

NEW RIVER CTC WORKS TO OVERCOME ENROLLMENT DECLINE

Posted on January 11, 2019 by Tyler Barker



BEAVER, WV (WOAY) - As the state of West Virginia has seen a decrease in population, New River Community and Technical College has also seen a decline in enrollment.

Recently the Charleston Gazette-Mail reported on the college's enrollment, down 27 percent from the 2016-17 to the 2017-18 academic year. Last month Pew Charitable Trusts reported on the state's shrinking population, the fastest decline in the nation. The United States Census Bureau has estimated a 2.5% decrease in West Virginia's population between April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018, and southern West Virginia has seen the most significant decline.

"The college is going through a challenging time," explained new President Dr. Bonny Copenhaver. "Unfortunately, the trend of declining enrollment has occurred in most community colleges across West Virginia and even across the nation.

"But the decline in students pursuing academic degrees doesn't change our mission- we are committed to providing accessible, affordable, quality education and workforce programs. The college has a lot to be proud of because the college did not stand still in the face of declining enrollments but continued to pursue program development."

The Medical Laboratory Technician program was awarded initial accreditation from the National



Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences during the fall 2018 semester. The program has a 100% pass rate on the certification exam and a 100% job placement rate for all program graduates. The MLT program at New River CTC was started in 2016 to meet the need of trained and certified laboratory professionals in southern West Virginia.

The college recently launched diesel service technology programs at the Advanced Technology Center in Ghent, and will be adding barbering to the offerings at the Greenbrier Valley Campus in Lewisburg in the fall of 2019.

New River CTC has recently expanded opportunities for students to participate in Learn and Earn, an innovative state sponsored grant program that connects business and industry to skilled workers. The Learn and Earn program gives students in technical degree programs the opportunity to gain paid hands-on experience at sponsoring companies while in school and the state of West Virginia reimburses the employer 50% of the student's salary. The college has Learn and Earn grants for students in the automotive service technology, electric distribution engineering technology, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) and welding programs.

"The college's Learn and Earn partnerships and accelerated workforce programs that train workers for careers in weeks are steps in the right direction," said Copenhaver. "And we will continue to look for creative, new ways to build programs to meet the needs of students and employers."

New River CTC has also been working to grow relationships in the areas of the workforce and technical education with the addition of program advisory boards started during the fall of 2018. The college is also working with hospitals, career and technical schools and other industries to develop programs to meet the employment and educational needs in southern West Virginia to contribute to growth in these areas.

A 2016 report commissioned by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Council and completed by the WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research, state that New River CTC had an economic impact of \$30.6 million. The study showed that all higher education institutions in the state are crucial to improving and diversifying the state's economy.

The report highlighted that New River CTC produced the most significant impact among the state's two-year institutions based upon state investment with a ratio of \$5.30 for every dollar invested by the state.

"We are optimistic that the college can see growth again and contribute to a revitalization of our region," added Copenhaver.

New River CTC offers associate degrees, certificates and workforce training. The college serves nine counties in southeastern West Virginia from the Greenbrier Valley Campus (Lewisburg), Mercer County Campus (Princeton), Nicholas County Campus (Summersville) and Raleigh County Campus (Beaver). For more information about the college, visit www.newriver.edu.

