



NEWS

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El Camino College Business Training Center Ranked Highest in Grant Award

The El Camino College Business Training Center received the highest ranking out of 11 community colleges that applied for a two-year grant recently awarded by the California Community College Chancellor's Office.

The \$450,000 grant will be used to support the "Plugging into Competitiveness Program" developed by the El Camino College Business Training Center to educate and motivate middle school- and high school-age students to explore careers in the manufacturing field.

"Three or four years ago, we put together a strategic plan in order to respond to the needs of businesses in the South Bay," said John Means, dean of the El Camino College Business Training Center. "Since manufacturing and aerospace are the primary employers in this area, we created a program to assist with workforce and economic development for these industries. The 'Plugging into Competitiveness Program' was developed as part of our strategic plan.

"Our short-term goal is to provide training to employers so they can be more competitive. Our long-term goal is to attract middle and high school age students to pursue careers in the manufacturing trades such as technologists, manufacturing technicians, and engineers while strengthening core math, communications, problem solving and computer/technology skills that will be critical for their success."

The first-place ranking was awarded because the El Camino College Business Training Center, in conjunction with the El Camino College Industry and Technology program, already has the "Plugging into Competitiveness" program in place. The program allows easy implementation of the Career and Technical Education curricula at seven additional high schools and a regional occupation center.

"Despite a long trend of significant job loss in manufacturing, we see a dramatic shift and an increased need in the manufacturing sector for competent, skilled, and adaptable employees who are technologically savvy," said Ron Way, dean of Industry and Technology at El Camino College.

Based on "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," a report developed under the guidance of the National Academies Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy,

manufacturers say they are on the verge of an acute skilled labor shortage. The most critical shortages of employees identified were in production and direct support of production including engineering and skilled crafts. Manufacturers also cited shortages in technical skills, inadequate basic employability skills, and inadequate reading and writing skills among both job applicants and incumbent workers.

This acute skilled labor shortage is a result of the past decade's dramatic employment loss in manufacturing, not only lowering the number of workers, but also forcing eligible workers into early retirement on top of losses due to the mass retirement of baby boomer workers.

California's policy makers, business leaders and educators have recognized this crucial labor shortage and have started to develop coalitions to address and develop an increased pool of candidates by reaching out to middle and high school student populations to introduce technical skills in mathematics, engineering and technology skills.

The Governor's 2005-06 budget called for expanded vocational and career technical educational opportunities for middle school and high school students, and improved coordination between career and technical curricula of the public schools and community colleges. Senate Bill 70 titled the "Economic Development and Career Technical Education Reform Initiative" provides \$20 million to California community colleges for use in projects related to this issue. The "Plugging into Competitiveness" program is supported under the "Quick Start" Partnership grant administered by the California Community College Chancellor's Office.

"We are proud that El Camino College had the foresight to have a program in place to serve the needs of the manufacturing and aerospace businesses in the South Bay. This grant will help provide a prepared workforce and well-paying jobs," said Means.

The El Camino College Business Training Center provides businesses assistance with manufacturing technology, business development, international trade and workforce training. For more information, visit www.businessassist.org or call 310-973-3178.

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