

U.S. Labor Department awards \$2.7 million grant for energy center

By LES BOWEN
Sun Advocate reporter

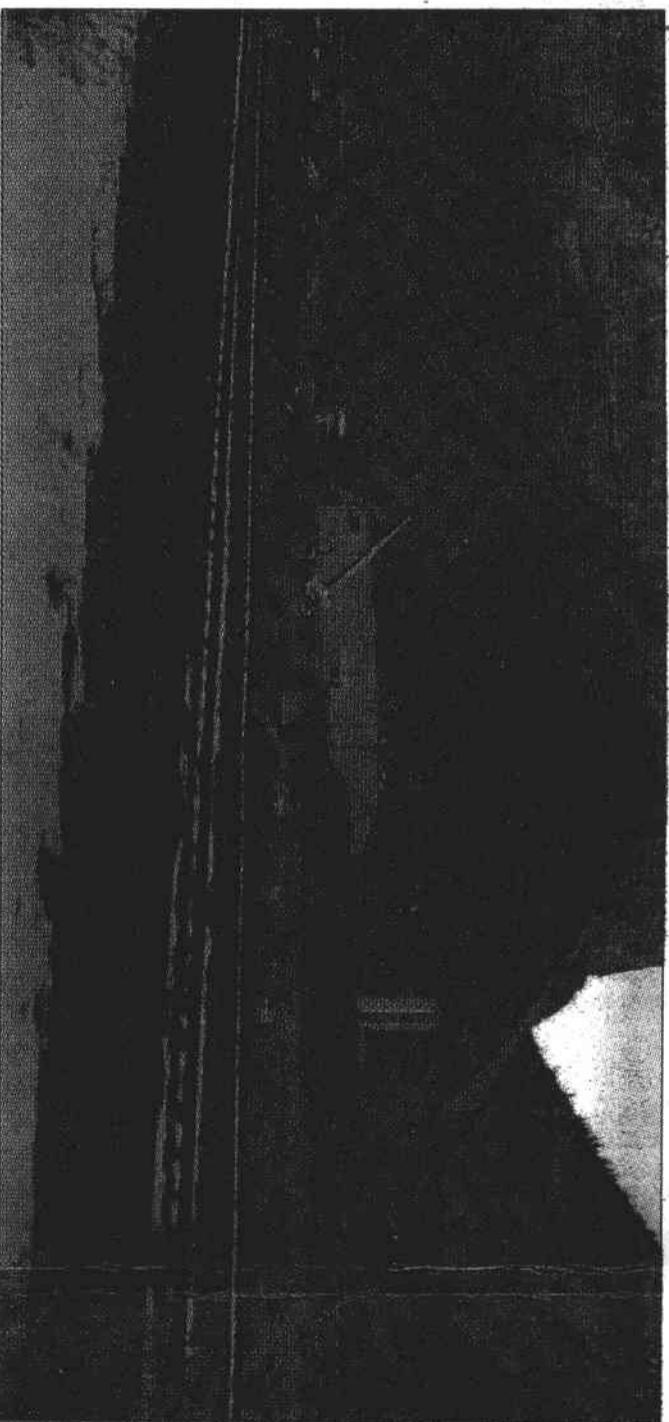
The United States Department of Labor announced Monday that the federal agency will award a grant of \$2.7 million to College of Eastern Utah to train laborers in multiple sectors of the energy industry.

The grant is part of nearly \$27 million in investments made since 2003 in support of the nation's energy workforce through President George Bush's high growth job training initiative.

The college indicated several months ago that it has a desire to create an education facility to train workers in various sectors of the energy field. College President Ryan Thomas indicated that the funding would be used primarily for curriculum development at the proposed training facility, with some going toward administrative costs.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for CEU and the surrounding communities," said Gov. Jon Huntsman. "This sort of boost is perfect for our state's energy industry and the corresponding economic development in the area."

The grant totals \$2,737,804 and has the backing of three key partners, including the South-



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Work crews dismantle a hopper at the site of the former Willow Creek mine. College of Eastern Utah has expressed interest in purchasing the property, which is owned by Plateau Mining Corporation. Although land purchase

negotiations are ongoing, CEU received a federal grant of \$2.7 million from the United States Department of Labor toward funding an energy center and curriculum development at the proposed job training facility.

eastern Utah Energy Producers Association, the Utah Department of Workforce Services and the Eastern Utah District of the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Utah is one of six states to receive funding under the federal initiative.

"Utah's natural resources are plentiful and will play a vital role in meeting the United States' ever increasing demands for energy in the future," wrote Sen. Bob Bennett in a letter supporting the grant. "As of this time, however, there has been no investment of federal funds for

the purpose of training individuals capable of assisting Utah in harnessing these resources."

"The proposed grant funding, as part of the high growth job training initiative, would be used for the development of those individuals involved in the oil and gas, coal and electrical

power industries in this area," added Bennett.

Now that the grant from the U.S. Department of Labor has been announced, the proposed CEU energy center looks to become more of a possibility than some people may have thought.

And while some people have derided the concept as nothing more than a pipe dream, industry experts and public officials are beginning to realize the need for such a facility in the region.

"The growing demand for energy resources is creating new jobs in eastern Utah for workers who possess the right skill sets," said U.S. Labor Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao. "With this \$2.7 million grant under President Bush's high growth job training initiative, the College of Eastern Utah will partner with industry to provide training and certification programs so workers can acquire those skills and access these new career opportunities."

Courses will include safety, instrumentation and technical skills certifications with the capacity to train up to 2,100 people annually.

Classes also will be offered to Hispanic and American Indian populations in their native languages.

"The training provided by the College of Eastern Utah and its partners will prepare workers with transferable skills, equipping them to compete for good jobs and promotion opportunities," said Emily Stover, (Continued on page 5A)

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Awards \$2.7 million grant for center:

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assistant secretary of labor for employment and training. "The eastern Utah energy industry also will benefit from a pipeline of new workers to help address the challenge of a baby-boom workforce ready to retire."

Upon completion of the curriculum, participants will be offered additional training tailored to mining and power generation.

Training will lead to a knowledge base that can be transferred across multiple energy industry sectors.

"We are trying to create a different approach to training in this area," pointed out Thomas. He explained that courses will be offered on a non-traditional schedule.

The CEU president explained that in the education field, curriculum is often manipulated and adjusted to fit into a 14 or 16 week schedule and the type of training that the college plans to offer will not be constrained by the time frame of the traditional semester system.

Energy industry experts have raised concern regarding the need for more skilled workers in the industry.

Specifically, experts warn the nearly half of the current energy workforce will retire in the next five to 10 years.

Many younger workers are unaware of the highly skilled, well-paying careers available.

Many people tend to consider energy jobs as dirty, unstable and low-skilled employment opportunities.

However, despite the need for more workers in the industry, many training programs were scaled back or closed down due to a downturn in the industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s. And those training programs have not been revamped despite growth in the industry.

Further, with new technologies being implemented, employers are looking for workers who are more proficient in math, science and technology than in the past.

As a result, experts, including officials within the U.S. Department of Labor are looking for creative solutions that will help experienced workers who are retiring to transfer skills and knowledge to a younger workforce as quickly as possible.

In addition, labor experts note that few industry-defined, portable credentials have been developed in the energy industry.

Further, career ladders that show the possibility for promotion within the industry are severely lacking.

As a result, many fail to see the viability of the field as a career choice.

The \$2.7 million from the Department of Labor is indicative of the importance of creating a training center in the region.

"Price is an important energy hub for Utah and for the West," commented Sen. Orrin Hatch.

"The new energy training center will go a long way toward helping to ensure that we have the best prepared workers in the field developed, trained and taught right here in Utah. This is a big win for Price and Carbon County."

In the future, the facility could also receive backing from the National Mining Association, said Thomas.

He indicated that the NMA has expressed an interest in developing a regional training center in eastern Utah.

According to Thomas, a training facility similar to that proposed by the college would serve as a support facility and the NMA would augment training.

In order to provide the necessary training, CEU plans to provide classes at the main Price campus and satellite campuses located throughout eastern Utah.

"Utah's natural resources will play an increasing role in meeting the energy needs of the United States. It is appropriate that the federal government invest in training folks to do the jobs needed by the energy industry," said Rep. Jim Matheson. "I'm pleased that the College of Eastern Utah will play a lead role."

Hands-on training will be offered at the college's energy center, according to Thomas.

Additional training will be offered at the center's on-site mine and other employer-chosen work sites.

"There are several pieces that are coming together that we have been working on for a number of months," said Thomas.

However, one of the pieces of that puzzle, the physical location of the college's energy center, is still in the works.

Thomas explained that the college is working with multiple donors and plans to purchase land from Plateau Mining Corporation located at the former Willow Creek coal production operation in Price Canyon.

In October, Thomas and CEU officials approached the Utah Permanent Community Impact Fund Board in an effort to acquire temporary funding for the purchase of 300 acres and buildings housing state-of-the-art equipment that would be used for the training program.

The community impact board members were reluctant to provide funding for the proposed energy center for multiple reasons.

As a result, CEU is looking to private donors and alternate sources of funding in order to purchase the property.

Though funding for the land is still in the works, Thomas was optimistic that the college would be able to move forward with the planned training facility.

The college president explained that lawyers representing Plateau Mining and CEU are in the process of reviewing the contract.

Thomas said he felt confident that the property transaction would take place as anticipated.

Declines to pursue criminal charges

(Continued from page 1A)
anonymous throughout the investigative process.

The document supporting the issuance of the search warrant indicated that the alleged business expense misbookings and miscodings involved Emery Telcom's non-regulated subsidiary companies. The subsidiaries included Emery Telcom's long distance, Internet and communications companies. Emery Telcom manages and assumes the accounting responsibilities for all of the company's subsidiaries and regulated businesses.

As a regulated cooperative utility, the court document explained that Emery Telcom operates under rates set by the Utah Public Service Commission. The rate is fixed at 10 percent profit plus reimbursement for capital improvements.

The alleged misbooking of subsidiary company expenses to Emery Telcom al-

lowed the utility to be rate increases, contended reporting the issuance of the search warrant. In addition, the court document also indicated that Emery Telcom's accounting records were being audited by outside contractors with outside equipment upgrades.

"As part of the search individuals provided information which was relied on by the office to prepare an affidavit for the search warrant," pointed out the court. Emery Telcom's board of directors was notified of the search warrant from public comment in the attorney general's office. Those few people who might be affected as well as the people under

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