



GREETINGS!



Photo: K. Kussart

This issue includes an update on the Alaska Refinancing Loan, announces the upcoming Alaska Can! conference, introduces the new Director of Program Operations and more! As always, I invite you to send me your feedback or suggestions for future topics.

A small, handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kerry'.

Kerry Thomas selected as ACPE Director of Program Operations

After the promotion of Stephanie Butler to Executive Director, a recruitment was conducted to fill the Director of Program Operations position. Kerry Thomas was selected and began her new role on October 1st.

Ms. Thomas holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an Accounting emphasis from UAF and a Master's degree in Business Administration with a Service Management emphasis from UAS. Ms. Thomas joined ACPE in 2007 as the Internal Auditor and is very familiar with the agency and our mission.



Kerry Thomas

The Director of Program Operations oversees Financial Aid programs and services (education loans, AK Education Grant and AK Performance Scholarship), Quality Assurance and Institutional Authorization.

We congratulate Ms. Thomas and wish her success in her new position!

Northern Industrial Training (NIT) approved as a candidate for accreditation

through Council on Occupational Education (COE)

NIT has begun the accreditation process with COE, a national accrediting body recognized by the US Dept. of Education. At the November meeting of the COE Executive Committee, NIT's application for candidacy was approved. As it typically takes a year-and-a-half from candidacy to initial accreditation, NIT will spend many months documenting that their institution and programs meet the Council's accreditation standards.

NIT, a family-owned vocational school located in Palmer, primarily offers programs preparatory to employment in the oil, gas, trucking and construction trades. Programs include Professional Truck Driver Institute-certified training and construction courses accredited by the National Center for Construction Education & Research. NIT is also accredited by the American Welding Society (AWS), another national professional organization, as a Test Facility. The approval of these professional organizations ensures that the training is consistent with national training standards.



NIT welding class

We congratulate NIT on their candidacy and wish them success as they pursue national accreditation!

Recent Commission Actions

October 27, 2016 Meeting

Initial Authorization

- Academy of Hair Design, LLC (Anchorage)
- The Esthetics District (Anchorage)

Renewal of Authorization

- Alaska Academy of Advanced Cosmetology (Juneau)
- Seattle University School of Law (Anchorage)
- Shear Fire Academy (Palmer)
- Wayland Baptist University (Anchorage, Wasilla, Fairbanks)

Upcoming Events

January 12, 2017

- Quarterly Commission Meeting (Anchorage, with audio/video conferencing)

March 23 & 24, 2017

- Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network Conference (Anchorage)

IMPORTANT DATE: January 15, 2017

Deadline for receipt of materials for items to be presented at the April 6, 2017 Commission meeting

Update on the Alaska Refinancing Loan

In August ACPE began offering a new refinancing option for Alaskans struggling to repay high-interest student loans. The Alaska Refinancing Loan (AK Refi), financed by the Alaska Student Loan Corporation (ASLC), offers a fixed 5.2% interest rate for the life of the loan, and borrowers can choose a 5, 10, or 15 year repayment schedule. This pilot program had a very successful beginning considering its limited promotion. As of December 1st the Refi program has served:

- 100 borrowers with

- 479 loans totaling
- \$3,600,707

The AK Refi is unique in that it allows borrowers to combine multiple types of education loans, including federal loans, state loans, and loans from private lenders such as Sallie Mae, Discover Financial Services or banks, into one fixed-rate loan. While applicants do not have to be current ACPE customers to qualify for the loan, they do have to be Alaskan residents and meet certain credit criteria. If a cosigner is required they also must be an Alaskan resident.

Please see http://acpe.alaska.gov/Alaska_Refi for more information and consider informing alumni of this opportunity. The pilot program will be evaluated next year to determine whether there is demand for a long-term refinancing option.

Third Alaska Network Conference will be held in March Alaska Can - Together!

The third annual Alaska Postsecondary Access & Completion Network Conference is taking place March 23 - 24, 2017, at the Downtown Marriot, in Anchorage, AK. The Network was formed to address Alaska's low ranking (49th in the Nation) in postsecondary access and completion and brings together organizations and individuals invested in bettering Alaska's performance. The Network's goal is to increase the percentage of working-age adults holding a high-value certificate, college degree, or other industry-recognized credential to 65% by the year 2025. We invite you to join in this effort.



As the theme "Alaska Can - Together!" articulates, the Network conference is a time for Alaskans - professionals in education, business, industry, public service - to unite and work together to increase the number of Alaskans enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education. By participating in this conference, attendees will:

- * Develop practical skills to overcome common obstacles
- * Build and grow partnerships
- * Learn from stories of success
- * Identify priorities and opportunities for program alignment

Visit the conference event page [here](#) for complete conference information. We hope to see you there!



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