

MCC manufacturing certification program to expand with grant

By Joseph T. O'Leary Journal Inquirer | Posted: Friday, July 31, 2015 11:47 am

MANCHESTER — Manchester Community College students who enroll in the first stage of its manufacturing certificate program will benefit from a number of improvements.

The school was allocated more than \$6 million of the total \$15 million Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative funding to bolster its programs, Michael Jordan-Reilly, director of public relations, said.

As a result, MCC's 10-week Conventional Precision Manufacturing certificate program, which starts on Aug. 17, will see a number of benefits: reduced costs for students, new curriculum, and expansion of its current labs, which will increase the number of students it can serve.

MCC is the lead college in a statewide consortium under CAMI, Jordan-Reilly said. It's expected to work with 11 other community colleges, Charter Oak State College, and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities program to channel funding and further develop manufacturing education across the Nutmeg State.

The CPM certificate program is the first of three sections in MCC's 26-week manufacturing program, which also includes a non-credit CPM certificate and a Computer-Aided Manufacturing certificate. Financial aid and scholarships may be available for the program, and manufacturing program Director Ed Dombrowski said attaining all three certificates can be done in less than one school year.

The initial CPM program is designed to help students gain skills for entry-level positions, Dombrowski said, but it also works as a tool that can assist further skill development.

Jordan-Reilly said the first program centers around operating conventional machinery used in the modern manufacturing world.

Students can go on to pursue more advanced certificates that cover industrial theory, provide hands-on experience with CNC machines, and allow additional studies in quality control inspection and CNC programming.

After completing the 10-week course, students will have information and basic machining experience that can help them attain positions as CNC machine operators or general machine operators, as well as apprenticeships in specialties such as tool and die, he continued.

The certificates are stackable as well, and several of them can be used as credits toward associate's degrees in technology studies.

With 40 years' experience in the manufacturing field, Dombrowski is excited about the improvements these grants can bring to the school's manufacturing abilities. The grants allow for the development of two new manufacturing labs and a number of new machines — as of now, the single lab in the school can support only a few students.

Dombrowski compared the machinery upgrades to someone learning how to drive. With two hours' hands-on experience before a driving test, that person will likely fail; with 200 hours, they'll do a lot better.

The grant “helps make sure students have the skills they need,” he said. “It's fabulous for Manchester and regional manufacturing.”

The program improvements are especially beneficial in light of manufacturing's resurgence in the last few years, he added. Four years ago, no companies wanted to invest in training entry-level employees — now, the market is warming up. With new programs, contracts, and parts in demand, trained workers are in high demand, and programs like MCC's will help fill the industry's needs.

Contrary to popular opinion, Dombrowski said, manufacturing in Connecticut is alive and well. Funding for manufacturing education helps spread the word that the industry can support strong careers and families without substantial student loans.

MCC intends to keep the programs up to date to match shifting industrial needs, Jordan-Reilly added.

In addition to the CAMI grant, the United Bank Foundation Connecticut donated \$100,000 to the college last winter to support further growth of manufacturing programs.

That donation has been divided into four annual \$25,000 payments, which will be used to pay for new equipment at the school and to allow for additional student financial support. The money supported the addition of four Bridgeport mills, machinery that comes standard in the industry.

“Our Foundation board always knows that when we make an investment in the college it will lead to a more rewarding higher educational experience for their students,” said William H.W. Crawford, IV. Chief Executive Officer of United Bank.

“MCC's vision to expand and enhance their manufacturing program is exciting for students and our business community,” Crawford continued. “That is why we are excited to be their partner in making that goal a reality.”