

Delaware Tech is Connecting Delawareans with Jobs

BY DR. MARK T. BRAINARD

THE PAST YEAR has been the most unusual in Delaware Tech history, and although the pandemic created many challenges, it also provided us with many opportunities. We have continued to help our students reach their academic goals, while also training and connecting Delawareans with jobs. In fact, we focused our workforce development efforts in several key areas to help meet the needs of our state's residents and employers who have been impacted by the current health crisis.

In August, Governor John Carney signed Executive Order 43, directing the Delaware Department of Labor to establish a Rapid Workforce Training and Redeployment Initiative in consultation with the Delaware Workforce Development Board. This initiative was designed to help Delawareans who were unemployed or underemployed with a specific focus on five industries—health care, information technology, hospitality, construction, and logistics/transportation.

Delaware Tech was awarded \$2.4 million to provide training in the areas of health care, commercial transportation, construction, and HVAC. Less than a week after we launched the website to publicize the opportunity, we had already generated over 1,300 inquiries. We ultimately received 2,400 inquiries for 280 open seats and are serving more than 375 students in this program, which provides training in 11 different short-term health care programs:

- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Patient Care Technician
- Certified Medical Administrative Assistant
- Hemodialysis Technician
- Pharmacy Technician
- Phlebotomy Technician
- Dental Assistant
- Medical Assistant
- Medical Insurance Billing
- Ophthalmic Assistant
- Home Health Aid

This is just the latest example of Delaware Tech responding to workforce demands. Another was in 2017, when we added a bachelor of science in nursing to our degree offerings. We currently have 435 students enrolled in that program, and we graduated 53 BSN students last spring. Since the program's start, we have graduated a total of 135 credentialed nurses.

More recently, we were approached by Delaware school superintendents asking us to consider adding a bachelor's degree in elementary education



Pictured are two Delaware Tech students who are currently in a phlebotomy training course under Executive Order 43.

in response to a teacher shortage in the state that began prior to the pandemic. As we did when considering the BSN program, we performed labor market research, reached out to professionals in the education field, and had many conversations as a team about the value of adding this degree. Our Board of Trustees gave approval to move forward with a program curriculum for their consideration. We are looking forward to this opportunity, especially given that a number of teachers have retired early or resigned over the past year, making the current shortage worse. For that reason, this program will become even more valuable as school districts are looking for additional skilled teachers to bring into their classrooms.

Certainly, we are as eager as everyone else to get on the other side of this health crisis, but until then, we will continue to make sure our students reach the finish line to attain their academic goals and offer training that connects Delawareans with jobs. We have learned a lot over the past year, much of which is going to help our students and our state long after the

pandemic ends. ■



Dr. Mark Brainard is president of Delaware Technical Community College.

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