

# ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES

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AzCapitolTimes.com

September 6, 2013 Vol. 114 Issue 36

# FOCUS

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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GateWay Community College, 108 N. 40th St., is the temporary home for the new Maricopa Corporate College. Eventually, officials hope to have a separate building for the Corporate College.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GATEWAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# MARKET DRIVEN

## New Maricopa Corporate College wants to be a single contact point for Arizona employers

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**J**ob training, a key component of economic development and business expansion, is getting a makeover as programs at 10 local colleges are being drawn into newly formed

Maricopa Corporate College.

In a true business sense, it's a move by Maricopa County Community Colleges to become more efficient and effective in providing corporate training and continuing education services. The idea is to leverage what the 10 campuses are doing and move all of

their programs under one roof.

"I like it," says Barry Broome, president and CEO of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC). "They're looking at getting skilled workers into the marketplace more quickly. There's been a change in the business

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF GATEWAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

world. They don't always require someone with an MBA. Sometimes four, six or eight weeks of concentrated training can turn the corner."

Currently housed at GateWay Community College, 108 N. 40th St., the Corporate College figures to be a one-stop shop for businesses with new employees and other workers needing retraining, and for professionals with continuing education requirements. Actually, classes can take place at the college, at the employer's place of business or online. MCC officials hope to have a new building of their own, with space for meetings and regional conferences.

"Technically, we are up and running as of July 1," says Eugene Giovannini, president of the Corporate College. "We are open for business. My challenge in the next couple of

months is to mobilize the people in the 10 colleges and their programs. We have talked to the people at each college to find out what they're doing and how they're doing it. We'll bring it all together under one new umbrella called Maricopa Corporate College."

Eventually, job training and continuing education staff at the other colleges will become part of the Corporate College and will move into space at the GateWay campus. Some may stay where they are for the time being if they're engaged in a major job-training project with a large employer. "It wouldn't make sense to move them," Giovannini says.

Having a single point of contact provides benefits for the business community as well as the Maricopa County Community College District.

"It will help businesses to increase sales

and profitability by providing their employees with skill sets through custom solutions," Giovannini says. "We'll work one-on-one with those businesses. We'll design a program that fits an employer's needs and the needs of its employees. We'll develop and deliver custom solutions. Sometimes they know what they need and sometimes they don't know. We will help them not only from a training standpoint of current employees but with the recruitment and orientation of new employees."

Organizations that make a commitment to employee training will find themselves better positioned for the changing economy, Giovannini says. "They'll be providing more value to their workforce, and it will enable

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## HIGH MARKS FOR MCC TRAINING PROGRAMS

### SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY

Employers give Maricopa County Community Colleges high marks for their job-training and employee educational programs.

One such client, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, has been contracting with GateWay Community College since 2010. Thus far, the college has conducted four classes, each for 20 tribal members. The tribe also has worked with Scottsdale Community College.

Crystal Banuelos, community employment manager for the Indian community, says the program has become so popular that a screening process was set up. "Interested students apply to our Apprenticeship Training Program to be interviewed," she says. "Taking into account many factors, we choose students who can benefit from the skills acquired. So often, those in the program have had minimal real work experience or minimal experience attending college programs. It is really our goal to have students enter the program who demonstrate a level of commitment, initiative and motivation to grow professionally."

Under GateWay's four-month Office Technology Certificate Program, students are able to acquire 18 college credits while taking courses on business relations, becoming more familiar with Word, Excel, Power Point and Outlook programs, and learning business English and professional grammar, Banuelos says.

"We continue to appreciate our partnership with GateWay Community College," Banuelos says. "All of our experiences continue to be positive ... and we are looking at other opportunities to expand in bringing additional credential programs to our community."

### SAFeway

Safeway has partnered with GateWay Community College for the past 10 years, offering college classes for employees, and has worked with all of the other Maricopa Community colleges as well. The classes are held in the food chain's division offices.

"Students range from entry level clerks to store managers," says Sharen Kitlas, learning and leadership development manager for Safeway. "GateWay supplies the instructor and works with us on our timeline in scheduling the classes. The staff is first rate and accommodates our requests, from on-campus cohort classes to specialty designed hybrid courses."

Kitlas says many of Safeway's retail associates haven't attended college and there is "a fear factor of the college entrance process." Kitlas adds, "Fortunately, the community colleges respect and understand this and work with our students to make the experience less intimidating, such as providing on-site registration and providing the textbooks."

"After the student receives their certificate they typically opt to continue taking courses to earn their AA or BA/BS," Kitlas says. "Our experience has been very positive because they understand our business needs and they are committed to educating working adults."

Maricopa Community Colleges and the food industry are on an advisory board for the Western Association of Food Chains. The association champions education opportunities for retail associates and works with the colleges to offer a Retail Management Certificate consisting of 10 courses.

— Don Harris



“ It will help businesses to increase sales and profitability by providing their employees with skill sets through custom solutions.”

— Eugene Giovannini, president of the Corporate College

them to attract and retain quality employees," he says. "We will be proactive in terms of forecasting workforce needs and eliminating any talent gaps they may have."

The Maricopa County Community College District benefits as well from the establishment of the Corporate College. "It gives this part of our mission more focus as one entity," Giovannini says. "It creates efficiencies, and it brands us as the point of contact."

He says chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and cities are supportive because of the single point of contact. "So, it's still the resources of the entire Maricopa Community College system, only through this new entity that I believe, and what others have told us who have done this, will position us better in the community as the provider of choice for training. The benefit to the district overall is, when we do this it opens up other doors, other avenues to serve, grants, philanthropic opportunities and partnership opportunities with the organizations themselves."

Broome of GPEC says he is excited about the emerging Corporate College. "We have a close relationship with the community colleges," he says. "What I like about it is they can get technology jobs delivered more quickly."

Colleges play an important role, he says, because graduates from K-12 schools aren't always as qualified for meaningful jobs as the business community would like. "Community colleges are building that path," Broome says. "The important part of what

they're trying to do is to focus on skilled workers, on the need for a skilled and young workforce."

In doing their due diligence and strategic planning, MCC officials examined similar corporate learning centers around the country and brought in outside consultants. It was determined that MCC is doing only 15 percent-to-20 percent of the job-training business it should be doing, Giovannini says. "We're just scratching the surface, compared to community colleges in other states," he says. "We should be able to triple our revenue in three years."

Current estimates indicate that job-training services brought in about \$1.5 million last year. Within a few years, that total should reach \$5 million, Giovannini says.

"We have been talking with large entities that do \$1 million of their training every year, either internally or using another source," he says. "What it says to me is our assessment and the assessment of the consultants was right on. There is a lot more business out there in this community than we're doing."

The college will work closely with trade associations representing various professions, such as pharmaceuticals, paralegals, IT and health care. In fact, when Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton was campaigning, he held a sector partnership for some 35 health care providers. "We were showcased as the trainer," Giovannini says, adding that Stanton is expected to hold several more meetings with various industry groups. "What we were trying to articulate — whether it's

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entry level or executive training — is we're here as a market-driven enterprise to provide custom training and educational programs for employees."

Giovannini emphasizes that the Corporate College is not in competition with such entities as GPEC and the Arizona Commerce Authority. "We are the provider of services — that's how we interact with GPEC and the Commerce Authority," he says. "They are recruiting businesses and we are a resource to them. Many times businesses considering a move to Arizona want to know if the available workforce is current, and what resources do we have for training."

He tells "the GPECs of the world" and the chambers of commerce that the Maricopa Corporate College is the point of contact. "I tell them, 'You are going to attract and retain businesses and we are here as the resource for you to do so.'"

Broome says the community colleges are training people for the available, unfilled jobs. "It's painful to sit down with an unemployed person who goes through two years of a program to be credentialed for something that is not marketable," Broome says. "The colleges are more efficient. They prepare people for the jobs that are there, and that's important for Arizona."

During the start-up phase, corporate training and continuing education at the 10 campuses will continue. "This initiative should be seamless and transparent to the end user, our customers," Giovannini says. "We're nearing the finalization of mobilizing everything that is being done and the people who are doing it. At the same time, we are doing quite a bit of community awareness and how it will relate to the business community, the cities, economic development agencies and the chambers."

Nevertheless, Giovannini strives to avoid confusion. "It's not good to sell what you can't deliver, and vice versa — we don't want to have a lot of content but no one to deliver it to. It's a jig-saw puzzle. Everything has to move together."

So far, only two new staff members have



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GATEWAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

been hired, supplemented by a few GateWay employees. Eventually, an estimated 20 job trainers and educators from the 10 college campuses will round out the initial faculty. "The success we have will determine how we hire," Giovannini says. "We expect to have a lot of independent contractors working for us as subject matter experts and trainers. We might have institutes around industry clusters that might require full-time staff to run them."

But Giovannini has no plans to ask the Legislature for money. "Most of the cost is people, and most of them are already on the payroll," he says. "It won't be a big initial investment. We may need some seed money. We want to look at this as a business. We should be able to cover our costs. I have no intention of going to the Legislature at this

point, not as an individual entity. If the district does, that's another thing. We won't have our own allocation or legislative request."

The cost of the training will depend on the number and skill-level of the employees to be trained. "Pricing is market driven," Giovannini says. "We go in with a clean sheet of paper, find out what they need and decide how long it will take. We'll build it case by case. Some lower level skills in terms of customer service, in terms of language training, will be a certain amount, and some engineering skills will be more expensive."

Courses have ranged from a few hours to part of every day for two or three weeks to nine months. Some of it is ongoing, particularly when you're getting into licensure certifications.

"It's all market driven," Giovannini says. 