



MEDIA RELEASE

Jobs are Alaska's Future



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Commissioner Click Bishop

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AVTEC's New High-Tech Connected Education Center Opens

SEWARD – The Alaska Vocational Technical Center announces a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house for its new \$2.6 million Connected Education Center in Seward, 703 Second Ave., on Friday, June 8 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. There will be a reception following at the AVTEC Student Service Center in Seward, 519 Fourth Ave., at 3:30 p.m.

AVTEC's goal in building the Connected Education Center is to help the school's growth by providing training and education online and using other technology-based instructional delivery systems such as video-teleconferencing. Class instructors in all AVTEC's departments will use the center, said Fred Esposito, the school's director.

"AVTEC is a leader in using communication technology to reach Alaskans, no matter where they live, to provide job training or technical training," Esposito said.

Built in 10½ months, the 4,787-square-foot center has three classrooms, a video broadcast studio, a video production and editing room, and four offices. The building is outfitted with the latest in distance-delivery technology, including wireless Internet connectivity throughout the building, video-teleconference cameras, ceiling-mounted speakers and microphones, flat screen monitors, a moveable wall to accommodate large groups and SMART Board interactive white boards. (The interactive white boards have a touch-sensitive surface that acts like a computer desktop. As instructors write on the board, their writing appears on their students' computer screens; the instructor's finger works like a mouse.)

Esposito said instructors using the center can be face-to-face with their Seward students at the same time they're hooked up by video and/or by computer with their distance students. Instructors will be able to broadcast live video of their classes, guest speakers or events, which requires distance students to have higher band-width computer connections. They'll also be able to record DVDs for students to watch later, in cases where the students have dial-up modems with lower band-width connections.

One program the school uses, Elluminate, allows teachers and students to share a desktop. It allows distance students with a question to click a button instead of raising their hands; students can "chat" with each other as the instructor looks on. The program, like others the school uses, requires only low band-width dial-up modems; most Alaska villages and small towns have at least dial-up modems, Esposito said.

“They’re very dynamic teaching and learning tools,” Esposito said, about the center’s technology and computer programs. “They’re very engaging. We see 100 percent participation by the students.”

Click Bishop, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, which runs AVTEC, said, “We’re excited about the new training opportunities that the AVTEC Connected Education Center will open up for all Alaskans.”

The center was built using a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, as well as \$323,000 from the State of Alaska. In-kind donations came from the state, GCI and the Chariot Group.

AVTEC staff chose the term “connected education” to denote all technology-enhanced or technology-assisted training programs intended for on-campus students and distance students throughout the state.

AVTEC has 16 long-term training programs (ranging from six weeks to 11 months) and roughly 60 short-term training programs (a week to six weeks). Fall classes begin Aug. 20; enrollment runs from now through the first day of classes. For more information, go to www.avtec.edu, or call (800) 478-5389.

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