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Surveys Identify Omaha Area Job Opportunities

LINCOLN- Two new reports prepared by Dr. Eric Thompson of the University of Nebraska's Bureau of Business Research provide insight into career opportunities in the Omaha area, and the hiring needs of Omaha businesses. The "Survey of Omaha Businesses about Skill and Training Requirements" and "Omaha Area Skills Gap Report" were commissioned by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Nebraska Department of Labor.

These reports are valuable tools in understanding the needs of area employers, and the corresponding opportunities for underemployed individuals, students about to enter the workforce, and people interested in relocating to Nebraska.

The Skills Gap study found annual worker deficits in business and financial operations workers and computer and mathematical workers, as well as among blue collar occupations. Highly skilled occupations with a deficit of workers include computer systems analysts, computer programmers and software developers, and network and computer systems administrators.

"The need for specialized training is greatest for computer and mathematical workers, construction workers, factory production workers, and industrial machinery mechanics," Thompson said. Employers reported that they provide job-specific training to newly-hired workers in 71 percent of occupations. In addition, Thompson said post-secondary institutions in the Omaha area are educating thousands of workers for skilled occupations each year. "There is a particularly large number of workers being trained at all levels for health care occupations," he said.

Thompson said the net in-migration of workers into the Omaha metropolitan area economy may help lesson skill gaps. "Based on Census data, there is an estimated net in-migration of 1,300 workers into the Omaha Metropolitan Area economy each year," he said.

Sarah Moylan, the Greater Omaha Chamber's Senior Director – Talent, said the studies underscore the the importance of the Chamber's new tech talent strategy and long-standing efforts to connect business and education. "Ensuring our employers have the talent they need to thrive is a priority for us and our community partners," she said. "We appreciate the effort that went into conducting this comprehensive study. By aligning skill sets and open positions, we're boosting both our employers and those entering or hoping to advance in their careers."

Commissioner of Labor John H. Albin said Nebraska's reemployment program works to fill employer demand through providing one-on-one assistance to help unemployed workers accelerate their return to employment. "The program utilizes the state labor exchange website, NEworks.nebraska.gov, to connect

workers with existing employment opportunities and provide an individualized plan to address any barriers to reemployment,” Albin said.

While the studies were intended to identify areas of need for employers, Thompson said employers expressed satisfaction in a number of areas as well. “Omaha area employers are complimentary about their current workforce,” he said.

“Results show that Omaha’s labor pool provides most employers with a quality workforce that largely matches the skills that local employers need,” said Courtney Dentlinger, Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. “But there are opportunities for additional workers to enter the market, particularly those with skills in IT, mathematics, construction, and production manufacturing. In addition, in those occupations where skills gaps exist, the study results note the types of education and training needed to expand the talent pipeline in the metro area,” she said. “This information will help inform our state’s talent strategy.”

The Omaha Skills Gap Report and Survey of Omaha Businesses about Skill and Training Requirements can be obtained at networks.nebraska.gov under the Labor Market Information Publications link.