

Tech Bytes

By Alison Snyder

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Reaching out to tomorrow's technology workers

Technology is big business on Long Island, home to heaps of employees working for Motorola, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Cablevision and Northrop Grumman, to name but a few tech-minded organizations.

But the tech industry, already on the hunt for qualified employees, could be facing an even larger labor shortfall.

According to the Department of Labor, employment in IT jobs is expected to increase by 11.6 percent by 2014, adding a total of 364,000 jobs. Despite that projected need, Stony Brook University has seen an enrollment decrease of 20 percent in its engineering and computer science programs – a common trend at schools across the country, according to Scott Passeser, executive director for industrial outreach at Stony Brook's Center of Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology.

This drop in supply, Passeser said, could affect the entire U.S. economy, not just Long Island's.

To make things more ominous, Passeser said he believes students have lost interest in computer science and engineering; it's something they consider boring, he said, and parents who remember the dot-com bubble burst will likely discourage their children from pursuing those fields.

Passeser's solution? Outreach.

He's founded the Outreach Program for Long Island Technology Education, which reaches out to educate Long Island school kids about job opportunities in the technology industry – and give them a chance to fall in love with tech.

This week, Passeser met with the Smithtown Council of PTAs to tell them about the tech worker shortage and inform them that "technology is now," according to Mary Pat Grafstein, executive director of the Smithtown Advisory Board.

OPLITE is teaming with companies such as Northrop Grumman, Cablevision, CA, Motorola, Cisco Systems, IBM and Microsoft on the outreach effort, which will include a career fair in March at Smithtown High School West. At the fair, heavy-hitting technology companies and recent grads working in the industry are expected to talk to students in grades 10 through 12 about working in technology.

OPLITE is also planning career fairs in other school districts, as well as field trips to visit the partner companies and Stony Brook's CEWIT. Also on tap are an annual tech competition and mentoring opportunities at participating firms.

Changing of the guard on DealerTrack board

Lake Success-based DealerTrack Holdings, which provides software and data solutions for the auto industry, will appoint Barry Zwarenstein to the company's board of directors Nov. 6.

The company also said Thomas Gilman will resign from its board Nov. 5. Gilman joined the board in February.

DealerTrack said Gilman's move to an "operating role" at New York City-based private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management makes it difficult to continue filling his role as a board member.

In May, Cerberus paid \$7.4 billion for an 80 percent stake in Chrysler.

Board director Thomas Gibson, a senior advisor to Cerberus, is anticipated to resign from the board for similar reasons after a replacement is chosen, the company said.

Family-friendly and diverse at Brookhaven National Lab

Brookhaven National Laboratory has scheduled two talks on family-friendly policies and diversity in the workplace. The talks are sponsored by Brookhaven Women in Science, a nonprofit group that promotes the advancement of women in science-related fields.

The first lecture – "Do Babies Matter? The Effect of Family Formation on Men and Women in Science" – will be given by Mary Ann Mason, a University of California- Berkley social welfare and law professor. That event is slated for Oct. 30 in Building 555's Hamilton Seminar Room.

Donna Nelson, associate professor of chemistry at the University of Oklahoma, is scheduled to speak Nov. 14 in Berkner Hall on "Diversity in Science and Engineering Faculty at Research Universities: Are We Preparing for the Great Crew Change?"

Laboratory management recently established a committee to review BNL's family-oriented policies and suggest improvements. The talks are free and open to the public; laboratory visitors must bring a photo ID.

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