In Scurry County, broadband computer access is available either on a limited basis, or not at all for persons living outside of the city of Snyder in sparsely-populated rural areas. It is also especially true for the 17.1% of persons who are at or below the poverty level in the county, and for the 24.2% of persons under age 18 who are below the poverty level. Computer and broadband access is limited for persons who cannot afford computers and Internet access, for after-school students and for adults desiring public Internet access and computer literacy training. Western Texas proposes to alleviate the problem (1) by providing a downtown public access Computer Center, and (2) by providing a training facility where computer literacy and career/technical education and other training can be offered. Situating the Center downtown places it in an area characterized by low-income neighborhoods 'the primary target group. Furthermore, the college will be able to supply its excellent support capabilities for overseeing and maintaining the Center. The Center will also offer educational programs as it reaches out to persons of varied ages from elementary school to senior citizens. Scurry County is located in west central Texas, approximately 250 miles due west of Fort Worth. Snyder, the county seat, is roughly equidistant from the three metropolitan areas of Midland, Abilene, and Lubbock 'each about 90 miles distant. The county covers 908 acres of rural West Texas and has a population density of 16.9 persons per square mile. Local economy has been based on the farming, ranching, and oil industries. In the past few years, the wind energy industry has also found the county to be attractive because of the west Texas winds. Significant demographic information helps to understand the needs in Scurry County: ' Population: 15,384 (5,559 rural, 10,425 city of Snyder) ' Median income: $44,272 (below the national and state averages). ' Percent of population at or below poverty level: 17.1%. ' Percent of those under age 18 in poverty: 24.2%. ' Percentage of white, non-Hispanic persons: 57.6%. ' Percentage of Hispanic persons: 34%. ' Percentage of Black persons: 6.4% ' Percentage of other non-white persons: 2%. The college estimates that a minimum of 90 persons per 5-day week, and 40 persons per weekend will be served by the Center, including public-access users and career/computer literacy, workforce/technology, and community/personal enrichment attendees. The College projects that 3 FTE instructors and 1 secretary will be needed for the Center. It anticipates reaching some 700 persons annually with the Center. Western Texas College is a publicly-supported Hispanic-serving comprehensive community college which opened in 1971. The college provides open access and equal educational opportunity as it supports the lifelong needs of a multicultural society. It is fully accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges is fully approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The main campus is located five miles from downtown Snyder. Having experienced record growth for the past 18 semesters, the college seeks other venues to further expand
educational opportunities in its 10-county service. In addition to opening the a downtown center called the College on the Square (in a donated building) in 2008, WTC purchased a 10,000 sq. ft. downtown building in 2008, planning to convert it for additional workforce and career/technology training. To carry out a major strategic goal of providing more downtown opportunities, the college began renovations in August 2009 and will build out two computer lab facilities in this building if awarded the grant. Western Texas College has almost four decades of experience in adult career/technical and continuing education to serve industrial, career, and personal needs and is well-positioned to expand opportunities for county residents.