Technical training program to increase Black Belt employment

UWA launches Advanced Manufacturing Technology Certification in Industrial Maintenance, Automotive Technician through DOL support

As part of its efforts to improve employment opportunities for Black Belt citizens, the University of West Alabama has launched the first phase of its Advanced Manufacturing Technology Certification Program. With successful completion of the program, students will earn the credentials of Automotive Technician Certification and Industrial Maintenance Certification.

The program orientation took place on the UWA campus in Kelly Land Hall, with UWA President Richard Holland, Outreach Services Director Kenneth Walker, and Center for Business and Economic Services Director Billy McFarland welcoming the first cohort of 39 students.

These certifications are tailored to the manufacturing industry and will place candidates on a career pathway to job placement. UWA has partnered with Alabama Power Company and other business and industries throughout West Alabama to ensure participants are trained according to the industry’s needs.

The training program is a major step in UWA’s initiative to serve the workforce needs of the Black Belt region by providing highly-qualified skilled workers to regional industries, a vision of UWA President Richard Holland.

“Our institution has planned for some time now to be able to provide this type of industry training to our citizens, and this program is the beginning of what we think will be a tremendous increase for employment opportunities in the Black Belt,” Holland said. “Not only will we open doors for new industries who will consider our area for locations, we will make it possible for people to secure employment in jobs where they will receive higher compensation than they would without this training. We are most grateful for the leadership provided by Congresswoman Sewell, Congressman Roby, Senator Sessions, and Senator Shelby in connection with this initiative.”

“The two-fold benefits of this certification program will be seen in a relatively short amount of time, as these participants will be ready to enter the workforce in one year or less,” Holland explained. “Even better, the results are far-reaching and will serve our region for many years by greatly enhancing area industries and their ability to employ a greater number of our citizens for many years to come.”

“The Manufacturing Technology Training Program provides us with a unique opportunity to bring much needed job skills in the area of manufacturing to the residents of the Black Belt,” said Veronica Triplett, program coordinator.

The University has plans to enhance the program by offering additional training and certification opportunities for workforce development. The certification program is part of the $2.19 million U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration grant that Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis awarded the University of West Alabama in September, 2012.