NWACC part of $34 million in federal grants

Department of Justice awards college to help train workers, create jobs

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (Sept. 27, 2011) – NorthWest Arkansas Community College was a part of more than $34 million worth of grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor Monday – money that will help students improve achievement rates and establish new high-tech course offerings. The awards were part of nearly $500 million worth of grants awarded to community colleges throughout the U.S. for targeted job training and workforce development to help economically dislocated workers.

The Path to Accelerated Completion and Employment (PACE) initiative awarded NWACC and other participating schools $14.7 million to improve student retention and achievement rates. The National STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Consortium, a group involving NWACC and nine other leading community colleges throughout the nation, received $19.5 million to implement programs in Cyber Technology and Environmental Technology.

NWACC will directly receive $5 million through the grants awarded Monday.

“This is one of the most exciting and most beneficial days at NWACC in the eight years I’ve been president here,” Dr. Becky Paneitz said upon hearing the news Monday. “Our students will benefit from programs specifically designed to break down barriers they may have toward receiving the degrees or training they need to perform jobs in our state’s largest career growth areas. This allows us to provide our students with opportunities to work in specialty areas where they are most likely to find jobs.”

NWACC will administer the PACE program on behalf of a consortium of all 22 two-year colleges in Arkansas. The initiatives focuses on improving retention and achievement rates and reducing time-to-completion by transforming developmental education, streamlining certificate and degree pathways, and enhancing student support technology and systems. NWACC will directly receive $3.8 million to administer the program and implement its portion, with the remainder being distributed to the other community colleges in the state.

“By redesigning classes and schedules to help working students balance jobs and college,” said Shane Broadway, ADHE interim director, “we hope to significantly boost student success and dramatically increase the number of college graduates in the state. These dollars will enable our two-year colleges, employers and other economic development partners to create a workforce that is prepared for careers in high-wage, high-skills fields such as advanced manufacturing and health care.”

NWACC will also directly receive $1.2 million as a member of the National STEM Consortium, awarded $19.5 million by the Department of Labor Monday. The consortium joins 10 leading community colleges in nine states to develop nationally portable, certificate-level programs in
Science, Technology, Engineering and Math to build a national model of labor market-driven occupational programs.

The announcement Monday came a week after NWACC, partnering with Winrock International and the University of Arkansas, received $3 million through several federal agencies to fund the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge: A Coordinated Initiative to Advance Regional Competitiveness program. The grant will allow for high-potential, capital-efficient, IT-focused startups resulting in job creation. Of the $3 million awarded, NWACC will receive $1 million for job creation programs.

**NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a comprehensive, public two-year college that serves and strengthens the community through learning for living.** NWACC’s service area is defined by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as Benton and Washington counties in extreme northwest Arkansas. The commitment of NWACC to life-long learning can be seen in the quality of instruction it offers, and the variety of programs it has designed to move students into the job market in a minimum amount of time, enrich people's lives, and prepare them to further their education. For more information, visit [www.nwacc.edu](http://www.nwacc.edu).