

TRAINING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Story written for the Folsom Chamber's Fabulous 50 Magazine, Fall 2012. Sidebar attached.



After being laid off four years ago, Michael Walacavage had no luck finding work. He figured he needed new skills but couldn't afford the time or money to pursue a second degree.

Then he discovered the Folsom Lake College career and technical education program.

CTE offers certificates and associate degrees in fields specifically identified as workforce needs in the Sacramento area.

"Our goal," said CTE Dean Stuart Van Horn, "is to supply in-demand skills for (local) employers."

To identify those skills, Van Horn works with the entities most in touch with the local job market – businesses, industries, unions, schools – as well as students and faculty. An advisory board of representatives from these groups governs the program. The board

meets twice a year to evaluate curriculum, and the college adjusts its classes to the board's recommendations, Van Horn said.

Currently, Folsom Lake CTE offers instruction in some 50 subject areas, many not typical for colleges, such as: human services gerontology, home caregiver, personal trainer, project management, wastewater management and nonprofit management.

Walacavage is now working toward a certificate in accounting and hopes to be ready for a fresh job hunt by summer. CTE, he said, enabled him to train for a new career within his tight budget.

Because he already has a degree, the certificate program was perfect for Walacavage. Certificates concentrate on a single subject area and require fewer units than an AA.

"They're a wonderful way for students to get the workforce skills they need and then go out and get jobs," Van Horn said.

CTE also provides pathways to four-year colleges. Melissa White transferred to California State University, Sacramento, after completing her associate of justice A.A. in 2009. Now with her B.S. in criminal justice, she's a dispatcher and working toward becoming a police officer. A highlight of her CTE program was an internship with Homeland Security.

All community colleges in the Los Rios district offer CTE, but Folsom Lake is different in ways that have made it a destination school for some students.

As the district's smallest campus, Folsom can't house such hands-on classes as automotive technology. Instead, the program specializes in what Van Horn calls a "suite of white-collar, core, technical-education programs." The newest is a certificate in purchasing, a field in demand.

Lynn Hallimore is a "white-collar" graduate who completed her A.A. in 2011 in small business management/entrepreneurship. Now she's a real estate agent, living her dream of owning her own business. The state-required real estate classes were part of her curriculum. Through CTE, she also learned practical skills, like writing a business plan, and experienced intercultural communications in a classroom setting.

Intercultural experiences are an integral focus of the CTE program, Van Horn said. In the 21st century, workers will need to know less about how things work and more about how to work in the global marketplace.

In today's flat world, that's CTE's edge: the ability to monitor and respond to the needs of the marketplace.

"CTE is very agile," Van Horn said, "very responsive and ever changing."

COLLEGE ROUNDUP SIDEBAR

Along with Folsom Lake College, area residents who want to continue their education have an array of choices:

Brandman University, with a campus in Folsom, is the adult-learning branch of Chapman University. The school renamed itself in 2009 after receiving a donation from the Brandman Foundation.

Brandman offers an expansive selection of associate, bachelor's and master's degrees, teaching credentials, education doctorate and post-docs in health fields. Emphasis is on liberal studies, education, business and health care.

Classes are held one night a week for eight weeks, with many online. As a nonprofit, Brandman is eligible for Cal grants.

There's an interesting twist: To be admitted, students must have completed 12 units at another accredited college with a 2.0 GPA. "We don't want to be in competition with Folsom Lake College," Site Director and Senior Academic Adviser Diana Schmidt explained.

www.brandman.edu/folsom/

Other area colleges include:

Bryan College: Associate degrees in fitness, massage therapy, health information management, court reporting. <http://bryancollege.edu/>

Emery-Riddle Aeronautical University: associate through doctoral degrees with aviation emphasis. <http://www.erau.edu/>

Heald College: certificates and A.A. degrees in healthcare, business, technical and legal fields. <http://www.heald.edu/>

ITT Technical Institute: bachelor's, associate degrees in technology, business, criminal justice, nursing. <http://www.itt-tech.edu/>

National Career Education: medical and optical/optometric assisting. <http://www.nceschool.com/>

National University: certificates, bachelor's, master's degrees in a long list of majors. <http://www.nu.edu/>

University of Phoenix: certificates, bachelor's, master's degrees in a range of majors. <http://www.phoenix.edu/>