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ADTEC Consortium Wins Prestigious Bellwether Award

The Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC) has received a prestigious Bellwether Award from the Community College Futures Assembly. The Assembly announced the honor in Orlando, Fla., on Jan. 26.

The Bellwether Awards recognize outstanding and trend-setting programs and practices that are successfully leading community colleges into the future. Programs are competitively reviewed based on how well they address the current



year's conference theme, an identified critical issue, and the published criteria.

Finalists submit supporting materials prior to the conference and then make a formal presentation at the Assembly. Judges review the materials and listen to the presentations before selecting the category winners.

“We are very proud of this recognition and are equally proud of the effort that our folks made in the overall presentation,” said Dr. Glen Fenter, MSCC President. “The Bellwether Award is a tremendously significant recognition nationally since it formally recognizes the efforts of cutting-edge community college programs. It is considered by many to be one of the premier awards nationally.”

“The competition is tough because the people who select the honorees are experts in how community colleges should operate. That makes the award all the more meaningful to Mid-South Community College and our partners in the consortium. In general, the Community College Futures Assembly is a very prestigious group within the two-year college ranks, so any recognition from that organization is certainly a great honor.”

The Assembly received 200 nominations and applications for awards in three categories, and the group selected the top 10 finalists in each division to present at the Florida convention.

Dr. Gibson “Sunny” Morris, Executive Director of the Arkansas Delta Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development (ADWIRED) project at MSCC, made the formal presentation at the conference. Dr. Callie Dunavin, ADWIRED Operations Director, and Pauline Pieper Vernon, MSCC’s ADTEC Director, also participated in conference activities. Vernon accepted the first-place trophy on behalf of the consortium.

ADTEC, which includes Mid-South Community College, Arkansas Northeastern College, East Arkansas Community College, Arkansas State University-Newport, and Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, won top honors in Workforce Development which recognizes strategic alliances that promote community and economic development.

The Arkansas Delta consortium, which presented “The Power of Partnerships Equals The Power of Success” at the Futures Assembly, has trained more than 8,000 new and incumbent manufacturing workers in three years and more than 200 students in the first semester of enrollment for renewable energy technology. Consortium members also enrolled 93 students last fall in the first semester of the ADTEC Allied Health program.

ADTEC, together with its strategic partners, is creating the capacity to provide a broad continuum of education that is focused on providing a skilled and educated workforce for the region. Over the last 48 months, nearly \$45 million has been invested in the Arkansas Delta to catalyze high-tech training and economic development opportunities.

ADTEC has now been recognized for four straight years as a model program for workforce training. The consortium earned a 2007 Southern Growth Policies Board

Innovator of the Year Award and a 2008 U.S. DOL Recognition of Excellence Award for Building a Regionally Focused Workforce Strategy. In 2009, ADTEC received recognition in a workforce training report commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

In an effort to provide a focused regional response to workforce development for eastern Arkansas, the Delta community colleges joined forces in 2005 to form ADTEC. With funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, the colleges began laying the groundwork for innovative, industry-driven training opportunities in the region.

The DOL later selected the ADTEC service area to receive a Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) planning grant. As the workforce training arm of the WIRED project, ADTEC is a critical component in the transformation of the economy of the Arkansas Delta.

ADTEC's goals include providing a comprehensive, regional approach to education/training; sharing faculty, equipment, curriculum and best practices; provide a broad range of services at lower cost, and promoting regional economic development.

The partnership is unique in that all member colleges have collaborated to share curriculum and support strategies while pursuing the ultimate goal of growing jobs and economic opportunity in the region. Student learning is measured by industry-defined competencies, and program success is measured by a common set of outcome indicators to ensure that resources are being used efficiently and effectively.

High school juniors and seniors have the opportunity to enter an education/career pathway by enrolling in college-level programs on each consortium college campus, while concurrently earning high school and college credit. Students who successfully complete designated two-year programs earn a certificate of proficiency and up to 24 college credits that apply toward a technical certificate and associate of applied science degree.

Students may go to work in the selected field of study, and return at any time to re-enter the pathway and achieve the next educational level.

College students, adult learners, incumbent workers and unemployed individuals may also enter a career pathway and advance through different levels of certification or

educational attainment. The short-term, more immediate successes and ability to re-enter the workforce foster lifelong learning principles.

The Bellwether Awards, established in 1995 and sponsored by the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Florida, are an integral part of the Community College Futures Assembly. The Assembly focuses on cutting-edge, trendsetting programs that other colleges might find worthy of replicating. Bellwether Awards are given annually in three categories to colleges with outstanding and innovative programs or practices.

The award has been compared to football's Heisman Trophy because it is competitively judged and is an award given by community college peers. It has also been called "the award of awards" because many institutions with programs that have won other honors are selected for Bellwether recognition as well.