

## Amarillo College – Employer Evaluation of Truck Driving Program

The West Texas Office of Evaluation and Research (WTER) provides external evaluation services for Amarillo College's Department of Labor Grant, the Accelerated Career Pathways project. On June 14, 2013, WTER Associate Director Judy Kelley and Research Associate Kris Drumheller collected surveys and conducted a focus group to get employer perspectives about the Truck Driving Program. The participants were asked to first complete a survey followed by the focus group. This report provides the responses to the survey in chart form and then offers highlights of the focus group based on the participant responses. Five potential employers of students who will complete Amarillo College's Truck Driving program responded to the survey and participated in the focus group.

### Part I: Survey Results

Participants were informed that Amarillo College has identified the following competencies accomplished through the various Truck Driving Certification course work. They were then asked to rate the importance of these competencies on a scale ranging from "Not At All Important" to "Very Important." The scale also included a "Not Sure" option. The public transportation participant marked "Not Sure" on many of the items because there are no manual transmission vehicles at the participant's organization. One participant neglected to answer half of the questions from the backside of the survey, which explains the differentiation in total responses on some of the items. The five employers' responses about the important of the truck driving program competencies are provided in the following table.

Competencies		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Only A Little Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
1	Recognize the proper double clutching procedures	1	1	1	0	2	0	5
2	Understand the proper use of the clutch brake	1	0	1	0	1	2	5
3	Identify the importance of starting in the proper gear	1	0	0	0	1	3	5
4	Understand the progressive shifting procedures	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
5	Demonstrate the proper procedures for conducting pre-trip, during-trip and post-trip inspections including an inspection of the air brakes system	0	0	0	0	0	5	5

Competencies		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Only A Little Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
6	Demonstrate the proper procedures for entering and exiting the equipment	0	0	0	0	3	2	5
7	Demonstrate the proper procedures for upshifting and downshifting a variety of standard shift transmissions	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
8	With regard to hours regulation, be able to identify who is regulated	0	0	0	2	1	2	5
9	Understand the federal requirements including the 11 Hour Driving Rule; 14 Consecutive Hours On-Duty Rule; and the 60/70 Hours of Service Rules	1	0	0	0	3	1	5
10	Recognize egregious violations	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
11	Understand the exceptions for extending driving time when experiencing unforeseen road or traffic delays	1	0	0	0	4	0	5
12	Identify what is considered to be on-duty time	1	0	0	0	4	0	5
13	Understand the 34-hour restart	1	0	0	0	3	1	5
14	Recognize log book (duty status record) requirements and documentation regulations	1	0	0	0	2	2	5

Competencies		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Only A Little Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
15	Understand the requirements for duty status record retention	1	0	0	0	4	0	5
16	Demonstrate the procedures for backing and parallel parking and tractor/trailer combination	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
17	Demonstrate the procedures for completing daily log sheets for 3 mock trips	1	0	0	1	2	1	5
18	Demonstrate the procedures for completing the monthly summary sheet	1	1	1	0	2	0	5
19	Identify the resources available in a motor carrier's road atlas	1	0	2	0	1	0	4
20	Demonstrate the procedures for utilizing and reading the atlas	1	0	2	0	0	1	4
21	Understand the procedures for calculating travel time and fuel consumption	1	0	2	0	1	0	4
22	Recognize the essential components of planning a trip	1	0	0	1	2	0	4
23	Demonstrate an understanding of the essential components of planning a trip	1	0	0	1	2	0	4

Competencies		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Only A Little Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
24	Demonstrate the ability to combine the Hours of Service Regulations, log books, reading an atlas, calculating travel time and fuel consumption and trip planning to plan and complete a trip	1	0	1	0	2	0	4
25	Understand the CSA regulations and how they can affect his/her CSA score and his/her employer's score	1	0	0	0	2	1	4
26	Demonstrate the proper procedures for operating the school bus including the procedures for picking up and dropping off students, and the procedures for approaching and crossing a railroad crossing	2	1	0	0	0	1	4
27	Identify a summary of the key components of the course and driver wellness tips and procedures that will enable him/her to maintain his/her health during their driving career	0	1	1	1	1	0	4
28	Transfer classroom knowledge into practical applications in a laboratory (truck or bus) environment	0	0	0	3	1	0	4

Competencies		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Only A Little Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
29	Demonstrate the proper procedures for coupling and uncoupling a trailer	1	0	0	1	0	2	4
30	Demonstrate the proper procedures for sliding tandem axles to adjust weight distribution	1	0	2	0	0	1	4
31	Demonstrate proper gear management in an urban environment that demands frequent gear shifting	1	0	0	1	1	1	4
32	Demonstrate the ability to back a tractor/trailer at 45 degree angles; dock, blindside, and S backing	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
33	Demonstrate the ability to back a tractor/trailer at 90 degree angles; dock, blindside, and S backing	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
34	Understand the fueling procedures at a truck stop and weighing the truck, trailer and load. And, how to obtain and use shower credits and frequent fueling points	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
35	Demonstrate proper gear management in a rural environment including up and down grades	1	0	0	0	2	2	5

Competencies		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Only A Little Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
36	Demonstrate the ability to make accurate adjustment of slack adjusters	1	0	0	0	3	1	5
37	Select the proper gear to ascend/descend grades including a 10 percent grade while utilizing the engine retarders	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
38	Demonstrate the proper procedures for inspecting, operating and utilization of a lift truck in a warehouse and loading dock environment while utilizing the appropriate safety precautions	2	1	1	1	0	0	5

Participants were asked to list three competencies they think would be valuable that are not listed above. Customer service, teamwork, and communication skills were included in addition to soft skills identified below. There is clearly concern that new drivers be able to deal with traffic concerns as well as trip planning through manual and digital means. Additional areas of competency are noted below.

Respondent	First Competency Listed	Second Competency Listed	Third Competency Listed
1	Understanding maps and atlas use	space management in relation to other traffic	time management and trip planning
2	Heavy traffic, courtesy, road rage	electronic logs, computer dispatch operation	training adjuster card
3	Traffic/right of way management in high traffic areas	Electronic logs (EOBR)	Dispatch familiarity
4	customer service skills	teamwork skills	communication skills
5	in-depth lessons of hand pump, truck, etc	delivery of products (tanks, quantity of product)	area of service - regional fuel v OTR

Participants were asked how important it is to add instruction related to each of the following soft skills to the truck driving program. The survey indicates that active listening is the most important soft skill needed for AC students in the truck driving program followed by clear and concise writing and effective eye contact. Interviewing and conversation skills were also ranked as important, with resume skills viewed less important in this industry.

Soft Skills		Not Sure	Not At All Important	Somewhat important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
1	Interviewing skills	0	0	1	2	2	5
2	Resume Writing skills	0	0	2	2	1	5
3	Active Listening skills	0	0	0	1	4	5
4	Ability to write clearly and concisely	0	0	1	1	3	5
5	Strong conversation skills	0	0	1	2	2	5
6	Effective eye contact	0	0	0	3	2	5

Participants were asked to identify any other soft skills that should be included in the truck driving program. They provided the following responses.

Proper dress Keeping trucks clean Ability to fill out accident paper work
Handwriting legibility, verbal communication and manners during customer contact
How to complete DOT mandated driving applications. Fill in all the blanks - complete application.
Ability to communicate over the radio in a professional manner, ability to work with different types of people; ability to handle emergencies/stressful situations
Stress the need to want to learn new techniques; new rules and regulations mandated by DOT

## Part II: Focus Group Results

The focus group consisted of five industry members from varied commercial trucking industries including public transportation and commercial loading. Four of the participants were male and one was female. The focus group responses were grouped into categories for easier assessment of the truck driving program. A majority of the group discussion was focused on soft skills with some generic views on technical skills needed that could help Amarillo College in its course redesign. None of the employers had hired AC students right out of the program because additional training and experience are needed beyond the 5 week AC course, so they could not speak on the merits of the AC program itself. It should be noted that one of the employers has received approval from its insurance company to begin hiring AC students directly from the program, which it cannot do with any school other than AC.

## **Soft Skills**

### **Responsibility**

- Training is costly so individuals who tend to jump jobs are not appealing candidates. Employers felt that can work with individuals who have a strong work history. Stable work experience is highly valued.
- Applications need to be filled out completely because many of the questions are federally mandated questions. It was assumed that some are just too lazy to fill out the full application. It is important to follow instructions.
- Dependability is important when industry spends \$4000-\$10,000 on training.
- Recognition that employee is the face of the company.

### **Communication Skills**

- Critical thinking
- Teamwork
- Conflict resolution
- Verbal communication skills
- Interviewing (situational-type interviews), Handshakes, Eye Contact

### **Realistic Expectations**

- Over-the-road is hard to recruit because often on the road 4-6 weeks, which could be hard on families.
  - Younger students are more social, family oriented, and it's hard to get them out for even 2-3 days and understand the long commitment.
- Although the money can be good, there are expenses that come out of the pay, which might not be what is expected.
- Varying between manual and automatic transmission vehicles.

### **Flexibility**

- Drivers may need to go where the work is which might mean working in one area for an extended period but then working in another in the interim period.
- Skewed view of life experiences

### **Early Recruiting Efforts**

- Develop relationships with junior and high schools for career skill development and career days. AISD and Canyon have pro days to show truck driving as a viable career.
  - Mobile simulator might be a way to work more closely with high schools.
  - Under 21 can drive intrastate but not interstate.
- Bred a society of middle managers and no jr. high kid wants to get dirty; vocational skills have fallen out of vogue.
- Retirees from all kinds of industries are valuable employees for public transportation services. They work hard and can problem solve.
- Using psychometric data could help with job placement efforts. The trucking industry used the Predictive Index, a behavior assessment that helps employers understand their employees for better performance. Similar psychometric testing could potentially be offered through the AC career center to determine fit within the trucking industry.

## **Technical Skills**

- Attention to detail is critical.
- Electronic logs and computer operating skills are important with math skills often taught in extended training.



- Qualcomm – satellite based comm company, standard in industry or Peoplenet
  - Hours of service logs, GPS, management and maintenance
  - Some use iPods; keyboard in trucks with some touch screens
  - Application is on the internet – if they can't navigate that, they won't be able to do the job
- Equipment is heavily computerized, including maintaining and servicing the vehicles
- Curves, mountain areas, tanker practice
- Defensive driving (Industry uses the Smith system)