

## WCCT brings Alpena to the cutting edge

SARA ASHFORD  
Staff writer

What is unique about WCCT (World Center For Concrete Technology) and where do they get their funding?

WCCT gains its revenue from many sources. "We do a lot of testing for industry and so our students have the opportunity to first of all take the class, learn how to do this testing through a project where they do the testing, and also get some experience during the course of the year working on a project that are real lab projects for industry where we get compensation for it," stated James Hayford, Director of WCCT.

The WCCT building came into being in 1994, when Dr. Newport and Jim Parks lobbied the state legislature and received a grant of two million dollars. Both Federal government

agencies and community and industry supplied funds of between \$400,000 to \$500,000.

The WCCT building itself cost roughly seven million dollars housing about two million dollars worth of equipment.

"For operating purposes we get no money from the community college. All of the operating funds come from programs that we bring in," said Hayford.

The industry leaders belong to what is called the "Partner's Council". This council has contributed significant funds to the building. They meet with WCCT two times yearly to make sure the programs are meeting their needs in the industry. An Advisory Committee also helps to keep WCCT up to date with the latest technology.

A unique quality that is found at WCCT is their studies on using recycled waste in the

manufacturing of concrete products. Waste plastic, ground up car tires, wood pulp, sewage sludge, and solid waste (what you put out by the curb one day a week), are all used in studies to see what can be done with them.

Students enrolled in the two-year program take a mandatory course that is called "concrete products lab". During the time allotted for this class, each student does a project in which they analyze and develop a product using their knowledge of cement production.

Hayford said, "This gives our students a little more background with actual hands-on stuff. The thing that is really great about the two year program is it's not easy curriculum, but by the same token there is a lot of hands on, you are actually doing things with it..."

Another quality that makes WCCT distinctive is the installation of ITV (Interactive Television Video). This allows classes to be taught here and transmitted to other places in the world, live or vice versa. WCCT received funds to make ITV possible as part of the grant that they received from the Legislature to strengthen the technology within the center.

At this time, the plan is to have a classroom as well as a conference room set up for ITV use. These grant funds are allotted to improve the quality of the ITV in the Center Building. Two stations will also be added in two rooms that will be equipped with power-point cameras. This is necessary because WCCT is writing their own curriculum on concrete products production, so it will be very helpful for the instructors.

They are also planning on upgrading the phone system at the

college during Spring Break. This upgrade will allow each extension to be available immediately without going through the switchboard. The ITV grant allows the purchase of the \$60,000 switch, which permits the Alpena Public school system to tie into the college system.

The technology and funding has really benefited the students of WCCT. Nineteen people graduated from WCCT in May of 2000. It is reported that they collectively had 249 job offers.

"The demographics of student population in the state of Michigan for colleges and community colleges particularly is not encouraging. In Alpena for example, the greatest export it has is our young people (and when I say Alpena I mean the five county area," said Hayford.

This research and educational facility wants to change this area from exporting

young people for education to importing them in greater numbers. Already the center has educated "12,000 people from 51 countries". Since Hayford has been at WCCT (May 2000), they have hosted educational classes for people from Canada, Bangladesh, Egypt, Aratraya (located right below Ethiopia), Venezuela, Bermuda, Surinam, and Mexico. International people are flocking into this facility for the expertise in concrete products production that the center offers. The courses offer credentials and college credits including "Master Blockmaker" (a series of five courses) that is recognized worldwide.

Hayford states, "I recommend to students if they don't really know what they want to do, take this program and in two years you'll learn a skill that can make you a decent living and also be a stepping stone to any number of other occupations."

## Graduate from college before you graduate from high school

LANCE SPENCER  
Staff Writer

After high school usually comes college, but what about college during high school?

For many high school students, college has become an early reality. Through the dual enrollment program, any eligible student can enroll in college while still attending high school. This program has given many students a head start on their college and their life.

There are certain requirements to be met before a student can dual enroll. The student has to be a junior or senior. In order to qualify for the accelerated courses and receive funding from the state, they have to pass a MEAP proficiency test. The student must then receive permission from their high school.

Usually, an eligible candidate will have to discuss with their high school counselor the classes they are eligible to take because of graduation requirements.

High Schools are also reluctant to pay for a class that they offer and deem similar to a college course. After the school approves, all the student has to do is register with the college.

One benefit of the dual enrollment program is the cost factor. High Schools are required to pay all of the tuition including registration fees. The only expenses left over for the student is books. This factor makes the dual enrollment program most appealing. A high school student can basically go to college for next to nothing.

Dual Enrollment has become quite popular. Students all over Michigan are attending colleges through this program. A student may enroll in any college or university as long as it is in state. This means a student can go to any college in Michigan as long as their yearly tuition does not exceed the amount given to the school from the state, which is roughly \$5,500.

Students may attend regular college classes or they may choose to take correspondence courses. Many states have also adopted similar programs with minor variations. Dual enrollment is starting to be looked at more and more each day by prospective students.

An example of using the dual enrollment program to its fullest, is receiving an associates degree while in high school. If a dual enrollment student started during their junior year and attended college full time, they could easily receive an associates degree before

they graduated from high school. This student would receive the degree for only the costs of two years worth of books and they will do it while still in high school.

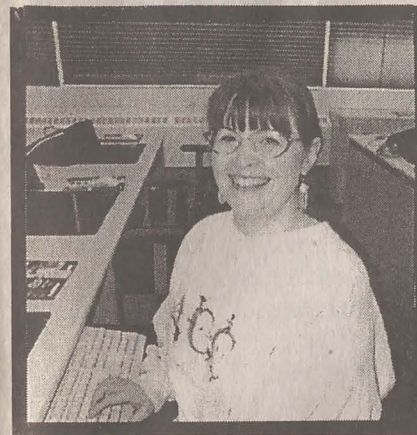
Most dual enrolled students may not go after a degree while in high school, but they do get a head start on their college. All of the dual enrolled students I talked with have one main thing in common: they all think the dual enrollment program is a great opportunity.

An eligible student definitely cannot beat the benefits and deals of the program. It is better than most scholarships out there in terms of paying tuition and fees.

Overall, the dual enrollment program has helped many high students get a head start on their college education and life. It is definitely something for any prospective college school student to look into.



## Take advantage: Microsoft certification now available at ACC



Pictured Rhonda Parker

WENDY WILLIAMS  
Staff Writer

ACC now offers MOUS, Microsoft Office User Specialist, certification. This is live-in-the-application testing software that measures users' proficiency in Microsoft Office Word, Excel, Project, Access, Power Point, and Outlook. ACC has recently been approved as an authorized testing site for Microsoft programs as well.

"This makes the certification a lot more 'do-able' for most students," explains instructor Mary Jane Thomson. "A year ago, I could encourage my students to go to Saginaw or Traverse City to get certified after they finished my course, but it was a long way to drive!"

ACC offers testing the first and third Fridays of the month at 8a.m., 10a.m., Noon, and 2p.m.

Lee Kirkpatrick and Mary Jane Thomson have been approved as authorized instructors. They have passed several exams, including the expert exams. Being authorized allows them to wear Microsoft clothing, use the logos, and access the internet for instructional forums. Selected courses are suggested before attempting to get certified, due to the proficiency of the timed exams.

"The certification exams are not just for students enrolled in these specific classes. Students enrolled in other programs here at the college, past graduates, and people from the community all can take the exam," says Thomson. "Because so many companies require that everyone be able to use Microsoft Office, getting certified in the software really can't hurt you, no matter what career path you are involved in."

Why choose certification? According to Microsoft, most people only use a fraction of these programs. You may just want to prove to yourself that you can do what your resume says you can do. You may want to pursue a new career path or a promotion and need the certification to verify skills to your employer. Having a broad understanding of these programs can help even when it

isn't directly used in your job. You can become a resource, and your employer can benefit from your advanced knowledge. This certification allows employers to quickly assess your capabilities in a business environment.

"By teaching MOUS skills, I can ensure that I'm teaching the skills employers need, individuals can gain marketable skills, and corporate employers can be assured that potential employees have achieved a level of expertise with the necessary software," said Thomson.

"Our efforts are focused on positioning the college as an Information Testing and Certification Center," explained Thomson. "We've started with MOUS and can only expand from here. With ever-changing technology, the sky is the limit!"

For further information on MOUS certification call 356-9021 or 888-468-6222 ext. 286 or 209.



Pictured Mary Jane Thomson

## Board Meeting Minutes

ERIN FLEMING  
Staff Writer

Alpena Community College Board of Trustees monthly meeting was held January 18, 2001. Frank McCourt started off the meeting by presenting the ACC basketball players before the board. He said, "They are the most polite group of young men I've ever coached in my entire life."

The agenda continued as the board of trustees confirmed a proposed contract with the 54 full-time faculty members. The contract extends the existing contract

to Aug. 15, 2004.

The closing of the Fletcher Paper Company and displacement of more than 200 employees was also addressed. The college wants to help former Fletcher employees prepare for new futures.

Following that, a presentation on Microsoft Office User Specialist was given by Mary Jane Thomson and Lee Kirkpatrick. MOUS proves computer literacy, measures proficiency, improves productivity and identifies opportunities for skills enhancement.

The board also discussed that Timm Construction will be redoing ACC roofing in the Spring. The next board meeting will be held in 400 NRC on February 15, 2001 at 7:30 pm.

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