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Walmart grant to let Santa Fe expand low-income job training

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Santa Fe College soon will be able to reach outside of its adult education program to help people get the job skills they need, thanks to a grant of more than \$200,000 by the Walmart Foundation.

SF College is one of 12 community colleges in the United States chosen this year for the Walmart Brighter Futures Project 2.0. Miami Dade College also was chosen.

The grant allows colleges to give low-income adults the training they need for middle-skill jobs, which is any job that requires more than a high school diploma, said project director and SF College adult education coordinator Julie Falt.

"We're looking at all the different credentials that people can work toward that will build toward future careers," she said.

Those credentials are varied, from basic — strengthening literacy skills or earning a GED — to specialist training such as CPR certification or an early-childhood care credential.

"There are a lot of different areas that people can meet success in," Falt said.

After attaining those credentials, participants will get some help with how to communicate their skills to potential employers. The point of the project is to help people become financially self-sufficient, according to a news release about the Walmart Brighter Futures awards.

The Walmart grant will fund projects for 2½ years.

To qualify, applicants must be considered low-income. Falt said there's no single marker for what that entails, but program coordinators will take into account factors such as homelessness, underemployment, size of the applicant's family and whether applicants are in assisted living facilities or on public assistance.

"For us, it makes perfect sense, because we have a lot of students in our adult ed GED program that would like to do more," Falt said.

She elaborated: Working toward a diploma is the first step, but you don't want to wait to start gathering additional credentials and getting job-ready. Under the Brighter Futures project, she said, you can work on all of those things at the same time.

Falt said she hopes to take 500 to 1,000 people a year for the project, which will be facilitated through the adult education program.

For more information or to apply, call SF College's adult education department at 395-5760 or select 'Apply Now' at sfcollege.edu.

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