Local Community College Debuts Health Care IT Program

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. - While the national unemployment average remains above 9 percent, the health care industry is exploding with opportunity, especially in the IT department. Now, one local community college is offering an online program tailored to the field.

As doctors, clinics, hospitals and pharmacies shift to electronic records, those with knowledge in health-based computer systems are finding themselves in high demand.

Evan Newton has been scanning job listings, and to improve his job prospects, he was a member of Normandale Community College’s Minnesota Health IT Training Program.

“The health care industry and the IT industry, it’s creating this beautiful fusion,” said Sunny Ainley, with NCC.

The Bloomington-based school is using a federal grant to train a new breed of professional that marries knowledge of computer systems with the world of health care services.

The government wants doctors, hospitals and physicians to adopt electronic reporting systems to ease access to patient information in the coming years; however, there are fears that there will be a shortage of properly-trained workers to build and maintain the infrastructure.

“You need all the systems, the processes and the people to do the work,” explained Ainley. “We are focusing on the people.”

The first group of trainees -- including Newton -- just graduated, and a second session is scheduled for the fall. Unfortunately, it isn’t currently open to everyone and applicants must have a certain level of experience in the IT or health care industries to enroll.