

Workforce³One

Transcript of Webinar

The IREC ISPQ Credentialing Program

Friday, September 23, 2011

AACC SEED WEBINAR:

**Building Quality Workforce Development Programs for Real Energy Efficiency Jobs
September 23, 2011**

*Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*



aacc.nche.edu
Washington, DC

ecoAmerica
start with people
ecoAmerica.org
Washington, DC

TODD COHEN: (In progress) -- am the program director for the SEED initiative, which comes out of the American Association of Community Colleges.

We're really excited about the opportunity to touch on this particular topic today, quality training programs in the energy efficiency sector. We know the sector's dynamic. We know it's multifaceted. We know the administration, as seen most recently through the latest jobs bill, continues to promote investments in infrastructure and retrofitting; coincidentally with \$5 billion to modernize community colleges themselves.

We also know that our colleges continue to have questions -- and in some cases, some frustration -- about things like standards across all green-collar workforce programs; but particularly in this particular sector, questions and frustrations about placement, accreditation program costs. I know our colleges are thinking, if we're going to make the investment in building a program or advancing what they've got how do you know at this point if you're going to get the return on that investment? How do you market to students? And how do you connect students on the back end to jobs that don't seem to be there now; we hope are there in the future?

So a lot is happening at the national level now, so we think it's a really good time to educate and continue the conversation that I think has been happening in different geographic pockets across the country and certainly within different stakeholder groups, but not necessarily happening sort of broadly within the community college-specific network across the country.

So we're happy that you're here with us. I'd also like to thank the National Council for Continuing Education and Training for their sponsorship of this webinar.

Before we dig in, I'm just going to turn it over to Gary. He's going to go through some of the logistics.

GARY GONZALEZ: Thanks, Todd. Again, my name is Gary Gonzalez. I'm going to be here throughout today's webinar. If you experience any technical issues, be sure to let me know at any point.

A couple of things I want to go over with you. The first is the layout of the webinar platform. Showing up or taking up the majority of your screen is the presentation slide layout. This is where the majority of the content is going to appear. It'll also be the main focus of your attention throughout our session today.

Now one thing we want to point out about that PowerPoint is there is a full-screen option at the very top-right of the display. If any of the content appears too small, if you left-click that full-screen option the display will enlarge so it's taking up the entirety of your monitor. The chat window will disappear, so you'll have to come out of full-screen mode if you want that chat window to reappear. More on that chat in just a second.



Now, you'll also notice that there are a couple of controls at the top left. One is the audio control, or your actual speaker control. If the audio from today's webinar is coming in too low, you can adjust the audio controls there. Also, down at the bottom right, you should also notice a speaker control on your computer where you can adjust the audio levels there as well.

Now, you'll also notice that there is a dropdown option to the right of that speaker. There is a raise hand icon. You can actually use that dropdown to let us know in real-time what you're thinking. If you need us to speak louder, speak softer, if you're agreeing with what we're saying or disagreeing. Even if you stepped away, you can let us know through those emoticons.

And then there's that attendee list at the top left of your screen, which you can use to see a list of everyone who's logged into the webinar with you. Looks like we have about 97 logins so far and that number's going up. So you have a very good turnout for today.

And I see a lot of you are chiming into the chat window with who you are and where you're from. So keep on doing that, please, if you haven't done so already. We're going to be using that chat throughout the day's session to solicit your questions and comments throughout the day's session.

We have muted today's phone line. You actually listening through your computer speakers, so we're going to be broadcasting everything, all the audio, through your computer. So we're going to be relying on that chat application to get your questions and comments and feedback from today's session.

Now, to just go over that chat feature and how to use it. You'll notice that there is a white horizontal text field. Just mouse over, left-click in that area, type in any question or comment that you might have. And then when you're done, click the arrow button or click the sort of "chat" balloon to the right to submit. Or hit the enter button on your keyboard and you'll be able to submit your question or your comment.

What we're going to be doing is we're going to be taking questions throughout. We'll be posting your question in a queue. And then, with the time remaining after we've gone through today's content, we'll address your question near to the end with, as I said, whatever time we have remaining.

We're also going to be using a closed chat for the majority of today's session. Right now it's an open chat, so you're able to see what everybody else is typing in. But once we actually start today's session with the content, we'll be moving to a closed chat. And basically what that means is when you type something in, only you see what's entered. Other participants don't see what you're typing, just the speakers. OK?

So again, feel free to use that chat at any point. Type in your questions or your comments. We'll be taking them, placing them in a queue and then with the time remaining we'll address those questions and comments.



All right. And if you're just joining us -- which I see a few of you have -- if you would, type in your name, your organization, where you're located in the country -- for instance, your city or your state -- and how many people if any are attending this session with you. This will give you a chance to practice using that chat and it'll give us a sense of who's attending the session.

I see, actually -- (inaudible) -- you're asking, "Will the PowerPoint be made available to participants?" Yes. It's actually been uploaded to the SEED Center webinar site. So if you go back and check with the site you can access it. Or if you scroll to the very top of the chat window, you'll notice that there is the link to that PowerPoint as well. So you'll have access to the PowerPoint.

We are also recording today's webinar. We'll be making the recording available within about two business days. And that recording will have a transcript of everything that was said over the line. So you'll have that available as well.

So I'm going to turn things back over now to Todd Cohen. Todd?

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Gary.

Just a quick note on SEED, for those of you who don't know. SEED -- Sustainability Education Economic Development initiative -- is a national initiative coming from AACC and our partner, ecoAmerica, and funded through the Kresge Foundation. And really, it aims to advance sustainability and green-collar workforce development practices at community colleges by disseminating best practices, pointing our colleges to the best resources out there, and really providing the infrastructure to help colleges share information, share resources, share models, share practices, share curriculum.

We think there's real value in colleges connecting not just regionally but state-to-state across the country in this particular sector because, in many ways, it is so new and it's changing so rapidly. And so SEED really is there to help our colleges. And not just faculty, either, but senior administrators, workforce administrators, staff -- all of whom we believe through SEED have a role to play in positioning community colleges specifically as real leaders in the broader green economy and sustainability movement.

It's also free. So if you're in college and you're not a member, there's really no reason not to be. So we hope to have you.

OK. We brought today three dynamic speakers, with different but I think very much aligned perspectives of the energy efficiency sector and the appropriate community college workforce response. We wanted to sort of provide this national-level viewpoint, all the way down to the regional level boots-on-the-ground, here's what it looks like at a college that's doing it really well.

So we've got from the Department of Energy, Benjamin Goldstein, who is a lead on weatherization and on performance, workforce guidelines and training program accreditation. He is the liaison to the



recovery through retrofit interagency process, convened by the White House. He's been mired in this for, I think, a couple of years now, Benjamin; right? And he's been doing -- he does everybody's speaker circuit, and we're really glad to have you. And he's going to talk about the new -- (inaudible) -- he's putting out, some of the work specifications, and how he envisions that being rolled out to our colleges and other training providers.

We've got Pat Fox from the Interstate Renewable Energy Council. IREC, for those of you who don't know, is a nationally recognized leader in developing quality and competency standards for both renewable energy and energy efficiency training programs. Pat is also the director of operations and oversees the accreditation process. She's going to touch on the value of green-collar accreditation, but also get into specifics around new energy efficiency standards that they've been focusing on and what colleges need to know.

And then finally, Roger Ebbage from Lane Community College in Oregon. Roger sort of built the college's energy management program from the ground up in 1992, long before green was ever part of -- sort of green workforce was ever part of any lexicon. And he's certainly built it into a national model. It's a comprehensive program covering all aspects of energy systems. And he himself has since become the mentor to many of our other colleges across the country through the Northwest Energy Education Institute.

And he himself is a certified energy manager, a certified auditor, a certified inspector. So -- (inaudible) -- certifications, Roger's been through this at many different levels and we're thrilled to have him. He's going to touch on sort of the background about his program, some of the successes they've had, what credentialing and accreditation has positioned Lane for, and then some of the key things to think about for colleges going forward in this particular field.

So just to set the stage, let me just say sort of why we chose this topic. Last year, we did an unofficial survey of our colleges and found that more than a significant majority of them -- 80-plus percent -- do currently offer or are planning to offer a course in residential weatherization and/or energy auditing. And more than half offer full programs that lead to certificates or degrees. And so there's certainly a critical mass of colleges at this point in this space.

The second sort of burning platform this year -- and this has been certainly well documented -- is the confusing and uncoordinated emergence of credentials. And some lack of information about accreditation from training providers, which has led to a lot of programs that are not as aligned as they could be to industry needs. But I think it also left many of our colleges -- many of you all -- wondering if this is a worthy investment and where to get more information.

And then certainly the third piece is the placement piece. And I know a lot of you are struggling with this. I think what you're going to hear today from our speakers is that there are, in fact, employment opportunities out there if you are teaching the right skills that industry desires.



So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Benjamin. Again, we're going to have about 15 minutes at the end for questions. But the last thing I'll say is this. Part of the SEED model is that we have this giant community of practice network. And this is not just a webinar, one and done. If you have questions, we will either get to them today, or once this is over -- because there's just not going to be enough time to get through all the details of what all these people want to say -- we will continue the conversation.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Benjamin. Benjamin, thanks.

BENJAMIN GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Todd. And I just wanted to thank all of -- you know, all the great work AACC has done over the years. You guys really have been at the forefront and the vanguard of clean energy education.

I'm going to spend just a few minutes today giving an overview of a DOE initiative known as "The Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals." This initiative was born really out of the weatherization assistance program training and technical assistance plan. And simultaneously out of -- the White House Council on Environmental Quality convened a recovery through retrofit interagency task force that was looking ahead to the post-recovery act period, knowing that the public dollars that were flowing out through the recovery act were going to have a limited duration. And then, kind of looking over that hill and saying what lies beyond in terms of the requirements for a vibrant, private sector-led home energy upgrade industry.

And we identified a couple of different hurdles that needed to be addressed. And one of those main hurdles was workforce qualification and work quality standards. So the guidelines for a home energy upgrade focuses on these three pieces: creating guidelines for quality work, guidelines for effective training and guidelines for professional certifications.

The goals really are to help support private, third party-administered certifications that are recognized in the marketplace; to promote a set of work quality guidelines that training programs can use to develop curriculum and that programs can use in the administration of their home energy program, be it at the state level, utility level, at the weatherization assistance program level -- to help guide the actual conducting and the installation of the work. And then, guidelines for training programs, for educators to develop curriculum and develop programs that meet the needs of students and of the industry.

So this graphic will hopefully help kind of provide a little bit of a flow of how these three components work together. The guidelines for quality work define the minimum requirements for high-quality work. These are different than technical standards that you may see coming out of ASHRAE or ASTM or even the codes that govern new construction. Those are very important and we reference as many and all existing technical standards and codes as we possibly can.

But there was a big missing piece in the kind of overall standards landscape, and those are known as work specifications; basically, what are the minimum requirements for doing high-quality work. And then there's an enormous amount of innovation that happens on the protocols and best practices side



of the ledger, where either educators or private companies or even individuals are kind of innovating how to meet the quality requirements. So just identifying the common quality requirements for the work and then allowing the industry to figure out how to achieve that.

And then on the guidelines for effective training side of things, that's a set of guidelines that help outline what workers need to know to be able to -- to be capable of doing the job well. And there's a couple different pieces to that. One is what is known as a job task analysis. And it essentially asks, what do you do on the job and what do you need to know to do it?

So we facilitated a process that brought dozens of top -- of highly qualified professionals from around the country together to sit down and ask those questions and write them down and then validate that content with an even larger number of qualified technicians and professionals, and then put that out for publication. So I'll provide some links later on where you can access these materials.

The other piece of the guidelines for effective training is what is known as training program accreditation. And I won't spend too much time on that because both Pat Fox and Roger Ebbage are going to discuss later on the kind of benefits and merits and process for training program accreditation. And community colleges are very familiar with the accreditation process, having gone through it most likely on the academic side.

Then the third component, the guidelines for professional certification, again, there's a couple pieces to that component as well. One is similar to, on the training side, is this notion of a job task analysis that really says, well, what do these professionals do on the job and what do they need to know to do it?

And then we've even taken a step further and helped develop the blue prints for four new professional certifications to kind of answer this question of what are the national credentials that this specific workforce is looking for; to carry between programs, across geographies, and up a career ladder. And I'll discuss those four certifications and also the fact that those four certifications are not meant to compete or replace existing industry credentials. They're meant to complement many other credentials that are already available.

So then going down, these components feed into the deliverables, or kind of what is the meat and the potatoes, right? So I talked about the standard work specifications, the accreditation, the job task analysis and the four new certifications. There's benefits to each of these components, which you can see in red on your screen. And then, you know, the overall outcome is a set of resources to support a high-quality workforce, highly skilled, with relevant credentials, servicing the home energy upgrade industry, which is growing.

So the four professional certifications are on your screen now. These were developed through a collaborative dialogue across the industry, both on the private sector side, on the public sector side, Department of Labor, community colleges -- just asking the fundamental question of, let's not complicate this, folks; what are the four job classifications that are really relevant out there?



I assume most people on this call are familiar with the energy auditor job classification. And then the installer/technician is an individual well-versed in air ceiling and insulation and some of the additional trades. Crew leader is kind of a step up from that, with some supervisory responsibilities. And then the quality assurance inspector is expected to be able to go in and actually verify that the work was done well and even conduct diagnostic tests on the back end. So these are somewhat new in their designation but not necessarily new in their utilization in the field.

So let's talk a minute about accreditation -- the difference, excuse me, between accreditation and certification. This is something that's part of my standard slide deck. I don't expect this to be that confusing to this crowd because of community college educators and students. You guys are familiar with this world of both workforce and training program credentialing. But just to emphasize that accreditation is for the training provider; certification is for the workforce.

So we identified the Interstate Renewable Energy Council -- who Pat Fox represents and will give a much deeper overview in a minute -- as the kind of preeminent accreditation body for energy efficiency and renewable energy training programs in the country. You know, they focus very specifically on that niche of the clean energy economy, and they have an accreditation process that's based on an international standard.

And we identified IREC and kind of enlisted them to help support this accreditation process. Certainly voluntary from the Department of Energy side of things; but again, a resource for training programs -- or providers, excuse me -- to differentiate themselves from the competition in showing that what you're teaching is really what students need to know, and therefore what -- and the same thing that students would be certified according to when they get their professional credential and what employers are ultimately looking for in a highly qualified workforce.

On the certification side, we enlisted our National Renewable Energy Laboratory to develop the certification blueprints; the schemes, essentially -- what are the prerequisites, what are the re-certification requirements, what are the continuing education requirements, what's the on-the-job component. Then the National Renewable Energy Lab issued a competitive solicitation for a certifying body to actually develop the tests and administer the certification. So DOE and NREL are not getting in the business of certifying anybody. We wanted that to be done by existing, established industry certifying bodies.

The first of which that was selected was the Building Performance Institute -- BPI -- which already has a suite of certifications serving this market, but again, had never fully developed an energy auditor or an installer or a crew leader or an inspector to really fit the needs of the weatherization program and the home performance industry.

DOE's now in conversations with other certifying bodies to see if they are also interested in ministering these certifications, or if it would be a better use of DOE resources and support to focus on



complementary certifications; for example, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration, solar installation. So just look at whether the suite of certifications that employers are looking for and that students therefore would be in demand for.

So the importance of certification can't be underemphasized. I think as a community college sector you all are very familiar with the value of professional credentials overall, be they certificates from reputable training providers or the more kind of comprehensive certification process, which we have identified as something that's very important and as different than -- you know, a true independent certification can be carried across programs, across geographies, and is something that could be valued and recognized on the national level.

I just want to emphasize, though, going back to this slide, that these four new certifications are certainly not the only ones that are in value or in use or relevant to the market. These are very kind of specific to the weatherization and home energy upgrade or home performance industry. But you've got -- I mentioned the HVAC industry, which is a very vibrant industry and kind of inherently is an energy efficiency industry because you're talking about heating and cooling being the main energy draw in a residence; and more properly functioning equipment or higher-performing equipment or newly installed and more efficient equipment is going to just decrease the load of energy in the building.

There's also plumbing and heating and cooling credentials that are kind of more generic to the building trades but have been around for a number of years. And so DOE's not intending to kind of replace or supplant any of those credentials. We're simply identifying these four new ones as something that could be and should be part of the mix and that we're missing, frankly; and that no certifying body had really stepped up to develop.

And again, we have a specific obligation to the federally supported and administered weatherization assistance program, which has never had relevant certifications available to it. And you've got 25,000 workers in the weatherization assistance program that will be transitioning -- or a chunk of those workers -- will be transitioning into the private sector and we want to offer a suite of certifications that could be available and recognized. Certainly these certifications will be available, though, and offered to the entire -- all workers who are interested. But I just wanted to give you a little context on how we kind of came up around supporting those four first, rather than kind of everything else that was available.

So kind of wrapping up, we've got a little more work to do on the standard work specifications, right, the work quality guidelines. Those are undergoing a technical review and will be back out for public comment in a couple months. They've already been out for a first round of comment. And, you know, I urge everyone if you're interested on following this project just to click on that link or copy and paste at the very bottom, the wip.energy.gov and you can get regular project updates on every time we announce a new comment period or a new development in this project.



On the accreditation side, IREC is accepting applications for training program accreditation. You're going to hear more from Pat and from Roger on that.

On the certification side, we're looking to pilot the new certifications in early to mid-2012. We've still got some work to do developing the technical materials and then BPI and/or other certifying bodies who are interested in administering those certifications will have to write test questions and set up their testing infrastructure.

And, you know, finally, again for the community college crowd, just going back to the kind of training side of the ledger, I wanted to really emphasize that the job task analyses are complete for those four job classifications and available online -- the DOE site at the link below.

And there's also a missing piece, that every time I tell people about, they're kind of -- you know, their eyebrows elevate. And that is that the weatherization assistance program has developed a whole suite of standardized curriculum that's free and available to the general public, not just to training providers in the weatherization -- interested in taking bits and pieces of a free curriculum, that's available as well. And that link is on -- that link is available on this website as well.

So with that, I'll conclude. I think we're going to have time for questions at the end of the presentations, so I'll certainly remain around and able to answer questions. And again, thanks for signing up and for joining us on a Friday.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Benjamin. Pat?

PAT FOX: OK. Hello, everybody. There we go. Thank you, Benjamin and thank you, Todd for the introduction.

My name is Pat Fox, and as was stated earlier, I'm the director of operations for the Interstate Renewable Energy Council. And today, I'm going to give you an introduction and overview to the IREC ISPQ credentialing program. I want to talk about what the program is, the value that our current credential holders are experiencing, and for those interested, a little information about how to get started.

So with that, let me start with just a little background about IREC, the Interstate Renewable Energy Council. For those of you who may not be familiar with us, we are a nonprofit. We have been involved in standards and guidelines throughout our history, and we were formed in the early '80s. We helped form the Solar Rating and Certification Corporation. We helped start the Small Wind Certification Council. And in its formative stage, we helped launch the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners before it became an independent organization. So we have a long history in guidelines and standards.



In addition, we have a robust history involved with education and educators. IREC is the national administrator for the Solar Instructor Training Network, and we also host a clean energy workforce education conference about every 18 months in which we bring together training providers to share best practices and really promote the expansion of quality training in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

So those two things come together to really form a foundation for our program on credentialing training programs, through the ISPQ process. It looks -- sorry, wrong button.

In 2005, IREC became the North American licensee for the ISPQ standard. Now, ISPQ stands for Institute for Sustainable Power Quality. This is a standard that was developed by an international body of subject matter experts to provide a foundation for quality assessment of training in renewable energy and energy efficiency. We began -- IREC began using this in 2005 for renewable energy, and in 2010 we began to take steps to open up the program to energy efficiency.

And earlier this year, IREC actually purchased the standard so that we can continue to review, improve and strengthen the standard that is used for quality assessment in North America.

So as you can see from the chart in front of you, in the early years, we, you know, were just -- had just a few folks who were interested in quality assessment. And in about 2008, we saw standards really catch on and the importance and value really be recognized in the renewable energy sector. And we have been growing exponentially year over year ever since.

So our current awardees are all in renewable energy. However, as Benjamin mentioned, we have opened up our program to encompass energy efficiency and weatherization. And at this point we have several training programs in that sector who have entered the pipeline to begin the process of accreditation.

So throughout our program, our entire focus is really quality training. We look for candidates to ensure that the standards are met. And at all places in the process, we work with the candidate to make sure if there were gaps or improvement needed, that we provide the opportunity to make that happen. We're responsible for the full application process, which I'll talk about in a minute. We have a team of assessors that are responsible for the full assessment process for the accreditation.

We have an independent committee that we convene to make rulings on awarding credentials. And then, a full maintenance cycle. And IREC administers this full process.

But fundamentally, what we want to ensure is that students are learning the right skills. So they're learning the tasks, the subtasks, the skills they need to be able to perform successfully on the job; you know, employers can have some confidence in hiring the students that are coming out of accredited training programs, that they will have the skills that they need to be successful; and that consumers



ultimately will benefit from the quality work that having students who have gone through programs can come out and execute work for them.

So what we have experienced is the training programs who have achieved the IREC ISPQ credential consistently agree that simply going through the process has improved their program. The beginning of the process is a very robust self-assessment procedure, and virtually every applicant says how valuable just the process is. In addition, the ISPQ mark really gives a visible sign that international standards are being met for the quality training.

So our program offers six credentials. We have two credentials for accreditation and four for certification of instructors. Today I'm really focused on talking about training program accreditation. And we define training programs as programs that are preparing students to be successful on the job by teaching all of the tasks and subtasks that have been identified in a job task analysis for a specific job category.

So what you see on your screen now is kind of a map of our process. And I'm not going to go through all the details of the process, but I show this to let you know it is really a robust process. It starts with a letter of intent. This is the opportunity for a program to let us know that they plan to apply for accreditation. And it serves two purposes. One is to get you in the queue so that we can plan our resources and be ready for your application. And the second is really to begin a dialogue so that we can be sure that your program is applying for the appropriate credential.

We then go through the application process. You prepare an application packet. It's a strong, as I said, self-assessment. One of the key components there is really aligning your curriculum with the job task analysis that Benjamin had referenced.

Once we get the application and we assign an auditor, we'll go through a desk audit process. And that is where we take your application and verify that you, through that application, have demonstrated that you meet the requirements of the international standard. That involves an iteration process. So as I mentioned before, our goal is really quality training. It is not a punitive process. If we find gaps, we'll communicate with you, give you an opportunity to fill the gaps; questions, get them answered, et cetera.

Once the desk audit process is done, we'll then go on to an onsite audit. And this is really our opportunity to come onsite, to visit your facilities, to talk to your administration, to interview some students, to look at your tools and equipment, and really just to assure that the requirements are actually being delivered to the students.

Once the audit process is done, the assessor writes up a report that goes to our award committee; again, an independent committee who will make a ruling based on that report on whether or not to award the credential.



And finally, there's a maintenance process. Each credential has a lifespan of five years, and each year there's a reporting requirement to ensure that a candidate continues to meet the requirements of the international standard.

So the standard that we use -- the IREC IPSQ international standard 1022 -- really provides a well-rounded assessment of training programs. There's a strong emphasis on safety. And that's both safe practices in teaching as well as -- teaching the student safe practices to use when they get out in the field. But that's one core component. A second is really looking at the skills being taught. Again, the job task analysis -- are you teaching the skills to make sure that a graduate is prepared to go out and be successful on the job?

And the third is, do you really have the facilities and the tools and equipment to support that training so that a graduate of your program has hands-on experience with what they'll need to know when they get out in the field?

As part of the application -- or as the purpose of the application -- is really to provide evidence that the requirements of the standard are met. And this evidence includes copies of policies and procedures; lists of tools and equipment, copies of examinations that are used; a process, policy and procedures about how you stay connected with industry to ensure that your students are being taught what is needed in your area; and information about curriculum and how it's developed, how it's maintained and how it covers all the information required.

So to that point, as we look at your entire program, one of the core pieces is ensuring that all of the tasks and subtasks in a defined job task analysis are covered. Now, Benjamin mentioned in his presentation there are four job categories that have been covered through the efforts of DOE and NREL. And those four job categories have job task analyses -- the energy auditor, the quality control inspector, the crew leader and the installer/technician.

And those job task analyses are used by IREC to assess your curriculum. We look for you to put together a cross-map of how things are covered, and then we will help assess that as we go through the auditing process.

We have eight job task analyses that we currently use in our credentialing program. All of these job task analyses have been reviewed and assessed by IREC to ensure that they clearly define a job, that they were developed with a balanced input of subject matter experts, and that they were really developed using an acceptable occupational analysis process. So the four, again, that we use for energy efficiency are energy auditor, installer/technician, crew leader and quality control inspector, to be in alignment with the job categories defined through the work of DOE and NREL.

So that's a really quick overview of the IREC IPSQ credentialing program. For anyone who's interested in pursuing things, I want to take just a minute to talk about a couple of resources. One is the IREC website. If you go to the website and go to the IPSQ program page, you will find all of the information



that you need to understand the program and all of the information you'll need to begin the application process.

Your first step should be to take a look at the candidate handbook. This is a relatively lengthy document. However, it's available for download and it's really required reading for anyone who wants to put an application together. It'll step you through the process, talk about all our policies and procedures and help you understand what to expect in the process.

The second is the IPSQ international standard. Again, you want to read through that and understand the requirements. And then the third is the application. And our applications are designed to help walk you through the process, the requirements and what you need to provide to show evidence.

And then finally, when you go to the page you'll see a link to a wonderful little video. If you have three-and-a-half minutes, this'll give you a great overview of the whole process and fill in some of the blanks that I've skipped in this presentation.

And with that, I'm going to -- here's my contact information. And I'm going to turn it over to Roger.

ROGER EBBAGE: Well, thank you, Pat, very much. I first want to say I'm thankful for being on a panel -- I'm getting feedback, darn it.

I'm humbled to be on a panel with Todd, Benjamin and Pat. All do excellent work in this field.

What I would like to do is quickly give you an overview of who we are and then express to you the value that we have in accreditation through IREC and the work that we do with IREC and NABCEP

Very quickly, we are the Northwest Energy Education Institute. We kind of take a look that we do through the eyes of different people. And the first one I'll -- or the only one that I will give you an example of is Friedman and the work that he did with "Hot, Flat and Crowded" in his book in 2009. This really kind of sums it up, not only for us, but for utilities that are looking at providing electrical generation. Its first resource -- conservation is the first resource that we should be looking at for providing electricity.

And I know that sounds a little contrary to the reason why they do their work, and that is to sell electricity. But it's really the resource that they look at first before they go out and investigate renewable or fossil fuel resources.

A little bit about our program. We have two separate paths through the Northwest Energy Education Institute. The first is our two-year degree program at Lane Community College. And then we provide some professional training opportunities for practitioners who are in the field wanting to upgrade their skills.



Our two-year degrees. The first one is in energy management. Todd mentioned that I began the program in 1992. Thank you for that, Todd, but the program actually began in 1980, through a National Science Foundation grant offered -- or received by Alan Gubrud, who is our physicist that was teaching in the science division. We're very early adopters of this mission to train green workforce professionals, as Todd mentioned.

We closed the program in 1988 because of the administration's view of efficiency and renewables and the federal administration's view. And then we reopened the program in 1992, changed it from a focus on residential weatherization and solar water heating to, very specifically, commercial energy efficiency. We started developing additional options to the energy management program. The first one that we picked up was renewable energy technology. It is ISPQ-accredited.

We then started a whole new degree in water conservation technology; did that in 2008. And then we began our resource conservation management program. And if you're interested in hearing more about that stuff, we can do that offline.

Our program population has tripled, of course, which is why everybody else is starting programs now. There's a huge interest by students and a huge interest by the federal government to help create this workforce, or help create demand for this workforce. So our student population has tripled, from an annual influx of 30, to now an annual influx of 90, who can choose between one of the three energy-related programs. And then we have another 30 coming into our water technician program, annually. So we've really grown and really experienced those growing pains.

So the accreditation that we sought when it first became available was through IREC, and it was Institute of Sustainable Power. When we put our programs out on the street for students, we felt that it would be important for them to have the assurance through national accreditation that we knew what we were doing. As you all know, we can put a program out there and we have industry experts who are doing our curriculum development and our instruction. But are they following the standard that is seen as credible by the national workforce that's doing this kind of work?

The one that we picked up was the one for our renewable energy program, because that was the only one ISP-accredited (sic) at that time. And as Pat said, it gave us the ability to take a look at what we were teaching, make sure it was aligned with the task analyses that were developed through the standard that ISP (sic) created, and gave us a lot of comfort to put our program out on the street.

And when we talk about our program, we highlight that to our students that it's not just something that we know that we're doing OK here, but it's something that is viewed upon by the national industry as being credible. That's really important to us. Obviously, as I'm sure you feel, the student's best interest is what we're looking for. And to have something that a student can take -- and maybe there isn't a huge workforce here in Lane County in Oregon, which is a pretty small place -- they can take this training that they have and feel comfortable porting it some place else in the country, which they do.



I think the reason why Todd asked me to speak today is because -- that we have this value of accreditation, since we've had it for a while and can see that there is a value to us. And Todd asked me to hit a couple of high points regarding that value; some we've spoken about today and some might be new to you.

The industrial accreditation allows our students to know that this is not something that we developed; it's not something that we made up on our own; and it is in line with national standards. It's very important to be in line with national standards. It allows our faculty to adjust what they know with what -- in terms of designing a program or designing a course -- to what the industry accepts as being the way it should be done.

And we have a guy that's teaching, for instance, our photovoltaic class. We sent him all the way through the accreditation process to become a master trainer for -- an ISPQ master trainer. And so we're covering all of our bags in terms of accreditation. So it helps them to develop their courses, using the ISPQ knowledge, skills and abilities.

And then one thing that you may not recognize as a value is that, boy, is it important to have some credibility when you're applying for grants. I mean, we have a National Science Foundation grant where we're helping other colleges to what we do. And at every turn, we emphasize the fact that we are using a national accreditation standard, and it has really been an important piece in our being able to acquire grants. So if you're not thinking about it other than in student perception and student comfort, think about it also in the sense that it's a great tool for providing credibility for your program.

Some of the bits of advice that I would give. If you're starting a new or have an existing energy efficiency program, have the people that are developing your classes, your curriculum writers take a look at the KSAs as they're putting a new course together. I would suggest that as you're doing that, look to accreditation through ISPQ. Because as you're building your course, you can also be developing your application package that will go to -- I think Pat mentioned this earlier -- that can go towards your ISP (sic) application. And so you're kind of doing a couple of things at one time.

And, you know, the bottom line is having your program stand out. I realize I was really kind of surprised at the number that Todd threw out there, that 80 percent of all the SEED colleges have some sort of a weatherization program or course underway and 50 percent of them are offering degrees -- boy, that's a lot -- and how do we stand out, one to the other? I realize we're not competing, but how do we stand out, one to the other, when there are so many of us out there now?

When we first started our program, there weren't any. And so this has been a lonely world up until about 2006, 2008 for us. And it's great to have people starting to do this, but there has to be a method for us to, you know, show that our program has the chops to be able to deliver this kind of an education.

And I think that's it.



MR. COHEN: Great. Thanks, Roger. Thanks, all.

So I'm going to go through this quick. And there's essentially two big questions that we suspected going in, and we got to hit them. I might ask, you know, all three to really pack a punch, because we've got about seven minutes left. So, you know, as articulately and as quickly as we can answer them.

But then the two questions naturally are -- you know, there is some confusion around credentials and accreditation, and I think we just need to clear that up between how IREC and ISPQ interplays with BTI and NABCEP. So I want to hit that.

But the first one -- and I'll direct this to you, Roger, first -- which is placement because it's one thing to have a quality program; we all want that. But at the end of the day we need students to get jobs. And so my question for you, Roger, is how do you address the placement issue; how are you impacted by the current economy? And what tips do you have for these other colleges that are trying to do the same?

MR. EBBAGE: Good question.

You know, first of all, I think a very important thing to know is what your workforce demands might be. We have an advisory committee. They help us with understanding that. We work very closely with our workforce investment board. They of course understand that. But we work with organizations like community action programs and the residential weatherization industry. They're huge and they're in every county. And they do low-income weatherization.

Well, we can get hit on our workforce demands through them. We can take a look at our statewide research on workforce demands. So we have a couple of different vehicles through which we figure this out and we stick with that. We don't think that -- for instance, we don't say, oh, let's do a renewable energy program because we have somebody that can teach it, and not know whether or not we have that workforce demand that's out there. So being very specific in what you put on the ground, what sort of training you offer that is relative to your demand I think is really important.

We have a cooperative education requirement -- an intern requirement in our program that places students out in the workforce while they're in the program. And of course, all of you that have co-op programs recognize the value to that is networking; it's getting résumé material; it's getting real-life experience in the field -- all very important to employment.

We track placement. We assist with placement. We do that through our co-op program. And then we are in the field a lot. We are connected to our local, regional and national industry. And so we don't -- you know, and we do that intentionally to let people know that we have this program out there and we have competent students who are coming through an IPSQ-accredited program and they know what they're doing.



So we do a lot to facilitate placement. We do keep track of that, though. We have about an 80 percent placement rate. We know that for sure. As a matter of fact, we keep more track of that than we do our graduation rate.

MR. COHEN: Thanks, Roger. So I just want to follow up on that real quick. You obviously do not place all of your students in Lane County. So what resources do you actually use to place them elsewhere? You know, how do you do that? I mean, in about 30 seconds.

MR. EBBAGE: Before, it was pretty easy. Before we had all of the interest by other community colleges to get into this game, it was pretty darn easy because we -- as I said earlier, we were pretty much the only game in town. There were a couple of other colleges out there that were doing similar work. But we have been by ourselves up until about 2008.

And so we have this -- being involved nationally in the industry, we have this influx of placement requests by people who want our students. And now it's getting a little difficult. When students come into our program, our disclaimer is you can find work but you probably will need to relocate to do that. And so they understand that they're going to go someplace.

I think, Todd, being involved in the industry again at the local, regional and national level is vital to placement success.

MR. COHEN: Sure. Thanks, Roger. And one last question. Let me say a couple things, though. If you want to stick around, folks, after this is done, we have just an open-ended question. We'd like to hear from you what topics you want. And then I also want to say one last thing.

But let me throw this to Benjamin, I guess, and/or Pat. Somebody asked it; it's real clear-cut, so we're going to throw it on the board there. But, you know, the question is, "Are you saying that all the work we've done to gain accreditation by NABCEP and BPI is a waste?" So can you just really, really quickly just try to clarify that?

MR. GOLDSTEIN: This is Benjamin. Let me take a quick stab, and then Pat, you certainly may have more to add.

But the answer is no. And the existing BPI affiliate network of training providers is going to remain intact in some way, shape or form as a network of potential testing centers.

But what we've got to realize is that you can't have training and certification that kind of intimately in bed with each other. There needs to be a little bit of a firewall. So this notion of BPI training was always kind of vague. And I think what's happening now is BPI is further -- is really identifying itself as a certification body for the workforce.



In terms of the NABCEP accreditation, I'm not quite sure how that works. My understanding was NABCEP was also a certification body for the workforce and that IREC ISPO always did the accreditation of the training providers.

So the answer is no, none of that existing kind of relationship will change. It will simply just become a little more crisp and clear in terms of who's doing the accreditation of the training providers, who's affiliating as testing centers, and then who's actually administering the certification.

Pat, did you want to add anything to that?

MR. COHEN: Pat, you've got about 15 seconds.

MS. FOX: That's OK. No. I think Benjamin -- I think you said it well. You know, BPI and NABCEP are certification bodies for the practitioner and IREC provides the quality assessment for the training programs.

MR. COHEN: Great. Thank you.

Last thing; let me just put this out. First of all, let me thank the speakers. Thank you all so much. We really appreciate your time and information.

Couple of things folks should know on the call. There's a few new resources out there I'd like to point your attention to. We've got a new toolkit on -- really trying to help colleges go beyond just simply looking at the supply side in terms of this green economy, but trying to be more active and more engaged actually creating jobs on the demand side, which I think we can all agree is so critical.

This particular action plan focuses on policy; so what colleges should know about state-level, local-level policies, incentive packages, what's going to drive industry to your region so that you can, on the back end, be better prepared to offer training programs that are aligned to industry. So I urge you to check that out. That was released this week.

We've got a couple of more webinars. I would just write down in pencil for now. We're going to do one on sort of just rural-based green jobs; creation in the workforce, what's the community college's role there. And then it looks like November 30th we're going to do one on cutting-edge hybrid vehicle training. We're going to highlight a couple of colleges that are doing some fantastic things there.

And then finally, we've got a workshop at our AACC Workforce Development Institute. I urge all of you to go to that. In fact, Roger will be one of the mentors and one of the faculty there, along with a couple other colleges. You can find out all this information from theseedcenter.org.

Thank you all for participating. Thank you to the speakers for participating.



And please stay on for another couple of minutes and give us the feedback of what we can provide in the future to meet your needs. So thanks, everybody.

(END)



aacc.nche.edu
Washington, DC

ecoAmerica
start with people
ecoAmerica.org
Washington, DC