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**RCC training construction workers
in anticipation of federal highway funding**

Rogue Community College is helping construction workers train for new job opportunities expected to emerge when the federal government releases billions of dollars for highway infrastructure repairs.

RCC also is aiming to prepare the workforce for when the recession eases and an economic upturn begins. A nearly \$1.2 million U.S. Department of Labor grant is enabling the college to more than double its number of construction technology students.

Projections call for the federal government to infuse approximately \$150 billion in infrastructure repairs, including \$10 billion in highway funding. "When the federal infrastructure money comes around and jobs open up, we'll have well-trained people ready," said Avi Zohar, project coordinator for the Southern Oregon Construction Training Alliance.

The \$1.19 million three-year federal grant, now in its second year, has allowed RCC to provide continuing professional education for people already working in construction trades. Six professional track modules, offered in seminar format 12 times a year, provide continuing professional education for workers already in the trades. The seminars use Web-based distance learning technologies and include subjects such as project management, design, building codes and new technologies.

Offered now primarily in Jackson County at the RCC Table Rock Campus, the college is expanding construction training into Josephine County by adding instruction and lab facilities at the RCC Redwood Campus. Training resumes fall term, with openings remaining for approximately 50 additional students, Zohar said.

To ready the workforce, RCC has developed a two-term course of training. The first term focuses on general knowledge, terminology, tools, safety, and work expectations. The second term, consisting of 10 modules taught by industry representatives, covers career exploration and hands-on experience at worksites. Students earn seven credits while gaining exposure to a wide range of jobs and opportunities.

Rogue will provide entry-level training in 10-trade specific areas including plumbing, electrical, carpentry, drywall, HVAC, concrete, masonry, and steel erection. Classes will also be offered in prefabricated buildings, flooring, glassing, roofing, painting, plastering, bridge and highway infrastructure, and heavy equipment operation.

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“The industry is happy to be doing this because people come out with broad knowledge of jobs and ideas where they want to go,” Zohar said. After the second term, students can follow up their training with apprenticeships or additional RCC classes.

Zohar encourages high school students to explore opportunities for dual enrollment. For more information call Barb Brown, Construction Technology Department secretary, at 245-7980, or contact their high schools counselors.

The three-year grant from the U.S. Labor Department’s Employment and Training Administration has meant RCC will increase construction enrollment capacity from 75 to an average of 174 students, said Ralph Henderson, head of the Construction Technology program. Two years remain on the grant, and RCC is working toward sustaining the increased enrollment.

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