

Rep. Davis Joins Grant Partners For U. S. Dept. Of Labor Partnership Celebration

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EDWARDSVILLE – Congressman Rodney Davis (R-Ill.) joined Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Chancellor Julie Furst-Bowe and Lewis and Clark Community College President Dale Chapman to celebrate the institutions' ongoing partnership, the Building Illinois' Bioeconomy (BIB) consortium, at 9 a.m. Tuesday, June 23, at the NCERC at SIUE.

In October 2014, the Department of Labor awarded a nearly \$10 million grant to SIUE as part of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) initiative. The grant provides funding for the BIB consortium, which is comprised of five higher education institutions spanning the state of Illinois: SIUE, Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C) in Godfrey, Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) in Springfield, Carl Sandburg College (CSC) in Galesburg and Southeastern Illinois College (SIC) in Harrisburg.

“SIUE is proud to be the lead partner in building a regional coalition of higher education institutions to train a skilled workforce in biotechnology,” said Julie Furst-Bowe, SIUE chancellor. “Our consortium has teamed to establish transformative career pathways that prepare students for jobs in the fields of bioprocessing and water management. Students will benefit from specialized training at the NCERC at SIUE and at the Environmental Resources Training Center, with innovative online learning tools, unparalleled hands-on learning opportunities, and access to the Centers’ research and industry expertise. This award further demonstrates SIUE’s vision of innovative and interdisciplinary programs that empower individuals to achieve their full potential.”

At Tuesday’s event, BIB schools, federal and state lawmakers, Illinois agency heads and employer partners came together for a project celebration, set to coincide with hands-on student training at the NCERC at SIUE, a nationally recognized research center dedicated to the development and commercialization of biofuels and other renewable compounds.

Throughout the grant-funded training, students from L&C’s Process Operations Technology (PTEC) program will utilize the pilot plant as a “micro-refinery” to gain hands-on training on critical unit operations used in the petroleum, ethanol and other PTEC industries.

Chapman also announced the launch of the “Partnership for Education, Workforce Training and Research,” a new collaboration between the NCERC and L&C’s PTEC program, which builds upon the TAACCCT grant by outfitting a state-of-the art classroom space at the Center with Siemens process control training simulators. The Siemens simulators will expand upon this experience by giving students further experience with process control from an industry-leading technology provider.

“The Lewis and Clark Community College PTEC program offers tremendous opportunity for area residents to develop the technical skills required to build a lifelong career in this high paying career field,” Chapman said. “The Department of Labor recognizes the importance of closing the gap for the skills required for these 21st Century industrial jobs and the role that community colleges can play in advancing

skills training and connecting employers to a skilled workforce. The TAACCCT program and our new partnership with the NCERC at SIUE will further enhance our accredited PTEC program by giving our students the best simulation of process controls and plant operations any student could access before entering the workforce.”

Davis, a supporter of the project from conception, said partnerships such as BIB were critical to ensuring our nation’s workforce needs are met.

“It is an honor to stand here at the kickoff for this project, which joins so many excellent educational institutions from across the state as partners for Illinois Bioeconomy Consortium,” Davis said. “This grant will help train workers for quality, in-demand jobs and advance the bioeconomy industry within Illinois. Projects like these are invaluable to our state and its universities and community colleges, and I look forward to supporting similar endeavors in the future.”

NCERC Director John Caupert said he welcomed the opportunity for the research center's veteran engineers, operators and researchers to assist in training the next generation of workers.