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Laid-off workers find computer skills key

LAWRENCE — Fifty unemployed local people, who are struggling with their job searches because of a lack of basic computer skills, will take a free computer course for beginners offered by Northern Essex Community College.

Many workers are middle-aged or older and are out of work due to the lagging economy. Some are veterans just home from the Middle East, or people who had to leave a career for medical reasons and are looking for less physically demanding jobs.

President David Hartleb came up with the idea after hearing about a similar program being offered at a community college in the Midwest.

The Valley Works Career Center in Lawrence has partnered with the college for the project and recruited the people taking the course, which will run twice a week on the Lawrence campus.

The college, the Commonwealth Alliance for Information Technology Education and Boston Area Advanced Technological Education Connection are funding the course. If successful, and more funding can be found, the college will program will be expanded. More information is available by contacting Chuck Phair at 978-556-3873 or ephair@nec.mass.edu.