

M-TEC offers flexible training opportunities

By JAMES THORNTON
Sun Special Writer

Michigan Technical Education Center student Carey Fulton, 43, is excited about the fact that his current training is preparing him for Michigan's job market.

"I have been in M-TEC for 10 weeks," said Fulton, as he took a break from the computer activity. "There is a nice atmosphere here, everyone is helpful. It allows you to get the training needed for a good technical background."

M-TEC, located at Mid Michigan Community College in Harrison, is one of 18 Michigan centers helping fill the void of skilled technical workers in the state.

In fall of 2001, the doors at M-TEC's \$1.95 million facility opened to those in need of training for a wide variety of occupations.

From July 2004 to June 2005, the M-TEC, and all of its

related programs, instructed a total of 1,753 students of varied ages.

"It could be the student right out of high school, or it might be the 40-year-old who has lost his job and wants to receive training for a new career," said Scott Govitz, the executive director of M-TEC.

The program offers curriculums in technical fields such as plumbing, robotics, maintenance technology and electrical technician.

"The state determined that community colleges have done well at technical training," said Govitz. "They just needed something that was more flexible (for the students)."

M-TEC is built around the idea of "on demand" training. This open-entry, open-exit system allows any student to come in at their convenience and take as long as they want, within a given time frame, to finish their area of study.

"This is the beauty of the

Growth in mid-Michigan

About this series of reports: Members of Central Michigan University journalism faculty member Mark Ranzenberger's Public Affairs Reporting class examined issues spurring growth - and holding back growth - in mid-Michigan.

■ Wednesday: Bringing a downtown back

■ Today: Training a future work force

■ Friday: A look at cool cities

program," Govitz said. "What this allows is a student to take bits and pieces, learning it at their own pace. We had one student complete a curriculum in 16 weeks."

Students develop their own learning plan while at M-TEC. Whether they decide to pursue an associate's degree or just receive a certificate of completion by finishing all the required modules is entirely up

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Skilled labor on the rise in Michigan work force

By NICK STOUT
Sun Special Writer

Over the past 60 years, Michigan has watched the educational level and skill of its workers skyrocket into the technical age.

In 1945, Michigan had a workforce that was mostly unskilled labor. Only 20 percent of jobs required degrees and 65 percent of jobs required no technical skills at all. Today it is quite the opposite as 65 percent of jobs require skilled labor and 25 percent of jobs require degrees.

New jobs are created every day. Mechanical technology,

computer aided design, automotive engineering, agricultural development, the list goes on. As more skilled jobs hit the market, Michigan must continue to stress the development and growth of its work force.

"Things have changed in our work force," said Carolyn Bennett, Director of Promotions and Workforce Development for Middle Michigan Development Corp. "Skilled labor is, on the rise and the bar has to be raised."

Cumulatively Clare and Isabella counties exceed that mark of 25 percent of their workers having degrees.

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M-TEC

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to the individual.

After setting a path, students complete theory and concept portions of each module working with a computer.

"We require a 100 percent competency level," Govitz said. "If a student does not pass a module, they then go back and take it again until they do."

After passing individual modules, the student spends time working hands-on in the lab. A field specialist, called a subject matter expert, guides them in the lab.

"They (students) arrange their own date and time with the subject matter expert,"

said Govitz.

After all the required modules are completed, students conclude with a final lab session. This closing lab can sometimes last over 50 hours.

"They bring it all together in this capstone lab," Govitz said.

Other programs under the M-TEC umbrella include: the Business and Industry Development Center; the Small Business and Technology Development Center; and Continuing Education.

"The BIDC does a lot of customized training for businesses that need help preparing workers," Govitz said.

Through this program M-TEC builds and maintains relationships with local employers, which allows the program to aide students in the search for a job.

The SBTDC program assists those who are interested in starting a business of their own.

"Clients have the ability to get their hands on material that tells just what it takes to start a small business," Govitz said. "All of the one-to-one counseling is free."

Through the SBTDC last year 60.5 jobs were created.

Finally, the CE trains those interested in careers such as truck driving and certified nurse's aides.

The Harrison branch of M-TEC plays a large role in the growth of Mid-Michigan economy and it is still growing. They currently have made some modules available on the Mt. Pleasant campus. Soon they will expand to the Internet as well.

"We are making our theory and development portions of the modules available online," Govitz said. "We should be online within the month."