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Unemployed using education to advance

By **BOB HILL**
STAFF WRITER

While the bad economy is helping boost enrollments at two- and four-year colleges around the state, as described in the preceding story, it is also sending unemployed people back to the classroom.

Programs that can provide important job skills in a few days or weeks are proving especially popular. Some certificate programs in Portland State University's School of Extended Studies have seen a doubling of class sizes and added more classes, said Bill Prows, director of outreach and market development for the school. A large percentage of the new students are unemployed people looking to beef up their skill sets to help them get new jobs, Prows said.

Two of the popular certificate programs are in project management and Six Sigma, a program in business effectiveness. Both these certificates are valued in the high-tech industry, Prows said.

The private University of Phoenix campuses in Oregon and Southwest Washington have doubled enrollment in the past year in their shorter programs in criminal justice, health care and psychology.

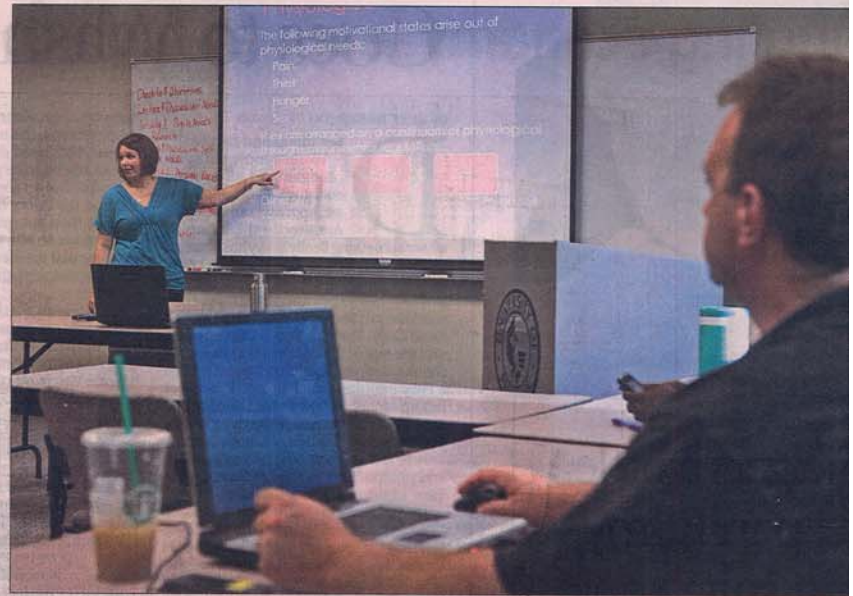
"More and more people are looking to re-career or to beef up skills to help them get jobs," said Flint Holland, director of the school's five local campuses. "People seem much more driven to take courses that are directly vocationally related."

Kim Welsh, who is currently unemployed, was motivated to come to Portland from Eugene to take a course to improve her job skills. She spent \$1,000 to take a course in search engine optimization (SEO) from the Search Engine Academy of Oregon. "The Eugene area had nothing like this," Welsh said. (SEO gives tips on making Web sites more effective for marketing and other uses.)

The Academy teaches a two-day course in the basics of SEO and a three-day advanced course. Graduates can take a test and receive an SEO certificate. Col-

leen Wright, who owns the academy and teaches at it, said she has seen a complete switch in the type of people taking her courses in the past year. Before the economic downturn, public relations and marketing people attended with their tuition paid by their companies. Now it's almost entirely unemployed people and people looking to beef up their job skills, Wright said, and they are paying the tuition themselves.

Patty Barker of Tigard, who lost her writing and design job last spring, decided to use a short course to create a new career for herself. She attended a three-day course (cost: \$999) from Anne Blumer who operates the Professional Organizer Training Institute in the Portland area. Barker is now a professional organizer whose company, Artistic Organization, helps people eliminate clutter from their homes, offices, garages, etc. "It's a time-saving service that, in effect, helps people



Karen Paez teaches a psychology class at the University of Phoenix Tigard campus. Psychology courses have seen a big enrollment increase.

get better control of their lives," Barker said.

Blumer, who also has written a book, "Get Rich Organizing," said people taking her courses used to be moms looking for part-time jobs they could do while raising kids. Now, her students tend to be those

who are unemployed or are scared they will lose their careers if they don't get more organized.

"Everything is shifting now, and people are having to react to those shifts," Blumer said.