

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TIMES



'Big Lift U' participants train for emergencies involving heavy vehicles. ▶Page 5

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Students at Tulsa Community College test their air traffic control skills on the college's new \$1.5 million airport simulator.

BY GARRY BOULARD

When students at Tulsa Community College (TCC) in Oklahoma enter a new \$1.5 million air traffic control simulator—complete with a 360-degree view and large-frame television images—they are not only participating in a unique high-tech virtual reality, they are also signaling their faith that there is such a thing as a recession-proof job.

"We don't know if being an air traffic controller is a profession that is entirely resistant to economic downturns," says David Sollars, associate dean of science, math and engineering technology at TCC. "But we do know that the demand for air traffic controllers is very strong and is only going to increase for the foreseeable future."

One reason for that growth, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), is the expected retirement of baby boomer air controllers over the next decade, creating a need for up to 17,000 replacements between now and 2019.

Another reason is the ongoing expansion of a vital national industry that has seen some 5,000 new controllers hired in just the last three years.

In response, TCC established an FAA-designed air traffic collegiate training program that is expected to attract up to 25 students per class.

"If the program is entirely filled, we could end up with around 100 students per semester," Sollars says.

The idea behind TCC's air controller training program is simple, Sollars says.

"We have intertwined it with our professional pilots program, which means that by the time they are done with all of their classes, the students will have a real feel for what a pilot is experiencing up in the air and what they need to be doing to support them," he says.

While TCC is one of eight two-year and four-year institutions approved last fall by FAA to participate in its air traffic training initiative, it is one

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Energy bill could include funding for education

BY MATTHEW DEMBICKI

As Congress works on a new energy bill, education advocates want lawmakers to allocate some of the potential funds generated through it to K-postsecondary education to support education efforts on the green economy and climate change.

House and Senate lawmakers crafting the legislation are considering allowing companies to auction off their carbon emission allowances, which could garner as much as \$100 billion annually for the federal government. Education advocates support a proposal to set aside 1 percent of those funds—which could amount to as much as \$1 billion annually—for K-12 and postsecondary institutions for education on green issues.

"Education can—and must—help people understand the true connections, the linkages and interdependencies between the environment, our energy sources and the economy, which underpin and form the very foundation of the concept of a green economy. Only then will a broad segment of the population understand why

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Budget crisis prompts deep cuts in Calif.

Under Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's plan to tackle California's historic budget crisis, community colleges and schools would lose \$5.3 billion over the coming year—on top of billions of dollars in recent reductions and payment delays.

Meanwhile, California lawmakers have put forth their own budget blueprint that for community colleges includes \$630 million in cuts and \$115 million in funding deferrals.

Without a strong economic recovery, which few experts predict, the reduced K-12 and higher education funding could last for years, shortchanging millions of students, driving away residents and businesses and darkening California's economic future.

"California used to lead the nation in education," U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said during a recent visit to San Francisco. "Honestly, I think California has lost its way, and I think the long-term consequences of that are very troubling."

Slammed by an epic housing bust and massive job losses, California faces a \$24 billion budget deficit and could run out of cash by late July if Schwarzenegger and the state legislature cannot

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A career takes flight

FLORENCE, Ala. (AP)—A comment made in passing by her dad changed the course of Sophie Repolt's life.

"We lived near an airport at the time, and my dad said something about how neat it would be to fly," she said. "The thought had never occurred to me. I'd never been exposed to aviation in that way. I'd never even toyed with it. But the day my dad said that, I thought 'yes.' And the next day I went and picked up a brochure about flight schools, and I've been in love with it ever since."

Repolt wasn't just out of high school. She wasn't a recent college graduate. She was a wife in her early 40s in 1999, and she was living in Delaware.

A decade later, Repolt can fly just about any plane you put her in, and she has since moved from Delaware to the Crooked Oak community in Colbert

County, where she operates a pine tree farm. Flying and farming weren't enough to keep her busy. Repolt added flight instructor to her list of to-dos a couple of semesters ago.

Although she has five regular students now, she has taught 45 students since she began in 2002. Matthew Hea, airport director, said the skies often hold an allure for people who take the classes to become licensed to fly.

"Everyone comes with a little bit of a different slant on what their expectations are and what they want to get out of it," he said. "Some want to get into it as a profession, and it does lead into that for them as a corporate pilot or for an airline, in crop dusters or flying cargo. There are many different areas pilots go into, and a lot of them do want to make their living by flying."

Repolt supplements her instructor's salary with a part-time job she has flying out of Huntsville once a week for an individual there.

In between everything else, she manages to find time to complete online assignments for her professors at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University as well as Northwest-Shoals Community College (NSCC).

"Online classes were great for me because I could do my assignments when I was in a hotel in Chicago after flying up earlier that day from Huntsville," she said. "My goal is to keep learning because I love that process. I might even go after a higher degree."

Sherry Crabtree was one of Repolt's math instructors at NSCC. She said Repolt was perfectly suited for the online course because she was disciplined about completing assignments.

"She was dedicated, and she knew this was something she had to do to go on," Crabtree said. "She was so motivated to complete the course, she finished all the work by spring break."

Even with all the flight time she logs as an instructor and as a contract pilot, as well as the time she spends working toward a degree, Repolt said she never gets tired of the thrill she gets each time she flies.

"I still get the same joy from it as I did initially," she said. "When you get behind the controls, and you're flying that airplane through the clouds and you're talking to air traffic control, and I've gone through so much in my life to get to this point that, when I'm in the plane and I look down at the ground, it's something I never get tired of. It's so fulfilling. It really is."

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of many community colleges nationally offering training for jobs that appear to be less dependent on the swings of the national economy.

"Any community college that is training students to get into a high-tech or service-oriented job is very much on the right track in today's economy," says Laurence Shatkin, author of *150 Best Recession-Proof Jobs*.

"There is always going to be a need for health care services, which means that jobs for nurses, medical assistants and the various types of therapists will remain in demand," Shatkin says. "The same holds true for jobs in education. Kids have to go to school, whether there is a recession going on or not."

Economic downturns also tend to make popular services that might be taken for granted when the economy is stronger, such as automotive and computer repair.

"The auto companies right now are not selling that many new cars," says Jerry Nissen, program chair in the department of automotive technology at Iowa Western Community College (IWCC). "But that doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of cars out there that need work done on them. Anyone possessing repair skills today is going to be able to find a job."

With up to 60 students taking automotive technology classes at IWCC each semester, Nissen says that employment prospects, particularly with independent dealerships, remain strong.

"We don't know what all of the GM dealerships are going to be doing, which ones will be closing down and which ones are staying open," Nissen says. "But the independents and after-market dealerships continue to do well."

Nissen notes that in down times, repair work usually increases because owners are not in the market to buy new cars.

Job training during an economic downturn needs to also reflect changes in specific industries, according to Candace Moody, vice president for communications at WorkSource in Jacksonville.

"There is a lot of unemployment right now among mortgage brokers,"

says Moody, whose WorkForce has partnered with Florida Community College at Jacksonville on job training. "But jobs in collections are stronger than ever, and the same goes with foreclosure specialists."

"We talk to people about transitioning their skill set just a little bit to the other side of the house, so to speak, in order to make themselves more employable," Moody adds.

A demand for services and goods reflecting the fact that many people tend to stay home more during recessions may also provide unexpected job opportunities, she says.

"People right now are much more likely to cook at home than eat out, which is a good thing for wine and cooking stores," Moody says.

Bakeries are also doing well, observes Kay King, division chair of lifestyle, arts and design at Houston Community College in Texas.

"Our culinary arts program had a 15 percent increase in students this year from 898 to 1,055, while our pastry arts enrollment went from 293 to 371—a 21 percent increase," King says.

The reason is that students who have seen their career plans altered by the recession often decide to take a different route and go into something that they feel passionate about, such as baking, King says.

Such career path changes often prove promising. A representative for the supermarket chain H-E-B, based in Texas, recently told King that he would "hire everyone who graduated in the pastry arts."

"They have something like 240 in-store bakeries throughout the state and desperately need people who can make the bread, tortillas and cakes," King says.

Some jobs that are even more directly related to home life are proving to be among the most stable. Students enrolled with the National Apartment Association Education Institute (NAAEI) learn about an industry that doesn't shift much, no matter what is happening on Wall Street.

"There will always be apartments and people who need to live in them," says Maureen Lambe, executive vice president at NAAEI. The organization's program

is currently offered at Rio Salado Community College (Arizona), Trident Community College (North Carolina) and Ivy Tech Community College (Indiana).

"What many people are not aware of is the wide number of jobs that are an important part of the apartment industry," says Lambe, as she lists an ongoing need for the services of managers, plumbers and electricians, among other professions.

Offering courses specific to the apartment business in leasing, maintenance and management, the NAAEI program opens students to an industry that is "if not recession-proof, very close to it,"

Lambe says.

"It's an industry that few people really think about, which is why they are surprised when they learn about the careers that go along with it," she says.

Such surprises are typical of job market fluctuations in a recession, says author Shatkin.

"Old jobs go by the wayside and new ones appear when an economy is going through major changes" he says. "The challenge for community colleges is not just to recognize these kinds of trends, but to also figure out a way to use them to the advantage of their students."

Below are sample salaries from careers in the apartment industry.

Leasing

Leasing consultant	\$20,000+
Leasing manager	\$30,000+
Concierge	\$20,000+
Regional marketing manager	\$70,000+

Management

Assistant manager	\$30,000+
Apartment manager (300-500 units)	\$50,000+
Senior apartment manager	\$60,000+
Regional manager - property operations	\$90,000+ to \$130,000+
Vice president - property operations	\$160,000+

Maintenance

Groundskeeper	\$20,000+
Maintenance technician	\$30,000+
Maintenance manager (300-500 units)	\$40,000+
Multi-site maintenance manager	\$50,000+
Regional maintenance manager	\$70,000+

Source: National Apartment Association Education Institute