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Economic & Workforce Development staff to lead PCC into expanded service venues

PUEBLO – Already the regional leader in providing customized workforce development training, Pueblo Community College takes a progressive leap today to expand its role even further. The college announces that its Economic and Workforce Development Division staff will adopt a laser-focused approach to driving the economies in its service areas by expanding its training capabilities in those areas.

The staff will both strengthen and expand the role that PCC plays in fueling the economic fortunes in the Pueblo region and will provide similar support to the Four Corners area. It will be headed by John Vukich, who is being promoted to Dean of Economic Development & Workforce Training.

With the new focus, PCC's Economic and Workforce Development Division staff will:

- Strengthen the strategic partnership with economic development leaders and serve as an advocate for the education and training opportunities offered by PCC.
- Seek out new partnerships and innovations that ultimately serve the citizens of our community and region.
- Facilitate the expanded outreach to the Four Corners area and create a seamless approach to maximizing PCC and San Juan Basin Technical College resources to serve employers in that area, especially the oil and gas industry prevalent there.
- Serve as the liaison between employers and faculty to help define workplace needs and how that translates to new curricula and capabilities at the college.
- Serve on the college cabinet to continue to make PCC the regional leader in providing post-secondary education and training programs.
- Create a closer relationship between the credit and non-credit programs improve the pipeline between students and employers.

In recent years, the Economic & Workforce Development Division has:

- Seen significant growth in the past several years in the number of employees trained for local employers located in the Pueblo and surrounding area. FY2004 – 700 people, FY2009 anticipated to reach 1,500.
- Grown from three people to thirteen dedicated staff that support this mission of serving employers' customized training needs.

- Broadened the array of services offered to the community by expanding its training to safety, environmental, homeland security, healthcare and business administration topics.
- Partnered with Pikes Peak Community College and the Pikes Peak Workforce Center to support training El Paso and Teller county area employers.
- Provided training outside of Colorado at the Los Alamos National Laboratories.
- Developed a mobile learning lab to take training on-site to business and industry.
- Secured a \$2 million Department of Labor grant to provide advanced manufacturing training through three additional mobile learning labs.

PCC's Gorsich Advanced Technology Center and the customized training capabilities of the Economic & Workforce Development Division were instrumental in attracting Vestas Wind Systems to build its wind tower manufacturing plant in Pueblo. That staff will provide training in the GATC for the 475-500 employees that the Vestas plant is expected to employ.

All potential Vestas employees must first go through the SOS Staffing agency and will be hired by Vestas. Initial training for Vestas by PCC is expected to begin sometime in March, with the bulk of the training to begin in late April or early May. Employees will receive an average of 400 training hours. The Vestas plant anticipates opening sometime in August.

Vukich has more than 30 years experience in engineering, manufacturing and technical education and has a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology from Colorado State University-Pueblo. He serves as a board member of the Pueblo Regional Building Department and the Pueblo Retention and Expansion Program, and he is a member of Kiwanis Club of Pueblo.

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Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21st Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest campuses.