Spotlight: University Centers Meet at the UEDA 2023 Summit Co-Sponsored by the University of Utah!

EDA University Centers convened and had insightful discussions and workshops during the summit! Attendees addressed topics such as leveraging stakeholders, collaboration with various communities, and building relationships with Economic Development Districts. University Center-focused sessions and their key highlights are listed below:

EDA UC Workshop: Growing your University Center: Applying Strategic Planning Tools to Achieve Greater Impact

- Elli Travis and Sarah Lyon-Hill from Virginia Tech discussed how to grow your University Center through strategic planning, as they shared lessons learned from their three-year strategic planning process.
- The workshop asked attendees to consider what stakeholders could be included in this process, the value in creating a logic model, and the timeline Virginia Tech used to be successful. A workbook was shared with attendees to assist in their own strategic plan development.

EDA UC Cohort: University Centers at HBCU's: Grounding the Work in Community

- Donald Andrews (Southern University), David Teek (Florida A&M University), and Milton Omar Faison (Virginia State University) presented the ways their University Centers, based at HBCUs, ground their efforts in their communities to benefit historically underserved and underrepresented populations.
- Discussion focused on how University Centers can build successful programming to engage BIPOC students and how to effectively build trust and relationships with your local community.

EDA University Center Cohort Visioning Session

- The visioning session brought 18 EDA University Centers together, along with other universities and economic development partners, to collaborate on the future of the program and connect in-person.
- University Centers are a unifying force for leveraging university assets for economic development. However, flat funding for the program creates a challenge for helping universities to meet their communities where they are. Strategies for creating a common message and advocating for UCs were discussed in the session.

University Centers Building Skills for the Future of Regional Economies: A Workforce Ecosystem Approach

- Candice McKie from Georgia Tech highlighted workforce projects the University Center is working on, such as Northwest Georgia iWORKS, which partners with organizations in a 15-county region, which resulted in a collaborative education partnership responsive to the needs of local employers.
- Chad Hardaway from the University of South Carolina shared the ways his University Center connects students to industry partners; the importance of gaining buy-in, consensus building, and finding a community champion to help improve the ecosystem were lessons shared.

University Center Approaches to Building Relationships With Economic Development Districts

- Molly Schnoke (Cleveland State University), Kim Denton (University of Tennessee), and Josh Bruce (University of Oregon) shared how their University Centers would with

local Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and shared ways they make the relationship intentional.

- The University Centers hope EDDs can expand their work to consider the collective issues their community faces beyond economic development, such as housing and childcare challenges. Decreasing silos can promote greater collaboration between the two entities, leading to stronger outcomes and alignment of efforts.