FLCC embraces online education with Open SUNY

Jonathan Weissman, assistant professor of computing sciences at Finger Lakes Community College, teaches an online course called Computing in the Information Age. With an online course, his computer is his classroom.

Jack Haley/Messenger Post Media

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HOPEWELL — The new Open SUNY online college courses initiative is about to bring students from across the state — and the world — to Finger...
Lakes Community College.

One of the stars of the initiative is FLCC’s two-year associate of applied sciences degree in tourism management. Open SUNY is promoting the course, along with seven others from other colleges, and will provide 24/7 student help desk services and a one-stop concierge at FLCC to answer questions and provide direction.

Jeanne Fagan, professor of business administration at FLCC, is the primary faculty member for the tourism curriculum and knows first-hand how difficult it is for many adult students to complete coursework and get a degree.

“They have lots of things going on in their lives; they don’t have time to drive to campus, and this restricts their schedule,” she said. “Online courses offer them the opportunity to do their class work anytime, anywhere.

“I had a student who was in the service and had to spend three months in Germany. I went with her, in her laptop, as she finished the course,” said Fagan.

The effort bring the classroom to the computer is a state priority.

“SUNY (State University of New York) is expanding access to its world-class programs and faculty by embracing technology and innovative instructional delivery,” said David Doyle, director of communications at SUNY. “The state university system of New York is a national leader in public higher education, and Open SUNY is one of our signature initiatives. We believe it is a model that can be replicated across the country to educate more students and educate them better.”

Officials at FLCC see this as a boon and a recognition.

Larry Dugan, director of online learning at FLCC, said Open SUNY helps the school reach new audiences.

“This is a way to aggregate all of our online courses into a single repository across the state, so students can do some one-stop shopping on a website and find courses from FLCC,” he said. “We’ll get a tremendous amount of student support from SUNY.”

Dugan added, “We as a college get centralized marketing across the state, as opposed to what we usually do here. We’re a small college, but now we’re now part of the Open SUNY catalog, which is a benefit to us. This will help tell people our story: We’re the only college in SUNY with a tourism program online. People (who) might not have seen our program before will see it now.”

Fagan said she was pleased that FLCC’s tourism management degree program was chosen for the Open SUNY introduction.

“Tourism is one of the governor’s economic initiatives,” she said, “so they wanted a tourism program. Ours is the only tourism management program that is totally online. So, we feel very
flattered they chose us.”