



FLORIDA'S Great Northwest

Florida's Great Northwest
Media Contact: Kelly Lorenz
Manager, Marketing and Communications
850.337.3469 (Office)

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FLORIDA'S GREAT NORTHWEST AWARDS WORKFORCE INNOVATION II GRANT TO UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

(Pensacola, FL) February 19, 2009 – Florida's Great Northwest, Inc. is pleased to announce the award of a \$302,727 workforce training grant to the University of West Florida. The grant is part of the Workforce Innovation II Program, a component of Florida's Great Northwest's WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative. The University of West Florida will match the grant with \$1,867,572 of its own funds to develop a versatile educational pipeline that will target multiple tiers of professionals that play a critical role in meeting the workforce needs across the entire Northwest Florida region.

The Workforce Innovation II Program is designed to create education and training activities that lead to new job creation or employee advancement in Florida's Great Northwest's four target technology-related industry clusters: *Aviation, Aerospace, Defense & National Security; Health Science and Human Performance Enhancement; Renewable Energy and Environment; Transportation & Logistics Services*; and the two critical support industries of *Information Technology Services*; and *Research & Engineering*.

“At a time when positive economic news can be hard to come by today's grant announcement certainly represents good news for the University of West Florida and the region,” said Al Wenstrand, President of Florida's Great Northwest. “This grant award is a reinforcement of Florida's Great Northwest's and UWF's commitment to the future of the region. The science and engineering fields play a critical role in the support and success of all other knowledge-based industries in Northwest Florida and UWF creation of innovative training programs in these critical fields demonstrate a commitment to the region that will help lay the foundation for a sustainable Northwest Florida economy.”

“The concept behind the Workforce Innovation II Program is to address the mounting needs that exist for highly trained individuals in Northwest Florida's high-tech, knowledge-based industries,” said Wenstrand. “Time and time again we hear businesses cite their number one concern as “a skilled workforce to meet their future employment requirements.” We believe that the organizations that are receiving the Workforce Innovation II grants will be able to implement innovative talent development programs to meet the region's training needs.”

The University of West Florida was awarded \$302,727 and will be providing a match of \$1,867,572 to fund the development of a multi-faceted educational pipeline that will simultaneously target multiple

tiers of professionals that play a critical role in meeting the workforce needs across the entire Northwest Florida region. The program will implement a two-part program involving the development of an executive Masters of Science degree in Computer Science-Software Engineering; and provide educational outreach to high school guidance counselors on information technology career options and requirements. The University of West Florida anticipates 2009 enrollment will be 25 students in the Software Engineering Graduate Program and 20 in the high school Guidance Counselor Training program.

Judy A. Bense, PhD, President, University of West Florida noted, "UWF is excited to receive support from Florida's Great Northwest for its Master of Science degree program in Computer Science/Software Engineering. This new online, executive program exemplifies how the University of West Florida can respond quickly to address our region's critical need for highly trained professionals in information technology and health care."

Through the Workforce Innovation II Program, Florida's Great Northwest is awarding a total of \$962,426 to five Northwest Florida training providers with a grant match totaling \$3,193,112 contributed by the awardees. The implementation of these programs will have a tremendous impact on the development of Northwest Florida's workforce, will foster the growth of high-skill, high-wage jobs, and will support the development of the industries that will lead the region into a diversified and sustainable economy.

Eligibility for the grants was limited to Northwest Florida educational organizations or businesses in the targeted industries where instruction is conducted and jobs created in Northwest Florida. Qualifying jobs must meet the requirement of a wage of at least 125% of the regional average annual wage plus a defined benefits program. The individuals trained through the grant award must either be currently employed by a target industry employer in the region or be pursuing training for high-skill, high-wage target industry employment opportunities within Northwest Florida.

Florida's Great Northwest provides regional leadership in economic and workforce development, serving 16 counties in Northwest Florida from Pensacola through Tallahassee. Its primary mission is the creation of a diversified and sustainable economy in Northwest Florida that creates nationally and globally competitive advantages for the development of key industry clusters, increases the income and prosperity of workers and families and preserves the region's vibrant quality of life.

Florida's Great Northwest is the administrator and facilitating organization for the U.S. Department of Labor WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) Grant. Florida's Great Northwest's WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative, funded in part through the US Department of Labor, is designed to create high-wage, high-skill jobs within the region in the target industries of Aviation, Aerospace, Defense, and National Security; Life Sciences (Human Performance Enhancement, Medical Device Manufacturing, Medical Technologies, Health Services, and Biotechnology); Information Technology; Engineering; Renewable Energy and Environment; Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution; and Construction Products Manufacturing.

Note: This program is funded through Florida's Great Northwest's WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative which is funded in part through a U.S. Department of Labor Federal grant program and financed with Federal Funds.

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