Mario's Story

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Mario Alaniz

Whether you are college-age or older, maneuvering across a career tightrope can be stressful, especially if there is no safety net below.

Mario Alaniz, of East Carbon, Utah, felt that panic when suddenly he was no longer able to perform his work responsibilities due to an injury at work. He felt helpless and vulnerable. He also felt great relief when he learned about Utah State University Eastern Center for Workforce Development. A safety net did exist, after all.

Although it had been a while since he had attended school, he said that with the help of the center’s skills lab staff, he was able to progress through the courses he needed to get him ready to begin taking college credit classes.

The center recently moved into the old art building on the heels of a major remodel of the aging facility. The newly refurbished structure, with its open and spacious lobby area, provides a warm and welcoming environment for community businesses and for students of all ages.

Its convenient location next to the student center was not by accident, says USU Eastern Chancellor Joe Peterson. It was purposely relocated along a prominent and busy corridor of the campus to better serve as a campus and community hub.

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Within this locus, a suite of community and students services are offered. On the community side, for example, the center provides business and economic development and job placement advising. For students, the center provides job readiness skills and helps them obtain certificates in a variety of fields such as certified nursing assistant, automotive and welding technology, says Russell Goodrich, associate vice chancellor over professional and technical education. The center provides clear pathways for classes needed to prepare students for college and classes needed to prepare other students for high-wage vocations, Goodrich says.

“We help people determine where they are now and then we take them one step beyond where they initially thought they could go,” he says.

This individualized approach has made all the difference for Mario in mapping out a new course for his life.

“This support system has helped me progress in tremendous ways,” he says. “I have been able to change the direction of my life in a very positive and dramatic way.”

Being able to take college classes gave him new confidence and renewed his sense of purpose.

“I feel like my self-esteem has improved and I look forward to a positive future with my new education,” he says. “I could not have reached this point if it weren't for the help and encouragement I received.”

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