

NICEVILLE, Fla. - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis visited Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) on Thursday to announce a \$2.85 million award to the College through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund. The funds will be used to establish the College's Transit Technician program, which will support a broad range of industries through transferable skills to include the Florida Department of Transportation, heavy-duty trucks, transit, school bus and construction equipment. The program will also fill a specialized need for diesel marine repair technicians as students apply their general experiences to targeted marine applications.

"The Transit Technician program extends our commitment to further advance the state's workforce goals with an immediate pathway to employment at a family-sustainable wage," said NWFSC President, Dr. Devin Stephenson. "We appreciate Governor DeSantis's leadership and commitment to ensure Northwest Florida State College is equipped to provide the labor force needed to support the logistics, transportation and distribution industry in our region."

The Transit Technician program will be located adjacent to the driving pad on NWFSC's Niceville campus through the expansion of existing buildings. The program projects 340 completers over a seven-year period. The local area currently has only one Transit Technician program within 150 miles of NWFSC.

The Transit Technician program will closely support the College's Commercial Driving License program and will consist of three phases that build on each other. Students will be able to complete all three phases in five semesters. While enrolled, students will earn CAPE certifications provided by Automotive Service Excellence and complete a two-year work experience requirement.

"To support job growth in our state, we are focused on not only investing in infrastructure, but also supporting workforce training programs like the great ones here at Northwest Florida State College," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "Today, I am excited to award \$2.8 million to fund a new diesel mechanic training program at Northwest Florida State College – a high-demand field that will move our state forward and provide young people opportunities to do very well for themselves. When you look at Florida compared to the nation, it's clear that while other states have struggled over the past year and a half, our state continues to do better and better. While we are proud of the progress we have made, we know that there is more to accomplish, and with awards like the ones we are making this week, we are continuing to push that progress forward."

"Governor DeSantis providing this award to Northwest Florida State College will help individuals in the Panhandle gain technical skills that will grow the workforce in surrounding rural communities," said Secretary Dane Eagle of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). "This award will support the success of Governor DeSantis' vision of being the nation's leader in workforce development by 2030."

"As an alumna of Northwest Florida State College, I am keenly aware of the impact we are making on students and their families," added Trustee Chair Lori Kelley. "Programs like the transit technician program help lift students and families such that they can fulfill their potential, providing positive long-term impacts on generations to come."

The Transit Technician program aligns with NWFSC's partnership with Cummins Corporation, the single largest engine manufacturer in the world. Those who complete the program will earn industry certificates recognizing their proficiency in various skills. More importantly, they will be prepared to maintain and repair heavy trucks, buses, construction equipment, and diesel-engine-equipped boats, playing a significant role in keeping the region's economy driving forward.

To learn more about the Transit Technician program at Northwest Florida State College, please contact Dr. Michael Erny at (850) 729-6051 or [ernym@nwfsc.edu](mailto:ernym@nwfsc.edu).

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