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Durham Tech selected to strengthen pathways leading to middle-skill retail careers

The college is participating in an Achieving the Dream grant-funded learning initiative

Durham – Durham Tech is one of four community colleges selected to receive a $112,000 grant to strengthen the college’s short-term (six months or less), middle-skill retail career pathway and corresponding advising systems. The pathway prepares students to pursue middle-skill retail careers in the Triangle region. Middle-skill jobs require more than secondary school but less than a bachelor’s degree.

Durham Tech is part of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) Retail Pathways Initiative, funded by the Walmart Foundation. The initiative also supports Durham Tech and other participating colleges in developing strong partnerships with local retail employers so pathways graduates can successfully enter the job market.

“The Triangle region continues to see a demand for retail jobs and a strong need for more workers with unique skills for the retail industry. We are extremely proud to be a recipient of this grant. Our hope is that this initiative will create opportunities for students and meet the changing needs of regional employers,” said Darlene Bullock, dean and department head of the college’s Continuing Education program. “We are excited to integrate classroom lessons with internships, job placement activities and one-on-one career coaching to help our students achieve their goals of job security and economic prosperity through pursuing careers with retailers in the Triangle region.”

By creating a short-term retail pathway, Durham Tech is providing an opportunity for students to learn the immediate skills needed for local in-demand, middle-skill retail jobs. Additionally, the retail credential can serve as a stepping-stone to an associate’s degree and other post-secondary credentials if the student chooses to pursue further studies.

The ATD initiative was created to address the need for clearly defined and readily accessible pathways to middle skill retail careers throughout the country.

Other recipients of this grant include:

- Broward College (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
- Tallahassee Community College (Tallahassee, FL)
- Umpqua Community College (Roseburg, OR)
As part of the grant, Durham Tech will receive technical assistance through the ATD Retail Pathways Support Team.

During the Spring 2015 semester, Durham Tech began offering START, the college’s first Hotel and Lodging program with a curriculum aimed at preparing students for jobs in the Triangle’s growing hospitality industry. The 250-hour pilot program includes on-site visits with area hotels and restaurants, “hands-on” externships, and guest speakers who share their expertise with students.

Students interested in entering the retail pathway at Durham Tech can do so by visiting http://www.durhamtech.edu/noncredit/culinary.htm or by contacting Administrative Assistant Latoya Brower at 919-536-7222 x4021 or browerl@durhamtech.edu.

Achieving the Dream, Inc. is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by: guiding evidence-based institutional improvement; leading policy change; generating knowledge; and engaging the public. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is leading the most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for student success in higher education history. With over 200 institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams - working throughout 34 states and the District of Columbia – the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network helps nearly 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.