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National Manufacturing Institute, MSCC Working Together to Establish Training Standards

Mid-South Community College and the Washington, DC-based Manufacturing Institute have entered into a partnership to facilitate deployment of the National Association of Manufacturers-Endorsed Manufacturing Skills Certification System in Arkansas.



Mid-South Community College machining students work on an assignment in the Workforce Technology Center

Through the alignment of educational and career pathways, this large-scale effort is intended to prepare students and working learners for high quality jobs in manufacturing.

“We need to engage more young people and transitioning workers in learning skills that translate to high-quality jobs in our economy,” said Manufacturing Institute President Emily DeRocco who visited MSCC twice while serving as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training for the U.S. Department of Labor.

“By deploying the Manufacturing Skills Certification System as stackable credentials in Arkansas colleges, we will be offering new pathways to employment and advancement in manufacturing, which is a mainstay of the state’s economy.”

The partnership is supported by a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based private foundation dedicated to expanding access to and success in

education beyond high school. The Foundation supports projects nationwide that help increase the proportion of Americans with college degrees and the necessary credentials to enter the workforce.

With enhanced access to community college programs that offer industry-recognized, nationally portable credentials, students and workers in Arkansas can receive the quality education and training needed to respond to the demands of local manufacturers, who depend on talent-driven innovation for survival and growth in the competitive global marketplace.

Support from The Manufacturing Institute and Lumina Foundation for Education positions Arkansas as one of 17 states receiving private, independent funding to establish the Manufacturing Skills Certification System as the statewide standard for manufacturing education.

“Joining the efforts of other states in the country to help drive manufacturing education reform efforts is certainly an honor that we don’t take lightly,” said MSCC President Dr. Glen Fenter. “This initiative will position our region for great economic advances.”

“Our relationship with The Manufacturing Institute is an extension of that continued effort. This partnership will pay great dividends, not just for eastern Arkansas but our whole state as our country’s economy improves and manufacturing regains a more vibrant role.”

Dr. Fenter said integrating industry skills certifications in MSCC’s technical programs will help the College prepare individuals for manufacturing jobs.

“The Manufacturing Institute has created a national solution to drive manufacturing education reform to meet the needs of Arkansas companies and the new realities of the students and working learners they seek to employ,” he said. “The partnership will help us meet the ever-evolving needs and learning styles of our students and working learners to enhance our delivery of a first-class manufacturing workforce for Arkansas, equipped with 21st century skills.”

As the lead agency in Arkansas, MSCC will convene three meetings around the state: one each for policy leaders, educational leaders, and business-sector

leaders/employers. The College will work with the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, and the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce.

Implementation of the NAM-Endorsed Manufacturing Skills Certification System will build college programs that prepare students and transitioning workers with entry-level skills necessary to succeed in all advanced manufacturing careers, including motor vehicles, food processing, and metal fabrication. The skills certifications included in these educational programs address personal effectiveness competencies, foundational academic competencies, general workplace skills and manufacturing industry-wide technical skills. Applied science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills are included in the system.

The national skills system organizes individual certification programs designed and validated by ACT, Inc., the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council, the American Welding Society, the National Institute of Metalworking Skills, and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers into educational pathways with "stackable" credentials leading to an associate's degree.

The Manufacturing Institute, the non-partisan 501(c) (3) affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers, delivers leading-edge information and services to the nation's manufacturers through its National Center for the American Workforce and its National Center for Manufacturing Research.

The Institute focuses on developing human capital strategies through education reform and workforce development, conducting applied research to provide critical information to public policy makers on challenges and opportunities for today's industry, and advancing the innovation capacity of manufacturers operating in a global market. Visit www.institute.nam.org for additional information.