



# North Carolina SHRM State Council

2014 Crown Award Nomination Submission

*Advance the Profession Category*

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# North Carolina SHRM State Council Crown Award 2014

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## **Why was the program created? Who participated in the implementation of your program?**

*Students@Work* was conceived and created by the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to connect 8<sup>th</sup> grade students across the state with businesses in their local communities. During a week in February, businesses were invited to participate by either 1) visiting middle school classrooms or 2) hosting students at their workplace. The desired outcome of the program is to educate students on the range of careers options available to them and engage them in career pathing prior to selecting courses as they enter high school. In 2013, over 23,000 students across North Carolina took part.

Members of the WNC HRA Workforce Readiness Committee, in conjunction with Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, the United Way, and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, led an effort to work collaboratively to expand the size, scope, and impact of *Students@Work* week in Asheville/Buncombe County. The result was a “first-in-the-state” model that coordinated both local economic and workforce development efforts, involved 26 businesses, and provided experiential learning opportunities for nearly 850 students over the course of the week.

## **How was the program implemented?**

The organizing committee structured the event around the Asheville Chamber of Commerce’s 5X5 initiative, whose aim is to add 5,000 new jobs to the local economy across 5 different industries over 5 years. Each day of the week featured businesses in one of the 5 sectors identified by the Chamber including: Arts & Culture, Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hospitality/Tourism, and Entrepreneurial/Science, Technical, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Approximately 150-200 students travelled to businesses each day, documenting their experiences along the way through photos and videos and creating an entirely new template for the event.

## **What were the program’s goals? Were they met?**

In addition to the general program goals outlined above, the organizers of the Asheville event sought to: 1) provide students with access to multiple businesses and expand the impact and scope of *Students@Work*; 2) position HR leaders from WNC HRA as a resource within the community on workforce development issues and give the organization greater visibility; 3) create a viable new template for community-wide workforce development; and 4) highlight the connection between economic and

workforce development by tying two different programs – *Students@Work* and 5X5 - together. Goals were met in the following ways: 1) The Asheville *Students@Work* event involved and engaged far more students (850) than any single employer could have individually; 2) put WNC HRA on the radar with the 26 businesses that hosted students that week, and a follow-up survey with those businesses helped to inform the Workforce Readiness committee's 2014 priorities; 3) Asheville was recognized for its collaborative, "first-in-the-state" community-wide effort by the Governor's office; and 4) paved the way for conversations between the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and WNC HRA regarding strategic partnership opportunities.

**Was the program effective? Based upon what criteria?**

See Above. 2014 *Students@Work* built on the successes of the 2013 event and brought with it increased excitement, opportunities, and new partners such as Goodwill Industries. In addition, NCBCE has recognized Asheville's *Students@Work* planning team for developing a new "best practice" model for workforce development and featured the template and team at its 2013 annual membership meeting in Raleigh. This event format has already been duplicated in Charlotte, and *Students@Work* has also been taken on as a chapter project by the Lower Cape Fear HR Association in 2014.

**Who benefited from your program? How so?**

Our community was the true beneficiary. In addition to the positive impact on students and businesses, we were able to bring workforce development issues to the forefront, spotlight WNC HRA as a resource, and advance the HR profession locally through a successful collaboration with community partners. Furthermore, the Chamber of Commerce is now able to use this program to 1) promote the community's commitment to workforce development and 2) recruit new businesses to the Asheville.

**What makes your program deserving of a Crown Award?**

We believe that *Students@Work* is deserving of a Crown Award because it is an innovative example of collaboration and leadership that is already being replicated in other communities; meets the standards of excellence set forth by the North Carolina SHRM State Council; and advances HR professionals as a true strategic partners.