

# **Department of Labor Representative Speaks on MRTDL, Tours L&C Automotive and Welding Facilities**

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A representative of the U.S. Department of Labor visited Lewis and Clark Community College today, to address a crowd on the \$23.8 million grant recently awarded to the Mississippi River Transportation Distribution and Logistics (MRTDL) consortium, and to tour the campus' automotive and welding training facilities.

The grant comes to the nine MRTDL consortium member colleges, led by Lewis and Clark, through the Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, a multi-year, nearly \$2 billion initiative to expand targeted training programs for unemployed workers, especially those impacted by foreign trade.

"The TAACCCT program strengthens the workforce, gives our citizens the marketable skills that lead to good middle class jobs, and it strengthens the overall economy by providing a pipeline of talented workers that are in demand by today's employers," said Jay Williams, executive director of the Office of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers, U.S. Department of Labor.

Williams said he has learned from his travels and talking with employers at small- and medium-sized companies across the country that while job openings are available, they currently lack the qualified candidates to fill those openings. He estimated that there are between 4,000-5,000 jobs remaining unfilled at any given time due to a lack of qualified candidates.

Over the past three years, more than \$1.5 billion have been awarded to community colleges across the country to address that issue, as part of President Barack Obama's agenda for the recovery of the United States economy, Williams said.

"A diverse range of industries is being targeted within the Transportation, Distribution and Logistics sector throughout the consortium ranging from Process Operations Technology here at Lewis and Clark, to Aviation Maintenance across the river at St. Louis Community College, to Transportation and Distribution Management at John Wood Community College in Quincy," said Lewis and Clark President Dale Chapman. "Still, other consortium colleges from the headwaters to the gulf are focusing on other important and growing industrial needs such as ship and dock personnel, diesel maintenance technicians and truck transportation. For Lewis and Clark, this grant will allow us to expand our Automotive Technology, Welding and Process Operations Technology programs, while also creating short-term certificate programs in Truck Driver Training and Logistics."

John Letts, president of John Wood Community College in Quincy, Ill. said he's also received much positive feedback from the residents and businesses in his district.

Melissa Erker, director of government and community relations at Phillips66, spoke on behalf of employers, expressing a need for her company to fill positions as workers retire from the business.

“Lewis and Clark’s Process Operations Technology (PTEC) program provides a two-year foundation to build on skills needed to work in the industry,” she said. “We need to encourage more people to look at these jobs.”

Mike Morgan, coordinator of L&C’s North American Process Technology Association (NAPTA), endorsed PTEC program, touted the program’s huge success and introduced Steve Case, a recent program graduate, who currently works at Phillips66.

“We take students where they are, and we allow them to learn, develop and achieve, and get themselves where they need to be,” Morgan said.

Case, who completed the program under the college’s 30 and Out option, talked about being able to obtain his degree in only 10 classes (typically two semesters for full time students), and getting not only his Process Operations Technology training at Lewis and Clark, but also the career search training that helped him find an internship, and then a job.

“You get to engage people from the industry, and get face time with people who are doing what you want to do,” Case said. “Lewis and Clark gave me the head start that I needed to be able to go to work.”

Following the presentation, held in the Trimpe Advanced Technology Center on the college’s Godfrey campus, Williams accompanied Chapman and others on a tour of L&C’s automotive technology and welding labs, where he had the opportunity to speak with instructors and even students currently studying in those fields.

The MRTDL consortium is committed to advancing economic development in the Mississippi River region, from the headwaters to the Gulf, and is dedicated to the placement of dislocated and other workers in high-wage, high-skill occupations in the vital transportation, distribution and logistics and related industry sectors.

Watch a portion of Williams’ address on Lewis and Clark’s YouTube channel, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gby56x8jJP0>. Read more about the grant at [http://www.lc.edu/News\\_Story/NineCollegesMissGrant-Sept2013/](http://www.lc.edu/News_Story/NineCollegesMissGrant-Sept2013/). Find more photos on Lewis and Clark’s Flickr site at [www.flickr.com/lewisandclarkc](http://www.flickr.com/lewisandclarkc)