

By Emily Ford

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KANNAPOLIS — Rowan-Cabarrus Community College will launch a fast-track job training program this fall using federal stimulus money.

The program will help unemployed and under-employed people complete job training as quickly as possible, probably within six months.

"This is an area we're very good at," said Jeanie Moore, vice president of continuing education programs, at the RCCC board of trustees meeting Tuesday.

To design the program, the college needs input from local businesses about what kind of training to provide.

RCCC invites any Rowan or Cabarrus county business to attend an employer forum from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday in the David H. Murdock Core Laboratory Building at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis.

Any employer who would like to participate should contact Carolyn Helms at 704-216-3505 or helmsc@rowancabarrus.edu.

College officials want to learn about future workforce needs as they develop "JobsNOW 12-in-6," a program initiated two weeks ago across the state by N.C. Gov. Beverly Perdue.

JobsNOW targets 12 occupational areas that can train workers in six months or less.

"It means career pathways and marketable skill sets that can be developed in six months," Moore said.

Due in part to the area's high unemployment rate, RCCC is one of four community colleges in the state eligible for the highest amount of stimulus money available, \$350,000. The funding will pay to develop the 12-in-6 program and hire instructors to teach the classes.

The college must submit a plan to the state in June and should receive funding in July. Classes could start as early as August.

Officials anticipate high demand.

"We will have full facilities," Moore said.

The college will use its own classrooms, including on nights and weekends, as well as public schools.

Unemployed and under-employed people are eligible to apply for the JobsNOW program through local JobLink Career Centers. Applications will be available in July.

Normal N.C. community college tuition rates will apply. However, some education and training funds are available through the local Centralina Workforce Development Board.

RCCC already has chosen six JobsNOW training areas, with the possibility of adding at least three more based on feedback from area employers.

The planned programs include:

- air conditioning, heating and refrigeration
- automotive systems technology
- electrical/electronics technology
- nurse assistant
- office systems technology, with a medical terminology focus
- welding technology

College officials are considering adding construction and masonry, machining technology and energy and green technologies.

People who complete the fast-track training will leave with job skills and a Career Readiness Certification. This certification is a national program that helps job applicants show proof of their basic skills to employers.

The certificate is a portable credential, allowing job searchers to use it anywhere in the United States to demonstrate their competence in key foundational skills.

To start the certification process, people first must complete a two-hour career advisement lab.

RCCC offers lab sessions at the college's Cloverleaf Extension Center at 942 Cloverleaf Plaza in Kannapolis, as well as at Career Connections at 1923 S. Main St. in Salisbury. Day, evening and some Saturday sessions are available.

Career advisement labs are free to everyone, and some people will qualify to complete the entire certification program free of charge, based on employment status and income.

To learn more about JobsNow, certification or labs, call RCCC at 704-216-3545 or 704-216-3709.