

Green Collar Jobs Testimony- A Student's Perspective

James Woulfe

February 19, 2009

As a college student in my senior year, preparing to head out into the proverbial "real world", I've become more and more aware of the challenges that lay ahead of me in finding a career. Coupling that with the economic climate our nation is in at the moment, it becomes apparent that to make it in this economy, a college graduate must possess an educational skill-set that sets them apart from the pack, and that offers an immediate return on investment to their employer.

Certainly a large share of the responsibility to build this kind of skill-set is placed on the shoulders of the students, as they need the drive to work hard to succeed. However, equally as important to a student's success is the quality of the coursework and curriculum they are offered. Without a curriculum that is up to date and tailored to suit the constantly changing demands of the present job market, students will be thrown into the job force unprepared and unaware of the knowledge and skills that are expected of them in today's job market.

A college degree, whether it's a general studies degree from MCC or an engineering degree from UCONN, must arm graduates with cutting edge knowledge in their field, and prepare them for the jobs of the future, not of the past.

In this time of economic peril, one of the few job sectors still expanding is the green collar job sector. The U.S. Conference of Mayors predicted that by 2038, 4.2 Million new jobs would be created in the green collar job sector. With the state of our economy as it is, it becomes immediately apparent that a curriculum tailored to prepare students for the green collar job industry, an industry that is growing and will continue to produce, is imperative if we intend for graduates of Connecticut's Public colleges and universities to continue to be competitive in today's cut-throat job market.

Green Collar job training is viable and useful at every level of Connecticut's higher education system. From training future fuel cell technicians at our community colleges, up to training future renewable energy site assessors at our CSU schools, and on to tier 1 research at UConn, there are a myriad of positions available across numerous disciplines that qualify as green collar jobs.

By instituting a green collar training curriculum throughout the schools that make up our higher education system, Connecticut will be on the path towards creating new, sustainable jobs for college graduates, which in turn stimulates the economy by way of new business growth and increased entrepreneurship. Additional benefits such as reduced tax burdens for inefficient public buildings and housing, and a reduction in consumption of foreign oil, make this initiative a lucrative and sensible way to keep Connecticut's students, future workforce, and its economy as a whole productive for generations to come.

I urge you to take into consideration my concerns, which I share with many of my friends and colleagues who prepare to enter the job force this year, and fight to implement a green collar training curriculum in our higher education system.