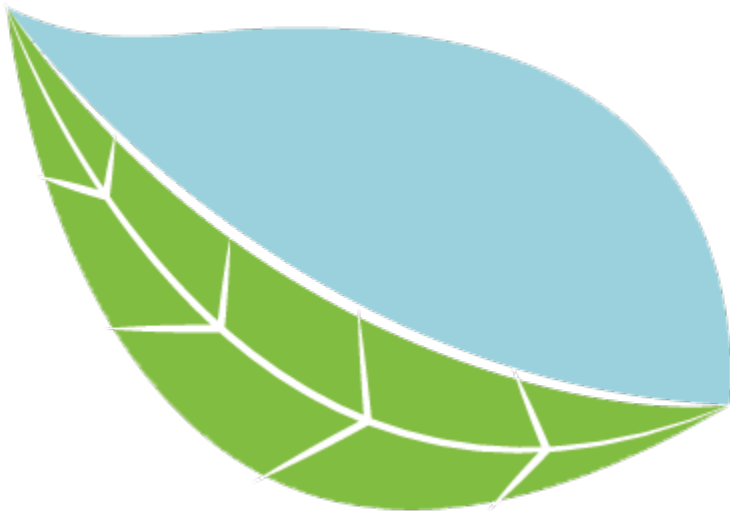




Federal Workforce Development Consortium hosted at SIUE awarded National Soft Skills Training Scholarship

by Courtney Breckenridge, Director of Communications and Client Relations, NCERC at SIUE

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The Building Illinois' Bioeconomy (BIB) Consortium, a federally funded education and training initiative led by Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and also comprising four regional community colleges, was selected from a pool of 120 applicants as one of the four recipients of the Wonderlic scholarship for a soft skills training program. The scholarship will help increase access to resources for the consortium's students.

The BIB Consortium was established to develop flexible and customizable pathways to high-paying jobs in the bioeconomy, largely targeted at adults changing careers, displaced workers and veterans. The scholarship gives BIB Consortium students the opportunity to participate in the Wonderlic Soft Skills Training Bootcamp, which focuses on competency-based instruction for communication, interpersonal skills,

listening and nonverbal skills, teamwork, professionalism, critical thinking, self-management and initiative.

“A deficit in soft skills is among the top concerns cited by employers in Southwestern Illinois, and we saw this scholarship as yet another opportunity to give our students access to more resources to build skills that ultimately lead to high-paying jobs,” said Courtney Breckenridge, BIB Consortium project manager. “We’re honored to be one of four recipients of the Wonderlic scholarship, because it aligns directly with the BIB Consortium’s core mission to create a job-ready workforce that meets the needs of regional employers in the growing bioeconomy.”

“Competency-based instruction on key soft skills, delivered through the Wonderlic Soft Skills Training Bootcamp, allows the BIB Consortium to increase the career readiness value of its educational offerings, as well as to respond to needs identified by employers, thus helping develop a skilled employee pipeline for a green economy in the Southern Illinois region,” said Diana Nastasia, PhD, a member of the BIB Consortium project management team who was instrumental in securing the Wonderlic scholarship.

The BIB Consortium will be incorporating the nationally recognized, research-based Wonderlic program into its existing coursework and also as an option for online modules to be completed by students at their own pace and on their own time. The mix of options is designed to reach students based on their needs.

“We are excited to offer these scholarships to the sorts of programs that we believe will have the greatest impact on their students and to their community,” said Charlie Wonderlic, CEO of Wonderlic, Inc. “We work with thousands of employers nationwide. I believe the employability skills of the students in the BIB Consortium’s program will benefit tremendously from the Wonderlic Soft Skills Bootcamp.”

“We selected the BIB Consortium as a scholarship recipient because their commitment to improving the soft skills of their students was evident in their application,” said Dr. Amanda Opperman, director of competency-based solutions at Wonderlic, Inc. “I’m honored to help them implement our interactive training, assessment, and digital badges into their program to improve their students’ soft skills, and ultimately, help them secure gainful employment.”

The NCERC at SIUE and SIUE’s Environmental Research Training Center (ERTC) play a critical role in the education and training experiences offered to students in various areas of the bioeconomy across the BIB Consortium by providing hands-on experiences to complement coursework. This spring, the NCERC’s and ERTC’s interns and trainees will be among the BIB Consortium students benefitting from the Wonderlic soft skills learning opportunity.

“This award is extremely important, because soft skills training is a dire need by employers not only in this region, but also across the country,” said John Caupert, NCERC director. “While the technical skills and knowledge students access at NCERC is paramount, employers seek a well-rounded candidate who is both professional and employable. We believe the training will better prepare trainees for the workplace, whether it’s a petroleum refinery, ethanol plant or laboratory.”

Wonderlic’s program became available to BIB Consortium students at the beginning of the 2017 Spring semester. To learn more about the BIB Consortium, visit www.buildingilbio.com.

About The Building Illinois’ Bioeconomy Consortium (BIB)

The Building Illinois’ Bioeconomy consortium, formed in 2014 through funding from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program, offers certificates and degrees, with options for stackable and latticed credentials, in Bioprocess, Process Maintenance, Bioenergy and Water Management. The BIB consortium, composed of five higher education institutions which span the state of Illinois, includes Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Lewis and Clark Community College located in Godfrey, Southeastern Illinois College located in Harrisburg, Lincoln Land Community College located in Springfield and Carl Sandburg College located in Galesburg.

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