

## BUSINESS VIEW

# Schooling key to recovery

Once the Massachusetts economy recovers enough to start adding jobs at a robust rate, it will be good news. But it will only be good news for those who know where the jobs are and are qualified to fill them.

Last month **Crittenton Women's Union** released "Hot Jobs 2010," which identifies 11 "Hot Jobs," jobs with high vacancy rates that require two years or less of education or training after high school and pay enough to support a family.

Only two of the Hot Jobs require just a high school diploma: correctional officers and supervisors of administrative support workers. For the rest — in the computer, health care and sales fields — a job-seeker needs at least an associate degree.

That's a problem when nearly half of the state's 3.2 million workers do not have an associate degree or advanced training, according to a 2008 CWU study. This deficit becomes even more problematic as Massachusetts becomes a more knowledge-based economy. Between 2006 and 2016, it is projected that the number of jobs requiring an associate's degree or advanced training certificate will increase by 15 percent, while those requiring only a high school diploma will increase by 1 percent to 3 percent.

Thirty years ago, manufacturing jobs in Massachusetts offered low-skilled workers a path to earning middle-class wages. Not so today. With manufacturing losing jobs faster than any other employment sector, low-skilled workers are confined to low-wage jobs.

And low-skilled, low-income workers can't survive in

Massachusetts. According to the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index, a single parent with two children needs an annual income of \$61,618 to meet basic expenses without public assistance, and a two-earner household with two children needs \$68,751 a year.

We must create more and better ways for low-income working adults to get the education and training they need to obtain good-paying jobs. Massachusetts spends \$206 per capita on public higher education, compared with the national average of \$294.

Only five states spend less than Massachusetts does. Our

community colleges are among the most costly in the nation. Workers in the bottom 20 percent of the economic ladder here must spend two-thirds of their salaries to earn a community college education.

President Obama just signed a historic piece of legislation to help more Americans obtain a college degree or career training certificate.

The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act invests more than \$40 billion in Pell Grants and includes \$2 billion for community colleges to provide education and career training programs.

Massachusetts can multiply many times over the beneficial effects of these federal initiatives by lowering the costs of our community colleges and by increasing support for career and academic counseling programs. We must ensure that workers can get the tools they need to feed their families and fuel the Massachusetts economy.

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