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What Do Employers Need?

Meridian, Miss.

A new study shows that, in the southern U.S., certain jobs are available, but there's a shortage of qualified workers.


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In today's economic atmosphere, finding a job is a big concern. A new study shows that, in the south, certain jobs are available, but there's a shortage of qualified workers.

The study was conducted by the National Skills Coalition. It discovered that more than 50% of the current jobs available in the south are classified as 'middle skilled' jobs, which require a two year associate degree.

However, only 43% of workers within the region are properly trained to get them.

Trailing only the health care industry, manufacturing provides the second highest number of jobs in Meridian.

In coming years, that number is only expected to grow.

"In the 1950s, we needed basically 60% unskilled workers and 20% skilled workers," said Janet Heggie, MCC's dean of community and business development. "That has flipped now, and so, it's the reverse."

That's why Heggie says so many people are clamoring to get into community colleges.

She said approximately 13,000 community college students already have a 4-year degree.

"But they're coming back to community colleges so they can get a skill, because that's what we need at this present time," Heggie said.

"Employers today need people who know more than just right out of high school. They have to do things on the floor that use to be an engineer's job," said Stanley Bishop, MCC's Workforce Center instructor.

For more than thirty years, Bishop has worked within the manufacturing industry in some capacity.

"Even in construction, the tools that they use now are not just the old hammer and nails," said Bishop.

"It's things that require some skills to use."

Within the last year, 9,000 people have been trained at MCC Workforce Training Center. With a waiting list, that number just continues to grow. To address this issue the college is now even offering a free course where participants can receive a credential that will increase their prospects of landing a job.

"The company building the lignite plant in Kemper County has skilled jobs to be had there. They have that plant. They have an operation going on in Pascagoula," said Bishop. "They'll be doing some work in Newton and another plant in north Mississippi. So, you might have to travel a little bit, but there are opportunities to find skilled jobs, which are the best paying jobs."

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