

# Students to benefit from CASE grant



Joshua Dillen The Clackamas Print

Welding instructor John Phelps and welding student Misty Whitmore discuss Misty's educational plan while here at Clackamas Community College and her future career goals.

**By Joshua Dillen**  
News Editor

Obama Bucks have found their way into the coffers of Oregon's 17 community colleges. Clackamas Community College gets an almost a \$3 million share of a \$18.7 million grant and the job of shelling out the rest.

These public institutions, along with industry employers and communities have received federal funding through President Obama's American Jobs Act and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training initiative. The program will disburse \$2 billion nationally, over a four year period. Through the work of the Credential Acceleration and Support for Employment (CASE) Consortium, the college intends to create new certificate programs and help graduates find local employment in their new or current field.

According to a US Department of Labor press release, the goal of these grants is to support partnerships between community colleges and employers to develop programs that provide pathways to good jobs. It also states the initiative complements Obama's broader agenda for every American to have at least one year of postsecondary education. In the release, Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis expressed how important the legislation is for the schools involved.

"Making it possible for unemployed Americans to return to work is a top priority of President Obama's. This initiative is about providing access to training that leads to real jobs," stated Solis. "These federal grants will enable community colleges, employers and other partners to prepare job candidates, through innovative programs, for new careers in high-wage, high-skills fields, including advanced manufacturing, transportation, health care and STEM [science, technology, engineering and math] occupations."

David Blessing has worked at the college for 14 years and is currently the project coordinator for customized training.

His current project is the CASE grant and he is the interim director. The monies are intended to serve 624 individuals by September 2014 and provide funding to implement changes to improve these students' experiences, and as always, improve and help them find a job. He also explained the money is not used to financially support students, but used to pay for improvements to programs and hire career coaches. He also said the funds will accelerate and expand programs to create more opportunities for those areas that are lacking the curriculum to serve students.

"It's a very substantial grant involving systemic changes to accelerate credentialing and support for employment," said Blessing. "That money goes to develop new programs and to provide classes for [students] to enroll in."

Blessing also explained that the US Department of Labor provides the guidelines that determine who the targeted student is. This grant is aimed at the unemployed who have been displaced by foreign competition, those changing their career or those who have been laid off their job. The monies will improve programs including but not limited to horticulture, welding, automotive and health occupations. The funding will support training in all career technical fields that show a demand from the labor market.

John Kylo is one of the career coaches at the college who works closely with students to guide them in their retraining and pursuit of a new career. He sees accessibility as one of the barriers to students who have had a hard time completing a degree or certification because they can't get into a class that is offered rarely. With many technical fields that may require one class in common that is not offered frequently, CASE funding's goal is to create the needed curriculum to satisfy and expedite a student's graduation or certification.

"The classes that are bottling up students and only offered once per term are creating waiting lists that keep students from finishing in a timely manner," said Kylo. "With the CASE

grant we will be able to hire or pay an instructor to teach another class to help them move on in their career."

Welding instructor John Phelps explains that the career coaches have informed the students in the welding program about CASE and are gathering information from them to improve and accelerate their training and goals.

"I know this has focused on immediate completion," said Phelps. "This might give people the opportunity to complete their program when it's been difficult for them."

Welding student Misty Whitmore has learned from and appreciates the help the career coaches have given to her and fellow students at the training center on campus.

"They helped me apply for my petition to graduate," said Whitmore. "They helped me find jobs and to better my resumé. I think it's awesome."

Kara Leonard is one of the career coaches employed by the college through the CASE grant. She sums up the benefits the funds will bring to the college and its students by explaining her role as a counselor and her work with the various career technical programs.

"I help students along their career path by providing one-on-one assistance to help them get a certificate or degree," Leonard said. "I work with them to make sure they get a job within the industry they have been trained in."

Leonard describes that her role as a career coach helps students with standard advising as well as helping the college to evaluate and improve career technical curriculum and what is offered. Part of her job is working with students for input and various departments to develop the programs on campus that focus on career development for students here.

In this stagnant economy, students will benefit from the improvements the CASE grant will bring to the college. Career coaches and the creation of new career technical classes and programs are just some of the goals being realized here through the efforts of the CASE consortium.

## The Clackamas Print wins 18 awards

Every year in May *The Clackamas Print* heads to the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association Collegiate Day, where we learn which awards we've won in a competition with other newspapers from colleges around the state. After three years writing for *The Print*, I am extremely happy to say that we brought 18 awards back to Clackamas. The staff that I have worked with this year worked hard on their stories, and they all are appreciated for their hard work, including photo editor Brad Heineke who won four awards for his photography.

Ten of those 18 awards were first place awards and include: Best Photography, Best News Story, Best House Ad and Best Sports Story.

We also swept Best Headline Writing for the second year in a row with first and second place.

For a full list of the awards and what we won visit <http://www.orenews.com/Contests/2012/cnc/>. You may find *The Clackamas Print* in circulation group three.

Needless to say, we would all like to give a big thanks to you, our readers. Without you there would be no *Clackamas Print*. Whether or not you agree or disagree with how or what we report, you give us the encouragement to keep writing.

-Brian Baldwin



The Clackamas Print staff shows off the 18 awards won at the Oregon Newspapers Publishers Association Collegiate Day on Friday, May 11.

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