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Rio Salado program to help Boomers transition to teaching

by **Lesley Wright** - Aug. 4, 2009 10:41 AM
The Arizona Republic

Rio Salado College is launching a new program for people who are at least 50 years old and want to make the transition to a career in education.

A Boomer think tank called Civic Ventures and the MetLife Foundation awarded Rio a \$25,000 grant to make the school's teacher-prep program Boomer friendly.

Kim Tobey, community liaison for the Encore program, said the grant will pay for in-person orientation programs around the Valley and a special coach to help the re-careerists navigate their re-entry into college and the world of [online education](#).

"In this economy, we know there are people who are unemployed who want to re-career," Tobey said. "This funding is going to allow us to go out and specifically work with the 50-plus re-careering student. It may have been a while since they've been in school. This will help them to be successful in school and in the online environment."

Civic Ventures and MetLife founded the program after learning from a 2008 survey that re-careering is of interest to about half the population age 44 to 70. And teaching or otherwise working with youths topped the chart of new ventures.

Marc Freedman, chief executive of Civic Ventures, said that community colleges will play a key role in helping Boomers reach their new career goals, partly because they cost less than [universities or](#) four-year colleges.

Rio Salado, one of 10 Maricopa Community Colleges in the Valley, has offered a teacher prep certification program for the past 10 years. Secondary, elementary, special education and early childhood education certificates can be earned with courses ranging from 35 to 51 credit hours.

Most students enter with bachelor degrees, but Rio also has programs for students who need to complete [undergraduate](#) credits.

The program last year had 550 students take courses. Tobey said the college hopes to boost that to 600 students with the Encore program. The school has not put a cap on the number of students who can enroll.

The orientation programs will offer an overview of the program and discuss [financial aid](#) options available through the district. There are no scholarships specific to this program.

The orientations are expected to begin about mid-August and take place monthly.

The Maricopa district charges \$71 per credit hour. Most students finish the work in 1½ to two years, although that timeline can be stretched or accelerated.

Most jobs now available are for teachers of [math](#), science and special education, but people willing to teach in rural areas or for low-income [school districts](#) could also have an easier time finding employment.

"It's about being flexible about where you look for positions," Tobey said.

Program details are still being worked out, but a summary should be available soon by going to: *www.rio*

salado.edu/programs/education. Information also is available by calling 480-384-9937.
