

## Partnering to Help Dislocated Workers

After a three-minute news spot on the local Spanish language television channel, 250 dislocated workers called **Cerritos Community College** for information on their CNC Machining program. This program is tailor made for Hispanic immigrant workers, who make up a large percentage of the manufacturing workforce in the region. These workers are most at-risk in these times of economic shift, because although they have good employability skills and some technical skills, they lack the English proficiency and formal training that they need to compete for the new higher-skill jobs that are in-demand in the region. The program aims to fill that gap through directly addressing employer skill demands and providing integrated Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) instruction.

While this television spot was an unexpected source of recruitment, the program is designed around a growing relationship with the local One-Stop Workforce Center, SASSFA (Southeast Area Social Services Funding Authority). Dislocated workers receiving unemployment benefits and looking to receive training are referred to the program, where they received 200 hours of technical training and 40 hours of VESL instruction over the course of 12 weeks. Those who enroll qualify for extended UI benefits, and following recruitment, SASSFA provides case management and support services such as transportation and childcare assistance. By focusing on the needs of the students, SASSFA allows Cerritos Community College to focus on the technical instruction.

This is a focus area that Cerritos knows well. The college has devoted a great deal of time and attention to creating an effective economic development division. Jose Anaya, the director of the division, comes from a manufacturing background himself, and is passionate about meeting the needs of employers. To accomplish this, the division works closely with its network of employer advisors to develop curriculum that is responsive to the entry level requirements of these employers, allowing the employers to quickly fill job openings, and for dislocated workers to quickly get another job.

When you have companies coming to you every week looking for people and you can't provide them, you're not doing your job. We're bending over backwards trying to help manufacturers. Employers are desperate for people – they just want to get them in the door at the entry level with the right skill set so that they can groom

them and move them up. —Jose Anaya,  
Director of Economic Development

The leadership at Cerritos believes strongly in the importance of credentials and providing career pathways, so it ensures that students in as many programs as possible receive college credit for their efforts. In this case, even though the program is being operated by the contract training arm of the college and no contact-hour reimbursement is being received from the state, students finish the program with six credits towards the 24 they would need to get a certificate in machining, or to apply toward an associate degree. Student orientation to the program includes an explanation of the certificate program and associate degree opportunities, and instructors emphasize these as students move through the curriculum. While most workers are just looking for a quick fix – 12 weeks and they'll be working again – three of the first cohort of 23 students have enrolled in the college.

**To pay for this program**, SSASFA and Cerritos are helping employers take advantage of a funding source that they already pay into, but that is difficult for them to access. The Employment Training Panel Fund is funded by tax money paid by employers who have competition outside of the state of California. Many employers use money from this pool to train their incumbent workforce, but few take advantage of the new hire program component, which is cumbersome and perceived as risky (payment of training costs is contingent on placement within 30 days of completing training). By acting as the fiscal agent, SASSFA takes on the administrative burdens of tracking and reporting activity and shoulders some of the risk that has traditionally made it difficult for small companies to access these funds. ETP funds pay for all the student costs, materials, space at the college and administrative time for the college and SASSFA. Support services such as transportation and childcare are funded through WIA dollars.

Near the end of the 10-week program, Cerritos begins recruiting local employers for a job fair. The first job fair was attended by 11 employers. The intimate nature of the job fair, with less than a two-to-one ratio of employers to students, meant that employers were able to devote quite a bit of time to each candidate, conducting mini-interviews during the job fair. Employer response has been very positive:

We were given the opportunity to meet with several of the graduating students in a Job Fair environment prior to their final commencement. I have to be very truthful and tell you that the industry is suffering due to lack of machinists in the

Aerospace Industry. My visit afforded me the opportunity to meet with many applicants, and their willingness to study a new trade as well as their dedication convinced me that to employ two of your students was well worth the risk. They have been employed more than two months at \$12 .50 per hour and are now in various circumstances accomplishing their own set-ups and measuring dimensions. Their attendance is exemplary and as an individual who has been in this industry for 28 years, I am proud that

there are institutions like yours helping our industry. —William E. Burgen, General Manager, Merco Manufacturing (in a letter to the college)

Some students received job offers before leaving the job fair, and 17 of the 23 students have since found employment in the field. While in some cases their pay is lower than it was at the jobs they left due to losing seniority, they know they have the skills they will need to advance and thrive in the new world of advanced manufacturing.

## Program CNC Training for Dislocated Workers

**Key Partners** Cerritos Community College, One-Stop Career Center, local employers

**Industry Sector** CNC machining for a variety of manufacturing sectors

**Problem Statement** The manufacturing industry in the region is in flux right now. Companies that rely on low-skill jobs are relocating or out-sourcing, while at the same time there is a very high demand for higher-skilled manufacturing workers. Employees who become dislocated need skills upgrading and improved English proficiency in order to qualify for the jobs that are in demand.

**Description of Program** The program is targeted at dislocated workers referred by the local One-Stop Center's Rapid Response Unit. Participants receive 200 hours of training, which includes 40 hours of VESL. Curriculum was adapted from a similar program targeting at-risk youth, which was developed with the assistance of a group of six key manufacturing employers. Have an existing pool of manufacturers who are eager to higher graduates from the program. A job fair is held on completion; small number of students per cohort means that employers can do interviews on the spot.

**Funding** Tuition is paid through WIA training funds for dislocated workers.

**Enrollment/Outcomes** 23 students in first cohort (summer 2007). 17 students were placed in jobs upon completion. 3 students enrolled in college following program.

**Hispanic Immigrant Participation** 18 of 23 students are Hispanic immigrants (79%).

**Employer Involvement** Employers were involved in the original curriculum design. Employer provides feedback about workers they have hired regarding missing or inadequate skills is used to modify the program. College has strong employer advisory group and received extensive donations of equipment and materials for use in manufacturing labs.

**Nature of Academic Pathway** Course provides 5 units of college credit. College policy is to provide credit wherever possible in order to help individuals build career pathways and have a portable credential.