

Column: College Community Connection

The Transformative Power of Education

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The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan group that informs the public about issues, attitudes, and trends that shape the country and the world, examined the situation facing workers in the United States. The report summarizing their findings was titled “The State of American Jobs: How the shifting economic landscape is reshaping work and society and affecting the way people think about the skills and training they need to get ahead” (October 2016).

“The nature of jobs is changing,” the report noted. “Employment data shows that the job categories with the highest growth tend to require higher social skills, analytic savvy, and technical prowess.” The study’s survey of employed adults found that an overwhelming majority—87%—said getting training and developing new skills were either important or essential for staying abreast of changes in the workplace. The report stated, “Americans believe knowledge of computers, social dexterity, communications skills, and access to training are key to success for today’s workers.”

To address these concerns, Southside Virginia Community College maintains active partnerships with business and industry leaders throughout our service area. These collaborative efforts help ensure that curricula are up to date and aligned with current and future workers’ needs. One example is the recent launch of the Center for Information Technology Excellence (CITE) Lab located at the Lake Country Advanced Knowledge Center in South Hill.

The CITE Lab was made possible through a grant from the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission and developed under the guidance of local employers, including Microsoft. Microsoft’s cloud computing facility in Mecklenburg County is one of the largest in the world. The CITE Lab’s state-of-the-art equipment lets students learn in a situation that replicates the work environment of large data centers and prepares them to earn important CompTia industry credentials (A+, Server+, Network+, and Security+).

The rise of cloud computing, which involves collecting and storing data, is one of the driving forces behind technology-related employment growth. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment in computer and information technology occupations will grow faster than the average for all occupations. Furthermore, they report wages within the field are more than double the median wage for all occupations.

At SVCC, our mission is to give everyone an educational foundation that develops and extends their skills and knowledge. This enables students to embark upon or move along career paths in growing fields with family sustaining wages. We believe in the transformative power of education. We believe students can meet challenges and change their lives through learning, and we believe education can lead to individual

prosperity and regional economic vitality. The responsibility to instruct scholars and train tomorrow's workforce drives all our activities. For more information about how your education needs can be met, call 434-949-1000.

Dr. Al Roberts is president of Southside Virginia Community College, an institution of higher learning that provides a wide variety of education opportunities to a diverse student population within a service area that spans ten counties and the city of Emporia. He can be reached via email at al.roberts@southside.edu.