

## Computer center prepares residents for tomorrow

Written by Ivan B. Phifer MMMC Technology Reporter  
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The Asian Community Technology Center (ACTC), in the Asian Press building at 417 University Avenue West in St. Paul, is one of 11 partner sites in the University of Minnesota's innovative Broadband Access Project (BAP).

The Broadband Access Project is a \$3.6 million initiative of the University's Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC) to improve high-speed Internet access, awareness and use in four federally designated poverty zones in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The Broadband Access Project supports development and enhancement of the 11 community-based public computer centers for underserved populations, including African and African American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander immigrants, and American Indians.

The ACTC training MMMC monitored last month was geared for job search skills. Taught by Broadband Access Project Technology Apprentice Angela Huynh, the job search skills workshop is held each Wednesday from 4pm-7pm.

Job search skills taught include how to browse online for jobs, exploring websites such as Star Tribune.com, mn.works.net, monster.com, craigslist, and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MNCN) website, mncn.org. ACTC training integrates job search training with interview preparation, and resume and cover letter building.

Trainees enrolled in the ACTC program learn, for instance, that MNCN has a job search that allows you to look for jobs in a specific job category, such as Human Resources, Facilities Management, Administrative Management, Legal Services or Public Relations.

They learn that job search programs will give them leads based on location, position and employment type, whether government, non-profit organization, or business.

Minnesota Works allows job searchers to register for a free account. Once registered, they can create a resume on the MN Works website.

Huynh said Minnesota Works' solid search program has local jobs and new career opportunities that are updated every day. "They also have a larger selection of occupations to choose from," she said.

The workshop includes job-searching strategies. Huynh said the key to effective computer-based job searching is to know what you are good at and to rely on what you have a foundational amount of information about. Also, it provides an opportunity to explore things that simply grab your interest. "This usually gives you a good idea on what jobs to look for and narrows down the search," she said.

The job search is step one in interview preparation, and marketing yourself, Huynh said. "When you go in for an interview, you want to be well-informed and have accurate background information on the position you want to receive," she said. "This demonstrates to the employer that you have a drive for the position you want to acquire. It is also a part of marketing yourself. Any previous experience in a field, and knowledge of the job or profession, will help," she said.

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Huynh said the trainee also reviews other aspects of how to prepare for job interviews. They learn why it is important to have a proper hair cut, appropriate attire, such as a suit, or slacks and shirt with a necktie and dress shoes. Excessive jewelry, tattoos, and logo-wear distract in the job interview. Candidates for jobs should arrive for job interviews at least 15 minutes early.

“First impressions are everything and if you show up even remotely on time, that is considered late,” she said. “An employer wants to know you are dependable. Tardiness is a sign of not being dependable,” Huyhn said.

Huynh said filling out an application is a key part of marketing one’s self. The application asks you to provide an address and other contact information, and hours you will be available to work.

A resume and cover letter give the employer additional information about people they are considering for employment.

“It is important to highlight your attributes and accomplishments. This makes the employer aware of what you can bring to the team, which may also give you a higher salary,” she said. “The resume should be a page long, and consist of half-inch margins on the left and right sides.”

Huynh said she tells trainees the purpose of the cover letter and how it should complement the resume, providing other facts that you were unable to put in the resume.

“A cover letter should be tailored to the position that you are applying for, just like the resume. Unless specifically instructed by employer not to provide one, the cover letter should be the first piece of information employers read. The cover letter should state explicitly why you feel you are appropriate for the position. This is the chance you have to express how your skills, talents and experience relate to the position,” Huynh said.

She also states that although this is a chance to highlight strengths and experience, the letter should not be too lengthy.

“The employer reads hundreds of applications a day, so make sure you give details, but get straight to the point in those details,” she said.

Trainees learn that the cover letter has three components. First, the introduction should state the goal of the cover letter. The second section should tell why you feel you are appropriate for the position. The final section should include a “thank you” to the prospective employer.

The workshop is open for anyone who needs assistance with job skills, resume critiques and help finding a job. The doors are open; all you have to do is walk in.

Contact the Asian Community Technology Center at (651) 224-6570, or Dan Huynh at [huyn0112@umn.edu](mailto:huyn0112@umn.edu).