

## **Seton Hill and Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board Receive Grant to help Pennsylvanians Complete Education Programs**

Greensburg, Pa. – The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB) and Seton Hill University will work together on a project that will support students who have left higher education in the past two years and want to complete their degree. The program is made possible through a \$475,182 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

“The WFWIB is excited to work with Seton Hill University on an initiative that strives to reconnect individuals to education and supports students in earning a high-quality career,” said WFWIB Executive Director Janet Ward. “There is a need in the local area for programs that link individuals to employment paying a living wage, and the Near Completer program works to fulfill that need. By eliminating barriers, mainly the cost of tuition, this program is a great option for those interested in finishing their degree and building their careers.”

“All of us at Seton Hill are grateful to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry for the Near Completer Grant that will allow us to work with the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board in helping students who have not completed their degree – from any institution – to complete a degree or certificate program through Seton Hill’s Online Degree Program,” said Seton Hill President Mary C. Finger. “Quite often, financial burdens keep students from finishing their education, and, through this grant program, we will be able to help them complete their degree with significant financial support and, in many cases, tuition-free. They will also gain the flexibility of an online program, which will allow them to continue working while completing classes. As the only program funded in western Pennsylvania in this grant cycle, we hope to attract students from across the region and Commonwealth.”

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry recently announced more than \$6 million in grant funding awarded to four local workforce development boards (LWDBs) helping Pennsylvania job seekers re-enroll in educational programs and complete credential requirements through the Near Completer grant program.

The Near Completer grant program is designed for Pennsylvanians who have started post-secondary education in high-priority, in-demand fields but stopped without completing their degrees or certificates. Under the guidance of LWDBs, participants will gain the skills and job training needed to obtain quality employment with family-sustaining wages, according to the department.

The grant received by the WFWIB and Seton Hill will support 18 to 20 students through Seton Hill’s Online Degree Program. These students will be dislocated, incumbent, or unemployed Pennsylvania workers who have left a higher education institution in the last two years. Degree options available to students include accounting, allied health leadership, healthcare administration, behavioral health, business administration, human resource management, marketing, and the RN to BSN pathway, aligning with local high-priority occupation needs.

As the local workforce development board, the WFWIB will leverage its established partnerships with local employers, community organizations, and its PA CareerLink® centers to connect potential students to the program. The WFWIB will, additionally, inform and refer employers involved in its two Industry Partnerships for Healthcare and Manufacturing of the program to create interest in hiring participating students.

The grant program, funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), will begin on June 1, 2023 and run until June 30, 2024.

For more information about the Near Completer program at Seton Hill University, please contact the Office of Graduate and Online Studies at 724-838-4208, email [jwarnick@setonhill.edu](mailto:jwarnick@setonhill.edu), or visit [www.setonhill.edu/completetheyourdegree](http://www.setonhill.edu/completetheyourdegree). For more information about the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, please contact Executive Director Janet Ward at 724-755-2145 or email [jward@westfaywib.org](mailto:jward@westfaywib.org).

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#### **About the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board**

The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB) is a non-profit entity consisting of appointees from the business, education, and labor sectors of Westmoreland-Fayette counties. The board is empowered to lead workforce development activities in Fayette and Westmoreland counties. The WFWIB is funded by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), which provides funding to federal workforce programs and local Workforce Development Boards. The WFWIB oversees the three PA CareerLink® centers that are located in Westmoreland and Fayette Counties: PA CareerLink® Westmoreland County at Youngwood, PA CareerLink® Fayette County, and PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski. For more information about the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, please visit [www.WestFayWIB.org](http://www.WestFayWIB.org). The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. For federal funding information, visit [www.westfaywib.org/resources/](http://www.westfaywib.org/resources/).