

Kessler Gives NJIT \$946,000 To Prepare Adults With Disabilities for IT Jobs

NEWARK, Jan. 12, 2007

New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) will lead a public-private partnership preparing adults with physical disabilities for entry-level and advanced jobs in information technology. A \$946,000, two-year grant from the Henry H. Kessler Foundation, of West Orange, will support "EmployMe!," a two-year, continuing education program.

"This is a win-win program for everyone because public-private partnerships are always about each partner delivering on what their organization does best, and in this case it is to help prepare prospective employees for jobs," said Joel S. Bloom, EdD, vice president of academic and student services and dean of the Albert Dorman Honors College. Program partners include the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Newark and Essex County Workforce Investment Boards, companies throughout New Jersey who will participate in a business advisory council and Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University.

Computer training rooms will be equipped with the state-of-art assistive technology tools to enable such individuals to access all training materials. By the conclusion of the program, 120 students will have been trained for new or upgraded jobs. At least 70 percent of the graduates are expected to obtain jobs.

Applications will be accepted starting Jan. 15, 2007. For more information, call 1-800-624-9850.

"The curriculum reflects the demands in the industry for specialists in web technology and open source Unix administration," says Gale Tenen Spak, associate vice president, continuing and distance education, and administrator of the program for NJIT. "Students will learn critical professional development competencies such as communication and soft skills, electronic communications and office productivity and document creation. Since needs and aptitudes may vary, participants will be able to select as a career track either open source Unix administration or web technology.

"NJIT is one of the few places authorized to award national certification for the UNIX track program," Spak added. "Computer-savvy students will be especially interested in pursuing this option."

The program includes an 18-week training course in which students will study in the most modern computer-aided classrooms at NJIT. The first two groups of 15 students are expected to finish their studies by June of 2007. A business advisory council comprised of prominent companies, employer associations and leaders from the disabilities community will participate.

"Everyone participates," said Spak. "Various agencies of the New Jersey Workforce Development system, particularly in the greater Newark area, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will recruit trainees. NJIT Continuing Professional Education will conduct the training and the NJIT Career Development Services will provide individual career assessment, advising and coaching, plus arrange for apprenticeships and job placement. The career center will support and lead the advisory council. The Heldrich Center will measure the benefits of participation for trainees and provide input for program improvement. EmployMe! partners will provide tuition assistance, as appropriate, for students such as those with mobility issues or visual impairment.

"This is a jobs program which will match trained people with jobs that are in demand," said Bloom. "You have NJIT offering work force training in a growing industry for people who are often under-employed. You get to see companies stepping forward and helping a community they often want to reach, and you have a terrific opportunity for the state to step forward and offer its considerable experience and expertise."

EmployME! resembles two earlier and successful NJIT programs: Pass-It-On and Bridging the Gap. Since 1998, both programs have trained more than 400 people for jobs to meet New Jersey's on-going demand for skilled information technology workers.