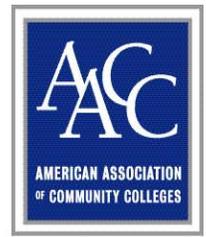


NEWS



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RESPONDING TO ECONOMIC CRISIS, PLUS 50 INITIATIVE EXPANDS TO HELP OLDER WORKERS
Community colleges intensify efforts to help baby boomers train for new jobs, maintain economic stability

WASHINGTON, D.C. – With unemployment figures on the rise and the economic recession wreaking havoc on retirement accounts, the Plus 50 Initiative at the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is spearheading a movement by community colleges to help workers age 50 and over train for new jobs and sharpen their marketable skills.

The Plus 50 Initiative is a three-year program to help community colleges engage 50+ learners in learning, civic engagement, and training and retraining. Reflecting changing economic circumstances for many older workers who thought they were poised for retirement but now must remain on the job, the new expansion focuses specifically on the initiative's training, retraining and career development area. The expansion pairs existing and more experienced Plus 50 colleges with dozens more community colleges that now become "affiliates" of the Plus 50 Initiative.

"The expansion of the Plus 50 Initiative will empower many more community colleges to offer targeted training programs that help baby boomers develop marketable skills and jumpstart stalled careers," said George R. Boggs, AACC President and CEO. "As institutions that respond to public needs, community colleges are on the front line helping communities and workers re-tool in a tumultuous economy."

The help can't arrive soon enough. Baby boomers may face the steepest odds of any unemployed workers in the job market, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 2008, laid-off workers over age 50 were out of work for 22.2 weeks, compared with 16.2 weeks for younger workers. When they land jobs, baby boomers typically experience a more significant drop in earnings than their younger counterparts.

Century College will be a Learning Partner for 9 Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn., community colleges. Century will host a regional meeting for Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Anoka Technical College, Dakota County Technical College, Hennepin Technical College, Inver Hills Community College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Normandale Community College, North Hennepin Community College and Saint Paul College to work on Plus 50 Initiative program implementation in the workforce training and retraining area.

Western Dakota Technical Institute in Rapid City, S.D. will host a conference for community colleges near National Parks to form partnerships and disseminate lessons learned from their innovative pilot program working with the National Park Service to train plus 50 adults to serve as seasonal rangers and interpretive guides.

Three Plus 50 Initiative community colleges in Washington - **Clark College, Clover Park Technical College and Community Colleges of Spokane** - will host a regional conference in Vancouver, Wash., focused on how to start a Plus 50 Initiative program, involving as many as 30 community colleges from Washington and Oregon.

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Plus 50 expansion aids older workers – 2

St. Louis Community College (STLCC) will be a Learning Partner for **Metropolitan Community College- Longview** in Lee's Summit, Mo. STLCC and this Kansas City area community college share regional concerns and have similar economic and educational demographics that make them ideal partners.

Central Florida Community College in Ocala, Fla., will serve as a Learning Partner for **Rose State College** in Midwest City, Okla. Both of these colleges are expanding training and retraining opportunities for plus 50 students seeking to stay in the workforce.

Joliet Junior College in Illinois will serve as a Learning Partner for neighboring **Moraine Valley Community College**, which will expand its efforts to help unemployed plus 50 workers who want to stay on the job. This partnership pairs the nation's first community college with the second largest community college in Illinois.

The Plus 50 Initiative began its efforts to improve course offerings for baby boomers in 2008 with 15 community colleges focused on learning, training and career development, and volunteering. The three-year project is sponsored by the AACC with a \$3.2 million dollar grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

For 89 years, the AACC has been the leading advocate for the nation's community colleges, which currently number more than 1,177 and serve close to 12 million students annually. Its membership comprises 90% of all public two-year colleges – the largest, most accessible, most diverse sector of U.S. higher education. As institutions committed to access, community service and lifelong learning, community colleges have long-focused on the needs of adults who are already in the workforce, many of whom are seeking new skills and knowledge for changes in their lives and careers.

To learn more about the Plus 50 Initiative, visit plus50.aacc.nche.edu. To learn more about the AACC and The Atlantic Philanthropies, visit www.aacc.nche.edu and www.atlanticphilanthropies.org.

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