JCC approved for StartUp NY participation

By Christopher Michel, Olean Times Herald | Posted: Friday, May 9, 2014 4:48 pm

OLEAN — An area college may now take a more active role in spurring economic development in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus counties.

State officials announced this week Jamestown Community College (JCC) was approved to participate in StartUp NY. The approval includes the community college’s sites in Jamestown, Dunkirk and Olean.

StartUp NY is a statewide initiative started last year aimed at fostering business development — like high-tech startups — within 1 mile of State University of New York campuses. Through the program, businesses have the opportunity to operate tax-free for 10 years on eligible land and space.

“We’re excited to play more of a role in the economic vitality of these two counties, which we consider our community,” said John Sayegh, dean of JCC Cattaraugus County Campus and vice president of continuing education. “What’s equally exciting for us, too, is that the StartUp NY program allows us to help existing businesses.”

Mr. Sayegh noted that StartUp NY’s 1-mile-radius restriction has been waived for JCC, allowing the college to offer its assistance to any business in the two counties it calls home.

“The state made it clear that if there is a significant investment in job creation, we are free to follow where the business wants to locate and operate in the Chautauqua and Cattaraugus counties,” he said.

Companies interested in being part of StartUp NY will be evaluated for their fit with JCC's academic mission through credit and/or non-credit programming and their ability to enhance learning inside and outside the classroom. The JCC President's Advisory Committee on Economic Development (PACED) will assess an applicant's ability to collaborate with the college on experiential learning opportunities, internships, and classroom instruction, and to create jobs that match local workforce qualifications.

Additionally, StartUp NY businesses must demonstrate their benefit to area economic development through increased economic growth; increased living wage jobs; beautification, reuse, or repurposing of vacant properties; and an impact, through additional jobs, on the local economy.

Participation in StartUp NY will go hand-in-hand with a new workforce development and training program coming to JCC’s Olean campus.

The school plans to offer courses, primarily in engineering and advanced manufacturing, at 129 Hamilton St., the former Knights of Columbus Hall. The school finalized the purchase of the social hall in February. Currently, plans for its renovation are being developed.
“The advent of providing technical, higher education and vocational training as part of our offering here at the Olean campus is really going to support this area,” Mr. Sayegh said. “Hopefully, that will bring new businesses to this area. For us to be able to help that along is very exciting.”

Mr. Sayegh said college officials recently held focus groups with the heads of several area businesses to find out exactly what their company’s needs are and how JCC can best service them.

“Our focus groups were really well attended,” he said. “One of the most important questions we asked was: What kind of programing can we offer our students that will lead to a full-time job after graduation? Most of the manufacturers have been concerned for the last three to five years about the Baby Boomers retiring and having a ready, skilled labor force to replace them. With the creation of this new technical institute, that will alleviate some of that concern for many of the area manufacturers.”

College officials intend to have the new workforce development center up and running by the start of the fall 2016 semester.

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