind of boot camp or apprenticeship situation where, if we give the employees the basic skills, the employers continue to invest in them.

In order to get involved in this program, the IT employers need to know about the tax credits, cost of accommodations, and how it’s going to disrupt their workplace, if at all. Ninety-nine percent of the time it’s not going to cause any disruption. But I think there is a real stigma to a person with a disability. And it’s a shame because it’s a myth. You need to dispel the myth.

Esther Hong: Thank you, Kim. We have about twenty-five minutes left for a question and answer period.

Edward (Texas): This is Edward from Texas. I have two questions for Kim. Would you be able to provide — if not now, through e-mail or another medium — contacts in Austin regarding their involvement and also the Denver Community College?

Kim Baker: Absolutely.

Edward (Texas): Thank you, Kim.

Vinny Spera: Edward, this is Vinny Spera from NAB again. We are working fairly closely with a group in Austin called the Capital Area Training Foundation.

Edward (Texas): Okay.

Vinny Spera: It might not necessarily have a lot of direct resources on youth with disabilities, but they are very involved — both in the Austin area and at the state level — in creating partnerships between employers and education and community

organizations. I would, if you are interested, be able to send you some information on that as well.

Edward (Texas): I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Tina Engdol (Oregon): Hi, this is Tina Engdol from Portland, Oregon. Kim, I wanted to be sure to let you know that the Oregon Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and Goodwill Industries has a program that has been going for at least five or six years now called the Business Information Systems Training.

Kim Baker: Great.

Tina Engdol (Oregon): It’s very similar and I would say that I was really involved when I was a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the program and learned the same types of lessons.

Kim Baker: I wish I had talked to you a year ago.

Tina Engdol (Oregon): I’d be happy to send you some information or send you a contact.

Kim Baker: Please. Why don’t I just give everybody my e-mail address quickly? If you want to send me anything, I would love to receive it. It’s just kbaker@itaa.org.

Tina Engdol (Oregon): Great. I’ll be sure to get that to you. Thank you.

Stephanie Carter (Wisconsin): This is Stephanie Carter. I have a question for Kim. I’m calling from Madison, Wisconsin. Do you have a brochure or something with more information regarding PASS IT ON?

Kim Baker: There is information on our web site at www.itaa.org. Just go to the workforce section.

Judy Rifle (California): Hi. This is Judy Rifle in California. With regards to Kim’s program, we have had a long-standing program in California,

too, connected with IBM, in the San Jose area. I can't recall the name of it.

Kim Baker: Actually, the Denver model was an IBM program. I think IBM went around and set up several across the country. I did want to mention, too, that there is an organization called the Association for Rehabilitative Programs and Computer Technologies. I use them very often just simply because people call me and say, "You are not doing this in my area. Is there one near me?" They have a database of organizations that do this across the country that you can search right on their web site. It's www.arpct.org. So, if you wanted to, you could look for something that is already going on in your area.

Judy Rifle (California): This is Judy again. I have a question with regards to your lessons learned.

Kim Baker: Okay.

Judy Rifle (California): You mentioned that the tax credits are important and you also mentioned the stigma that you guys have encountered. Yes, that's always been a hard sell. I've always initially worked on the employment side, and there is so much discrimination in terms of the employer community that you have to deal with. We have not really dealt very well with that as a rehabilitation or education community. I was wondering if you had any specific recommendations that you are making nationally in that area.

Kim Baker: Nationally, no. But on a grassroots level, it's a matter of education. You can have employment policy meetings for people with disability programs and they are not going to come. You literally almost have to go to their offices one by one and sit them down.

I have a story that I like to tell regarding this

issue because it's kind of a joke. I had someone that I had talked to about the program and I wanted to get him involved in doing an internship. He sent me an e-mail and asked me a bunch of questions. I sent a response using the acronyms for ADA and JAN; all capital letters. I said, "According to ADA and JAN, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," and he sent me a response saying, "I have a bunch of other questions. Do you think ADA and JAN would mind if I called them directly?" They don't know. It's just a matter of education, and it's very important.

I think once you have these conversations with them, their attitudes really change. I've done a lot of research on the tax credits, and was amazed to find out how many credits and assistance and matching dollars that you can get from the government for employees. They'll pay for half the person's salary for a while and they'll pay for half the accommodations. These are just really important things because they are issues that concern the employers.

They are also concerned about even a simple disruption in the workplace. One of their major issues concerns people that have nonapparent disabilities. People are very uncomfortable with what that means. "Are they psycho? Are they going to be one of those people that comes into my office and pulls out a gun and shoots everybody?" It's crazy, the things that are thought. But it's illegal to reveal someone's disability.

They also worry about other disruptions in the workplace. My favorite quote regarding that one is: "It may make other people feel uncomfortable to have somebody here that has a disability."

I like to use an example of a young man that I met when I was out in Denver. He went through the Denver program and was hired by an IT com-

pany called StorageTech. He is a software development programmer making \$50,000 a year. He is deaf. When he first got there, his manager told me that everybody felt uncomfortable. They couldn't really talk to him. His back was to them, looking at his computer. If they had to talk to him about something, they had to touch him to get his attention. They didn't feel comfortable with that.

So, this young man, Ethan, sent out an all-staff e-mail to this huge company and said, "I'm here, I'm deaf, and if anybody would like to learn basic sign language, I am going to teach it at lunch in the cafeteria every day for the next three weeks. Please come join me." And they had huge turnouts. The hundred people in this office now know basic sign language and they feel so much more enriched because of the experience. They all love him. And it's a really neat story. Employers are afraid that it's going to disrupt their workplace. They don't understand that it might actually accent their workplace.

Judy Rifle (California): Yeah. I think it's great. I'm really glad that you are where you are telling these stories and also experiencing the reality of the grants that you get. Now you have to report the numbers of people that got a job, not numbers of people that got a job in a high-wage, high-skill career.

Kim Baker: Right.

Judy Rifle (California): There is a lot of change that needs to take place. In California, very recently, we have gotten CBS to put forth \$4,000,000 worth of advertising in LA on stories of success. My big dilemma is finding a student with an obvious physical disability that you can see on the TV screen. Coming up with a student in a high-wage, high-skill career that has gone through this is a challenge right now. If you could help us with that

by getting your group behind really doing some films about individuals like this young man you just described — his real picture doing the sign language class and working at his computer — that would really help a great deal.

Kim Baker: We are working on that, believe it or not, but we had kind of stalled. We actually contacted Microsoft. Microsoft has come in here lately and has been a great supporter. They are supplying all of the curriculum and courseware — software that's needed to teach the program — when it is applicable, like if we're teaching network administration and NT. They have also agreed to actually send one of their PR crews to Denver to StorageTech to interview Ethan so that we can have what we are calling our IT employer marketing piece. I wanted to put together something that we can then distribute to the IT employer that addresses not just the people with disability stigmas, but all of the other things, such as tax credits, ADA, JAN, the help that's out there, and things like that.

Judy Rifle (California): Is there a way you can share that with our PR firm in LA working on this?

Kim Baker: I'd be happy to.

Judy Rifle (California): Thank you.

Pat Rogan (Indiana): This is Pat in Indiana. I have a question, not specifically about Info. Tech., but about the National Alliance of Business. I assume there are state chapters or organizations affiliated with the National Alliance. If so, do you have a marketing campaign or some sort of initiative to help state organizations open their doors and get information and so on?

Esther Hong: We don't have state affiliates, but we do have regional offices in Boston, Texas, Atlanta, Chicago, and Los Angeles that cover their respective regions.

Pat Rogan (Indiana): Thank you.

Kim Baker: I did want to just add one thing. I don't want it to come across that the problems are strictly with the IT employer. I do represent them, but I do feel that there are difficulties in every single phase. Actually, I didn't even mention one of the difficulties we had. I told you how I felt that VR was more interested in getting them basic skills and on to the job. We actually had a problem with some of the community colleges that we were trying to get on board that were concerned about ADA, too. Because they are public institutions, they have to meet the ADA requirements, but that's only if a student comes into one of their programs. They don't have to set up a program that is strictly for people with disabilities. Their fear was that it was going to break their bank. I thought that was really interesting. I think those are all of my lessons learned.

Esther Hong: Are there any other questions?

Diane Wiley (Iowa): Yes. This is Diane Wiley from Des Moines, Iowa, Vocational Rehabilitation. I was wondering if you had any other training for individuals who have lower reading and math abilities to be able to participate in the IT program?

Kim Baker: We don't right now. This is our first program geared toward people with disabilities, but we have already started talking about some programs that can be geared in that direction. There are the Cisco Networking Academies where the students lay cable and put the networks together. The Cisco Networking Academies are already going on across the country and you might want to look at their web site, www.cisco.com. You might be able to develop a relationship with Cisco.

Diane Wiley (Iowa): Okay. Thank you. Can you elaborate a little more on the assessment area

you spoke of as the individuals leave the training program? I think you said it had something to do with the employer and assessment.

Kim Baker: When they are in the program, they are going to be graded just like in any other college program. So, the assessments will be in place when they leave. When they come in, we use a couple of different tests, depending on which area the college has decided to use. You've got the Computer Battery Test or the Work Keys Assessment to gauge a student's assessment as far as the aptitude to complete the course.

Diane Wiley (Iowa): Thank you.

Esther Hong: We have time for one more question.

Diane Wiley (Iowa): I have a question regarding the Work Keys. Do you find it to be very useful for individuals with disabilities?

Kim Baker: Well, we have found it a little bit difficult. Those who could take it just the way it was written, did. For others, we have had to make adaptations. We have made it accessible in instances where it is not accessible. Exactly how they did that, I don't know. That was done at our Texas location.

Diane Wiley (Iowa): Thank you.

Stephanie Carter (Wisconsin): I do have a quick question again. Did you say that the government gives grants for students to attend these programs?

Kim Baker: As you probably know, people who are on disability have counselors in their state or their city. The counselors are authorized to pay for training that will lead to meaningful employment. So, the counselors generally authorize the payment of the tuition.

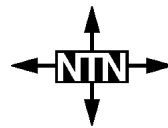
Stephanie Carter (Wisconsin): Thank you.

Esther Hong: And I think we are closing on

time. I want to just thank Kim, Vinny, Peter, and all the participants for joining us today. And, again, if you have any further questions or you need some more information, please don't hesitate to e-mail us or look us up on our web sites. NAB has a web site at www.nab.com. I want to thank you very much.

National Transition Alliance audio teleconferences are coordinated by the National Transition Network.

This transcript is copyright free. Please duplicate and share with others. For a copy of this or other transcripts, contact us at:



National Transition Network
Institute on Community Integration
110 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis MN 55455
(612) 624-2079 (*phone*)
(612) 624-9344 (*fax*)
ntn@mail.ici.coled.umn.edu (*email*)
www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn

For more information on the National Transition Alliance:



National Transition Alliance
Transition Research Institute at Illinois
University of Illinois
113 Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820
(217) 333-2325 (*phone*)
(217)244-0851 (*fax*)
www.dssc.org/nta