News

Workforce Alliance receives $5 million grant to increase the number of engineers in Kansas

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Workforce Alliance teams with WSU to increase the number of engineers in Kansas with $5 million grant

(Wichita, KS – Oct. 5, 2011) Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas and the Wichita State University College of Engineering and National Institute for Aviation Research will receive a $5 million grant to provide education, training and job placement assistance to long-term unemployed workers in critical engineering occupations.

The funding was received under the H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant Competition to support high-growth fields in which employers are currently using the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program to hire foreign workers.

In the Oct. 3 announcement, U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis said, "These grants are an important part of the administration's efforts to help ensure that our workers have the chance to succeed in new and emerging fields, and that growing businesses have access to the skilled American workforce they need."

In Kansas, aviation manufacturing is the primary engine that generates new wealth and job creation in the local, regional and state economies. The Workforce Alliance Kansas Engineering Excellence Project (KEEP) seeks to reduce the number of H-1B visas sought for engineers who work for local aviation manufacturing firms, research institutes and institutions of higher learning.

“The aviation industry is starting to recover, and industry leaders have expressed an immediate and future need for qualified engineers,” said Workforce Alliance Executive Director Keith Lawing. “The grant will be used to increase the number of engineers ready to work in south-central Kansas’ aviation industry.”

Funding for KEEP, received from the H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant, will be used to help 100 eligible women, minorities and laid-off individuals in south-central Kansas obtain degrees in engineering.

“This is a very unique funding opportunity,” said Zulma Toro-Ramos, dean of WSU’s College of
Engineering. “Wichita State College of Engineering is pleased to partner with the Workforce Alliance and the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration to advance the education and skills of approximately 100 engineering students – undergraduate, Master’s and PhD – over the next four years.”

Interested people should contact Wichita State University at innovation@wichita.edu to receive additional information.

Read more about the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas at http://www.workforce-ks.com/.
Read more about the Wichita State University College of Engineering at http://www.wichita.edu/thisis/academics/engineering/.
Read more about the Wichita State University National Center for Aviation Research at http://www.niar.twsu.edu/.

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Contact:
Kimberly Cronister, public information officer, Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas, (316) 771-6606 or kcronister@workforce-KS.com

Debra Franklin, director of operations, WSU Center for Innovation and Enterprise Engagement, (316) 978-5209 or debra.franklin@wichita.edu.

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