

## **Federal Workforce Development Consortium hosted at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Awarded National Soft Skills Training Scholarship**

*Building Illinois' Bioeconomy Consortium secures competitive national award  
to bolster soft skills training resources for students*

**EDWARDSVILLE, IL (DATE)** – The Building Illinois' Bioeconomy (BIB) Consortium, a federally funded education and training initiative led by Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) and also comprising four regional community colleges, was selected from a pool of 120 applicants as one of the four recipients of the Wonderlic scholarship for a soft skills training program, which will help increase access to resources for the consortium's students.

The BIB Consortium was established to develop flexible and customizable pathways to high-paying jobs in the bioeconomy, largely targeted at adults changing careers, displaced workers and veterans. The scholarship gives BIB Consortium students the opportunity to participate in the Wonderlic Soft Skills Training Bootcamp, which focuses on competency-based instruction for Communication, Interpersonal Skills, Listening & Nonverbal Skills, Teamwork, Professionalism, Critical Thinking, Self-Management, and Initiative.

“A deficit in soft skills is among the top concerns cited by employers in Southwestern Illinois, and we saw this scholarship as yet another opportunity give our students access to more resources to build skills that ultimately lead to high-paying jobs,” said Courtney Breckenridge, BIB Consortium Project Manager. “We're honored to be one of four recipients of the Wonderlic scholarship, because it aligns directly with the BIB consortium's core mission to create a job-ready workforce that meets the needs of regional employers in the growing bioeconomy.”

“Competency-based instruction on key soft skills, delivered through the Wonderlic Soft Skills Training Bootcamp, allows the BIB consortium to increase the career readiness value of its educational offerings, as well as to respond to needs identified by employers themselves, thus helping develop a skilled employee pipeline for a green economy in the Southern Illinois region,” said Dr. Diana Nastasia, a member of the BIB Consortium project management team who was instrumental in securing the Wonderlic scholarship.

The BIB Consortium will be incorporating the Wonderlic program, which is nationally recognized and backed by strong research, into its existing coursework and also as an option for online modules to be completed by students at their own pace and on their own time. The mix of options is designed to reach students based on their needs.

“We are excited to offer these scholarships to the sorts of programs that we believe will have the greatest impact to their students and to their community,” said Charlie Wonderlic, CEO of Wonderlic, Inc. “We work with thousands of employers nationwide, and I believe the employability skills of the students in the BIB Consortium's program will benefit tremendously from the Wonderlic Soft Skill Bootcamp.”

“We selected the BIB Consortium as a scholarship recipient because their commitment to improving the soft skills of their students was very evident in their application,” said Dr. Amanda Opperman, Director of Competency-Based Solutions at Wonderlic, Inc. “I’m honored to help them implement our interactive training, assessment, and digital badges into their program to improve their student’s soft skills, and ultimately, help them secure gainful employment.”

SIUE’s National Corn-to-Ethanol Research Center (NCERC), together with SIUE’s Environmental Research Training Center (ERTC), play a critical role in the education and training experiences offered to students in various areas of the bioeconomy across the BIB Consortium by providing hands-on experiences to complement coursework. This spring, NCERC’s and ERTC’s interns and trainees will be among the BIB Consortium students benefitting from the Wonderlic soft skills learning opportunity.

“This award is extremely important because ‘soft skills training’ is a dire need by employers not only in this region, but across the country,” said John Caupert, director of NCERC. “While the technical skills and knowledge students access at NCERC is paramount, employers seek a well-rounded candidate who is both professional and employable. We believe the training will better prepare trainees for the workplace, whether it’s a petroleum refinery, ethanol plant, or laboratory.”

Wonderlic’s program has become available to BIB Consortium students at the beginning of the Spring semester 2017. To learn more about the BIB Consortium, visit [www.buildingilbio.com](http://www.buildingilbio.com).

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### **About The Building Illinois’ Bioeconomy Consortium (BIB)**

The Building Illinois’ Bioeconomy consortium, formed in 2014 through funding from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program, offers certificates and degrees, with options for stackable and latticed credentials, in Bioprocess, Process Maintenance, Bioenergy, and Water Management. The BIB consortium, composed of five higher education institutions which span the state of Illinois, includes Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Lewis and Clark Community College located in Godfrey, Southeastern Illinois College located in Harrisburg, Lincoln Land Community College located in Springfield, and Carl Sandburg College located in Galesburg.

### **About Wonderlic, Inc.**

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