Newsletter
Third Edition, December 2023

Dear Techforce Community,

Welcome to the **third edition of the 21st Century Techforce Newsletter**, which our team creates to share the latest updates of our impactful project with our community. As we wrap up the year, we are excited to share progress along three initiatives we launched this year: K-12 Career Lighthouses, Short-form Credentials, and Stackable Credentials.

Remarkably, these past few months have shown promising large-scale action. On Monday, October 16th Governor Pedro Pierluisi Urrutia, Education Secretary Yanira Raíces Vega, and our office signed executive order 2023-031 requiring all K-12 students to have taken at least one computer science course prior to graduation. This momentous accomplishment will provide opportunities for students from an early age to foster essential 21st century skills in line with our goal of **transforming Puerto Rico into one of the top 10 states/territories in tech talent.**

Thank you for all you've done to support the 21st Century Techforce. We look forward to continuing to grow our impact each day with the help of leaders like you.

Sincerely,

Manuel Cidre
Secretary of PR DEDC

21st Century Update

What is happening in K-12?
K-12 Career Lighthouse schools have started receiving cutting-edge materials that will allow them to start teaching their innovative STEM curricula, focused on topics from computer science to robotics. Two out of nine of the schools have finished installing all materials that will allow them to kick-off lab classes early next year.

Additionally, we continued our **Techforce Partnerships** progress pairing all Lighthouse K-12 schools with a local university and a private sector employer to pursue activities that would increase their exposure to tech related careers. Some of the activities that participants will be pursuing include company and university tours, internships, mentorship programs, and dual enrollment possibilities among many more. We sincerely thank all participants of this wonderful initiative, especially our partner universities and private companies!

What about the short-form credential space?
Short-form credential grant recipients have not only finished the design of the programs they will execute, but also **as of end of October three of them already had over 150 enrolled students.** We expect this number to keep growing as more of them launch their programs in the coming months. There has been incredible traction across all programs, with **over 2,500 applicants to all programs – more than 2x since last update.**

Our Short-form Credential Grantees:

And what's the latest news on stackable credentials?
Our stackable credentials universities are in the process of accreditation for the curricula they designed over the past couple of months, with input from prominent Puerto Rican employers and subject matter experts. All of them have **kickstarted the rigorous process of internal approval** with the respective Presidents of their organizations, with some even having submitted their new programs for approval to the Junta de Instituciones Postsecundarias (JIP). Together, they re-designed 11 bachelor's degrees offering 26 credentials amongst them (9 associates and 17 certificates) available next year.

Our Stackable Credential Grantees:

21st Century in the News

Government pushes computer science and applied tech as high school graduation requisite

The government promotes the inclusion of computer science and applied technologies in school curricula for graduation, emphasizing their importance in higher education

DDEC featured in print version of El Vocero, explaining overall 21st Century Techforce project

On Monday October 30th, El Vocero released a special feature article outlining the general 21st Century Techforce project, its ambitious new strategy for comprehensive economic development, and the programs and grantees in place to carry out the vision.
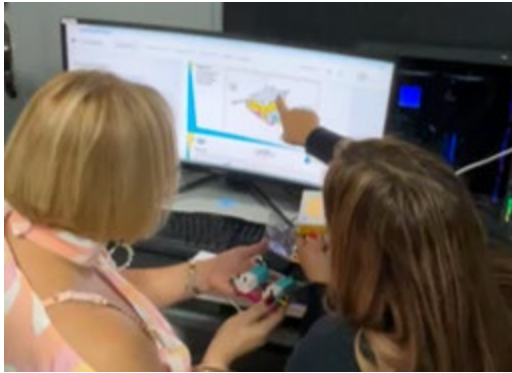

Latest Events

Techforce Partnerships: Bayamon Cluster visit - October 24th

We thank the participants of our second Techforce Partnership convening. The leaders of the María Teresa Piñeiro school, the UPR Bayamon, and CGI participated in an in depth discussion about the stackable curriculum, collaborations with the private sector, and carried out a closing tour of the school which included the new 21st Century Lab.

Code.org and Techno Inventors teacher training – September 21st
Code.org and Techno Inventors hosted a day to train 20 teachers in our K-12 lighthouse schools to teach computer science and applications of robotics. Teachers left the space feeling excited to be one of the firsts to receive this type of training and to start implementing it as soon as next year!

Holberton Coding School - Demo day - November 17th
Holberton Coding School hosted their demo day - a day where students got an opportunity to present their coding projects that they have been working on for weeks. We thank Holberton for hosting and everyone involved for the wonderful presentations!

Forte launch – November 29th
Forte had their grand launch for the first cohort of students to join the Puerto Rico class. With over 100 students enrolled, Forte has launched their classes and expects students to graduate in June of 2024. We thank them for a fantastic evening with great company!

Thought Leadership

Workforce Report September 2023
As the latest LinkedIn Workforce Report suggests, one of the most resilient and better performing industries even in difficult labor markets is Technology, Information, and Media.
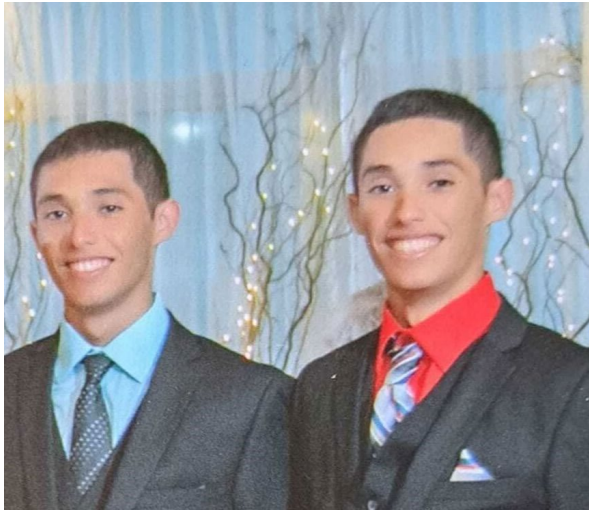
Rethinking retraining
Retraining is crucial for a more adaptable workforce amid rapid technological and economic changes. It might also be key for aging populations, as this article suggests.

Graduation requirements
Although progress has been made to diversify access to computer science programs, the gender gap persists in this field. Graduation requirements could help address it.

Talent Spotlight

**Luis y Alex
from Ironhack**

Luis and Alex are twin brothers who have always wanted to design websites, understand how information is managed, and visualize data in technology. After graduating, they realized they needed more practical experience to launch their careers in technology. Luis joined the web development program, while Alex enrolled in the data analytics program. They are expected to graduate in February 2024.

**Wilfredo Cardona, Tech Teacher
of Maria Teresa Piñeiro**

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to provide our students with the possibility of having a better professional future. Our school is part of the '21st Century Techforce' initiative. Our proposal will create an academic path in Computer Science throughout all the high school years. We will have a classroom equipped with robots, computers, and other technological equipment aimed at exposing our students to experiences that prepare them for a future workforce dominated by technology. I'm excited about having the resources in the school to provide quality learning.

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We encourage you to actively engage with us and share your thoughts by emailing us at: 21stcentury@ddec.pr.gov or by finding us at the 21st Century Techforce website.

Our Story

In April of this year, the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC), jointly with the Department of Education (PRDE) and the private sector in Puerto Rico introduced the visionary **"21st Century Techforce"** program. With a firm commitment

to generating over **50,000 skilled workers** and propelling Puerto Rico into the **top 10 territories for 21st century talent**, this initiative is revolutionizing education on the island.

Bolstered by a substantial **grant fund of $50 million**, the "21st Century Techforce" is committed to three main initiatives that will transform education for young and adult learners. The first one is **K-12 Lighthouse**, focused on innovative curriculum development and teacher training programs at schools; the second one is **Short Form Credentials**, developed to provide short, targeted courses that provide practical and industry-relevant knowledge; and the third one is **Stackable Credentials**, designed to allow individuals to customize their learning journeys and obtain specialized certifications.

The "21st Century Techforce" program is dedicated to improving educational access to all residents, empowering them to pursue their aspirations and shape their own futures.