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## Workforce Development Board to launch new work, tuition program for students



Robert Boone

Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com

A scholarship program slated to launch next year means the South Central Workforce Development Board is extending its services beyond just removing employment barriers.

“The goal for us is to connect students to employers in the area in the fields they’re studying or want to study,” board President and CEO Robert Boone said of the new KY hirED scholarship program.

Modeled after Western Kentucky University's Learn and Earn program, KY hirED will allow students at WKU and Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College to work part time and help pay for school. It's all thanks to relationships with about 20 industry partners, which the Learn and Earn program had been cultivating since it began in 2016.

"The goal is to help students earn a part-time income and a scholarship," Boone said.

Boone, who has served on the advisory council for WKU's Learn and Earn program, said the Workforce Development Board agreed to operate the program going forward. It's been rebranded as KY hirED and will be open to SKYCTC students.

In the past, Boone said his organization has mainly focused on removing employment barriers for existing workers. But this new program will allow the Workforce Development Board to blaze a new path, he said.

"I see a lot of potential in this program to help us grow our ability to work with the colleges that we have in the area," Boone said.

The program will launch in a limited capacity Jan. 1, according to a news release. That means participation will be limited to about 30 students currently involved in the Learn and Earn program.

Boone expects the program will accept new applicants in March and continue in the summer and fall.

Along with a part-time income and scholarships for students, the program helps businesses fill personnel needs, Boone said. It's also a way to let college students and new graduates know about jobs in southcentral Kentucky, he said, thus retaining more workers.

“Many of the jobs that we have in our area I think would be suitable for a college student,” he said, adding employers might choose to fill a full-time vacancy with two part-time student employees.

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#### Aaron Mudd

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