

Demand for workers with specialized online skills prompts colleges to develop new workforce training programs

The Social

BY ELLEN ULLMAN

Community colleges have long taken pride in their ability to adjust to changing workforce needs. The local plumbers union requires a new certification. No problem. Adjust. A biotechnology manufacturer seeks workers to staff its state-of-the-art research facility. Not a problem. Adjust.

But what happens when a new industry materializes almost overnight? From January 2011 to June 2011, Internet staffing firm Onward Search reports that the number of jobs with the phrase “social media” in their description increased by more than 45 percent. With the explosion of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media sites—Facebook alone now boasts more than 800 million users worldwide—more employers want workers who can skillfully navigate the social media universe. And community colleges are quickly becoming the place to turn.



MEDIA

Network

With entry-level jobs from \$45,000 a year into six figures, some institutions have begun working with employers to launch professional training courses and a handful of for-credit certificates intended to help businesses and their employees tap a wellspring of new business and marketing opportunities.

Start From Scratch

As co-lead marketing instructor at Madison Area Technical College (MATC) in Wisconsin, Kristin Uttech works closely

with local employers that advise the college on the skills most in demand. "Our business partners kept asking, 'Where is the social media training?'" she says. "We could not find evidence of cost-effective, high-quality training, even though we knew that 60 percent to 70 percent of marketing jobs required some element of social media."

After talking with other instructors at the college, she learned that the graphic design, journalism, and visual arts departments also had interest in integrating

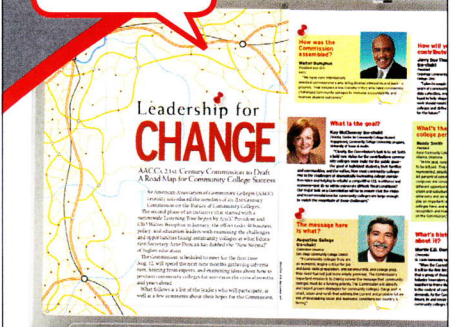
social media components with existing curricula. It was time to adjust.

MATC launched its first social media certificate program in the fall of 2010, with courses on social media campaigns, ethical issues surrounding social media, Web design strategies, and writing for new media. Courses currently in development include designing a mobile website, digital storytelling, and advanced social media campaigns.

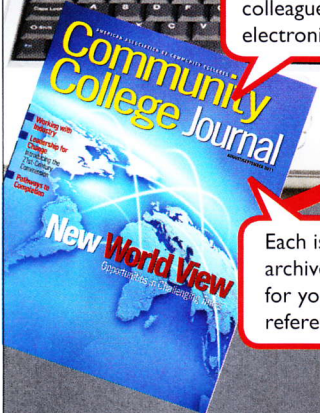
As part of a recent social media campaigns course, students developed an

Community College Journal digital edition

Read, download, print, and search the news.



Share articles with your board, colleagues, and staff electronically.



Each issue is archived online for your future reference.

Free access to all AACC members and Journal subscribers.

Not a subscriber yet?

Call 202-728-0200. Or visit www.aacc.nche.edu and click on AACC Publications.

www.ccjournal-digital.com



Published 6 times per year by the American Association of Community Colleges

e-marketing campaign for Axiom Foods. This spring, the same team of students will execute that marketing plan, develop ads for Facebook, launch a blog, and handle promotion using the popular Google AdWords application.

"We want our students to walk out of here with hands-on, real-world experience," says Uttech of the college's social media marketing program.

Local employers so far are impressed. "Already, we've seen a great response from the business community," says Uttech.

A handful of MATC graduates have secured jobs in social media. One graduate who had previously worked in traditional marketing accepted a position as social media manager at his firm. He credited his MATC certification with helping him land the job.

In less than a year, the college has gone from offering one section of its social media campaigns course to five.

Administrators plan to offer social media courses in different formats, including online and blended (a mixture of online and in-person) instruction. "We're looking at emerging trends, such as mobile marketing," explains Uttech. "It's a fascinating area we want to do more in."

Going Viral

MATC isn't the only community college to delve into social media career training. In YouTube parlance, social media careers are "going viral."

A successful Social Media Manager Certification course at Sandhills Community College (SCC) in North Carolina prompted instructor David Blide to lobby for more. Though SCC is a rural college, Senior Director of Business and Industry Services Alan Duncan says there are plenty of local opportunities for social media experts, even more so in nearby Raleigh.

That's the point. "We want the certificate to be something students can use to

find a job," says Blide. SCC's Social Media Manager course focuses on social media for small businesses.

The field is constantly evolving. And Blide says few people know how to do the work. "It's such a dynamic industry. My goal is to teach strategies more than actual applications."

Students at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College in Ohio can enroll in an Institute for Social Media (ISM).

In 2010, the college's Workforce Development Center formed an advisory council of social media professionals, including experts from blue-chip employers such as Procter & Gamble, to develop programs.

One of ISM's offerings, Marketing for Social Media Certification, requires students to spend three eight-hour days

learning about social media and mobile marketing. They then must pass a final exam before obtaining their certification.

Project Manager Jim Kleemeier says the program is built for people who see social media as an

important aspect of their career. "It's not a lunch-and-learn program; there is lots of rigor," he explains.

ISM also offers Business Development: Selling 2.0, a two-day course for sales professionals, entrepreneurs, and executives. A third class—a three-hour workshop on human resources and legal issues—will begin next year.

At Washtenaw Community College (WCC) in Michigan, social media-related classes focus on professional development and personal enrichment. "We offered a class on making a personal Facebook page, but we found that people wanted to learn how to use social media to promote their business," says Nancy Howard, program manager of WCC's LifeLong Learning division.

"We started offering three-hour workshops that have grown into a basic certificate in e-marketing," she says.

The classes cover topics ranging from search engine optimization to blogging.

45%

Percentage increase in social media jobs from January to June 2011.

Source: Onward Search

Monique James, director of LifeLong Learning at WCC, says the classes grow out of what local companies are looking for and what the instructor wants to teach. "Offering these classes puts us on the cutting edge of the trend, helping keep the workforce strong. We're always looking at technology trends and how we can help the community by responding to changing needs."

Don't Go It Alone

Not every college has the academic know-how on staff to launch its own social media training program. When administrators at Durham Technical Community College in North Carolina decided to offer its Social Networking for Business certificate, they turned

to nonprofit online education partner Learning Resources Network (LERN).

The college recruits students for its social media programs through its regular continuing education brochure. Once the student signs up, he or she is offered courses online through LERN.

"More than 200 institutions are using LERN's online courses, and about half are community colleges," says Bill Draves, the group's president. More than 25 community colleges offered the social media class in September. "Social media certificates and courses are really hot right now," Draves says.

Through the program, students learn the differences between traditional and social media marketing.

They also learn

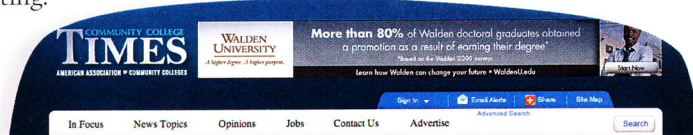
about technical nuances, such as how to integrate e-marketing campaigns with YouTube and other tools. And they study how online efforts fit into larger business marketing and sales plans.

"Community colleges can help people who are in their 40s or older but still very much in the peak of their careers understand the value and validity of social media and communications strategy," says Julie Coates, vice president of LERN. "In terms of the need, it's almost a parallel to teaching software skills to baby boomers 20 years ago."

ELLEN ULLMAN is an education writer based in Fairfield, Conn.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Community colleges have recently launched new workforce training programs in emerging job fields from nanotechnology to digital media for aerospace engineers. Check it out: www.aacc.nche.edu/workforcedevelopment.



ENGAGE, ENLIGHTEN, EMPOWER

www.myunion.edu Since 1964: Low Residency Doctoral Programs that Empower Lives and Communities

PH.D. (DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY) IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Explore and acquire a range of intellectual, humanistic, and social interpretations within your area of academic and professional interest.

Concentrations in:

- Ethical & Creative Leadership
- Public Policy & Social Change
- Humanities & Culture
- Martin Luther King Jr. Studies Specialization



ED.D. (DOCTOR OF EDUCATION)

Curriculum embeds the National Board's nine new Advanced Leadership Propositions

Specializations in:

- Higher Education
- Educational Leadership (Pre-K-12)

Brief face-to-face residencies in Cincinnati • Start dates in January and July • Rolling acceptance

www.myunion.edu/cc

440 East McMillan Street, Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, OH 45206 • 513-487-1219, 888.828-8575 • admissions@myunion.edu

Non-profit, private, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association for Colleges and Schools (www.ncahlc.org)

UI&U does not discriminate in its policies or procedures and conforms with federal non-discriminatory regulations.