ELEVEN COMMUNITY COLLEGES JOIN PROGRAM TO TRAIN 10,000 OLDER WORKERS FOR NEW JOBS

Students to earn certificates or degrees in healthcare, education or social service occupations

WASHINGTON – Eleven colleges have been chosen to join a national program designed to train 10,000 baby boomers over the next three years for new jobs in healthcare, education and social service.

The program is offered by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in cooperation with its member colleges and will ultimately comprise 100 colleges with special training programs for 50+ students. The Plus 50 Encore Completion Program is funded with a $3.2 million grant to AACC provided by Deerbrook Charitable Trust.

The selected colleges are: Arapahoe Community College (Littleton, Colo.), Black River Technical College (Pocahontas, Ark.), Broome Community College (Binghamton, N.Y.), John Wood Community College (Quincy, Ill.), Lansing Community College (Lansing, Mich.), Owens State Community College (Perrysburg, Ohio), Pitt Community College (Winterville, N.C.), San Jacinto Community College District (Pasadena, Texas), Southside Virginia Community College (Alberta, Va.), Waubonsee Community College (Aurora, Ill.), West Virginia University at Parkersburg (W.Va.).

In addition to grant funds to augment training programs, the participating colleges gain access to toolkits and extensive marketing resources that will make the work of reaching out to students age 50 and over effective and targeted. They’ll also benefit from the advice and support of college staff at other community colleges that have successfully implemented programs for older learners and understand the unique needs of this population.

“Baby boomers are not like traditional college students. We find that colleges need to adapt how they operate to support their job training needs and educational success,” said Mary Sue Vickers, director for the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC.

Those adaptations might include adjusting registration systems to accommodate students who don’t have electronic transcripts, tailoring career counseling to the needs of older adults who need to re-train quickly and get back in the job market, forging partnerships with employers and community organizations and educating faculty about baby boomer learning styles. As part of its work, AACC will develop an implementation manual with guidelines and promising practices for serving the plus 50 population.

Baby boomers have increasingly turned to community colleges for help training for new careers. Since 2007, adults age 50 and over have struggled in a job market plagued by record unemployment. Many find they must re-invent their careers and update their skills if they are going to get hired. Careers in health care, education and social services also appeal to baby boomers, who often have an interest in civic engagement.
Vickers says the program expects to add an additional 89 colleges in 2012 and early 2013 that will help it reach 10,000 baby boomer students by 2015. Grant funding applications for AACC member colleges are available now at [www.aacc.nche.edu/plus50rfp](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/plus50rfp).

The 100 colleges involved with the Plus 50 Encore Completion Program will build on the success of AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative. Since 2008, the initiative has focused its efforts on training programs to get unemployed older adults back on the job.

An independent evaluation of AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative found that 89 percent of students agreed that college work force training helped them acquire new job skills, and 72 percent attributed landing a job to such training.

The Plus 50 Encore Completion program supports AACC’s work to increase the number of students who finish degrees, certificates, and other credentials. In April 2010, AACC committed alongside other higher education organizations, to promote the development and implementation of policies, practices and institutional cultures that will produce 50 percent more students with high quality degrees and certificates by 2020.

Lumina Foundation currently funds the participation of 18 community colleges in the Plus 50 Completion Strategy, which is helping baby boomers complete degrees or credentials. AACC’s Plus 50 Initiative began with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies and originally involved 15 colleges, and then expanded to 32 more colleges.

For more information about the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC, see [http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu](http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu)

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*The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is a national organization representing close to 1,200 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest and fastest growing sector of higher education, enrolling more than 13 million credit and non-credit students annually. More information is available at [http://aacc.nche.edu](http://aacc.nche.edu)*