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Most Wisconsin jobs require more than a high school diploma

By: Patty Murray, Wisconsin Public Radio, Superior Telegram

A new report shows most jobs in Wisconsin require more than a high school diploma, but not necessarily a four-year college degree. Authors suggest the state needs to pay more attention to training adult workers for what they call "Mid-Skill" work.

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"Mid-Skill" jobs pay well but do require post-secondary training. Some companies find it hard to fill available positions, even in a recession.

Tim Sullivan is CEO of Bucyrus International. The company makes mining machinery. During a recent expansion, Sullivan says Bucyrus teamed up with the Milwaukee Area Technical College to offer a program for welders. One thousand three hundred people applied for it. Sullivan says no one had any skills in welding and the vast majority did not have a high school education. Sullivan says Bucyrus would like to expand further but the dearth of trained welders is a big question mark.

Many laid off workers are going to the state's technical colleges to retrain themselves. Dan Clancy is the Wisconsin Technical College System President. He says demographics show the potential for a shortage of mid-skill workers when the economy recovers and more baby-boomers retire. Clancy says there's also a decline expected in Wisconsin high school graduates, so there must be an emphasis on education that will help working adults.

Enrollment in technical colleges is up 15 percent this year. But despite the need for worker training, programs are feeling the strain. Federal money is running out, forcing some Workforce Development Boards to put people on waiting lists, or deny new applicants.

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