

Colleges and private companies are jumping into the business of training prospective workers for the estimated 10,000-plus jobs that three resort casinos and a slots parlor will bring to the Bay State.

Newton's Lasell College is adding a bachelor's degree in resort and casino management this fall — the first such program east of the Mississippi.

"The college already has a strong program in hospitality and event management, which has been growing fast," president Michael Alexander said. "And seeing what's going on in the state of Massachusetts and New England in the gaming industry, it made sense for us to give our students an opportunity to prepare to compete for the thousands of jobs that are going to be created in the industry."

The curriculum will include courses in resort and casino management, lodging, food and beverage management, casino regulation and security, and operation technology issues.

Job creation and workforce development are among the primary objectives of the state's 2011 gaming act, Gaming Commission Chairman Stephen Crosby said.

"One of the concerns about casino job generation is that skilled jobs will go to people out of state because we won't have a trained local workforce," he said. "So creating a pipeline of people with the specific skill sets for the higher-end jobs is fabulous."

While legislation doesn't require casino and slots parlor operators to provide jobs to local residents, they're encouraged to do so.

"Local employment is one of our evaluation criteria, so there is tremendous incentive for them to put real numbers to paper," Crosby said.

The commission is down to two finalists for a director of workforce and supplier development. In December, it partnered with the state's 15 community colleges to form the Massachusetts Casino Careers Training Institute, a training program for entry- and midlevel jobs. An estimated 30 percent of the 10,000 casino jobs will require training for positions that will be licensed by the commission.

The Hospitality & Tourism Department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Isenberg School of Management started offering four elective casino courses in 2002 that have been gaining traction since the gaming legislation passed. It also has an online casino management certificate program.

"The interest is growing very, very fast," department head Haemoon Oh said, noting course enrollment has more than doubled.

The New England Casino Dealer Academy in North Attleboro, meanwhile, opened a 6,000-square-foot facility in March to train prospective casino dealers in blackjack, craps, poker and roulette in eight- and 12-week courses.

And UMass Boston's College of Advancing and Professional Studies will start offering non-credit classes on counseling gambling addicts.

"We're really responding to a concern voiced by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health," dean Philip DiSalvio said. "There's a growing problem of gambling addiction, and it should be addressed by educational institutions."

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