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New Banner Center Aims to Boost Florida's Digital Media Talent Pool

HEATHROW — The new Employ Florida Digital Media Banner Center, launched with a \$500,000 grant from Workforce Florida Inc., will ensure Florida has the capacity to grow the talent necessary to fuel its expanding digital media industry.

“Florida is fortunate to be a national leader when it comes to information technology,” said Chris Hart IV, President and CEO of Workforce Florida. “With the anticipated growth of this industry, the Digital Media Banner Center is a valuable new tool for Florida businesses seeking highly skilled workers to help them stay on the cutting edge.”

Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp led a news conference Monday marking the official launch of the Banner Center at Seminole Community College's new Center for Economic Development at Heathrow. The Banner Center is based at SCC, a recognized leader in information technology education and training.

SCC is joined in this initiative by a statewide list of partners, including Daytona State College, Digital Media Alliance Florida, the First Coast Workforce Development Board, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, the Governor's Office of Film and Entertainment, Indian River State College, the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission, Orlando Tech, the Seminole County Economic Development Department, the University of Central Florida, Valencia Community College and Workforce Central Florida. Their aim is to create a continuous pipeline of high-tech talent to meet the current and future demands for a strong digital media workforce.

“From the beginning, our vision for the award-winning Center for Economic Development at Heathrow has been to bring partners together to train the region's workforce in business and high-tech programs,” said Dr. E. Ann McGee, SCC President. “All of us at SCC are committed to growing the talent to fuel Florida's expanding digital media industry and making this center a statewide hub for digital media and information technology innovation.”

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A recent survey by Digital Media Alliance Florida identified about 25,000 companies in Florida's digital media industry. Professionals in this sector, who number in the tens of thousands, include multi-media artists and animators, graphic designers, videogame and web developers, art directors, content authors, producers, audio engineers, motion graphics and video editors, photographers and programmers. The digital media industry payroll statewide exceeds \$1 billion, and this emerging sector is poised to boost the state's economy through continued growth in high-skill, high-wage jobs and total revenues through this decade and beyond. Digital media professionals in Florida earn on average \$59,766 a year – compared to the \$38,498 statewide annual average salary for all industries.

The Digital Media Banner Center will develop targeted training based on feedback from business, education, economic development and workforce partners. The center already has established relationships with several key stakeholders, who will provide ongoing contributions to this initiative, including Electronic Arts - Tiburon, Digitec Interactive, Engineering & Computer Simulations, The Center for Business Excellence, Hunton Brady Architects, the National Center for Simulation and the Florida High Tech Corridor Council.

“With the fast-paced evolution of the digital media industry, it can be a challenge to ensure workers have the skills we need,” said Colleen Wheeler McCreary, Global HR Director of Strategic Education and Outreach Initiatives for Electronic Arts (EA), which has a video game studio campus near Orlando. “As a global entertainment company, we have to stay ahead of the competition when it comes to acquiring talent with the latest education and training. The Digital Media Banner Center is an extraordinary new asset which, with appropriate industry involvement, will help us to achieve our talent acquisition goals here in Florida.”

The Employ Florida Digital Media Banner Center is one of two new Banner Centers to launch this year. There are 11 Banner Centers statewide, most targeting a specific industry that is an economic development priority for Florida, such as aviation and aerospace, alternative energy, biotechnology and manufacturing. All of the centers are created through startup funding from Workforce Florida, which is charged with serving as catalyst for creating world-class talent to help businesses thrive and Floridians improve their skills to qualify for higher wage employment opportunities.

All of the Employ Florida Banner Centers are part of the Employ Florida network of state and local workforce partners that provide workforce development services and resources. For more local information on Employ Florida Banner Centers, please visit www.EmployFlorida.com.

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Workforce Florida, Inc., (WFI) is the state's chief workforce policy organization and principal architect in the efforts to meet the current and future workforce needs and challenges of Florida's businesses and citizens. WFI is a state partner, along with the Agency for Workforce Innovation, in the Employ Florida affiliate network of 24 business-led regional workforce boards and nearly 100 One-Stop Centers that provide employment solutions throughout Florida. Learn more about Florida's workforce resources and solutions at www.EmployFlorida.com.

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