Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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A unique program has come to the UNM-Gallup branch that offers more than just classroom instruction for a career in construction.

The Transportation Construction Career Readiness Program, which began June 5, is a hands-on class that introduces students to the construction trade. And a core group of students have donned hardhats and rolled up their sleeves to get busy with some construction projects.

A collaboration of The Associated General Contractors of America, New Mexico Department of Transportation, and National Center for Construction Education Research, the program is free of charge to students.

And the program has its benefits as well as rewards.

Once completing the entire course, students receive a NCCER Core Completion Certification, OSHA 10 Construction Card, NCCER Site Safety Credential, Up to one-year advanced placement in all 5 of AGC New Mexico Apprenticeship programs.

Rebecca Johnson, UNM-Gallup Workforce Development Business liaison, said NMDOT utilized grant money so they could provide training to fill positions in transportation and construction.

“This collaboration between New Mexico Department of Transportation, AGC, and NCCER makes it possible for students to learn a new trade,” Johnson said. “We were lucky to make this

available to 14 students, they will learn all types of safety. They will even build a project here too, which is going to exciting … we hope to do this a couple times a year."

Donovan Williams, of Gallup, says the program was a welcome change in his deciding upon a different career path.

"I wanted a career change from what I was doing," he said. "It's very informing and it really teaches us everything."

Getting the students prepared so they can go out to the job force is all a matter of confidence says Robert Encinio, a UNM-Gallup Construction Technology instructor. Encinio who was a general contractor for more than 30 years, and has been teaching for five years at the UNM-Gallup branch.

"This is the first class that I have taught like this; to have the student realize what they are doing and then going out and doing it for themselves is a big part," Encinio adds, "We're giving them basic safety, we're giving them basic tool safety, tool usage, and teaching them basic blue print reading, layout and framing."

There is a great interest among young people in the construction field with 11 men and three women in this program. UNM graduates who have previously taken classes in construction have come back for this program.

"There are so many people who need people with construction skills right now, (and) we just don't have them and this program fits that's that gap." Encinio said.

Student Kiara Charley, who hopes it will enhance her degree, and, Cheyenne Livingston, wanted to take the class to gain some new experience.

"I want to use this program to help me reach my civil engineering degree," Charley said "It's also

teaching us the basics like using tools like the skill saw and it's really fun." Charley said.

"I took a class like this in high school in Thoreau, and if I don't find a job it's nice to have these qualities." Livingston said.

Requirements to enter the program include: GED, high school diploma, 18 years or older, and other requirements. Once accepted students are immersed right into the program with Basic Hands-on Construction Skills.

The three-week Transportation Career Readiness Program includes topics such as creating a trades resume, math and measuring skills, construction culture, what it's like to work in the construction trade, basic safety, and tools training. It includes 46 hours of core construction principles, 40 hours of heavy/highway construction principles, 10 hours of OSHA training, and 24 hours of hands on training.

For more details about the Construction Career Readiness program contact the UNM Gallup Community Based Ed & Workforce Development office at (505) 863-7743.

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