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## MSCC's 2012 Graduates Ace Career Readiness Exam

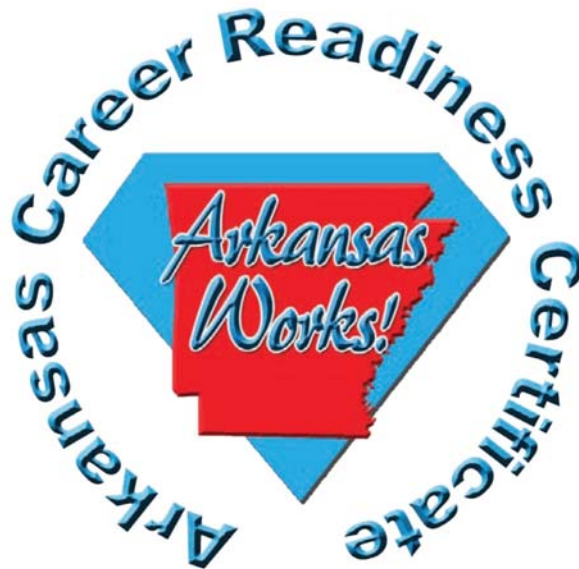
All of Mid-South Community College's 146 Associate of Arts and Associate of Applied Science graduates received at least bronze recognition, and 33 struck gold on the WorkKeys® career readiness exam.

"When we talk about measuring the institution's effectiveness and how well we are preparing our folks, this speaks volumes about what we are doing to help our students enter the workforce as productive employees," said Dr. Topeka Williams, MSCC Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

"We are really proud of the scores and the efforts that our students put forth on the exam. What surprised us most about the results is that our students did well across the board in math. That's usually not one of our stronger areas, so we're especially pleased with that."

All AA and AAS students in Arkansas are required to take the test before graduation to evaluate workplace skills. The gold level signifies an individual has the necessary skills for 90 percent of the 14,000 jobs profiled in the WorkKeys® database, and silver indicates skill levels needed for 65 percent of the jobs. Bronze signifies that an individual meets the criteria to succeed in 35 percent of the jobs profiled.

All students received Arkansas Career Readiness Certificates, signed by Gov. Mike Beebe, for their efforts. The certificate gives job seekers a competitive edge, assists



them with creating a skill-enhancement road map, and assures employers that they can perform the required duties. The CRC is also portable, meaning it is not tied to any specific job or business and is recognized in others states.

“Our students will be able to take their CRC to job interviews and show employers that they have the skills needed to excel in the workplace,” Williams said. “Many of the employers in this area are familiar with the CRC, and some even require that applicants take the WorkKeys exam before they will employ them. We think the certificates will be instrumental in helping our students find good jobs.”

The exam included questions related to Reading for Information (comprehending work-related reading materials, from memos and bulletins to policy manuals and governmental regulations), Applied Mathematics (using mathematical reasoning to solve work-related problems), and Locating Information (using information from such materials as diagrams, floor plans, tables, forms, graphs, and charts).

While all students graduating with two-year degrees are required to participate in the work skills evaluation process, they do not have to earn a specific score to “pass.” In previous years, that has hindered MSCC’s efforts to get a true evaluation using the examination tool. The College opted to provide some incentive in 2012.

“We told students before the exam that everyone who earned a gold certificate would also receive a \$50 gift card,” Williams said. “We told them on the front end, ‘This will not stop you from graduating,’ but we added the gift cards as an incentive to encourage students to give us their best effort. The gold-level students were really excited about that.”

In addition, MSCC expanded the times and days for the test in hopes that the more flexible schedule would aid students who juggle school, family, and work responsibilities.

“We revamped our entire process to help our students give their best effort, and they certainly came through for us,” Williams said. “We believe this year’s results are a valid and encouraging reflection of what our teachers have taught and our students have learned.”

Gold and silver recipients also received recognition in the 2012 graduation program distributed at commencement.

Williams pointed out that the WorkKeys® evaluation tool is not the only one Mid-South uses to assess academic effectiveness.

“The WorkKeys exam is one of many measures we use to evaluate our overall institutional effectiveness,” she said.

Since the program creation in 2008, nearly 40,000 Arkansas Career Readiness Certificates have been awarded. Only 25 percent of the people who have taken the exam scored on the gold level.

The overall goal of the certification program is to complement other traditional credentials, such as a high school diploma, community college degree, or certificate of technical proficiency. While these educational credentials mark the fulfillment of an individual’s classroom learning experiences, the certificate confirms competence in a specific set of workplace skills.

Thousands of American and international companies use WorkKeys® assessments, job profiles, training evaluations, research and reporting services to assess skill needs and measure progress.

To find out about learning opportunities at MSCC, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call (870) 733-6728, email [admissions@midsouthcc.edu](mailto:admissions@midsouthcc.edu), or access the college’s website at [www.midsouthcc.edu](http://www.midsouthcc.edu).

Mid-South’s fall semester is scheduled to begin on Aug. 20, and registration will be held on Monday, Aug. 6, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., and Tuesday, Aug. 7, 5 p.m.-6:30 p.m.