Career Days successful at WITC

Throughout the past several months, WITC has hosted numerous Career Days at its Ashland, New Richmond, Rice Lake and Superior campuses.

The goal of these events is to provide high school students an opportunity to learn about potential careers and discover the many opportunities available at WITC. Career Day also exposes many students to college instructors and environment.

For more information about Career Days held during the 2008-09 school year or to find out how to get your students involved, please contact a WITC Career Specialist.

Students observe a demonstration for the Automotive Maintenance Technician program.

Students take part in demonstrations in the Barber/Cosmetologist program during Career Day.
Dr. Robert M. Meyer named new president

The Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Board of Trustees has selected Dr. Robert M. Meyer, special assistant to the chancellor for state and federal relations; director, UW-Stout Technology Transfer Institute to become the next president of WITC. Meyer was named to a two-year term and is expected to begin his duties at WITC July 1.

“I am extremely pleased and honored to have the opportunity to serve as Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College’s next president,” Meyer says. “After serving UW-Stout for more than two decades, I see this as a natural and comfortable move since UW-Stout and WITC have similar goals in preparing students for careers in professions that are becoming more sophisticated and more technology driven.”

As assistant to the chancellor for state and federal relations, Meyer coordinates the development of UW-Stout’s federal and state funding priorities and advocates for funding initiatives that serve the mission of the university. As director of the Stout Technology Transfer Institute (STTI) and its 13 outreach centers, clients reported impacts resulting from STTI assistance exceeding $90 million and these services also created more than 200 jobs.

WITC Board Chair Hal Helwig described Dr. Meyer as “Bringing the right skills at the right time to our college. He is deeply committed to expanding the college’s dynamic and supportive learning environment. On behalf of the Board, I want to welcome him as the new president of Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.”

Previously, Meyer served as dean of the College of Technology, Engineering, and Management (CTEM). Prior to assuming his role as CTEM dean, Meyer has served UW-Stout as the CTEM associate dean of outreach and as the director of UW-Stout’s manufacturing engineering program. He has also served as the director of the Northwest Manufacturing Outreach Center (NWMOC), and director of UW-Stout’s Advanced Design and Manufacturing Simulation Center (ADMSC).

Meyer has taught a variety of manufacturing-related courses during his 25 years as a professor at UW-Stout, and has provided consulting services to industry relating to strategic planning, lean manufacturing, and quick changeover techniques.

“I like the fact that WITC is very student focused and very close to the employers that hire its graduates,” Meyer says. “During my career, I’ve had the good fortune of working with many of the faculty, staff, and leaders at WITC and regard them to be top shelf. Without a doubt, WITC is well managed, forward looking, and attains a level of excellence. I consider WITC to be the crown jewel of Wisconsin’s Technical College System and I feel very privileged and honored to join WITC’s leadership team.”

In the future, Meyer looks to keep WITC in pace with changing technology.

“With the world changing so rapidly, I also see one of our major challenges as keeping up with change and advances in technology,” he says. “These changes provide extremely exciting opportunities with respect to what students need to learn and how they will learn. Planning is already underway at WITC to adapt to these changes and new technologies and I will do all that I can to encourage development along these lines.”

Away from work, Meyer enjoys spending time in the outdoors with his wife, Debbie, and daughters Erica and Melly.

“We love to hike, fish, and canoe,” he says. “I enjoy hunting when I can find the time to do it. Our family has spent a lot of time in Northwest Wisconsin enjoying the outdoors, whether it is camping in the Chequamegon Forest or canoeing the Brule River. We absolutely love it here and sincerely believe this is the best part of Wisconsin. We also love canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, and spend at least a week in the BWCA every summer.”
Career Clusters help prepare workforce

You will begin to notice WITC information organized by career clusters and pathways. The catalog and cluster brochures will be the first documents to incorporate this format. Using Career Clusters and Pathways creates a similar organizing structure for secondary, postsecondary, state government, and employers to facilitate transition between educational organizations and into employment. The Wisconsin Technical College System has identified a cluster and pathway for each program in the 16 technical colleges.

Career Clusters is a national initiative intended to help organize programs and guidance activities around clusters of similar occupations. The 16-cluster format used by the U.S. Department of Education encompasses more than 970 occupations identified by O*net and the SOC codes. Each cluster is divided into two to seven pathways that further defines career areas. By adopting this cluster philosophy, schools expand their content and offerings to better prepare learners for their futures.

Career Clusters has three major objectives. The first is to increase learner awareness of career options so that they may make better informed decisions. It is also the goal to increase learner understanding of the structure and function of businesses so they can be more productive, value-added employees. The third desire is to increase learner achievement by setting high standards of expectations and by teaching academics in a context that interests the learners. Details, examples, and resources are available on the Web at www.career-clusters.org.

Career Clusters provide for curriculum integration and contextual learning opportunities that reflect the career goals and interests of all learners. This relevancy creates the motivation for many learners to stay in school longer and enroll in more challenging courses. Career Clusters identify the knowledge and skills, both academic and technical, for a broad career cluster that will allow all learners to pursue a wide range of career opportunities from entry level through management and professional levels.

Perkins IV legislation is a motivator for high schools to develop Career Cluster Programs of Study. Programs of Study are tools that help educators and students build the connections from secondary to postsecondary to work. The development includes reviewing potential availability of careers, potential earning power, and the development of a series of courses to acquire various careers. The benefits for students to be able to see how their high school courses connect to a specific career is a valuable tool. Giving students the skills and knowledge to access available resources to alter their plan as their career goals change is even more valuable.

WITC has created Program of Study templates for all associate degree and technical diploma programs to help facilitate the process for high schools. The templates are available at www.witc.edu/counselors/pathways. As articulation agreements are developed with individual high schools, WITC will highlight the courses in the Programs of Study and post them to www.witc.edu/high-school/advanced.htm to be used as a resource.
New course catalog and CD make debut

Students will soon have the option of flipping through the pages of WITC’s new course catalog or spinning a CD to access information about the college’s curriculum.

“This year a catalog committee was formed to review the catalog and determine what needed to be added or what could be deleted,” says Betty Tschernach, curriculum specialist. “The committee had representation from all campuses and [the Administrative Office in] Shell Lake.”

This input led to multiple changes and helped committee members institute changes which improved the overall usability of the catalog.

“The committee looked at the catalog from a student perspective and made several changes to the order of the catalog,” Tschernach says. “One of the most noticeable changes are that the course descriptions are now located on the page adjacent to the program or certificate they are in. Some of the other changes, to mention just a few, are: notations were made on programs that are financial aid eligible, certificate numbers were added to certificate pages, a frequently asked questions page was added regarding certificates, and an overall different look for layout of the catalog and cover has been made for this year.”

It was decided that a CD version would also be useful.

“The idea for the CD came about as an alternative for having so many print catalogs,” Tschernach says. “The CDs are easier to store, carry and more economical to mail.”

More benefits for a CD also appeared.

“The catalog CD provides prospective students with an interactive experience and information not included in the catalog,” says Kathy Maas, director of marketing and recruitment. “They can access program videos, a college video tour, career information and testimonials, in addition to pdf pages of the catalog.”

To request a catalog or CD, call 800.243.9482, Ext. 2217.
Demand high for employees in manufacturing

The hands of machinists, welders and others involved in the manufacturing industry have built America. While there are those that would claim careers in manufacturing are in decline, experts in the field know otherwise and are adamant that high-technology manufacturing is playing an increasingly important role in the future of our country’s economic growth and ability to compete in a global marketplace.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a significant number of manufacturing jobs will become available in the future. Manufacturers will continually be seeking to hire more highly skilled workers, especially those with good basic educational skills who, in turn, generally make good candidates for further training in the desired skills for jobs of twenty-first century manufacturing. Workers with these skills are expected to experience excellent job prospects.

“Recent myths that manufacturing is dying or moving off shore are simply untrue,” says Dr. Bob Meyer, special assistant to the chancellor for state and federal relations; director, Stout Technology Transfer Institute, Wisconsin. “By busting these myths, we hope to attract more people into the wonderful careers that are available in manufacturing. A stable, well-educated workforce is exactly what will help our manufacturers thrive and become more innovative and competitive in the future.”

In fact, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, manufacturing careers average more than $44,000, not including benefits – the highest paying career in the private sector. Manufacturers are responsible for almost two-thirds of all private sector research and development. Every dollar spent in manufacturing goods generates an additional $1.43 of additional economic activity – more than any other economic sector. The number of exported manufactured goods has doubled over the past 10 years to 63 percent. These impressive accomplishments are credit to the hard work of people in the trade.

Manufacturing is an industry full of bright and dynamic individuals who understand and embrace the latest innovations in control systems, micro-machining, computer-aided design and other technologies that push the limits of the manufacturing industry. These workers are creative thinkers with applied/hands-on abilities to solve problems and get things done.

Yet keeping this industry strong is not an easy task. Gold Collar Careers, an organization comprised of business and educational partners, is dedicated to increasing awareness about manufacturing careers within Northwest and Northcentral Wisconsin. In an effort to promote career paths in the manufacturing industry, the group has taken its message to malls, movie theaters and placed articles in local newspaper. Gold Collar Careers also works with middle and high schools sharing information about manufacturing related careers, and providing presentations at other community and professional gatherings.

In recognition of May being Manufacturing Month, WITC-Ashland will host a Machine Tool Operation Open House from 4 to 6 p.m., Thursday, May 1. For more information, see the full announcement on page 8.
MANUFACTURING, from page 4

events. This information promotes an understanding of the impact manufacturing has on Wisconsin.

“Gold Collar Careers is a grass-roots organization with membership from both the manufacturing community and the public sector,” says Meyer. “We are working together to let people know that manufacturing is alive and well in Wisconsin, is growing in sophistication, offers many challenging high technology careers, and is an exciting part of the economy to work in.”

Gold Collar Careers took shape following the Sept. 11 tragedy and the economic downturn that followed. While the manufacturing industry experienced a slowdown, which resulted in the loss of some low skill jobs, dynamic growth in high tech, sophisticated manufacturing jobs was taking place. Unfortunately, the job gains in highly skilled manufacturing was overshadowed by the losses of the low-tech, low-wage manufacturing jobs.

“Contrary to what the general public thought, manufacturing was growing rather than contracting,” Meyer says. “But the incorrect perception that manufacturing was in decline convinced many people to avoid career paths in manufacturing.”

Enrollments in manufacturing related programs at Chipewa Valley Technical College, the University of Wisconsin-Stout and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College suffered as a result. Soon manufacturers had great difficulty finding graduates that possessed the high tech skills they were looking for.

“Gold Collar Careers set its focus on this problem and began touting the strength of the manufacturing sector and the great career paths that are available in manufacturing,” Meyer says. “We are working very hard to change the incorrect perceptions of manufacturing that are out there and have had some great success with these efforts. Many of the manufacturing related educational programs at our technical colleges and universities in the region have rebounded nicely. This rebound will help grow the type of skilled workforce that is so critical to area manufacturers.”

Yet Gold Collar Careers is not the only organization in Wisconsin dedicated to promoting the manufacturing industry. The Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center is a partnership between five technical colleges in Northwest Wisconsin.

“Another outstanding group that I’ve been proud to work with is the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center,” Meyer says. “The NWMOC provides strategic planning, new product development, and Lean Manufacturing services to manufacturers in the region. They also provide training and technical assistance to help our manufacturers implement strategies that allow them to operate more efficiently, grow their bottom line, and compete in the global marketplace.”

The NWMOC has already proved to be a strong asset for manufacturers in Northwest Wisconsin. Last year, NWMOC clients reported impacts exceeding $90 million for the transformational training and implementation services that they received from the center.

In Wisconsin, the manufacturing industry contributes significantly to the state’s financial stability, comprising almost half of Wisconsin’s economy. Nearly 1 in 5 workers in Wisconsin are directly employed in some form of manufacturing.

“The manufacturing industry in Wisconsin is very strong and vibrant,” Meyer says. “By several measures, including number of employees and gross state product, manufacturing accounts for about 25 percent of Wisconsin’s economy and is the source of many of our highest paying jobs in the state. Therefore, it is especially important that we do what we can to maintain its strength.”
WITC’s Bricklaying and Masonry Program sets students on a path to successful careers

From a recipe of raw ingredients comes the material necessary to create countless objects. From constructing walls to building partitions and arches to intricate brick and stonework, WITC’s one-year Bricklaying and Masonry program shows students firsthand the proper building techniques for this ever-growing field.

“I try to expose the learner to as many different aspects of the masonry trade to help them find what areas interest them the most,” says Todd Larson, a mason and masonry instructor for Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College in Rice Lake.

Recently, Larson was named SkillsUSA Wisconsin Advisor of the Year in recognition for his hard work and dedication. His commitment to WITC’s Bricklaying and Masonry program is shown in the variety of skills his students develop.

“The Bricklaying and Masonry program covers many areas of the masonry trade, with the emphasis on brick, block and stonework,” Larson says. “The program is set up to cover building foundations with concrete block, how to build brick corners and walls, how to brick houses, installing patios, and building arches and fireplaces.”

The program stresses quality building techniques. Students also learn how to read prints and estimate supplies and materials to assist in developing a total understanding for this industry. By learning the methods and techniques in a classroom, students gain more experiences than learning on the job.

“The advantage of taking WITC’s Bricklaying and Masonry program versus learning on the job is we can go into much more detail in the classroom,” Larson says. “Typically, on-the-job training does not allow the time necessary to fully explain and demonstrate proper building techniques and procedures. The classroom setting allows the learner to practice and maybe mess up without costing the employer money. The goal of the Bricklaying and Masonry program is to provide the learner with the basic skills and knowledge to know what is going on the first day on the job.”

With additional training and experience, brickmasons, blockmasons, and stonemasons may become supervisors for masonry contractors. Some eventually become owners of businesses employing many workers. Others move into closely related areas such as construction management or building inspection.

Wisconsin’s Worknet places brickmasons on the list of hot jobs in Northwestern Wisconsin with a starting yearly salary of more than $36,000. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, job opportunities are expected to be very good through 2016, since large number of masons are expected to retire over the next decade.

“Despite the news discussing the poor economy right now, there is a demand for young people to enter into the construction trades,” Larson says. “The current workforce is aging and all of the statistics and newsletters I read predict the growth of more than one million new positions in construction. The money is great and the work is exciting and always changing. If you are an individual that enjoys working with your hands, construction is for you.”
Rep. Ron Kind tours WITC-New Richmond

Among the venues on Rep. Ron Kind’s March 28 visit to Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College-New Richmond was a tour of the college’s latest in technology: a live fire burn simulator, a computer-controlled tractor and the power equipment lab.

Kind watched carefully as the smoke gradually filled the burn simulator and flames grew at the opposite end of the trailer then burst across the ceiling. All in the group were safe as the entire demonstration was controlled by Fire Training Coordinator Jack Running and the remote controls.

“We can simulate a variety of fire conditions in this vehicle,” Running says. “Including second-story rescues, flashovers, search and rescue and all with varying degrees of flame and smoke. It’s an excellent training tool that gives firefighters an experience as close to real life as you can get. The instructor can shut everything down in an instant, if necessary.”

In the Agricultural Power and Equipment Technician lab, Kind climbed up into the cab of a monster tractor to view the computer diagnostics a student was using, and he visited WITC’s Motorcycle, Marine and Outdoor Power Products Technician lab and talked with students Jeremy Friel, Forest Lake, Minn., and Mitch Booth, Boyceville.

Kind also met with Student Senate Association representatives and other students in the Learning Resource Center before leaving for his next appointment. Kind fielded questions about college financing and the financial support needed for workers caught in an industry’s downsizing.

Rep. Ron Kind, left, visited with Mitch Booth, center, Boyceville, and Jeremy Friel, Forest Lake, Minn., who are students in the Motorcycle, Marine and Outdoor Power Products Technician program at WITC- New Richmond. In the background is a $21,000 Victory motorcycle donated by Polaris Inc. Students use a special diagnostics computer program similar to what they will use on the job to determine what the instructor has programmed as wrong with the motorcycle.

WITC Fire Training Coordinator Jack Running, left, demonstrates to Rep. Ron Kind the live fire training unit. Using a remote control, Running filled the room with smoke and built a growing fire with flashover. He extinguished the demo with the touch of a button. Instructors can simulate a variety of fire and rescue situations to train firefighters in close to real-life conditions.
Survey shows graduates have numbers in their favor

With a focus on continuous improvement, WITC conducts research studies and implements other strategies to measure our success and effectiveness as an institution of higher learning. Our recent longitudinal (5-year) follow-up survey of 2001-2002 graduates showed some impressive results.

- 97% of 2001-2002 WITC graduates are employed five years after graduation.
- 73% are employed in a career related to their WITC degree.
- 83% feel their WITC training was very important or important in beginning their career and 72% feel that WITC was very important/important in their career advancement.
- 57% of graduates have received at least one job promotion since graduation.
- 75% of graduates are employed in Wisconsin.
- Average yearly salary of 2001-2002 graduates five years later and working in a career related to their WITC training is $38,916.
- Graduate salaries increased 42% in five years. The Consumer Price Index increase for the same time frame was 15%.

For more information about the Executive Summary, visit www.witc.edu/witc/longitudinal/

Joining the YouTube party

WITC’s library of program videos is now available for viewing at YouTube. More than 40 videos ranging in topics from bricklaying and masonry to nursing assistant to marine repair can be found by typing in witcollege4you into the search window. These videos provide a look into a variety of programs and feature testimonials from students.

Videos will continue to be added as they become available. Please check back frequently.

Machine Tool Operation Open House

Prospective machinists are encouraged to attend WITC-Ashland’s Machine Tool Operation Open House from 4 to 6 p.m., Thursday, May 1.

Students can meet with program instructor Paul Kalin. Area employers will also be on hand to inform prospective students of the job opportunities that await upon graduation from the one-year technical diploma.

The Machine Tool Open House will be at the WITC-Ashland Campus, located at 1200 Beaser Avenue in Ashland.

For more information regarding the open house, or to arrange individual tours, call Paul Kalin at 715.682.4591, Ext. 3121 or 800.243.9482, Ext. 3121. He can also be reached via e-mail at paul.kalin@witc.edu.
Program offerings planned for 2008 - 2009

New programs and more programs in more places are just a few of the changes for WITC in academic year 2009.

A Professional Credential for Child Care Administrators course is one of the additions. This course will provide in-depth training for effective leadership in early childhood settings.

Also added to the offerings will be Professional Credential for Preschool Teachers. This course is designed for individuals working with children ages three to five.

Both of these courses will be available at Ashland, New Richmond, Rice Lake and Superior campuses. T.E.A.C.H. scholarships may be available for those currently working in a qualified child care center.

In addition to the previously announced Customer Service, Legal Office, and Cabling Technology certificates, other program additions include offering Marketing and Welding in Ashland. In Superior, the Information Technology - Computer Support Specialist program will be available.

The Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Machining certificate will now be offered in Rice Lake and Superior.

Upcoming Events

April

April 25 ....................... Spring counselor workshop, Hayward
April 25-26 ..................... Assistive technology conference, Superior
April 30 ......................... Bridges to success, Rice Lake
April 30 ......................... Fall term enrollment for continuing program and new core Associate Degree Nursing students, all campuses

May

May 1 .......................... Summer term open enrollment, all campuses
May 1 .......................... Machine tool open house, Ashland
May 1 .......................... Campus exploration day, New Richmond
May 13 .......................... Scholarship reception, Ashland
May 14 .......................... Fall term enrollment for new program students
May 15 ......................... Scholarship reception, Superior
May 16 .......................... Graduation, all campuses