

**MSU-Billings College of Technology  
&  
SD2 Billings Career Center  
Partnerships**

The MSU-Billings College of Technology has entered into its 36<sup>th</sup> year since its creation as the Billings VoTech Education Center which was originally a branch of School District # 2. Since 2000, the MSU-Billings College of Technology has worked to expand its two-year mission to include a wide range of career pathways ranging from health, computer technology, business to industry, transportation, and specialized programs such as process plant technology and fire science. The goal of the COT has been to respond to new challenges that will improve educational services for an expanding and more diverse student approach. Montana State University-Billings and its College of Technology have historically partnered with the SD2 Career Center via the Carl Perkins Tech Prep Program in areas which includes:

- Cisco Computer Networking Program (Articulated with the College of Technology Computer Systems Technology Program)
- Early Childhood (Articulated with the MSU-Billings College of Education Early Childhood Program)
- Annual Summer Health Careers Camp (collaboration with Saint Vincent Healthcare, Career Center and College of Technology)
- Automotive Technology
- Metals Manufacturing

Over the past fifty years the most significant shift in the American workforce was between skilled and unskilled jobs. While jobs requiring four-year degrees and higher remain constant (as a percentage of all jobs), jobs requiring technical training have shifted from 20% of the workforce in 1950 to 65% in today's workforce. In addition, **80.5% of all jobs in Montana** require some level of post-secondary training after high school up to an Associate **two-year degree**.

The recommendations set forth by the Board of Regents and the Board of Public Education Shared Leadership Initiative support the goal of further collaboration between the MSU-Billings College of Technology and the School District # 2 Career Center. This will provide many additional pathways for students to follow between secondary and post-secondary education.

The creation of additional partnerships between the MSU-Billings College of Technology and the Billings Career Center is critical because it will foster new interests and pathways into skilled workforce development programs. Just as Mangum noted in a report on the Virginia Community College System, "two-year colleges and [COTs] provide access, not only to workforce training, but also to a full range of postsecondary education services; they are embedded in their local communities and are closely attuned to the needs of local business and industry; and two-year colleges are the largest provided or educational

services to those most at risk of being left behind as our State economy transitions to a knowledge based economy.” (Mangum, 2003)

The synergy created from new Career Center/College of Technology partnerships also aligned with community advisory boards and professional associations (Montana Contractors Associations, Home Builders Association, Apprenticeship Programs, etc) will result in a direct investment in our regional human capital through workforce training and education. Not only do they become more productive through this effort, they also increase the productivity of the resources around them. Greater productivity translates into increased economic output from the same human resources thus increasing Montana's economic competitiveness.

It is important to note that the Billings Career Center is the first high school program in the state to be accepted in the pre-apprenticeship program thus establishing a relationship between the Career Center and the Montana Department of Labor.

### **Partnerships Scheduled for Fall 2005/Spring 2006**

#### **Carpentry/Construction Trades:**

The COT and Billings Career Center Building Construction Programs will use the NCCER (National Center for Construction Education Research) curriculum as its foundation. The program will evolve based on input from respective Program Advisory Councils. Because NCCER has designed competency-based curricula in a variety of skilled trade's areas, the students will be able to earn NCCER certification in four levels of "carpentry" certification. These certifications (similar in nature to the more familiar Cisco and Microsoft-style certifications) will be transcribed and maintained for the students at the national NCCER offices.

Utilization of both facilities creates a better partnership. For example, the COT would work with the Career Center to offer carpentry workforce development courses in the Billings Career Center Carpentry Lab beginning in Fall 2005, when not in use by the high school students. The COT will be working to develop an Associate of Applied Science degree in Construction and Trades Technology during Fall 2005.

#### **Culinary Arts:**

The Career Center has received approval for a junior/senior level family consumer science class titled, "Café Protégé." This partnership will involve using the COT instructional kitchen/lab area for students of the Café Protégé program. This partnership will be coordinated in conjunction with the University's Sodexo Food Service. The program will begin during Fall 2005 with two 2-hour block sections (morning and afternoon). The College of Technology will be developing short workforce development food service preparation and culinary workshops during the Fall of 2005 with a full post-secondary Associate of Applied Science degree in Culinary Studies under development

during Fall of 2005 with planned implementation for Fall of 2006. In addition, the COT will also be exploring an additional degree possibility in Hotel/Restaurant Management in 2006.

### **Future Areas for Collaboration**

- Metals Manufacturing (collaboration with COT Welding and Metals Fabrication Program)
- Medical Programs (Developing a pathway between Career Center Medical Careers Program and current COT Nursing, Paramedic, Radiologic Technology, Medical Assistant, Surgical Technology, and future programs such as Pharmacy Assistant and Medical Coding and Insurance Billing)
- Computer Graphics and Webpage Design (an additional partnership with COT Computer Systems Technology Department)

Most importantly, the COT and Billings Career Center chief administrators and industry leaders believe that new programs should be developed as a collaborative effort whenever possible. There should also be great opportunities to explore the potential for combined Program Advisory Committees which will link business and industry with both COT and Career Center programs.

