

Wright Tech Ad Hoc Committee  
White Paper  
Monday January 25, 2010  
Jack Condlin, Chairman

The Wright Tech Ad Hoc Committee has a tremendous challenge and a very short window of time to meet that challenge. The committee is charged with producing a report on the re-opening of Wright Tech by the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, 2010.

It is a monumental task but the Ad Hoc Committee has accepted the challenge and is aggressively working to meet this deadline. At the committee's first two meetings they focus on the issues that they felt are on critical path. First and foremost was the issue of putting together an outline on how to develop a plan to bring all the necessary elements for the report.

At the committee's first meeting, December 22, 2009, they established five areas of focus that the committee felt needed to be addressed. They're not in any particular order.

- 1.) Facility
- 2.) Trades
- 3.) Students
- 4.) Teachers
- 5.) Front Office

The Ad Hoc Committee also discussed incorporating green into the school. This would provide an opportunity to make the school environmental friendly through; the construction/rehabilitation of the school; as well as the operation of the school; and also incorporated Green into the trades. This is something that is on the cutting edge. It is neither difficult nor expensive and is being considered in the state school system. The opportunity to incorporate a total green environment into the reopening of this school is a tremendous opportunity to show cases this as a new and improved school, making it a school of choice. This would be a tremendous asset in the recruitment process for the school. It can be dovetailed with the new K through 8 regional magnet environmental Rogers School that just opened in Stamford, again creating a school of choice.

Facility – The existing building is in need of a complete rehab. Environmental remedial work has been done on the school over the past few years. The committee will need to know if this was completed or if there is outstanding work to be completed. This remedial work was part of the major renovation project. The legislators have adopted two bills totaling \$90 million for renovation of the school. These moneys have never been put on the Bonding Agenda, so they are still available.

Trades – Wright Tech has seen a decrease in the number of trades offered in the school over the past number of years. Before the decrease the school offered seven trades; *Culinary, Hairdressing, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, Automotive and Health Care*. A new trade, Facilities Management was about to open at Wright Tech, but do to the suspension of operations, it never materialized. The Ad Hoc Committee needs to develop a listing of trades that will meet the present demands of the regional area as well as the future growth.

Students – Wright Tech has struggled with its student enrolment for many years. In its previous life (1960/1970) the school always had a waiting list of Students With the suspension of operation of the school and its complete rehabilitation, will make this effectively a new start up technical high school. The committee will be outsourcing a survey within the regional area for the potential of student population. Based on programs conducted by the Stamford Chamber of Commerce over the past 8 years, for senior students who are graduating from the Stamford high schools who are not planning to attend any type of continuing education, Stamford should generate anywhere from 50 to 100 students per year to attend a technical high school.

Teachers – All of the previous Wright Tech teachers have been absorbed into the other state technical high schools or they are chosen to retire. The challenge is going to be to recruit new, well qualified teachers. It is possible that some of the teachers who transferred to other schools will return once the school is reopened, but a recruitment process will need to be developed for the balance of the teachers needed.

Front Office – A very critical element of opening any school is the right people in the front office. Everyone from the principal, vice principal, guidance councilors, administrative assistance and secretaries play an important roll in the school.

The Ad Hoc Committee can make all the recommendations needed to reopen this school base on the latest information and facts, but the biggest challenge is going to be the cost for re-opening this school.

The biggest challenge is the cost of the rehabilitation of the facility. Is the \$90 million going to be accessible and is it going to be sufficient? What is the operating cost of the building and the school once it opens?

The Ad Hoc Committee should consider making certain assumptions on all the critical path items, using their best educated guess estimates so a plan can begin to evolve. As the final surveys, studies and findings come in the plan can be adjusted to reflect this new information.

#### Ad Hoc Committee; Critical Path

Facility – Since we have \$90 million already appropriated it is best to begin some preliminary estimating. The cost of the rehabilitate the common space, the front office, the class rooms and the exterior of the school will be the same regardless of the trades that are offered. The laboratories for most of the trades share similar traits in their fit ups. The committee should be able to put some preliminary cost estimates on this rehab. There are also a complete set of drawings that were done a few years ago when the money was first appropriated to rehab the building. These drawings and along with other documents should help in the estimating of the rehabilitation. It would be in the best interest of the school and the students that all the work be completed before the school opens. This would move the reopening date from fall of 2011 to somewhere around 2013/14.

Trades – At the Ad Hoc Committee's January 11th meeting they reviewed all of the state's technical high schools and the trades that are offered. Based on the previous trades that were offered at Wright Tech and the trades that are offered at each of the other state technical high schools, plus the projections of job opportunities in the regional area, Wright Tech should offer seven trades. They are *Culinary, Hairdressing, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, Automotive and Health Care*. At this point it is probably better to hold off on the Facilities Maintenance trade because it is a new trade that is not offered in any of the other schools. Once the school is up and operating and meeting its goals for student population then it should be considered.

Students – There are 55,800 students enrolled within the region's eight public school districts. 12,500 of them are in middle or junior high schools. And 5,500 of these middle/junior high schools are in Stamford and Norwalk. Each year there are 4,100 students from the regions eight school district and 1,800 from Stamford/Norwalk who are entering high school. Considering that the total Wright Tech population should be around 400 to 500 students, this equates to 100 to 150 students entering as freshman each year. This is around 1% of the regions potential student population. These population figures indicate that this school should greatly exceed its enrolment goal. When you consider it is a start up, the enrolment for the first year will be around 150 students and increase somewhere around 100 students for the next three years to when the school is in full operation. There will be attrition of students that happens each year which is represented by the difference of 150 students the first year and only adding a net 100 each year after. It is also important to consider that the school should be totally rehabilitated before it opens. The greater the time span between its suspension of operation and the school opening after total rehabilitation the less of the school's history will impact recruitment efforts.

Teachers/Front Office – Assuming the student population is going to be as projected we need to develop an annual budget for the operation of the school. Since this will be a start up the teaching population only has to serve the 150 freshmen students the first year and a net increase of 100 students each

following years, until it reaches its full operation in the fourth year. The front office staff will also follow a similar growth pattern.

In summary

- 1.) This School should be opened as a new state technical high school in the fall of 2013 or 2014 in the existing building totally rehabbed.
- 2.) The school should meet the latest and up to date standards of the newest state technical high school building.
- 3.) The school should open with seven trades; *Culinary, Hairdressing, Electrical, HVAC, Plumbing, Automotive and Health Care*. Additional trades can be added as needed.
- 4.) The Student recruitment will be 150 students each year and the school population will reach full operation at 400 to 500 students in its fourth year of operation.
- 5.) A recruitment program needs to be developed to fill the necessary openings for teachers in the class rooms as well as the front office staff.
- 6.) As the information materializes from the survey and the market analysis studies, the committee can make the necessary adjustments in this plan.