

A History of the WTCS/DOC Partnership

Inmate labor was used to meet some of the institution needs even before the Waupun State Prison was open. Inmate crews were used to help build the stone walls and housing units in the prison. When a cabinet shop was opened in the Waupun State Prison in 1862, the inmates acquired some vocational training while making furnishing essential to the prison. In subsequent years, a shoe shop, tailor shop, wagon factory, knitting industry, twine plant, cannery, license plate operation, print shop, sign shop, silk-screening, and tailoring operations met institution and state government needs while providing, as a byproduct, skills training for inmates. Some of these shops survive until today.

In 1898, the Wisconsin State Reformatory in Green Bay opened. The Reformatory housed inmates 17-30 years old with the purpose of rehabilitating the young men through the teaching of trades, general education, and steady work.

The Industrial Home for Women at Taycheedah opened in 1921 as a home for unwed mothers and women with venereal disease. In 1933, the State Prison for Women is completed on the same grounds as the Home for Women. The women were provided general education, home economics education and work assignments.

Starting in the early 1900s and continuing throughout the century, minimum security farms and camps were opened throughout the state. At the farms, the inmates were involved in dairy and crop work to supply food for the correctional facilities and other state facilities. At the camps, inmates participated in road, maintenance and conservation work for state and local agencies. Some minimum-security inmates were also eligible for study release to nearby technical schools and universities.

In the 1960s, Wisconsin became a national innovator in providing education the inmates. In 1962, the Wisconsin Correctional Institution opened at Fox Lake. It was the nation's first modern medium security prison for men. During the same year, the Wisconsin School for Boys was opened at Plymouth. In 1974, it was converted to a medium security prison and named Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution.

Both of the new institutions adopted a unit-based concept which included individual rooms for each inmate, a central dayroom and professional treatment staff assigned to each unit. Central to both facilities were ample classroom and vocational shop areas. The academic instructors were required to have DPI certification. The vocational teachers need work experience or certification in their field.

Birth of the VTAE/DOC Partnership

In the spring of 1972, Burt Zien, a member of the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (VTAE) conceived of the idea of VTAE accreditation of vocational courses in the state's correctional institutions. VTAE was the predecessor of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). *** (See note at end about VTAE/WTCS name changes and DOC becoming a department)

Accreditation required upgrading faculty, programs, and equipment to qualify the programs for certification and for the inmate-students to earn diplomas that met VTAE standards and was accepted as legitimate by Wisconsin employers and the public.

To accomplish these ends, the Interagency Committee on Corrections Education was formed. The intent in establishing this committee was to create an "Umbrella Committee, state-wide in knowledge, experience, prestige and influence, which would be a vehicle for communication, pooling of resources, and developing effective linkages between state agencies and their local counterparts that would be involved in providing vocational education, support services, and employment to inmate of the Wisconsin Correctional System." (Interagency Report, p. 2)

The resulting Committee did indeed meet these criteria. Included were the following agencies and representatives:

- AFL-CIO (John Schmitt, President)
- Wisconsin Board of VTAE (Bert Ziena and Donald Brill, members)
- Moraine Park VTAE District (Robert Sorenson, District Director)
- Northeast Wisconsin VTAE District (K. W. Haubenschild, District Director)
- Wisconsin Division of Corrections (Andrew Basinas, Administrative Assistant); Allen Harbort, Superintendent of Education; and Wardens Paul Prost, Elmer Cady, Raymond Gray, Lewis McCauley and John Gagnon)
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (Kenneth Kassner and Donald Snyder)
- State Manpower Council (William Dunkin)
- Wisconsin State Employment Service (Stanley Spencer)
- Bureau of Probation and Parole (Del Huebner)
- University of Wisconsin System (Dave Stewart, Central Administration and John Stevenson, UW-Stout Dean)
- Bureau of Management Development (William Bechtel)
- State Chamber of Commerce (Dave Hoevler)
- Council on Criminal Justice (Austin Mc Clendon)
- Department of Public Instruction (Preston Smeltzer)
- Student representatives from each institution (Hall, p. 1)

The Committee's mission was specific and direct: "Design job training that meets the standards of the Wisconsin Board of Vocation, Technical and Adult Education; implement such training behind the walls and move the ex-offender off the street, off the welfare roll, and onto the job." (Interagency Report, p. 3)

When the partnership was formed, DOC academic instructors had DPI certification and many vocational teachers had experience in their trades, but did not have any state educational certification. To insure quality instruction, part of the agreement between VTAE and DOC was that DOC instructors were required to meet the same certification requirements that apply to VTAE instructors throughout the state in order to teach VTAE curricula. To better serve the DOC instructors, Moraine Park Technical Institute (MPTI) provided certification courses tuition-free.

To keep current with the skills required in the job market, instructors were encouraged to attend training workshops and courses offered at MPTI or by manufacturers. Instructors teaching programs that are linked with an on-campus program were invited to advisory committee meetings twice a year. There the DOC instructors were exposed to the on-campus faculty and the employers that hire MPTI graduates. These meetings kept faculty members up to date on MPTI curriculum changes and industry trends.

Moraine Park also recognized the importance of supporting its DOC partners in other ways, such as donating equipment to support the educational mission at the institutions. Later as technology became a more essential component of quality instruction, MPTI provided computers, printers, LCD projectors, VCRs and other technical equipment to enhance the educational experience of the students and also relieve some of the budgetary strain experienced at the institutions.

Three main factors have enabled the WTCS/DOC partnership to flourish over the decades: 1) a good original idea, 2) innovative staff dedicated to maintaining program quality, and 3) a delivery system which enhances program consistency.

In 1972, because four of the five major adult institutions were located within the Moraine Park District, Moraine Park Technical Institute took the lead in program development.

Fox Lake Correctional Institution

In August 1972, Fox Lake Correctional Institution (FLCI) was chosen for the pilot project. By January 1973, the Custodial Services and Small Engines programs were ready for State Board approval.

From the beginning, the education department at FLCI functioned as a branch campus of Moraine Park. Curricula were approved by administration at the main campus. A Correctional

Coordinator's office, headed by Ron Hall of MPTI, was established at FLCI to ensure that programs met MPTC standards. Records were kept at the FLCI office and the Moraine Park main campus. Diplomas and certificates are issued by MPTI with no reference to corrections. In March 1973 and accredited programs were begun.

After this beginning, VTAE involvement immediately began to expand. Additional funds of \$65,000 to expand the vocational offerings were approved in June 1973. A follow-up coordinator for job placement was employed in December 1973. This position was later terminated. In February 1976, the UW-Stout Dean of Education worked with the Committee to develop a long range plan.

Most significantly, the number of VTAE accredited programs expanded to ten: Appliance Servicing, Auto Body, Auto Mechanics, Custodial Services, Electronic Servicing, Machine Tool Operation, Mechanical Drafting, Merchandising, Small Engine and Chassis Repair, and Welding. In the first decade, from 1973 through 1979, 792 students received MPTI diplomas.

Much of the credit for the success of the FLCI/MPTI partnership must be given to those responsible for administrating the two agencies over the past five decades. Like the fundamental philosophy underlying the vocational training, the educational administrators overseeing program operation have remained stable. During this time span only six individuals have served as Education Director at FLCI: John Plank (14 years), Tom Olson (6 years), Bob Garcia (6 years), Glenn Poler (5 years), Holly Audley (1 year) and Chris Eplett (since 2007).

Working with them as the Moraine Park Corrections Education Coordinator have been Ron Hall and Paul Morin (1972-1976), Howard Steinhilber (1976-1995), Katie Soles (1995-1998), John Phillips (1998-2007). Chuck Brendel (2007-2018), and Mary Davies (2018-present).

As technology and the job market evolved over the years, FLCI vocational programs also evolved. The MPTC accredited programs now available at FLCI are:

- Auto Maintenance
- Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD)
- Computer Numerical Control (CNC)-Machine Tool Operations
- Construction Essentials
- Custodial Service
- Culinary Assistant
- Horticulture
- Marine, Motorcycle, and Outdoor Power Products
- Masonry
- Welding

As of May 31, 2013, MPTC had enrolled almost 17,400 unduplicated students at FLCI, awarded 4951 diplomas, and 474 certificates to graduates, making it the largest vocational training program in any Wisconsin institution as well as one of the largest in the nation.

Green Bay Correctional Institution

In 1972, The Wisconsin State Reformatory became an adult maximum security prison as the last juveniles were released or transferred from Green Bay.

The following year, a pilot project similar to the Moraine Park Corrections Project began at the Wisconsin State Reformatory in partnership with Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute. Problems in satisfying accreditation requirements limited the development of diploma-granting programs. By the end of the 1970 decade, the only programs which were fully-certified were Auto Mechanics, Barbering, Welding and Wood Techniques.

The NWTC accredited programs now available at GBCI are:

- Barbering/Cosmetology
- Cabinet Making
- Masonry

Waupun Correctional Institution

In 1975, the Waupun Correctional Institution began to develop accredited programs in Food Service Assistant, Legal Assistant, Machine Tool Operation, Mechanical Drafting and Welding, in addition to apprenticeship programs in Metal Fabrication and Meat-Cutting. Due to a high rate of teacher turnover and administrative problems involving the school, continuity in these programs was lacking and the student completion rate was low. Only 50 students received diplomas by the end of the decade.

The main difficulty of continuing many of these programs was the length of sentences for the majority of men held at WCI. As a maximum security prison, it wasn't practical to teach vocational skills such as welding or legal assistant or drafting to men who would not be released to society for a lengthy amount of time. It was more practical to reallocate programs like those to medium security institutions.

The MPTC accredited programs now available at WCI are:

- Building Maintenance, and Construction
- Computer Literacy (a single WTCS course, not a stand-alone program)

Taycheedah Correctional Institution

In 1975, the Wisconsin Home for Women was renamed Taycheedah Correctional Institution (TCI) and began to house male inmates in a co-ed setting. The institution reverted back to a female facility in 1978.

In the 1970's Taycheedah Correctional Institution (TCI) developed only one VTAE program, Public Relations. During this time the main thrust of Vocational training at TCI was a Study-Release arrangement with the nearby MPTI-Fond du Lac campus. Study-Release from TCI reached a high of 46 students in September 1976. Because of security problems which occurred while some of the TCI students were on the MPTI campus, the program was severely cut back.

In 1989, in responses to a law suit, DOC signed a consent decree that mandated gender parity in education, work and medical services at Taycheedah Correctional Institution. The consent decree led to expansion in the number and variety of vocational offerings at TCI.

Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution

Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution (KMCI) has been part of the Interagency Committee plan since 1974. KMCI used MPTI consultants in planning their vocational programs, but did not develop any VTAE accredited programs in the 1970s. The administration at KMCI opted to maintain their programs at the exploratory and pre-vocational levels.

Through the efforts of welding instructor George Barber and Education Director Dave Picard, KMCI re-visited their decision and added its first MPTC diploma offerings for Welding and Custodial Services in 2007.

The MPTC accredited programs now available at TCI are:

- Auto Maintenance
- Cabinet Making/Cabinetry
- Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD)
- Custodial Service
- Masonry
- Welding

DOC Expansion

Since 1980, Wisconsin's prison population has exploded resulting in a subsequent boom in prison construction. The Wisconsin prison population grew from 3677 at the beginning of 1980, to 6669 in 1990, to 15,286 in 2000, and to 22,816 in 2010. The state government responded by opening ten maximum and medium institutions and six minimum security centers.

Included in the programming plans for most of these institutions was vocational training. Since the new institutions were dispersed throughout the state, other WTCS schools began to be involved in accrediting the vocational programs in the correctional institutions in their districts.

The chart below lists all of the institutions that were opened since 1976 that included WTCS accredited vocational training among their education programming.

Correctional Institution	Year Opened	Accredited Programs	Accrediting Technical College
Oakhill	1976	Building Services Horticulture	Madison
Oshkosh	1986	Braille Transcription Building Services Dog Training and Grooming Food Service/Culinary Arts Horticulture Institution Food Production Multi-Occupational Aide Office Software Applications Practical Computer Skills	Fox Valley
Columbia	1986	Building Services Custodial Service Printing Technology	Madison Northeast Wisconsin Madison
Racine	1991	Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Custodial Services Culinary Arts	Gateway
Jackson	1995	Food Service / Culinary Arts	
Racine Youthful Offender	1997	Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Computer Help Desk Masonry	Gateway
Prairie du Chien	1997	Building Services	Western

Correctional Institution	Year Opened	Accredited Programs	Accrediting Technical College
		Computer Literacy Masonry Office Software Applications	
Wisconsin Secure Program Facility	1999	Barbering/Cosmetology	
Redgranite	2001	Baking Industrial Maintenance Mechanic	Fox Valley
Stanley	2001	Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD) Custodial Services Office Assistant/Aide Welding	Chippewa Valley
New Lisbon	2004	Bakery Computer Applications Horticulture	Western

Recent Initiatives

In 2015, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) awarded Wisconsin Fast Forward grants to three Technical Colleges to offer 14-week CNC technical education certificate programs for DOC inmates and offenders under Division of Community Corrections (DCC) supervision.

Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) provided instruction over the course of two years at its downtown campus to about 50 participants from Felmers O. Chaney, Marshall E. Sherrer and Milwaukee Women's Correctional Centers and individuals on DCC supervision in Region 3.

Gateway Technical College (GTC) provided instruction at Racine Correctional Institution (RCI) utilizing the DOC's self-contained mobile CNC lab as the classroom. The mobile lab is a 44-foot trailer equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, used to provide a hands-on experience for inmates training to become CNC operators. The Department has also purchased two additional mobile labs which provide instruction in welding and industrial maintenance.

In addition to DOC's partnerships with GTC and MATC, it also conducted a pilot project with Madison College to train inmates from Oregon and Thompson Correctional Centers with work release privileges in its 12-week Industrial Maintenance certificate program.

The Future

When VTAE programs were first introduced into Wisconsin correctional institutions much of the funding was secured with federal “seed money” or Moraine Park Technical College assistance. As the programs matured, they became primarily dependent on DOC funding. As a result program quality and expansion varied as the state’s political and financial environment changed and grant funding became available for the federal government.

Balancing the vocational needs of the students, while maintaining the integrity of the programs, and the certificates and diplomas that are issued has always been the prime objective of DOC’s and WTCS’s efforts. While the partnership between the DOC and WTCS has been long term and very productive, both parties are always looking for ways to keep it current and effective. The efforts on the part of both parties ensure the hope of employment for the students in the future. The positive results of providing vocational education for the incarcerated is well-documented. And both partners are proud to be doing their part in this important mission.

***** Notes ---** The Division of Corrections was created inside the Department of Public Welfare to administer the system in 1939. The 1967 Reorganization Act transferred the Division of Corrections to the Department of Health and Social Services where it remained until it became its own Department in 1990. Major facilities were renamed “Correctional Institutions” and minimum security camps and farms were renamed “Centers.”

In 1994, the name of the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education system was changed to the Wisconsin Technical College System under the provisions of 1993 Act 399. Individual schools changed their names from “Technical Institute” to “Technical College.”

***** Footnotes ---**

Report of the Interagency Committee on Corrections Education. Madison: November 9, 1976.

Hall, Ronald. “A History of VTAE Involvement in Corrections.” A speech delivered to the AVA convention; New Orleans: December 6, 1974