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Grant bolsters Gateway program

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EDGEWOOD - Gateway Community and Technical College has received \$180,000 to improve its automotive technology program.

The grant is part of a \$5.5 million grant that was awarded to the Kentucky Community and Technical College System by the National Science Foundation.

According to Amber Decker, Gateway director of grants and contracts, the funds were granted because Gateway's program addressed a local workforce need by increasing the capacity for the automotive tech program.

"The automotive manufacturing workforce has been and still is an area where resources are wasted on overlapping manpower," said Sam Collier, an assistant professor and chairman of Gateway's Transportation Technologies Division. "The purpose of the National Science Foundation grant is to create and implement training programs that will allow this workforce to be more diverse in their skills and knowledge."

Collier said Gateway students and the region's high schools will benefit from the lab.

"Gateway students range from people straight out of high school that are normally seeking a degree or diploma to students in their late 30s looking to obtain certificates to help them in a career change," he said.

Gateway places many of its students with Toyota dealers due to its involvement in the T-TEN program. T-TEN is a partnership program between Toyota dealers and community colleges to train technicians to service Toyota, Lexus and Scion cars. Gateway also works with independent shops and tire and battery stores for placement.

Collier said the grant money will be used to hire a lab tech and to purchase ATECH simulators.

"ATECH simulators range from computer-based activities to parts from or sections of automobiles on boards or stands," he said. "The simulators allow students to work at their own pace in a safe open lab environment that is designed by the instructor to meet the needs of the individual student and monitored via computer for student strengths and weaknesses. We will run open labs to allow students who excel to work ahead and students who are struggling to spend the extra time on areas where they need additional practice."

Collier said this is more important "during these tough economic times, more people are repairing their older cars, and driving the need for well-trained service technicians."
