

Testimony to the Senate Special Committee on Aging Field Hearing
“Back to Work: Empowering Alabama’s Aging Workforce”
November 30, 2018
Dr. Tamara Payne
Director of Career and Learning Services
Jefferson State Community College

Good Afternoon Senator Jones and other members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging field hearing, “Back to Work: Empowering Alabama’s Aging Workforce.

I am honored to speak with you today regarding the BACK TO WORK 50+ Program at Jefferson State Community College and the unique needs of job candidates that are 50 and older. Jefferson State Community College has been a part of AARP Foundation’s BACK TO WORK 50+ Network since mid-2014.

Major Components of BACK TO WORK 50+

- 7 Smart Strategies Workshop that includes an analysis of the 7 effective habits for 50+ job seekers
 - Targeted Job Search
 - The Importance of Keyword Searches
 - Interests VS Skills
 - Requirements VS Preferred Criteria
 - Create Personal Marketing Tools to Impress Employers
 - Resume and Cover Letter Development
 - Embedding Keywords into Your Resume
 - Conquering the Job Application and Interview Process
 - How to Complete an Online Application
 - How to Set Up Email Accounts
 - Get New Work Experiences and Skills
 - Transitional Employment
 - Part-time Employment
 - Volunteer Opportunities
 - Meet People Who Know People
 - Career Fairs
 - Career Centers
 - Temporary Agencies
 - Connect With Organizations That Find Jobs for Employers
 - Take Time to Focus on Yourself and Stay Strong
 - YMCA Silver Sneakers or East Pinson Valley Recreation Center
 - Eastern Mental Health Authority
 - Family Guidance Center
 - Chilton Shelby Mental Health Authority
 - Finances 50+

Other Program Components:

- Individual and Group Coaching
- Computer skills assessment and training (basic computer, Basic Word and Basic Excel are offered to all participants-technology deficits have been identified as a barrier to employment for 50+ job seekers with no skills , limited skills, or out of date skills (<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/info-2018/technology-training-for-older-adults.html>; <https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/planning-to-retire/2012/05/18/why-older-workers-cant-get-hired>)
- Scholarships for non-credit fast track training programs based on in-demand jobs leading to industry certification(s)
- Job readiness skills (working on soft skills) and interview preparation
- Job placement assistance (direct referrals and leads)

BACK TO WORK 50+: Women's Economic Stability Initiative (WESI)

After success with the BACK TO WORK 50+ Program, Jefferson State Community College enhanced our partnership with AARP Foundation by becoming a BACK TO WORK 50+ WESI Partner. WESI focuses on women ages 50 and older. Earlier we heard testimony regarding the national statistics on unemployment for women ages 50 and older. Here is are figures exclusive to Alabama. As of 2018, 16.9% of women in Alabama ages 60-64 are underemployed. Per data from October 2018, women ages 55-64 spend over 30 weeks being unemployed when compared to the average of 10 weeks for women ages 20-24. Jefferson State's selection as a WESI Partner was an indicator of our Success with the Classic Back To Work Program and hinged upon the need of a program expressly for women ages 50+ in Alabama, taking into account their distinctive needs to improve their employability and economic stability.

Outcomes

Since June 2014, 853 individuals have attended a 7 Smart Strategies Workshop. 313 individuals received individual and group coaching. 179 50+ candidates have been hired with an average wage of \$13 per hour.

Indicators for Success

- Suggestions a cohort coaching model where participants learn from the coaches and from one another
- Embedding basic and intermediate computer skills into a soft skills curriculum
- Look at short term, industry in-demand driven programs
- Mock interviews using local staffing agencies and HR personnel
- Highlight success stories and share with participants, employers, and local leaders

- Educate local employers on the innate skills that 50+ job candidates bring to the table
- Assist 50+ job seekers with highlighting their hard and soft skills

Local Partnerships/Regional Initiatives

- Longstanding partnership with the Alabama Department of Labor to accept referrals for BACK TO WORK 50+ and to provide referrals to ADOL for WIOA
- ALDOL representative housed at the Jefferson (Carson Road Campus) with ALDOL having representation at the Shelby Campus
- Mercedes Auto Initiative-focus on Ready to Work (Soft Skills and Industry Driven) and MSSC Certified Production Technician and Certified Logistics Technician
- Jefferson State Community College has partnered with Positive Maturity/Aware, the Middle Alabama Area on Aging, Central Six, and many other non-profits to accept referrals into the BACK TO WORK 50+ Program.
- Partnership with JSCC Adult Education to refer 50+ candidates that lack high school diploma or GED
- Partnership with Career Pathways for scholarships for in-demand credentials that are stackable and correlate to credit-based programs

Other JSCC Initiatives

- DOL Grant done in partnership with Generation and AAPR Foundation to work with displaced workers ages 40 and older
- New Options Program provides scholarship, book loan, tutoring, and wrap around services for non-traditional students, including older returning students

Success Story-Video

<https://vimeo.com/aarpbroadcast/review/292408975/16e5261c1a>