AWARD AMOUNT: $1,620,000

AREA SERVED: State of Arkansas
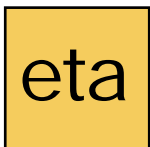
INDUSTRY: Forestry

KEY PARTNERS: 13 employer partners, 1 workforce partner, 7 education partners and 9 other partners

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS: The high cost of technology and an untrained workforce have put a substantial strain on the timber industry. The highly sophisticated computerized equipment used by the industry requires an equally highly trained workforce. However, a customized training program has not been developed, and the college plans to develop an industry-driven education plan, curriculum, and classes, to recruit qualified faculty, and to obtain classroom space, training sites, and equipment.

ACTIVITIES: The project will establish and operate a highly sophisticated heavy equipment operator-training program for the timber producers of Arkansas. This training program will be the only training available in the southern United States for the heavy equipment needed for the timber industry. Activities will include research and development of the program, curriculum development, equipment procurement, instructor recruitment, and the development and operation of a pilot program. Scholarships will be available to students. This training program will offer several options: a Certificate of Proficiency through the National Center for Construction Education; a Technical Certificate, an Associate Degree and transfer options into a four-year B.S. degree at the University of Arkansas--Monticello.

PROJECTED OUTCOMES:
- A complete training program will be developed;
- Curricula will be developed;
- Classroom equipment will be purchased or rented (simulators);
- Faculty will be trained;
- 90 students will enroll during the three years the program is being developed;
- 98% of students will be employed following graduation; and
- Incumbent workers will receive upgrade training.