Stack into Associate degrees

Getting Down to Business:

New Career Certificates

Stack into Associate degrees

By Mary McClintock, ’82

Want to earn more now while pursuing further education? Greenfield Community College’s new Business and Information Technology Pathways initiative can help. Responding to a state challenge to increase workforce readiness to fill needed jobs, GCC’s Business and Information Technology Department has created five new Certificate programs which students can earn while working toward their Associate degree. With these Certificates, already-working students can earn higher wages in career-related positions. The new Certificate programs provide immediate benefits and assure GCC’s commitment to encouraging students to transfer to Baccalaureate degree institutions.

Starting in Fall 2013, GCC students can work toward Certificates in Retail Management, Management, Network Administration, Hospitality, and Tourism, and Computer-Assisted Bookkeeping. The Certificates require 29 credits and all “stack” into GCC’s Associate degree programs. Stacking means that the credits earned in the Certificate programs can be applied toward the credits required for Associate and Bachelor’s degrees. GCC has transfer articulation agreements with Massachusetts public colleges and universities so credits from GCC’s Business Administration Transfer Associate degree can be applied to Bachelor’s degrees at any Massachusetts public four-year college or university. Speaking about the need for the new Certificate programs, Kathy Yavas, Co-Chair of GCC’s Business and Information Technology Department, said, “These Certificate programs provide students with the necessary advancement that demonstrates their competence for employment purposes as they pursue an Associate degree. All of the Certificates are tailored to fulfill short-term projected employment needs within Franklin and Hampden counties. We interviewed area employers about what qualifications they want their employees to have. Then we designed the course content for these Certificates to satisfy the employers’ needs. The Certificates also reflect our desire to develop hardworking GCC students who work an average of 25 to 30 hours per week to put themselves through college. GCC has a strategic priority to support economic development in our community. These Certificates address the workforce needs of area employers and the employment needs of our students while protecting our students’ opportunity to continue their education.”

GCC’s Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer Sheryl Bruskas said, “These new Certificate programs provide students who work during the day the opportunity to complete course work that will allow them to pursue their career and educational opportunities. The faculty teaching the courses have practical business experience as well as the academic credentials to provide engaging, useful courses. We are excited to offer students these new, well-developed options.”

GCC’s Dean of Social and Natural Sciences, Math, Business and Information Technology Peter Bernick said, “For many years, GCC’s Business and Information Technology Department has done two things for its students: provided those who sought to transfer with a solid foundation upon which to successfully build their Bachelor’s degree, and equipped students with relevant business and entrepreneurial skills that can be applied in real and immediate ways to the local business world. These Certificate options soon will Avalon them with these goals in mind, providing students with logical stepping stones towards developing workplace-ready skills while constructing a transferable portfolio of course.”

The new BT Certificates have been approved within GCC’s academic program review process and by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. For information about the new BT Pathways Certificates and the Business and Information Technology Department, contact Kathy Yavas, (413) 775-1450, myavas@gcc.mass.edu or Tom Fredrick, (413) 775-1490, tfredrick@gcc.mass.edu.