

## **COC Economic Development Division Programs Provide Fast Track to Recovery**

By Pete Bellas, COC Dean of Economic Development

College of the Canyons is well known, and respected, throughout the state for the wide variety of innovative academic degree, certificate and life-long learning programs that have been designed to help students and community members succeed in reaching their educational goals.

However, an equally important part of the college's overall mission is to help promote the development and growth of the region's business community, while providing relevant job training and workforce development services to employers and job-seeking individuals throughout our communities.

These programs are provided through the college's Economic Development Division, which has a number of departments and programs working under its umbrella to assist businesses in meeting their goals.

A new and important COC Economic Development Division initiative is the new Fast Track Institute, which debuted late in the fall 2010 semester.

Fast Track provides fast-paced, intensive, job preparation courses for job seekers, mid-career professionals, recent high school graduates and other community members looking for an opportunity to quickly jumpstart their career during the current economic downturn.

With two major focuses — entry-level job skills and professional certifications — Fast Track courses teach the job skills needed to quickly begin working in local businesses and industries where applicants with up-to-date training are in high demand.

Most Fast Track courses take only a few months to complete, and result in skills that students can share with potential employers. Classes being offered in spring 2011 include CNC Machinist Training for both commercial and aerospace machinist positions, Office Administration, and APICS Operations & Management Fundamentals, which is focused on providing hands-on training in several key manufacturing management areas.

The Fast Track institute also offers certification and certification preparation programs for individuals who may have already received training, but still need to prepare for a professional certification exam.

A number of local employers have expressed an almost constant need for trained entry-level workers that can perform jobs related to assembly and manufacturing. With the debut of Fast Track, these businesses will now have a reliable, flexible resource to train potential employees and fill these positions.

Fast Track is simply the latest tool in helping people get back to work and helping businesses by providing valuable training for potential employees. The program complements the work done by the other Economic Development Division departments.

The COC Center for Applied Competitive Technologies (CACT) works to advance the global competitiveness of local manufacturing companies by offering a variety of workforce training and technical consulting services in a wide range of computer aided design and manufacturing disciplines.

The Employee Training Institute (ETI) is available to help companies drive down costs, expand the talent within their workforce and adapt to industry advances, by providing customizable skill training services that can be delivered in a variety of locations, and conducted based on the employer's needs.

The award winning Small Business Development Center (SBDC) hosted by College of the Canyons provides free one-on-one counseling with professional business advisors on a number of pertinent issues. Whether you are looking for help with business expansion and start-up, marketing and sales, business plan development, international trade, import/export assistance, access to capital, finance and accounting, legal issues, e-commerce and much more, SBDC business advisors can help!

A specialized service within the SBDC is the Advanced Technology Incubator (ATI) which serves technology oriented entrepreneurs and start-up companies. The Incubator combines the resources of a specialized advisory board and mentor group with the knowledge and experience offered by the SBDC's team of business advisors to help local entrepreneurs grow and succeed.

As you can see, the college's entire Economic Development Division is working hand in hand to continually enhance the level of consulting services, advice and assistance available to employers, small businesses and job seekers throughout the region.

*For more information about the College of the Canyons Economic Development Division please call (661) 362-3521 or visit [www.canyonsecondev.org](http://www.canyonsecondev.org). For more information about the Fast Track Institute please visit [www.canyons.edu/fasttrack](http://www.canyons.edu/fasttrack).*