



September 12, 2012

MSCC Receives \$1.5 Million Grant for Aviation Technology Facility



Mid-South Community College has been awarded a \$1.5 million U.S. Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration grant to build a facility for its aviation maintenance technology program.

Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank announced the award on Wednesday, Sept. 5. It is among six awards, totaling \$6.9 million, coming to the state to build or rebuild infrastructure as well as boost economic and job growth.

“These \$6.9 million in EDA investments in Arkansas are examples of the Obama administration’s commitment to support critical infrastructure essential to fostering economic growth,” Blank said. “The six grants...will help Arkansas communities recover from flood damage and rebuild infrastructure crucial for strengthening the local economy and creating jobs.”

U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor of Arkansas said the funding is crucial to economic development efforts in the state.

“If we want robust economic growth, we need to equip students with the skills and experience they need to compete in today’s global economy,” Sen. Pryor said. “These federal dollars will help jumpstart construction of Mid-South Community College’s Aviation Technology Facility, paving the way for Arkansas students to pursue careers in the rapidly-growing aviation maintenance field.”

First District Congressman Rick Crawford agreed.

“Mid-South Community College’s Aviation Technology Facility will give students in Arkansas the kind of practical experience they need to get ahead,” Rep. Crawford said. “This grant will prepare many young people for reliable, good paying jobs.”

MSCC will use the grant to help fund construction of a 22,000-square foot building on four acres of ground adjacent to the West Memphis airport that the college purchased in 2011 in anticipation of expanding the aviation program. The facility will cost approximately \$2.6 million. The EDA award actually came a year earlier than anticipated, so the College will be pursuing additional funding sources to close the \$1.1 million gap. Mid-South will look to large corporations and/or potential employment partners to ensure that the vital project comes to fruition.

“This is a great opportunity that we can’t afford to miss,” Dr. Fenter said. “We’re going to do everything we can to raise the funds necessary to meet the requirements of the grant and the project. The people of our region deserve a first-class facility and the opportunity to compete for great jobs.”

“Mid-South Community College has faced many difficult situations where the odds seemed to be stacked against us, but good things have happened in spite of those challenges. We have been blessed by more than a few occurrences of divine intervention, and we are hoping this will be another one of those instances.”

Aviation training currently takes place in MSCC’s Workforce Technology Center where the program shares space with advanced manufacturing and machining initiatives.

The new training facility will support the workforce development programs of the Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC), a partnership of five

community colleges that are committed to the economic development of the 12 counties of eastern Arkansas.

“The financial assistance provided by the Economic Development Administration will help us continue to train skilled workers for companies that are in dire need of top-notch workers in the aviation maintenance field,” said Dr. Gibson “Sunny” Morris, ADTEC Liaison for Special Projects. “We need a facility of this size and caliber to expand our airframe and powerplant program so that we can meet the growing technician needs in the aviation field.”

“We recognize the immense importance of providing our students with job-ready skills, and this latest EDA investment, along with previous funding that has bolstered our efforts, clearly enhances our ability to offer the kinds of workforce training programming that is critical to our regions’ future. Certainly this will be a great addition to our campus and our community.”

The EDA has also provided funding for MSCC’s Workforce Technology Center and Marion Berry Renewable Energy Center.

Dr. Cliff Jones, MSCC Vice President for Learning and Instruction, said the aviation training provides unprecedented employment opportunities for residents of eastern Arkansas.

“This program can take people from Earle, Turrell, West Memphis, Hughes and Marion whose options for future success seemed limited and put them into some great career opportunities,” Dr. Jones said. “We need more programs like this, programs that are focused on training people for jobs that are crucial to the future of our local, regional, and national economies.”

The project includes construction of a facility that will feature an aircraft hangar, classrooms, laboratories, and support areas for the aviation maintenance program. EDA funds will also support site development which includes a parking pad area for a Boeing 727 aircraft recently donated to the College by FedEx.

MSCC received a \$3,391,053 grant, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, from the U.S. Department of Labor to establish the aviation program. Key partners in the program include ADTEC, the Workforce Investment Board of Eastern Arkansas, and FedEx.

Emphasizing internships and on-the-job training, the MSCC program gives students the opportunity to master skills needed to meet the demands of the growing aviation maintenance industry.

The College earned Federal Aviation Administration approval to offer the program in January 2011 (AMTS certification-2MCT 601K). It currently serves 45 students, but MSCC needs additional space and more students to maintain the viability of the program.

“We were originally approved for two cohorts of 15 students each, and we recently received approval from the FAA to add a third cohort of 15 students,” Dr. Fenter explained. “A major stumbling block in the approval process from FAA was the amount of square footage that we could provide the program.”

“We spent a great deal of the summer shifting equipment and training modules in our Workforce Technology Center to create as much space as possible for the aviation program to meet the FAA requirement. For us to maintain our airframe and powerplant program, we’re going to need more than the 45 students we have space for now. This grant will help us move the program forward.”

For information on Aviation Maintenance Technology or other training programs at MSCC, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call the Admissions Office at (870) 733-6728, email admissions@midsouthcc.edu, or see the college’s website at www.midsouthcc.edu.

The MSCC project is part of a \$200 million appropriation made by Congress to EDA to help communities that received a major disaster designation in fiscal year 2011 with long-term economic recovery and infrastructure support.

The mission of the EDA is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA makes investments in economically distressed communities to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.