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Chinburg Properties partners with Great Bay Community College for training programs

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Portsmouth, NH Rapid growth often requires employees to quickly adapt, take on new responsibilities and advance into leadership roles. It can also change a company's identity. Chinburg Properties, which has grown from a small family business to one of the largest builders and developers of homes and housing units in the Seacoast region, recognized the challenges associated with this level of growth and sought out a partner to help them through it. Great Bay Community College (GBCC) teamed up with Chinburg employees and leaders and completed customized training programs that have helped them learn and grow, while embracing the company's core identity.

Chinburg leaders approached GBCC in November 2017 about creating Chinburg University because they wanted to invest in their growing team. The company had tripled the number of employees over the past five years and was concerned about the impact such growth would have on preserving its unique culture.

Chinburg is a construction and property management company in the Seacoast region. One of their specialties is turning old mills such as Newmarket Mill in Newmarket and the Cocheco and Washington Street Mills in Dover into residential and office properties, while preserving their history.

They recently redeveloped the Frank Jones Brew Yard into the Brew House and the 1884 House, located on Brewery Lane in the west end of Portsmouth.

"Our senior leadership team decided that we wanted to offer more opportunities for training and professional development to the Chinburg employees. We saw many benefits, including an increase and broadening of skills, job satisfaction, employee retention, increased knowledge, common language and understanding of concepts, stronger relationships within the company and a better understanding of our company philosophy and core values. I reached out to Great Bay to see if they could accommodate and work with us to create a program that would be customized for our needs. When we met it became clear that the enthusiasm, the experience and the flexibility that Great Bay demonstrated, would make working with their team a great fit as we created this program that we now call Chinburg University," said Jennifer Chinburg, the company's vice president of corporate development and marketing.

The GBCC team worked closely with Chinburg to help them envision what Chinburg University would want to ultimately accomplish, and developed a plan to address their professional

development goals. It began with a kick-off meeting that all Chinburg employees were invited to attend to learn about the effort and provide input and learn about the core value of customer service. This led to some initial training programs geared towards improving core skills in such programs as Microsoft Excel. Most recently, it included seven leadership sessions for 21 employees, each of which focused on leadership topic and keys to success. Those topics included communication and building relationships, coaching as a management tool, decision making, problem solving, negotiation and conflict resolution.

Chinburg recognized that their senior leaders who grew up in the company didn't have shared formal leadership training, while their growing team would also benefit from this type of training. As a result of the program, completed in July, Chinburg now has a core group of employees with common leadership language and learning experience. This pilot program will continue to be rolled out to employees across the company.

"At GBCC, we thrive on working with companies like Chinburg that are committed to their employees and recognize that they need to invest in themselves proactively. The program we built included core leadership training, but also focused on affirming how important their culture and values are to their young leaders and to their whole organization," said Sean Clancy, associate vice president of marketing and community engagement at GBCC.

An additional benefit was that GBCC helped with Chinburg Properties successful grant application to the N.H. Job Training Fund, which exists to promote and support this type of workforce development in N.H.

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