

Ridley-Lowell Business & Technical Institute - 165-Year Commitment to Helping Its Students Land Jobs

Attend RL's open house March 5 at its Danbury and New London campuses and learn about its career-targeted programs

By Bob Weinstein

Ridley-Lowell Business & Technical Institute has never strayed from its mission of educating students and helping them land career jobs, said Lauren Weymouth, RL's vice president, business development.

RL has relentlessly achieved that goal since it was launched in 1850.

What better proof than having successfully placed more than 10,000 graduates in the past decade?

But Weymouth and her staff are not resting on their laurels. They have more to accomplish so that each new crop of students can take advantage of state-of-the-art programs that prepare them for successful careers in a fiercely competitive workplace.

Weymouth sees RL as a solution to her students' higher educational and career problems. "All of our courses are designed for a particular skill set," she said.

RL's career-targeted programs are offered at its five campuses: Danbury and New London, Connecticut; Binghamton and Poughkeepsie, New York; and West Warwick, Rhode Island.

Core Programs

RL's core programs are health care, IT, business and construction trades. Health care programs include medical assistant, medical billing and coding, medical administrative assistant, phlebotomy, dental assistant and massage therapy. Business programs include accounting, legal administrative assistant and Office Assistant. Trade programs include Information Technology and Electrical Systems Technician.

Intensive phlebotomy program

On April 2, RL is kicking off its intensive, low-investment short course (6 weeks, day; 7½ weeks, night) in phlebotomy. "A Phlebotomist is a great steppingstone job for students who want to break into the health care field," Weymouth said. "This program qualifies graduates to sit for the NCPT exam to become a Certified Phlebotomy Technician. As we are a registered NCCT testing site, students have the convenience of taking their exam on campus."

As with all of RL's programs, students can successfully complete the course and immediately find a job.

RL's phlebotomy program prepares students for jobs in hospitals, blood banks, clinics and research labs.

Through 2020, a 15 percent increase in demand for phlebotomists, as well as all clinical laboratory technicians, is projected, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Fifth anniversary of Danbury campus

This year RL is celebrating the fifth anniversary of its Danbury campus, marking a significant turning point for the school.

"We started Danbury with medical assisting and massage therapy programs," Weymouth said. "Over the past five years, we've added new programs each year, to reflect market needs."

Paula King, director of the Danbury campus, sees the Danbury Campus anniversary as a "special time to reflect upon RL's past" and "at the same time, look ahead toward its future."

"The five-year marker demonstrates that we are providing value to both our students and to the community," King added. "When we look back, we see the successful implementation of our programs in the city of Danbury. In a relatively short amount of time — depending upon whether students attend school at night or during the day — students leave with lifelong skills employers want. They're immediately employable, and that's quite an accomplishment."

RL's accomplishments have been hard won by both its administrators and dedicated instructors who have gone to great lengths to make sure that students get the best education possible.

Staff of carefully-vetted professionals

King pointed out that all of RL's carefully picked and vetted teachers bring real-world experience to the classroom. "Teaching is far more than a job to them," King said. "It's a passion. On their own time, they attend seminars and conferences so they can stay abreast of changes in their respective fields." The workplace is always changing. The health care industry is a prime example. Every year brings new regulations and certification requirements, as well as medical breakthroughs. A pressing concern is meeting the manpower needs of an aging population.

Change is the propellant for technology industries. Tomorrow's technology is already on the drawing board, King said. "The challenge that motivates RL's instructors is not just staying on top of the technology, but striving to be one step ahead of it."

"We are not a static institution, but a constantly evolving one," King said. "That's what makes our jobs so exciting. "The result is our students get the benefit of fresh information the workplace needs."

Win-win for student and community

Students are not the only beneficiaries of Ridley Lowell's dedication and commitment to its students. The community benefits as well, King said.

"Our goal is to apply abstract rules and principles to real-world settings," she said.

"By setting up shop in Danbury, we are providing employers with a valuable resource - fully trained and competent workers who understand their respective fields," King said.

All of RL's programs are chosen and developed to meet the needs of local employers. "The various departments have partnered with community services and businesses," Weymouth said. "Our electrical department, for example, has partnered with local firehouses. Our students go into firehouses and fix their electrical problems. In our massage program, the massage instructor takes his students to elder-care facilities so that students can give therapeutic massages. And medical assistant students visit nursing facilities, where they can practice checking patients' vital signs."

The payoff to RL's comprehensive programs is that many of RL's students get jobs before they graduate, and a significant number get multiple job offers.

Opportunity to check for good fit

One of the best ways to get the inside skinny on schools is to attend their open houses. Ridley Lowell's upcoming open house is scheduled for March 5 at its Danbury and New London campuses. An open house is an opportunity to find out whether a school is right for you.

Ridley-Lowell's staff strive to give prospective students an accurate picture of what the school offers. Beyond checking out RL's campus, they can get a close-up look at what they can expect. They can chat with faculty and administrators; and watch demonstrations. On March 5, the massage instructor, for example, will be giving chair massages, and the IT department will be giving hands-on demonstrations of computer technologies. And that's only a sampling.

If prospective students need more information about attending RL, the open house can be the deciding factor. That was the case for Susan Lovell, a certified medical assistant (CMA) at Western CT Medical Group, who's on a solid health care career track.

Six years ago, Lovell was searching for a meaningful career that would meet her mounting financial obligations.

Lovell knew nothing about RL until she saw an ad for the school on the side of a bus. She spent a few hours researching the school on the Internet, and liked what she read. She combed through former students' opinions about the school. Everything she read impressed her. It was worth checking out, she reasoned. And the timing was good. An open house was scheduled for the opening of RL's Danbury campus. She didn't know it then, but she would become a student in the Danbury campus's first medical assistant program.

Looking back, Lovell says, if she hadn't seen the RL sign on a passing bus, she wonders whether her life and career would have fallen into place as well as they did.

At the open house, she talked with RL's instructors and to Weymouth. All her questions were answered. The vibes seemed perfect.

The happy ending to Lovell's story is that she got everything she signed up for and more. She landed a job as soon as soon as she graduated. The best part is that she loves working as an MA. "Every day is different, and I'm busy from the time I come to work until the moment I leave," Lovell said. "At the end of the day, I'm incredibly tired, but I feel great knowing I made a difference in my patients' lives. That feeling is hard to beat."

All about the students

Weymouth said she takes great pride in attending RL's graduations. "It is one of the most gratifying days of the year," she said. "When our students start school, they may be working at jobs they don't enjoy in order to support their families. Over a nine- or 12-month period, it's a thrill watching them gain self-confidence and change emotionally and intellectually. When they graduate, they leave motivated and with a sense of purpose," she said. "It's an incredible experience for the students, especially for those who are the first person in their families to attend college. Seeing this every year makes all our hard work worthwhile."

To learn more about Ridley-Lowell Business & Technical Institute, visit <http://www.ridley.edu/>.

Paula King, Director of Danbury campus



Graduate Susan Lovell

