

PRESS & GUIDE

OPINION - HFCC: Another Dearborn gem

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We have an educational gem within the city of Dearborn - Henry Ford Community College.

While many universities are struggling, HFCC enrollment has increased 15 percent overall (22-23 percent in technical education programs) each semester for the past several years. Because of this, HFCC has run out of parking spaces and tore down the tennis courts, track and baseball diamond to accommodate additional parking.

In correspondence with my friend HFCC Professor Greg Laskowsky, I learned many unique things about our wonderful community college.

Today students have new options and can graduate with the standard 60-68 credit hours earning an associate's degree of applied science and if they choose, head off to a four-year university.

Even better, students can take 90-94 credit hours at HFCC and due to HFCC's agreements with Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti and Siena Heights University's satellite campus in Southfield and main campus in Adrian, 100 percent of an HFCC student's credits earned will transfer to both universities and the student will have senior status. HFCC also has articulation agreements with several other universities.

With HFCC charging \$70 per credit hour for Dearborn residents and \$130 per credit hour for out of district students, HFCC offers a first-class education for far less than university rates, which range from \$300 to \$700 per credit hour.

In addition, HFCC students can also live at home while attending, thereby also saving room and board expenses which can cost thousands of dollars. The savings by attending HFCC, our Dearborn college are incredible.

Knowing how financially strapped many students and families are today, taking advantage of these savings can ease some of that financial pane.

Several years ago HFCC also created five alternative energy classes giving people exposure to alternative ways to produce energy other than coal or nuclear power, which are expensive and contribute to global warming.

Attendance at these classes, are taking off like a rocket. Students can earn a basic renewable energy certificate, advanced certificate or alternative energy degree in applied science.

Students laid-off due to economic conditions - who have already earned an MBA or engineering degrees - are signing up as well. No Worker Left Behind, TRA and other governmental programs are financing many students. These programs are part of the HFCC Technical Education Division, Energy Technology Department.

That department has several re-education programs which are on the SEMCA demand occupational list in Michigan, including heating and cooling, (HVAC), power engineering and multi-skilled facility maintenance. basic and advanced degree programs are available. There is also a new online power engineering program for students who live outside of Southeast Michigan and wish to acquire boiler operator's licenses. However HFCC recommends that students living in the region attend regular classes because the Energy Technology Department has four hands-on labs.

With the high-energy expenses required to heat and cool our homes and businesses, the future is going to be in high efficiency equipment, wind and solar, geothermal and high efficiency energy saving HVAC equipment. HFCC is also one of few Michigan colleges that installed energy saving operating equipment with hands on labs.

At a recent green jobs conference in Lansing, Gov. Jennifer Granholm and Van Jones, special energy secretary, from President Barack Obama's administration updated everyone on what future jobs we can expect.

Emerging jobs will focus on energy efficiency, alternative energies, heating and cooling, architecture and computer based machining jobs, and business programs, which will support the new emerging Michigan jobs and industry. Remarkably, there will also be many new emerging automotive jobs related to the new advanced energy saving transportation technologies. Speakers identified community colleges as the main source for training or re-training and how important today it is to have a degree.

We are very fortunate to have HFCC in Dearborn.

If you want to prepare yourself for the future, contact HFCC at 313-845-9600, or go to www.hfcc.edu and look at the on-line catalog and 2009 fall schedule. Candidates can also make an appointment with an HFCC department adviser or counselor. Hurry, since classes are filling for the 2009 fall semester.

Michael D. Albano has lived in Dearborn for 35 years and is a regular guest contributor to the Press & Guide. He describes himself as an unabashed supporter of Dearborn, because he is grateful for all of the blessings our city has bestowed upon his life. He can be reached at mdalbano@yahoo.com.