Adobe® Certified Associate
Provides Foundation for State's Digital Media Curriculum

HINDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PEARL-RANKIN CAREER & TECHNICAL CENTER

LOCATION:
Pearl, Mississippi

SCHOOL DISTRICTS ENROLLMENT:
• 4,850 students

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT:
• 50 students

SUCCESS METRICS:
• Proof of employment-ready skills
• National and international standard
• Popular program enhancer

Career & Tech center pioneers efforts to successfully implement certification program and spark statewide adoption across Mississippi

CHALLENGE

Three years ago, Trey Gore was a key figure in creating the curriculum behind Mississippi's Digital Media Technology program for high school students. Guided by the state's College and Career Readiness initiative, which gave him latitude to select subject matter equipped to help students achieve foot holes in high-demand careers, Gore found curriculum provided by Adobe® that supported the achievement of Adobe Certified Associate (ACA) credentials.

Gore adopted several components of the curriculum to fashion the Digital Media Technology program approved by the state department of education. Yet something was still missing. Gore, an instructor at the Pearl-Rankin Career & Technical Center, pined for a way to validate student digital media skills. His wish came to fruition earlier this year with the acquisition of the ACA Classroom License. The Classroom License provides unlimited access to certification exams for a one-time annual fee.

"Previously, there was no way at the high school level to show proficiencies in these skills," he said. "Allowing students to take this exam gives us an industry standard—a benchmark—and allows them to pursue careers based on these standards after they leave my class."

SOLUTION

According to Gore, the Pearl-Rankin Career & Technical Center, located on the campus of Hinds Community College in Pearl, Mississippi, is one of five institutions in the state to currently offer the two-year Digital Media course and the only one that offers ACA certification. Students come from both the Pearl and Rankin School Districts to learn digital communications techniques through fast-paced classroom lessons in Adobe Photoshop®, Dreamweaver® and Flash®. They hone their skills through a bevy of project work—banners, posters, tee-shirts—anything Gore can get his hands on to put them to task.

All of the coursework is designed to provide students with meaningful opportunities to develop core skills that will aide them in achieving ACA credentials, something Gore believes to be essential both to participating students and the program. "The fact that they're able to take a test that is recognized statewide, nationally, and even internationally — it's a plus, and it's been much needed," he said.

Though Gore has begun administering the ACA certification during the second half of the school year, he is already a staunch supporter of the credential. He's pushed to embed the certification as a licensure requirement of educators who teach the Digital Media Technology course, would like to see it become a state benchmark for student proficiency of digital communications skills, and also included as part of an articulation agreement for credit with state community colleges.

Of course, such wide-ranging initiatives will take time and funding. Emily Reed, the instructional design specialist who helped choreograph the multiple developmental phases of the Digital Media Technology curriculum, said the challenge is for each individual district to find the budget to bring the certification program on board.

"I would definitely like to see all [Digital Media Technology] programs adopt the ACA certification," she said. "I understand the financial constraints, but I would like to see us work to find alternative funding or resources that provide all Digital Media students with the opportunity to sit for and pass the exams prior to graduation."

CERTIPORT®

Gore said the Pearl-Rankin Center was able to overcome economic barriers to offering the ACA certification with the Classroom License. "It was a 'no-brainer' when we signed off on [the Classroom License]. We were able to test 31 different students in three different [application domains] that would have cost us a fortune if we had used vouchers."

RESULTS:

The popularity of the Digital Media Technology course at the Pearl-Rankin Center has skyrocketed in a matter of few short months. Gore said he expects next year's enrollment to double or even triple. "It's growing like wildfire," he said. "I can't tell you the number of parents who have called asking about the certifications, and other people who aren't high school students wanting to know if they can sit in and take the test."

He said evidence of the ACA certification's success can be noted in the intensity of student engagement. "Students do not want to leave the classroom. The students actually enjoy coming to school. They look forward to participating in the class and know from day one what's expected of them and what they can get out of it."

Gore said one student in particular who entered his class this year somewhat shy and unassuming is now fixed and determined to achieve a dream career using her digital media skills. Tristan Duplichain, who will be going into college next fall, says she now wants to own and operate a photography studio after certifying in Dreamweaver, Flash and Photoshop. "The certification[s] made me realize I was better in these areas than I thought," she said. "I wasn't sure of my potential going into the classroom, [but] I was encouraged to know I was able to achieve such a high goal."

Early successes in the classroom have garnered the Pearl-Rankin Center coverage in a local publication, Metro Teen Jackson. Publisher Amy Braud was impressed by the skills and credentials students could take with them throughout life. "As an employer, I think this program is very valuable," she said. "Many of our largest creative employers currently must move new employees in from other states. Having local students who can be brought on board early will be a great asset to these companies."

Reed said perhaps Adobe Certified Associate's greatest benefit is to state employers that can hire without costly training. "[The certified] student comes in already having mastered industry-standard software and has the skills needed to get to work," she said.

As more students, parents and employers see the ACA certification's link to coveted employment skills, Gore says the profile of his course will continue to snowball across the state. "The bottom line in any class now is the value of it. And today, it's jobs," he said. "The kids see the opportunity to use what they're learning in this class to make money with it in a job environment."

"It's growing like wildfire. I can't tell you the number of parents who have called asking about the certifications and other people who aren't high school students wanting to know if they can sit in and take the test."

– Trey Gore
Digital Media Technology Instructor, Pearl-Rankin Career & Technical Center at Hinds Community College

ABOUT CERTIPORT

Certiport is the leading provider of certification exam development, delivery and program management services which include practice tests via MeasureUp® delivered through an expansive network of over 10,000 Certiport Authorized Testing Centers worldwide. Certiport manages a sophisticated portfolio of leading certification programs including: the official Microsoft® Office certification program, the Adobe® Certified Associate certification program, the *iCritical Thinking*™ Certification powered by ETS, the CompTIA Strata™ IT Fundamentals and the Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3®). Certiport reliably delivers over two million tests each year throughout the secondary, post-secondary, workforce and corporate technology markets in more than 142 countries and 24 languages worldwide.

CERTIPORT®