



PRESS RELEASE

Education Commissioner Winn Announces Workforce Education Public Awareness Campaign

Campaign urges students to achieve career goals through Workforce Education programs

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TALLAHASSEE - Education Commissioner John L. Winn and Community College and Workforce Education Chancellor David Armstrong today announced a public awareness campaign to educate Floridians about workforce education programs that are available to help them realize their career goals. The campaign "I've Always Wanted to...", encourages people to consider their career options then directs them to Florida's Workforce Education programs to achieve their goals.

"Florida's Workforce Education programs offer high-skilled training opportunities to prepare students for our competitive workforce," said Commissioner Winn. "Too often students think education or a career is out of reach. This shows them that they can go from considering the possibilities, to accomplishing them.

The campaign carries out a priority of Commissioner Winn and members of the Florida Legislature to step up efforts to prepare students for success by appealing directly to their needs. Workforce Education provides practical, high-skill training that prepares students for their chosen career path.

"Students who complete Workforce Education programs are proven to earn higher wages and have better job opportunities," said Chancellor Armstrong. "Given our commitment to maintaining the academic rigor and real-world relevance of the programs being offered, more and more business and industry partners are realizing the value of hiring our program completers over other potential employees."

The campaign includes print and broadcast components. The first phase began today with the unveiling of billboard, bus shelter and radio advertisements. Through a special public service partnership with the Florida Outdoor Advertising Association, billboards and bus shelters in strategically-placed locations statewide feature the "Have the career you want... start now!" tagline, web address and toll free hotline.

"Learning is a lifelong experience. In an ever-changing world, it's critical that

these students have a solid foundation to begin that experience," said Florida Senate President Designate Ken Pruitt. "This initiative provides them the tools they will need in charting their career paths and adapting to the inevitable changes that will take place in the working world."

Additionally, 85 stations in the Florida Radio Network family, plus another 25 non-affiliated stations, will air 15- and 30-second radio advertisements. The voiceover asks the listener: "If you've ever said 'I've always wanted to be a nurse, a technician, a fireman'... let Workforce Education help you train to achieve that career you've always wanted."

"Every student should have the opportunity to learn about great career pathways and leave high school with an industry certified skill set which will allow them to take advantage of high-wage careers that are just waiting for them," said Rep. Dennis Baxley, Chair of the House Education Council. "This should be a pathway that also allows them to continue upward on career and education ladders."

The Florida Chamber of Commerce supports efforts to educate Floridians about critical workforce issue. "Education and Workforce" continue to be the most important issue identified by Florida Chamber of Commerce members as the key to success in economic development and business retention.

"One of the biggest challenges for Florida's businesses is finding potential employees who are prepared for today's job market," said Florida Chamber of Commerce President Frank Ryll, Jr. "Our state's economic future relies on a strong and highly-skilled workforce. The Florida Chamber strongly supports the Workforce Education campaign, an excellent step toward improving Florida's workforce and helping today's students find their future."

A second phase of the campaign will begin in June and include television advertisements that focus on specific careers such as nursing, manufacturing, construction and teaching. These will also be aired in Spanish and Creole so that non-English speakers can find out how to enroll in Workforce Education.

Six of the top 10 fastest growing occupations in Florida fall within an Enterprise Florida targeted sector for economic development, which include life sciences, information technology, manufacturing, homeland security, aviation and aerospace and financial services. Five of those six occupations are trained through the Community College and Workforce Education system, which includes 28 community colleges, 46 technical centers, hundreds of private career schools, and a rapidly growing number of career academies in public high schools.

"In order to further diversify Florida's economy and create higher-wage jobs for its citizens, it is critical that we have a prepared workforce" said Progress Energy's President and CEO Susan Story, who also serves as vice-chair of the Enterprise Florida Board of Directors. "Particularly with regard to the state's

targeted sectors, these programs are right in sync with the needs identified by Florida's business leaders."

Many industry groups have joined as partners in the campaign. The Florida Hospital Association is sponsoring "FLACAREERS" - a career-specific campaign to recruit nurses in Florida.

"We're excited to have the Department of Education assist Florida hospitals by driving future nurses and caregivers to our organizations," said Florida Hospital Association Vice President for Strategic Communications Rich Rasmussen.

Florida's Workforce Education programs provide career and technical education, as well as other educational services that help students attain those skills that enable them to become or remain economically self-sufficient. The student populations served by the workforce programs include individuals who are entering the workforce for the first time, seeking to upgrade their skills, or retraining to meet the changing demands of the economy. Public workforce education programs served more than 823,000 students in 2003-04. These programs, provided by 28 community colleges and 58 of the 67 school districts throughout the state, are overseen by the Department of Education's Office of Workforce Education.

For more information on the campaign, to download a media kit or to become a business partner, please call the hotline at (800) 406-5555 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. or visit the website www.fldoe.org.

Contact:

Cathy Schroeder
(850) 245-0413



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Media Contact:

Justin Cross, Public Relations Assistant
Email: justin@floridacompact.org
Phone: (850) 488-7782