

## D.C. Program Addresses Computer Skills Gap

Washington D.C. metropolitan area employers face a significant shortage of qualified information technology (IT) workers, both at the entry level and above. The shortage is not limited to high-technology firms. Many businesses, as well as the myriad government agencies in the region, require an ever-increasing number of technologically literate workers. If Washington's economy is to continue to thrive, regional employers need a program designed to enlarge the pool of competent IT employees at all levels.

Partially funded by the NSSB, the Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI) is a collaborative, IT-focused workforce development project of four partners: the D.C. Agenda Support Corporation, the Foundation for Educational Innovation (FEI), A Greater Washington, and Potomac Knowledge Way. RJI is currently engaged in a 9-month Development Phase to design and utilize an industry-driven skill-based workforce training and employment approach to match D.C. residents with multi-state career pathway opportunities in the District of Columbia and neighboring Maryland and Virginia suburbs. The RJI design will be implemented via the FEI's D.C. Link and Learn Center, a state-of-the-art, 40,000 square foot family technology learning center.

Each partner will work in tandem with corporate participants to ensure project success. The Foundation for Educational Innovation (FEI) has put theory into



practice with its Ballou High School pilot project. For the past two years, FEI has conducted computer networking training at the Ballou Senior High School in Washington, D.C. under the Novell Certified Network Administrator program. Funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, FEI designed a self-contained, state-of-the-art computer training center at Ballou. Successful students have been placed in regional IT organizations, at salaries of \$21,000-\$28,000 upon graduation. Under the new configuration of D.C. Link and Learn, program participants receive a basic introduction to computer technologies at the school and more advanced training in computer networking on site at D.C. Link and Learn. Participants in this school-based career development program will also receive career objective and life skills counseling. ◀◀

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### WHO WE ARE:

The NSSB is building a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification that will enhance the ability of the United States to compete effectively in a global economy. These skills are being identified by industry in full partnership with education, labor, civil rights and community-based organizations. The standards will be based on high performance work and will be portable across industry sectors.

### News Scan

#### NSSB Gives Award to Auto CEOs

The DaimlerChrysler Corporation and the General Motors Corporation (GM), partners in Automotive Youth Educational Systems, Inc. (AYES), a national school-to-work-partnership, were recently presented with the NSSB Best Practices Award for addressing the shortage of skilled automotive technicians. The presentation was held during the AYES Annual Advisory Board Meeting at the DaimlerChrysler Headquarters in Auburn Hills, MI. The Award was presented by NSSB Board members Anne-Lee Verville and James Burge to: Jack Smith, Chairman and CEO, GM; Bob Eaton, Chairman and CEO, DaimlerChrysler; Yale Gieszl, Executive Vice President of Toyota Motor Sales; and Phil Broman, Vice President, Service Operation, Toyota Motor Sales. AYES, which was established by GM in 1995, joined by



DaimlerChrysler in 1997, Toyota in 1998, and Volkswagen in 1999, seeks to meet the shortage of skilled automotive technicians through the creation of automotive dealership/education partnerships. The program provides students with training and workforce preparation through paid internships, which begin in the summer following the eleventh grade and continue through the senior year.

In addition to GM and DaimlerChrysler, AYES is sponsored by the 25,000-member National Automobile Dealers Association, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Pew Foundation, Midtronics, and TRW. The program will reach 1,000 secondary school students in 22 states by the end of next year. As of September 1997, over 70% of the 1997 AYES graduates worked at the dealership where they served their summer internship. 84% were attending post-secondary schools, and 65% were enrolled in a manufacturer-sponsored post-secondary automotive program. The latest AYES survey indicates over a 90% satisfaction rate among students, dealership service managers, and mentor technicians.

## Message from the Executive Director



**Edie West**  
Executive Director

By now people are starting to get the message—the skill levels of a particular workforce are going to determine its competitiveness. We are seeing recognition of the need for skilled workers in all industries, from Microsoft's Skills 2000 Initiative to Starbucks' barista training program. And these are just the beginning. The mission of the NSSB is to establish a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification that will make America

competitive in the 21st century, and we're making great progress.

Skill standards development has already begun in the manufacturing and retail trade industry sectors and will be completed by the end of this year. The coalition representing education and training has submitted a proposal to begin the skill standards development process. Coalition building continues for the construction, hospitality, finance and insurance, business and administrative services, and telecommunications industries.

We are pleased to mention that recently leaders from Singapore, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, the United Kingdom and several other

nations have visited with the NSSB. Their intent was to share their progress with us, and to learn more about our system development plan and ways they might benefit from our research and experience to apply in the development of their own skill standards systems. These international links will be critical to our success in maintaining a world-class system in the future.

Please visit our Web site at [www.nssb.org](http://www.nssb.org) to gather the most up-to-date information on skill standards projects, from across the nation to across the world, or to access information from our world-class Clearinghouse.

## SSVP Talks Standards

In its mission to develop skill standards and assessment for the retail, wholesale, real estate, and personal service industries, the Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership (SSVP), an NSSB grantee, has adopted a creative mix of innovative technology and original research methodology to access the information it needs. Between March 1999 and July 1999, over 300 industry representatives will be convening in 17 U.S. cities with the common mission of developing a high performance, globally competitive, and flexible workforce.

The nine participants in each of the Skill Standard Development Panels will be as diverse as the industry the SSVP represents: invitees may include hairdressers, real estate agents, grocery store clerks, and retail salespeople. The SSVP is seeking out entry level through first line supervisors to participate in the discussions. According to Beth Holst, Project Coordinator at the SSVP, the first two panels, held in New York City and Chicago, have yielded a wealth of insights, largely due to this employee-focused participation.

Upcoming panels will include human resource directors, managers, work analysts, educators, and exemplary workers from previous sessions. Each panelist will be presented with the results of the work analysis from all the

previous sessions and asked to make comments and suggestions. This process, if done on paper, would be quite cumbersome. Therefore, the partnership is investigating the use of innovative software and laptops for these sessions.

According to Holst, the software itself is conducive to organized and accurate data collection for analysis and 'just-in-time' results, while the use of private laptops lends itself to individualized opinions. SSVP analysts will then identify areas where participants reached consensus and will reexamine areas of discord.

Deborah Masten, Chair of the SSVP, and Manager of Human Resources at JC Penney Company states: "The skills that we are addressing in the partnership will serve the individual for many years to come. We are giving people fundamental skills that are portable and meaningful."

In August and September 1999, the SSVP will distribute a national validation survey to ensure that the results of the Panels reflect the skills required by the industry as a whole. The standards are slated to be complete by year-end, 1999.

For more information, contact Beth Holst at (202) 626-8100. ◀◀

### Surfing for Skills?

## Catch a Wave to [WWW.NSSB.ORG](http://WWW.NSSB.ORG)

One of the best ways to keep up with the development of the NSSB's voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification is to check in regularly with our Web site. The site, located at [www.nssb.org](http://www.nssb.org), is the most complete collection of skills related information on the Internet. The site hosts an electronic version of our Clearinghouse that houses nearly 1,000 skills-related documents; a categorized system of more than 130 links to domestic and international skills organizations and projects; and detailed information on all of our industry coalitions.

#### Recent additions to the NSSB site include:

- A database of more than 700 certifying organizations across the country
- A database of skill standards contacts and initiatives, broken down by State
- Detailed descriptions of existing skill standards, broken down by industry sector
- Links to new Web sites for the Sales & Service and the Manufacturing industry coalitions

Be sure to check back to the site on a regular basis to monitor the progress of the NSSB system. We always appreciate feedback on the site, so please feel free to contact us with questions, comments, or ideas.

## Manufacturing Partnership Unveils Roadmap

Year-end 1999 will go down as one of the landmark dates in the skill standards movement. By then, the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), an NSSB Voluntary Partnership developing skill standards for the manufacturing industry, will have produced the first entry-level voluntary skill standards for the industries of manufacturing, installation, and repair, an unprecedented achievement.

John Rauschenberger, Chair of MSSC's Steering Committee and Manager of Workforce Resources at the Ford Motor Company, believes that skill standards are essential if the industry wants to maintain its competitive edge in the global economy. "Manufacturers in this country will be competitive if and only if we have a definition of what it takes to be successful," he said. "This is the benchmarking element that helps us find people to sustain us in a competitive environment."

The MSSC's Skill Standards Development Workplan outlines the nine critical activities identified by the MSSC as necessary for the development of industry-wide manufacturing skill standards. Those activities are:

1. Design a Skill Standards Development Workplan, which involves determining how to best develop and validate skill standards to meet NSSB criteria and crafting a plan for carrying out that strategy.
2. Determine the scope of the industry "sector", which involves identifying every single job and occupational area that is considered part of the industry.
3. Conduct research on high performance manufacturing, which involves identifying the major trends that have an impact on the work that gets done in high performance manufacturing workplaces.
4. Developing skill standards: Identify critical work functions and key activities, which involves systematically analyzing critical

work functions and key activities across the entire manufacturing industry that lead to fully competent workers, high performance work places, and team leaders.

5. Developing skill standards: Identify performance indicators, which involves working with expert panels made up of hundreds of manufacturing workers in order to develop criteria that describes how well work needs to be performed.
6. Developing skill standards: Identify knowledge and skills, which involves describing the academic, employment, and occupational/technical knowledge and skills that workers need to perform effectively.
7. Conduct a national validation survey on the information gathered, which involves ensuring that the skill standards are meaningful and applicable across the spectrum.
8. Prepare a benchmarking study, which involves ensuring that the standards developed by the MSSC meet or exceed other standards developed both in the United States and abroad.
9. Prepare skill standards for NSSB endorsement, which involves compiling and providing evidence demonstrating that the MSSC's manufacturing standards meet the criteria set by the NSSB.

The workplan is clearly an aggressive roadmap leading to an unprecedented goal: industry-wide skill standards that meet national benchmarking criteria established by the NSSB. The application for and receipt of the NSSB endorsement for the manufacturing skill standards, expected by year-end, is the critical step in completing the objectives of the workplan, and may well become a model for other industry coalitions as they develop their own standards. ◀

## Great Lakes Governors Join Forces

In an unprecedented skill standards partnership, eight Great Lakes Governors, representing Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, joined by the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec, Canada, created the Great Lakes Guarantee in July 1997 - a recognition of industry skill standards that guarantees their quality and portability throughout this region. Under this agreement, a worker's skills recognized in one member state or province are recognized in all member states and provinces.

In its first year, the Guarantee, as part of the Great Lakes Workforce Quality Initiative, endorsed the metalworking skills developed by the National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) as the first skills recognized under the Guarantee. NIMS will partner with each state in the region to develop a strategy to provide opportunities for worker certification in metalworking.

According to Richard Spill, an NSSB Special Projects Consultant who has worked closely with the Initiative, the Great Lakes Guarantee is unique: "For the first time, many states have joined forces on skill standards, agreeing to recognize the standards from one state to another. The international partnership with Ontario and Quebec reinforces this strong relationship."

The Great Lakes Governors share a common, nonpartisan goal of maintaining a workforce able to use current technology and grow with future technologies to remain competitive in business and ensure a high quality of life for the region's residents. The Great Lakes Workforce Quality Initiative was founded to achieve this goal by developing a regional workforce system that assists with the creation of jobs to support a high performance economic environment.

For more information, contact Richard Spill at (707) 253-4339. ◀

## Success Story

**Jessica Smith\***,  
Certified Novell Administrator

Like many high school students, Jessica Smith hadn't thought much about her future as she approached her 1997 graduation from Washington, D.C.'s Ballou High School. During her last semester, she attended a meeting with other students interested in computer-oriented careers to explore the Foundation for Educational Innovation (FEI) project.

"The majority of my friends that have graduated from high school are now out of work and don't have any plans for the future," said Jessica, "My friends don't really have a future. This was my starting point for a career."

Jessica and 22 other students trained at FEI's Training and Learning Center, with facilities and curricula developed in close

collaboration with Novell Corporation and other national corporations. At the Training and Learning Center, Jessica not only received superb technical training, but also honed the other skills she needs to succeed, such as time management, goal setting, and conflict resolution.

Jessica acknowledges that this rigorous program posed numerous challenges: "It was rough for me, but because I stuck with the program, I have come out on top." Persevering, Jessica passed the exam to become a Certified Novell Administrator (CNA), a credential sought after by businesses looking to hire qualified network professionals. She is now a help-desk assistant in Washington, D.C.

"I really don't know where I would be right now if it wasn't for the opportunity provided by the FEI at Ballou. I hadn't planned on going to college until next year

because I couldn't afford it."

Jessica realizes, however, that this is but a first step. She is currently working on becoming a Certified Novell Engineer (CNE), and plans to attend college while working.

The Regional Jobs Initiatives project intends to capitalize on the successes of its partners' programs, such as FEI's Ballou Pilot project, providing comprehensive IT and life skills training. Skill standards will play a significant role in the development process, reinforcing the quality and portability in an already promising and results-driven initiative.

For more information, please contact Kirti Shastri at 202-331-1550, or e-mail her at [kshastri@robertbrandon.com](mailto:kshastri@robertbrandon.com).

\* name has been changed to preserve anonymity.

### UPCOMING NSSB BOARD MEETINGS

- Tuesday, May 18, 1999 - Detroit, Michigan
- Friday, October 1, 1999 - Jackson, Mississippi
- Friday, December 10, 1999 - Washington, DC

### Other Meetings:

- MSSC Semi-Annual Meeting  
Wednesday-Thursday,  
April 28-29, 1999  
Dearborn, Michigan
- SSVP Annual Meeting  
Thursday-Friday,  
June 17-18, 1999  
Dallas, Texas



## National Skill Standards Board

1441 L Street, NW, Suite 9000  
Washington, D.C. 20005-3512  
Phone: (202) 254-8628  
(877) THE-NSSB  
Fax: (202) 254-8646  
Internet: <http://www.nssb.org>