
Competency Models In Action:

Industry Association Aligns Certificate Program with Retail Competencies

June 2015

- Working with industry partners to develop education/career pathways
- Preparing the retail grocery workforce for advancement
- Creating and revalidating the Retail Management Certificate Program

Introduction

The retail grocery industry is not all about restocking the produce bin or ringing up the case register receipts. In fact, this portion of the retail sector affords employees opportunities to move along a career pathway into meaningful management occupations with family-sustaining wages. As a means to that end, the Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC), a non-profit business organization representing the retail and wholesale food industry, has established the Retail Management Certificate (RMC) program. The RMC received recognition in a recent White House event, “Upskilling America,” commending WAFC and other organizations for expanding access to training and credentials in industries like retail and hospitality that employ millions of front-line workers.¹

The RMC aligns with the competencies in the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration’s (ETA) Retail Competency Model. The program began with community college partners in California and has now expanded significantly to over 150 community colleges in the western United States. It is also available in its entirety online to reach students and working learners in every state in the nation.

The Workforce Need

The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Current Population Survey indicates that over the five year period from 2009-2014 the number of persons employed in the retail trade sector grew from 15,877,000 to 16,609,000, an increase of 4.6%. Over that same time period, a number of management, business and financial occupations within the sector grew at more substantial rates. For example, these occupations in grocery store operations grew from 57,000 persons to 71,000, an increase of 24.5%, while comparable occupations in electronic shopping enterprises more than doubled from 17,000 persons to 37,000.²

Approach

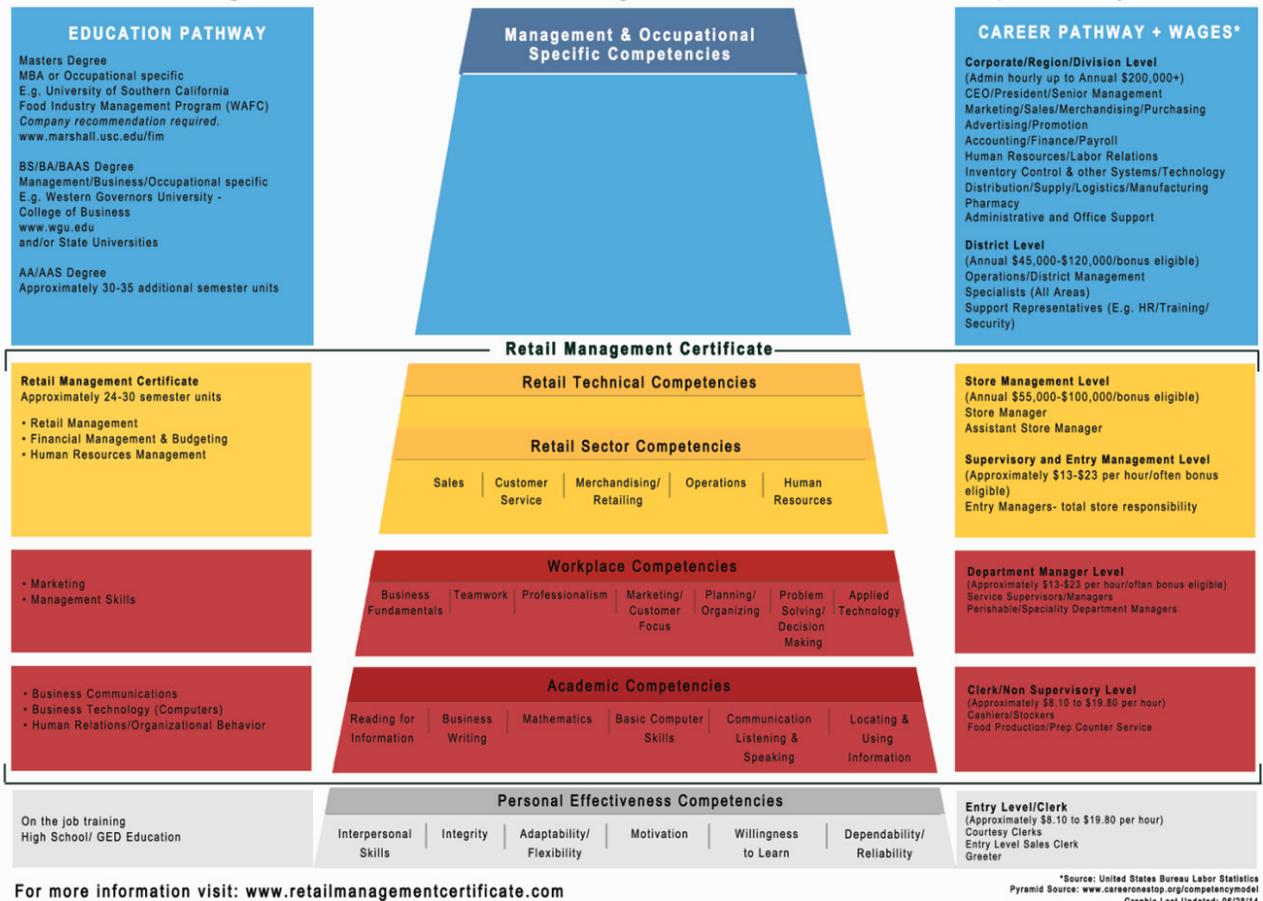
“We’ve done work around competencies since the late 1990’s,” says Cherie Phipps, Director, RMC. “The initiative was launched in 2000 after several years of collaboration with community

¹ The Shelby Report, Kristen Cloud, <http://www.theshelbyreport.com/2015/04/28/wafcs-retail-management-certificate-lauded-by-white-house/>

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unpublished Tabulations from the Current Population Survey

college and industry leaders. When the Retail Competency Model came along in 2007, it allowed us to visualize our competencies. This has made a huge difference for us. The RMC correlates core competencies for supervisory and management positions within the retail sector with corresponding education and career pathways. We now have an independent body of work from the U.S. Department of Labor to validate and provide credibility to our work. We use the RMC visual depiction as the centerpiece of our presentations to industry partners.”

Retail Management Certificate Aligned with Retail Competency Model



In 2013, WAFIC met with a panel of industry experts to reassess and revalidate the core competencies identified in 1997 as linked to success at the store manager level in the retail grocery industry sector. The objective was to utilize industry experts and college professors who teach the courses to ensure that RMC graduates were equipped with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for managerial success in the 21st century grocery industry. The original list of core competencies was analyzed item-by-item to determine contemporary relevance in the retail industry. The panel also worked with faculty from several community college partners to link the revised 2013 competencies to RMC student learning outcomes. Ultimately, the group recommended that the courses remain intact with a few enhancements to accelerate students’ learning and increase certificate completion rates. Since 2013, the recommend changes

have been reviewed at bi-annual statewide advisory meetings. In each of the 14 WAFC-member states, the industry and college representatives have agreed with these recommendations.³

“After these deliberations, we re-evaluated the curriculum and consolidated the coursework necessary to complete the certificate,” says Ms. Phipps. “It is possible for students to complete the program of study in as few as eight courses, providing that member colleges can demonstrate that the identified competencies are met. As a result of these changes, we’ve doubled the annual number of program graduates.”

Next Steps

“The RMC is the ticket to the front of the line for hiring and promotion,” says Ms. Phipps. “Our objective is to help people accelerate their education that leads to a viable career path. The plan is to scale the RMC across the nation to the entire retail industry sector. It’s a win-win proposition. Students can earn college credit and embark on a career pathway to a fulfilling career in the retail sector. Employers can benefit by finding qualified employees trained in the competencies that they have identified.”

Related Links

Retail Management Certificate
www.RetailManagementCertificate.com

Western Association of Food Chains
<http://www.wafc.com>

³ Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC), Core Competencies - Revalidation Event, February 2013, http://retailmanagementcertificate.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/WAFC-Competency-Revalidation-Summary_FINAL-VERSION.pdf