

NEWS RELEASE

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SIAST develops program to assess foreign credentials of skilled workers

New program would match immigrant tradespeople with employer needs

February 27, 2007 – The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology has launched an initiative designed to match the foreign credentials of skilled tradespeople with Saskatchewan employer requirements – while the potential immigrants are still living in their home countries.

SIAST is conducting a feasibility study into the viability of assessing the credentials of applicants to the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

“The program would leverage both our expertise in prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and our partnerships with international training institutions,” says David Harvey, director of Business Development and International Partnership.

“It would provide cost-effective credential assessment in areas where employers are experiencing critically high demand,” Harvey says. The program would also support the Saskatchewan government’s goal, announced just over a year ago, of bringing 5,000 immigrants into the province by 2008, he adds.

SIAST has been a pioneer in the development of prior learning assessment, now offering PLAR services for almost 800 courses in more than 90 SIAST programs. As well, the organization has been active overseas, helping developing countries establish employer-driven training facilities for 20 years.

Through a foreign credential recognition program, SIAST would collaborate with partner institutions internationally to assess immigration applicants with respect to Canadian and Saskatchewan labour market demands. The short list of countries where this may take place includes Ukraine, the Balkans, South Africa, Korea and the Philippines. Initially, the project would likely focus on such trades vocations as welder, machinist, heavy duty mechanic and pipefitter.

Human Resources and Social Development Canada is contributing almost \$300,000 to the cost of the feasibility study, which should be complete by June. This program's development would take place with the guidance of a project steering committee that will include representation from such stakeholders as Saskatchewan Immigration, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, economic development agencies and employers.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 12,000 students are registered in SIAST programs, which touch every sector of the economy; additionally, the organization draws more than 28,000 individual course registrations. It operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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Additional information about SIAST can be found at www.goSIAST.com.