

Opinion: Benefits of an LTCC education

By Bob Cliff

Everyone knows what Barton Memorial Hospital does. We have all used it for one reason or another. Yet many people in our community may not fully appreciate what Lake Tahoe Community College brings to our community.

On June 30, LTCC held its graduation ceremony with over 150 students getting a degree or certificate. Many will go on to a four-year university to get a bachelor's degree.



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We now know where last year's 163 students who graduated from LTCC went. Of these, 80 went on to a university for a bachelor's degree, and 28 went on to a two-year school (for example, a two-year nursing program). The rest (25) earned an associate's degree or certificate and went on to get a job. Each of these students now has many new options ahead of them.

Let's look at the impact of an LTCC education.

With a high school degree, the average income in our country is \$35,300 per year. With two years of college leading to an associate's degree from LTCC, or a certificate, the average income in the U.S. is \$41,500 per year. With this degree, our students can enter a variety of fields. For example, LTCC has

programs in fire science, dental assisting, phlebotomist (someone who draws blood), computer and information sciences, business, and the list goes on. The good news is that the students pick the field they want to go into. They are working in an area they love.

But there is more good news. As you can see, many students who graduate from LTCC go on to a university for a bachelor's degree. These universities include University of California schools (like UC Davis or UC Berkeley) or one of the California State universities (Sacramento State University or Chico State University). These college students, when they graduate, will earn an average of \$59,100 per year, but in California the wages will often be higher than that. A student graduating in mechanical engineering who lives in California (a higher income state), can often start at around \$100,000 per year depending on the school they attend. Furthermore, workers with a bachelor's degree will usually get retirement contributions paid by their employer along with medical insurance. Not a bad deal.

The average fees at LTCC are about \$1,350 per year, but low-income students can often get this waived. At a UC the fees are about \$14,000 per year, or total fees of \$56,000 for four years. But with the first two years at LTCC and the last two years at a UC university, the total tuition would be \$30,000. Having the first two years of college at LTCC reduces the tuition costs by almost half. In addition, the cost of living in Tahoe is much cheaper than living, for example, in Berkeley or Davis. Many of our students from LTCC will also get scholarships and grants at a UC university, which will further lower their costs. And now with LTCC's new University Center, which was dedicated this past month, we will start to offer four-year degrees in selected fields.

LTCC offers excellent college courses taught by experts at a much lower cost. Many graduates of LTCC probably feel that LTCC has been a miracle maker for them. Our alumni have become

business persons, doctors, engineers, firemen and women, nurses, and other professionals.

An LTCC degree can provide a student with an amazing start for their future career at a fraction of the cost of a four-year university. This fall, the college is hosting a community forum to introduce some of the students who are now finishing their educations at a university, as well as students with two-year degrees from LTCC who are now working in successful careers. Come hear their success stories and ask questions. Save the date of this forum: Sept. 14 at 6pm on LTCC's campus. See the miracle LTCC helps to create.

Bob Cliff is an LTCC Foundation board member.