

Iowa Region #10 Regional Workforce Investment Board Short-Term Training Gap Tuition Assistance

The Regional Workforce Investment Board works with the Kirkwood Community College's Gap Tuition Assistance program to provide assistance for non-credit education and training. Because non-credit programs are not eligible for federal financial aid, the WIB and the Gap Tuition Assistance program jointly support WIA-eligible students pursuing short-term certificates.

The Gap program includes 13 programs in the area of business and information technology, nine in manufacturing and industrial technology, three in transportation, and seven in health occupations. All of the programs offer industry-recognized certifications, certificates of completion, or skill credentials that students can put on their resumes. Some program curricula are based on state licensing requirements; others are based on employer-defined requirements, which include a 90 percent attendance rate and a score of 80 percent or higher on tests.

Depending on eligibility, funding can cover all or part of a student's direct training costs, including tuition, books, required fees, and equipment. Eligibility for the Gap program is set at 80 percent or less than the county's median family income, with 100 percent tuition support for those earning 50 percent or less. A person eligible for the WIA adult program is automatically eligible for the Gap program, though WIA dislocated worker program participants may not be.

The Gap program is funded by the Kirkwood Community College Workplace Training and Economic Development Fund, but Gap scholarships are often used in partnership with WIA and ARRA funding. The regional allowable limit for WIA funding is only \$3,000; when a program's tuition is \$4,000, a Gap scholarship can fill the \$1,000 gap for the customer. Currently, the region is out of WIA and ARRA funds; the Gap program is helping to support WIA enrollments by providing financial assistance for those in continuing education certificate programs.

WIB staff is responsible for eligibility, case management, counseling, and placement for program participants that receive WIA or ARRA funds. While the case manager for the Gap program is funded by the college, this person is part of the WIB case management team and does provide recruitment and outreach support for WIA and ARRA programs.

The Gap Tuition Assistance program has been operating since September 2006, and has enrolled 219 individuals, with 134 completers. The credential rate for the 134 completers is 78 percent. The new employment rate for those credentialed is 63 percent; the new or continued employment rate is 76 percent. Of the originally budgeted \$85,000 for the Gap Tuition Assistance program in fiscal year 2010, \$11,835 remains to be spent.

WIBs should look at partnering with other funders – community college or otherwise – to leverage WIA and ARRA funds to fill the gap in covering tuition costs for short-term, non-credit education and training programs. The Gap Tuition Assistance program is one method for increasing the education and training dollars available for low-income individuals who are not pursuing PELL-eligible programs.

Contact: Kim Johnson
Associate Vice President
Continuing Education and Training Services
Kirkwood Skills to Employment Center
1030 Fifth Ave. SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403-5454
(319) 398-5105
kjohnson@kirkwood.edu