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BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Frankfort on notice: focus on improved education

Just prior to the inauguration of governor-elect Steve Beshear and the convening of the 2008 Kentucky General Assembly, the state's business community is sending a clear message to Frankfort to focus on the competitive imperative of workforce development through enhanced education.

"Recommendations and suggested action steps" offered by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce include the goal of achieving by 2020 the development of "a society with a standard of living and quality of life that meets or exceeds the national average." The chamber calls on the governor and legislature to "affirm the goal to develop a major comprehensive research university — The University of Kentucky — ranked nationally in the top twenty public universities; a premiere, nationally recognized metropolitan university — The University of Louisville; comprehensive universities with nationally recognized programs of excellence and nationally recognized applied research programs; a comprehensive community and technical college system; and a coordinating system to deliver educational services comparable to or exceeding the national average to all Kentuckians."

Among other recommendations, the chamber calls for the adoption of a goal of "reaching the education attainment levels of the most competitive nations by 2025 and set benchmarks referenced to the United States," as well as those of member nations of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development.

Toyota offers work/college tuition plan

Impressed by Louisville's Metropolitan College program launched by UPS, Toyota is offering to pay a tax-free tuition reimbursement of up to $2,500 to students who take 12 hours of college credit per semester at any accredited Kentucky college or university and earn at least a 3.0 grade point average. To qualify for the maximum reimbursement, students are required to work at Toyota — at $12 an hour — for at least 24 hours over three days per week. Students who work less than three days a week will receive prorated tuition reimbursements.

Toyota officials created the program after learning that 80 percent of Kentucky's college students work while in school and that nearly 30 percent of a Kentucky family's income is spent on post-secondary education.

Work schedules will be flexible to accommodate students' needs.

Students who work less than three days a week will get smaller tuition reimbursements. The amount will be prorated.

Didn't finish college? Opportunity knocks

With funds from a national grant designed to make post-secondary education more adult-friendly, the University of Kentucky is partnering with the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) on a plan to lure Kentucky adults back to college.

Targeting a market of 310,000 adult students in the Bluegrass, the program will unfold in two phases. In phase one, Project Graduate, the goal is to reach more than 11,000 of adults who have earned 90 or more credit hours but have not obtained a bachelor's degree. CPE, in partnership with institutions across the state including UK, will coordinate media events and a direct mail effort to reach this audience.

Once at UK, these students will be placed with academic advisers trained to assist with course scheduling and to explain requirements and university procedures. They will also be able to utilize a degree audit program that shows exactly which courses they must take to complete a degree in their initial fields of study or in other disciplines.

For more information, contact Cecile McKinney, UK's Project Graduate representative, at (859) 257-3802 or toll-free 1-866-900-4685 or cmckinn@email.uky.edu.