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Economic recovery linked to jobs requiring technical training

For the Herald Times Reporter

More than 426,000 "middle-skill" job openings — those that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree — are projected for the state of Wisconsin by 2016, according to a study released recently by The Workforce Alliance and the Skills2Compete-Wisconsin campaign.

To unleash the economic benefits of these openings, the report says Wisconsin needs to continue to invest in proper training and education.

The campaign is calling on state leaders to embrace the vision that every Wisconsinite should have access to education or training past high school leading to a technical degree or diploma, occupational credential, industry certification, or first two years of college.

About 54 percent of all jobs are classified as middle-skill, but only 46 percent of Wisconsin workers likely have the credentials to fill them, according to the report.

Middle-skill jobs expected to grow by 2016 in Wisconsin include police and sheriff's patrol officers with average annual earnings of \$45,269, carpenters with average annual earnings of \$38,760 and registered nurses with average annual earnings of \$57,376.

Based on demographic trends — including baby-boomer retirements — demand for highly skilled workers and programs to train incumbent and dislocated workers in Wisconsin will remain strong through at least 2016, the report stated.

"Our 16 technical colleges are uniquely positioned to provide postsecondary career and technical education and respond to the training needs of business across the state," said Wisconsin Technical College System President Dan Clancy.

Transition back to classroom

Lakeshore Technical College President Michael Lanser said, "At the local level, Lakeshore Technical College is finding innovative ways to deliver education and training to working adults and dislocated workers, particularly for those students who are not college ready. Anyone can pursue instruction here at whatever point and pace makes sense for their lifestyle or individual needs."

LTC offers pre-trades math and reading courses to students pursuing careers in welding, industrial maintenance and machine tool, helping them transition back into the classroom.

LTC also offers customer service courses aimed at creating career pathways for English Language Learners and Adult Basic Education students.

Customer Service Techniques is taught under the I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education Skills Training) teaching model, which integrates college credit courses with English language and adult basic skills. The course is team taught by an adult basic education instructor and a subject-matter expert faculty-member.

Currently 15 students are enrolled in the first course that will help to qualify students for Hotel & Hospitality Management Certificate I, upon their successful completion of two courses.

Members of the Skills2 Compete-Wisconsin campaign will meet in Washington, D.C., this month with congressional leaders to review the study's findings and encourage further federal efforts to ensure all

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