

NEWS RELEASE

March 15, 2012

Arkansas' Two-Year Colleges Promoting Entrepreneurship

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges (AATYC) has launched a statewide effort to promote entrepreneurship. Seventeen of the state's public two-year colleges have committed to promoting job creation through entrepreneurship in order to impact the economic well-being of the communities they serve.

Participating institutions, including Mid-South Community College, signed on to commitments developed by the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) as part of their *Presidents for Entrepreneurship Forum*. NACCE is the nation's leading organization focused on promoting entrepreneurship through community colleges. The commitments are based on their observations of best practices in supporting and promoting entrepreneurs on community college campuses.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT PARTICIPANTS – Participants in the entrepreneurship launch in Little Rock included, front row from left, Coy Grace, East Arkansas Community College; Larry Davis, University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton; Barbara Jones, South Arkansas Community College; Stephen Schoonmaker, College of the Ouachitas; Gwen Gresham, North Arkansas College; Wayne Hatcher, Black River Technical College; and Eugene McKay, Arkansas State University–Beebe; back row from left, Phillip Wilson, Rich Mountain Community College; Dan Bakke, Pulaski Technical College; Corbet Lamkin, Southern Arkansas University Tech; Glen Fenter, Mid-South Community College; Ed Coulter, Arkansas State University– Mountain Home; Steve Gates, NorthWest Arkansas Community College; and Robin Myers, Arkansas Northeastern College.

“Entrepreneurs are vital to economic growth, innovation and higher standards of living,” said Dr. Ed Franklin, executive director of AATYC. “They provide products and services that people need, they hire employees, and they conduct business with local banks and retailers. But having an idea for a new business is just the beginning. Adequate planning, financial literacy, management skills and education are essential to the success of entrepreneurs.”

The initiative will build upon existing efforts of two-year colleges, such as the recent development of a common entrepreneurship curriculum with courses that count towards a technical certificate in business and/or a two-year business degree. Some colleges have imbedded entrepreneurship education within technical programs such as welding, automotive and cosmetology so that graduates can gain the skills to launch and manage their own businesses.

“Small businesses are the backbone of any local economy, and they are one of the major keys to economic growth in America,” said Dr. Glen Fenter, president of Mid-South Community College. “Wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially-minded individuals. We believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale.”

“By participating in this partnership, we expect to emphasize the academic skills, learning skills, and curriculum content that are essential to the 21st century. Entrepreneurship is an economic development strategy that you can see, and there will always be opportunities to grow businesses. And when one company succeeds, it creates an environment and opportunity for others to become entrepreneurs.”

Dr. Barbara Jones, President of South Arkansas Community College in El Dorado, said entrepreneurship is an important part of SouthArk's workforce development and business programs, as well as the business community in the area.

“With plant closures and high unemployment in our region, we are committed to supporting new and expanding small businesses,” she said. “The college collaborates with the Chamber of Commerce, Arkansas Women's Business Center and an Entrepreneurship Task Force made up of local business owners, bankers, accountants and community leaders to provide education, training, mentoring and networking opportunities to potential new business start-ups.”

In attendance at the signing were Matt and Maria Hampton of Elevate, an Arkansas-based firm devoted to fostering entrepreneurship. Clifton Taulbert and Gary Schoeniger, authors of *Who Owns the Ice House - Eight Life Lessons from an Unlikely Entrepreneur*, also attended the event. The *Ice House* is a Kauffman Foundation supported project.

Two-year colleges participating in the initiative include MSCC, Arkansas Northeastern College (Blytheville), Arkansas State University – Beebe, Arkansas State University – Mountain Home, Black River Technical College (Pocahontas), Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas (DeQueen), College of the Ouachitas (Malvern), East Arkansas Community College (Forrest City), North Arkansas College (Harrison), National Park

Community College (Hot Springs), NorthWest Arkansas Community College (Bentonville), Pulaski Technical College (North Little Rock), Rich Mountain Community College (Mena), South Arkansas Community College (El Dorado), Southern Arkansas University Tech (Camden), the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope, and the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton.

For more information, contact the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges at 501-371-0404.

About AATYC

AATYC is a private, non-profit higher education membership organization serving the educational needs of two-year college students and the business/industry needs of the state. AATYC represents all 22 public two-year colleges in Arkansas. The association facilitates the sharing of ideas, resources and opportunities among its members and advocates on behalf of members' students.

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