

GCC zeroing in on career prep

By CHRIS SHORES
Recorder Staff

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Archive Article

GREENFIELD — Greenfield Community College is using a federal grant to help students secure internships and prepare for jobs, an effort that will soon include the launch of a new career services website.

There's been a gap in these services ever since the college was forced to close its career center five years ago, said Andrew Baker, who directs the school's Workforce Development Transformation program.

But since October 2011, the college has been using a three-year \$785,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to try to fill that gap — through resume workshops, career fairs, advising hours, internships and new career courses that will become a part of academic programs in the fall.

"Even for students who are aiming to transfer to UMass or to other four-year schools, having some hands-on experience and getting some early workplace experience ... (is) an important piece of that whole development process," said Baker.

Internship coordinator Christine Copeland, a grant-funded employee, helped build an internship website that launched last fall. The website, www.gcc.mass.edu/internships, can be used by both students and local companies — part of GCC's goal to establish stronger relationships with area employers.

Students also can set up appointments with Career Development Counselor Janine Desgres, who provides career coaching and guidance. The college also plans to purchase 10 computers for GCC's advising center that will be used for workshops in online career development, resume building and job searches.

There will be about a half dozen workshops throughout the semester that will help students on tasks like writing resumes and cover letters. But the real impact will be seen this fall, said Baker, when academic programs begin including a one-credit careers course that the GCC staff have been developing.

Baker has been working to create a calendar for students that merges GCC events with ones at the Franklin Hampshire Career Center. Students can access it digitally and in paper form in the college's office of student and academic affairs.

The three-year grant is scheduled to run out at the end of September, although Baker said there's a chance it could be renewed for an additional six months to one year.

Still, Baker feels that the work his staff has done will carry beyond the life of the grant, whenever it ends. And because of a grant requirement, everything that's been developed for this program will be preserved in an online public database — so that other colleges and universities will be able to create similar programs.

The grant has helped the college develop work training programs in fields like renewable energy and medical assisting. It's also helped support the local advanced manufacturing program that is training unemployed or under-employed workers during evenings at Franklin County Technical School.

You can reach Chris Shores at: cshores@recorder.com or 413-772-0261, ext. 264