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“Green” Workforce Study Predicts Hot Growth

Immediate and significant workforce opportunities trending in Central Valley

And the winner is -- California’s Central Valley region. According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s December 2008 data, the region ranked the highest in unemployment in the state at 9.5% --the highest in over 13 years and double the unemployment rate a year ago. And the future doesn’t look much brighter with unemployment predictions at 17.5%, and an additional 36,000 layoffs expected in the next 12 months.

Where is the good news in all of these workforce woes? According to the recent environmental scan from the California Community Colleges Workforce and Economic Development Centers of Excellence’s (COE), it may very well lie in the future of the “green” economy and hot occupations that follow in its wake.

Center Director Michelle Marquez, Central Valley Region COE, acknowledges some of the promising trends for the Central Valley. “Over three-quarters (79%) of California’s Central Valley businesses in the fields of energy, building and design services, engineering and environmental services, as well as government and public administration, indicate that the green economy will be “very important” or “somewhat important” in focusing the types of products and services that they will be involved with in the future,” said Michelle. “This translates to new occupations and jobs associated with these products and services.”

In addition to secondary research on economic predictions, the study surveyed 59 businesses from the Central Region and examined 1) how a green-focused economy would impact the region; 2) which industries would be most impacted over the short-term; and 3) how these changes would alter the need for workforce demand and training in the region. Findings from the report were surprising and uplifting:

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- **Price fluxuations of old-energy, consumer demand and legislative support are all propelling industry change at record levels and speed.**
- **Green jobs come in all shapes and require varying experience levels including senior and entry level alike. A short-term training certificate can mean as much to a current employer than years of formal training. The immediacy for green professionals is taking precedence over long-term, path-specific experience.**
- **Seventy one percent of employers reported a “great” or “moderate” difficulty in retaining valuable employees from competition. These fields are competitive, and employers are hiring long-term positions.**
- **Individuals with experience in sales, installation, technology, estimation, assembly, manufacturing, resource allocation and planning can all readily turn their experience into “green collar” jobs.**

The report details what community colleges and training centers can do to meet the needs of employers, including technical-skill training and advanced safety training. The report also debunks the myth that “green” industries are only industries of the future. Rather, the industries demanding the most jobs include the traditional industries of agriculture, utilities and power generation, water and wastewater, and construction and design services.

The COE is hosting a free Webinar for community college professionals and other interested parties, on February 11th at 10:00 a.m. PST, to discuss the details of the report. Panelist Keith Griffith, a senior education manager with the Stanislaus Economic Development and Workforce Alliance, states, “This Webinar will provide many insights into how community colleges, K-12, and local workforce investment boards can link to green career technical educational programs, and prepare our workforce immediately to meet market demands.”

To register for the Webinar, receive a free copy of the COE *Green Economy Workforce Study*, or find valuable information about the Central Valley’s current economic status, go to

<http://www.coecc.net/green>