

## ACCT's India-US Partnership Lab Leads Workforce Development in a Global Era

*Association of Community College Trustees pairs U.S., Indian institutions to develop culturally competent workers in crucial fields.*

Washington, D.C — March 5, 2025 — The **Association of Community College Trustees** (ACCT) is proud to announce the launch of the **India-US Partnership Lab**, a cohort-based program designed to establish sustained partnerships between US and Indian higher education institutions to create a workforce to address growing challenges that transcend national borders.

ACCT selected two member colleges to participate in the Partnership Lab pilot program. **Pierce College** in Washington is paired with **Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University (RTMNU)** in Nagpur to develop collaborations in the area of disaster management. **Wor-Wic Community College** in Maryland is paired with **Symbiosis Skills and Professional University** in Pune, with a focus on cybersecurity and other STEM fields.

The workforce development fields selected align with recommendations by participants in ACCT's inaugural [India-US Workforce Partnership Workshop](#), which brought together government, industry, and higher education leaders both countries to discuss opportunities for collaboration. The resulting "[Action Agenda](#)," which identifies strategic fields with high workforce needs in both countries, the skills and competencies graduates need, and key stakeholders to engage in partnerships, provides an initial roadmap for Lab participants.

"In an increasingly interconnected world, community colleges play a critical role in educating students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in and contribute to a global workforce," said ACCT President and CEO **Jee Hang Lee**. "ACCT is proud to provide a pathway for colleges to develop sustained and substantive workforce-focused partnerships that contribute to our shared goal of student success."

The Partnership Lab is supported by Cognizant, a global IT services company.

"Cognizant is proud to support the India-U.S. Partnership Lab which is bringing together government, industry and higher education leaders to share best practices and spur global innovative workforce solutions," said Emma Fisher, Managing Director of Corporate Affairs. "Cognizant has longstanding expertise in training and educating a global workforce and is committed to training one million people on the digital skills needed to build the future workforce through its [Synapse Initiative](#)."

Recognizing that leadership commitment is a critical part of the equation for successful partnerships, presidents, staff, and trustees from Wor-Wic and Pierce met at ACCT's Community College National Legislative Summit in February to discuss goals and strategies for their work with their Indian partners. "Wor-Wic Community College is committed to expanding global opportunities in STEM and cybersecurity education," said Deb Casey, president at Wor-Wic Community College. Our partnership with Symbiosis Skills and Professional University strengthens our mission to provide students with workforce skills, cross-cultural collaboration, and pathways to high-demand careers. Together, we will cultivate innovation, workforce readiness, and a shared vision for the future."

In March, leaders, faculty, and administrators from Pierce College will visit RTMNU for in-person planning meetings and signing of a memorandum of understanding to officially launch their partnership. Julie White, chancellor and CEO of Pierce College, stated, "Our Pierce College team is excited to visit our RTMNU partners and learn more about their programs, as we bring our areas of expertise together to build a sustainable and culturally responsive collaboration to support workforce development in the US and India."

Wor-Wic Community College and Symbiosis Skills and Professional University will focus on virtual meetings to start, with a visit by the Wor-Wic team to Symbiosis to take place in the coming months. Dr. Casey and her team will also host delegations from the Partnership Lab institutions for an in-person visit to Wor-Wic in August in conjunction with a second India-US Workforce Partnership Workshop, which will take place in Washington and will feature lesson learned from the Partnership Lab.

"The Lab program model is proving to be successful in catalyzing meaningful global partnerships," said **Robin Matross Helms**, Vice President for Membership and Educational Services at ACCT. "A high-touch approach that entails carefully matching community colleges with complementary partner institutions abroad, engaging leaders and trustees, and providing a structured process for relationship development creates a framework to support the creativity and brilliance of the faculty and staff. It's wonderful to see their expertise shine as they carry these collaborations forward."

ACCT is currently piloting the Lab model in the India-US Partnership Lab, as well as the [US-UK Community College and Technical Exchange](#), funded by the Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation.

Given strong interest among ACCT member colleges, a growing network of institutions abroad, and a global emphasis on workforce development and technical education, ACCT is exploring opportunities to expand the Lab initiative to include additional institutions, industries, and countries. Institutions interested in exploring future global Partnership Lab opportunities should contact Robin Matross Helms at [rhelms@acct.org](mailto:rhelms@acct.org).

**About ACCT**

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,000 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond. For more information, go to [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org).

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