



Press Release

April 24, 2009

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Anoka Technical College provides college courses and hope to dislocated workers

Anoka, MN - During a time when people have had a torrent of bad news and they are reeling from never-ending reports of financial and economic disasters, Anoka Technical College announces an innovative program that gives dislocated workers new skills and education and provides a sense of hope. The technical college, just 30 miles north of the Twin Cities, recently created Next STEP, a fast, flexible and focused pathway program for people who suddenly find themselves in dislocated worker programs.

The purpose of Next STEP, which is an acronym for Successful Transitions for Experienced Populations, is trouble free, said Anne Weyandt, president of Anoka Technical College. "Next STEP aligns our college programs and services with the Anoka County Workforce Center outreach efforts to create a seamless set of educational opportunities for dislocated workers and other adults seeking career and retraining options."

A unique concept of Next STEP is that it gives people an opportunity to start taking technical college classes at various times of the semester. The principle veers from the tradition of starting college classes at the beginning of the semester. "Instead of turning dislocated workers away and telling them they have to wait until summer or fall to start school," said Weyandt, "we are telling them they can start working on their diploma, degree or certificate today."

The academic programs with alternative start times include the Medical Assistant, Information Technology, Electronic Engineering Technology and Construction Electrician programs; the Manufacturing and Automotive programs will have summer start dates.

Not all of the programs at the college are offering alternative start days. The college leadership collaborated with the Anoka County Workforce Center to identify the academic programs that would give dislocated workers the real-life skills and

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competencies that would prepare them for the workforce when the economy turns around. “There are hundreds of people being eliminated from positions they have held for 25 to 30 years; those positions are not likely to come back,” said Jerry Vitzthum, director of Anoka County Job Training Center. “The two-year programs at Anoka Tech give people a superior education and the new skills and training they need for the future.”

Next Step is more than scheduling varied program start times; it is an entire package centered on the premise of providing dislocated workers educational opportunities. “We want to make it as easy and painless as possible for people who are suffering in this time of economic distress to access and secure the education and training they need without having to navigate typical governmental and educational bureaucracies,” said Weyandt.

One of the obstacles the technical college faces is getting dislocated workers over the fear of taking the ACCUPLACER test - a math, English and reading assessment test that determines course selection - and of going back to school. In an effort to ease the transition, the college is hosting college information sessions - Tech Talks – every Tuesday. Coordinated by the admissions, financial aid and the student support services departments, Tech Talks are meticulously designed to provide participants with information on everything from preparing for the ACCUPLACER test, to buying books to graduation requirements.

For the dislocated workers who need to take Adult Basic Education courses, the college is offering Adult Tech Expect. Adult Tech Expect allows dislocated workers to sample some technical classes in programs such as welding, information technology or legal administration while they are taking their Adult Basic Education classes in math, reading and writing.

“Anoka Tech has worked closely with the workforce center to provide educational relief to dislocated workers,” said Vitzthum. “They will be instrumental in getting people back into the workforce.”

For more information about Anoka Technical College visit anokatech.edu or call (763) 576-4700.