For high school seniors in the Waukesha County community looking to get a jump-start on their college education and a head start in jobs in high-demand fields, Waukesha County Technical College is offering the Dual Enrollment Academy, now in its second year.

The academy features programs in Printing and Publishing, Tool and Die/CNC and Welding/Fabrication, with additional program offerings being explored.

As part of the academy experience, high school students spend the majority of their day – both fall and spring semesters of their senior year – at WCTC, earning high school and college credits. Students will earn four to five high school credits and 20 to 24 college credits, depending on which program they are enrolled, along with industry-recognized certificates.

To be eligible for the program, high school seniors must be in good standing and on track to graduate, have a minimum 2.0 grade point average, have taken all the high school courses available that are relevant to the subject area and show a sincere interest in the program area of study, said Sandra Maylen, WCTC’s dual enrollment coordinator.

“This program is best for the student who likes hands-on learning and wants to learn material that is in line with their career interest,” Maylen said, noting the program is a rigorous one, and academy students need to be committed to putting in the necessary time and effort.

Currently, the Dual Enrollment Academy is funded through a grant and supported through Gov. Scott Walker’s Blueprint for Prosperity initiative. “There may be a cost to school districts in the future, but we’re always going to be pursuing grants to support it,” Maylen said.

A main benefit of the program is students’ access to some of the most cutting-edge technology and tools available in industry today. While some high schools may have only one or two pieces of specialty equipment that is shared among a group, at WCTC, students have access to an abundance of equipment, therefore maximizing the learning process.

“Parents are excited to see the quality of equipment used in these programs. And for those parents whose kids had a disinterest in high school, they’re excited to see them have a renewed interest in learning and have a plan,” she said.

Additionally, there is a great partnership between local industry and the Dual Enrollment Academy: companies find skilled workers and students find good-paying jobs.

“Employers are really connected to the academy and the students in it,” Maylen said, noting businesses are eager to work with these ambitious students, introduce them to their company and hire them on as employees.

To learn more about WCTC’s Dual Enrollment Academy, visit www.wctc.edu/dual-enroll.

Did you know?

In the pilot year of the Dual Enrollment Academy (2013-14), 40 students participated in the three areas offered that year: Tool and Die/CNC, Welding/Fabrication and Information Technology. Of the 40 Dual Enrollment Academy students, 31 continued their education and enrolled in diploma or degree programs at WCTC.