

# CREATING AND REPLICATING HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES AND SCHOOLS

## CASE STUDY

# Houston County Frito-Lay Partnership

## Building a Pipeline of Industrial Maintenance Professionals through a Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Houston County, GA



Carl Vinson Institute of Government  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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## Building a Pipeline of Industrial Maintenance Professionals through a Pre-Apprenticeship Program

The Houston County Frito-Lay Partnership began as a way to solve a local industry problem. Craig Hoffman, director of maintenance and engineering at the Frito-Lay plant in Perry, Georgia, approached the Houston County Career Academy (HCCA) in Warner Robins and Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) because his plant had recently expanded and he was having trouble finding experienced technicians to join his team. From these early conversations, the industrial maintenance curriculum and pre-apprenticeship program were born. The high school industrial maintenance program is divided into four sections over a two-year period. In the first year, students begin to learn about methods and tools of industrial mechanics. By the end of the first year, students have experience with building and troubleshooting pneumatic and hydraulic systems in a lab setting. In the first semester of the second year, students learn industrial and electrical motor controls in the lab. The last segment of the second year is a “senior lab,” where students have the opportunity to tear down and rebuild official Frito-Lay plant equipment. After successfully completing the industrial maintenance program at HCCA, students are eligible to apply for Frito-Lay’s apprenticeship program. Cadets in the apprenticeship program continue their industrial maintenance education at CGTC, where they can complete their Industrial Systems Associate Degree. Cadets are also paired with mentors from the Frito-Lay plant to provide on-the-job training identical to the skills attained by plant employees.

Hoffman said that regardless of where students end up after completing the industrial maintenance program at HCCA, they have gained the knowledge and skills of entry-level industrial mechanics: “They’ll gain a basic understanding of mechanical and electrical, which could potentially open doors for them not only in Frito-Lay but in other manufacturers.” Others involved in this project, like Angie Gheesling, executive director of the Houston County Development Authority, believe that the success of the industrial maintenance program partnership will serve as a recruitment tool for prospective businesses. For those looking to create a similar pre-apprenticeship program, she recommends that schools analyze what industries are in demand and identify the specific businesses that are open to collaborating. She also said that development authorities can be used as a catalyst for partnerships by helping schools make connections and serving as a go-between for schools and businesses.

