



## **Southwest launches \$1M U.S. Department of Labor IT apprenticeship program**

*Through the DOL's Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap grant, 800 apprentices from 10 Mid-South counties will receive training and skills to jumpstart careers in IT.*

Southwest Tennessee Community College launched its new apprenticeship program this fall that will provide 800 apprentices with a pathway to Information Technology (IT) careers over the course of four years. The College received funding for the program through a U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship: Closing the Skills Gap grant worth \$998,405.

Southwest is among 28 public-private partnerships that received funding from a \$100M grant that was disbursed across the US in February 2020. Due to COVID-19, the College delayed the start of its pilot cohort of students from summer to fall and revised the apprenticeship program to include a hybrid learning format of both in-person training and virtual engagement.

"Partnering with local industries to provide essential skills training and technical education for Southwest students is at the core of what we do," President Dr. Tracy D. Hall said. "This funding will enable us to expand workforce opportunities and empower students to compete in the highly skilled and competitive world of IT. We are grateful to be among the grant's recipients."

The University of Memphis Herff College of Engineering is a higher education partner of the paid work-based training program grant. Southwest will provide employee readiness skills training through *SouthwestWorks* while both schools will provide technical instruction, supportive services and mentoring. Each will offer courses and programs to scaffold students' education and training into college credit, short-term certificates and industry-recognized credentials that include CompTIA A+, CCNET, CCNA, Linux+, Comp TIA Security+ and CIW Web Foundations.

Several industry partners and trade groups are aligned with the program including the Greater Memphis IT Council who will help craft the highly customized IT apprenticeship model to reflect employer needs and the Greater Memphis Chamber that will scale the program regionally. Business partners LabFour, IMC Companies and eBiz Solutions are lending their expertise to provide assistance with program design and implementation.

"Information technology is fundamental to every business model today and there is an unmet need to fill IT positions in the Memphis area," said Regina Whitley, executive director of the Greater Memphis IT Council. "GMITC is honored to be a partner in this collaboration to develop meaningful apprenticeships and deliver a real-world experience that will greatly benefit both the student and employer."

The Greater Memphis Apprenticeship Program is not only designed to help close the skills gap, but also to create a pipeline of trained, motivated workers from underemployed and underrepresented populations, including women, people of color and ex-offenders, in 10 counties in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Students currently enrolled in Southwest's CITC programs are eligible for the apprenticeship.

Ten new businesses each year will be recruited for the apprenticeships. Businesses interested in participating in the Greater Memphis Apprenticeship Program should contact Southwest Tennessee Community College's Associate Vice President of Workforce and Economic Development and Continuing Education, Anita Brackin, at (office) 901-333-4018 or [abrackin1@southwest.tn.edu](mailto:abrackin1@southwest.tn.edu).

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