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SCC starts unique careers program

By Susan Winlow

FAIRFIELD - This fall a unique statewide program called the California Insurance Careers Program will be offered in full at Solano Community College which brings the community college system and the local workforce together.

Offered as a two-year associate degree, the program is unique in that SCC will be the only community college this fall to offer the full curriculum needed - six insurance classes included in the approximately 31 credits plus general education classes - to graduate with a two-year degree in the Insurance Careers Program.

Put together because of an industry-wide demand for qualified entry-level workers, the program is partially funded by a grant from the Department of Labor. SCC is in the forefront in administering and overseeing the grant for all the California community colleges.

"We're the lead school in developing the insurance careers associates degree program," said John Urrutia, the dean of business and computer science at SCC. "We see a need and we feel that we can have a significant impact in our local insurance community."

The idea of the program at SCC is to provide a model that can be used by any other college in the state, Urrutia said.

"Any community college can grab the curriculum and not have to go through the hoops like we had to do," he said.

The idea for the program came about two years ago.

"We surveyed insurance trade organizations to better understand what are the issues and dilemmas in recruiting entry level workers and what type of skills they wouldn't need," said Jeff Stephens, outreach manager for the California Insurance Careers Program.

The result is a series of six classes, such as classes in property and liability insurance and personal insurance, designed to prepare students for behind-the-scenes employment opportunities in the insurance industry. Within the six classes will be a paid internship.

Urrutia said this is not designed to teach students how to sell insurance but rather teach them about back-office functions that the insurance industry has problems finding qualified people to fill.