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White House Plans Job Training Partnership

By **CATHERINE RAMPELL**

As part of efforts to address record-high levels of long-term unemployment, **President Obama** plans to announce a new national public-private partnership on Monday to help retrain workers for jobs that are in demand.

The national program is a response to frustrations from both workers and employers who complain that public retraining programs frequently do not provide students with employable skills. This new initiative is intended to help better align **community college** curriculums with the demands of local companies.

“The goal is to encourage community colleges and other training providers to work in close partnership with employers, to design a curriculum where they want to hire the people coming out of these programs right away,” said **Austan Goolsbee**, chairman of the President’s **Council of Economic Advisers**.

Some similar employer-community college partnerships already exist around the country, generally in one-off programs. The new White House initiative, Skills for America’s Future, will try to foster more of these programs, and to certify a list of best practices for public-private retraining partnerships.

The program will be run by the **Aspen Institute**, a not-for-profit, private research organization based in Washington, but will be accompanied by a new government task force with representatives from the Department of Labor, the Department of Commerce and other agencies.

So far five major private employers — **Gap Inc.**, **Accenture**, **United Technologies**, **P.G.& E.** and **McDonald’s** — have been named as partners, in part to build on existing training programs they already run.

“There’s a number of studies and a number of discussions about the skills gap and how that’s related to unemployment,” said **Penny Pritzker**, a Chicago business executive and Obama fund-raiser who sits on the President’s Economic Recovery Advisory Board. Her

family foundation, the Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation, is providing \$250,000 to the Aspen Institute to start the program.

“We’re trying to bring together the government, the private sector, labor and community colleges and students to really address what is one of the structural problems facing this country right now,” she said.

As yet there are no plans to request government money to support these efforts, White House officials said. Ms. Pritzker said she was working with other foundations to shore up financing.

The commitments from private partners are primarily in the form of providing guidance and scholarships to community colleges, not in donating funds directly to the new national program. P.G.& E., for example, says it plans to provide \$1.5 million in in-kind support for each of the next three years to community colleges, including equipment donations and student field visits, according to Tamar Sarkissian, a P.G.& E. spokeswoman.

Mr. Obama is to unveil the new program in a meeting of the President’s Economic Recovery Advisory Board on Monday, to be followed by a [White House Summit on Community Colleges](#) on Tuesday hosted by [Jill Biden](#), the vice president’s wife.

The Aspen Institute will announce an executive director for its new program on Oct. 25, according to Maureen Conway, executive director of the institute’s economic opportunities program.