

Collaborating With Hudson Valley Manufacturers To Address The Skills Gap



Westchester Community College is Rising to the Challenge

Manufacturing Industry Trends

Manufacturing in the United States has seen a resurgence in recent years helping to drive our strong economy. Reshoring, or bringing back jobs to the U.S., has become an important trend in the industry and positions the U.S. to be more competitive globally. Favorable tax policy and deregulation are propelling increased investments and capital spending in technology. Advances in technology have significantly improved productivity.

Along with this resurgence, particularly the advances in technology and automation, a new challenge has emerged. With unemployment rates at, or near, all-time lows, local manufacturers are feeling the impact of this when it comes to filling many of their open positions. Many local manufacturers have said the shortage of workers is their most pressing issue. The challenge now is the need to develop people with the necessary skills to work in advanced manufacturing. Among the skills needed are machine operators, as well as qualified personnel to create, install, repair, and manage the wide array of equipment and machinery being deployed on the factory floor.

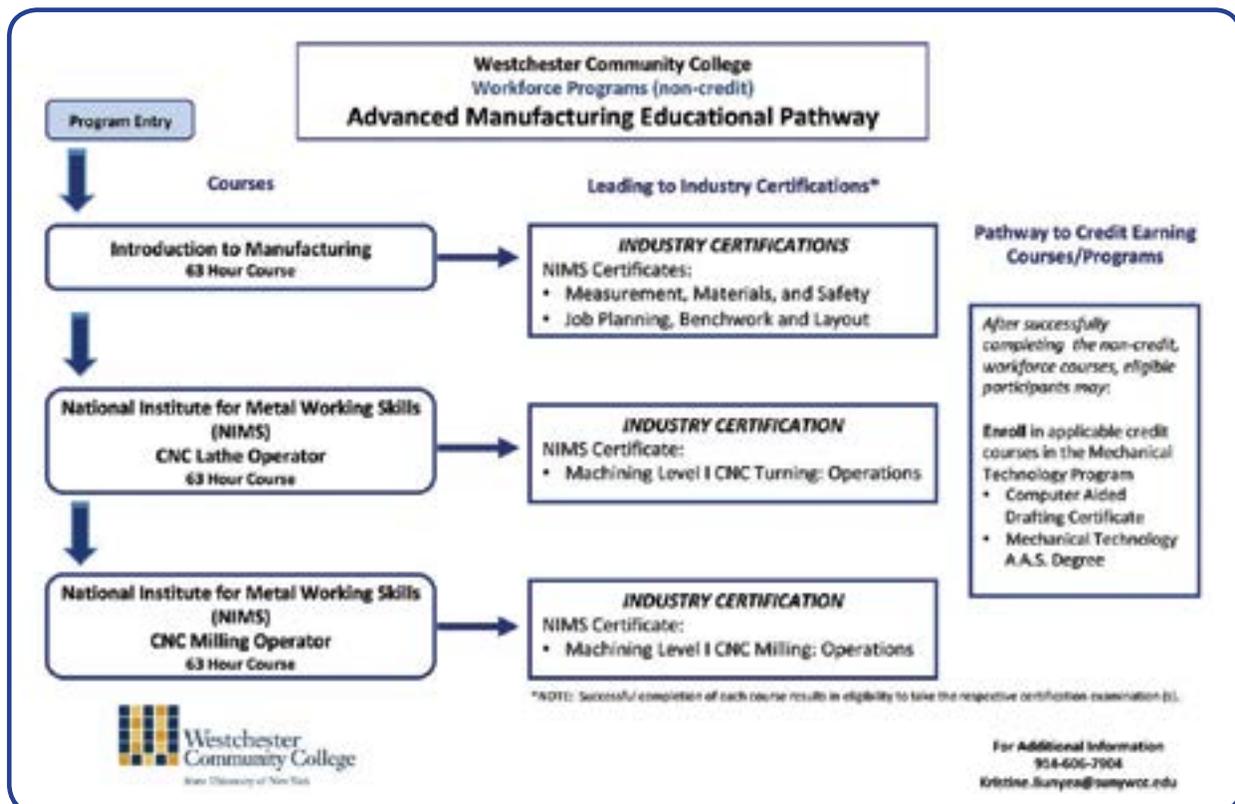
Creating Programs to Meet Industry Needs

Together with input from several local manufacturers, Westchester Community College developed a set of programs to help address the talent shortage occurring in the sector. This focused need is to teach entry-level skills for CNC operators and machinists to meet the demand from employers to keep their businesses running effectively.

Larry Fryer, President of Fryer Machines, an important benefactor to Westchester Community College and an advisory board member shared his comments recently about the industry being overlooked by many of the younger generation. “The perception out there is manufacturing, and machine shops are dirty, they’re old fashioned, something our fathers did,” stated Larry Fryer. “The fact is that

manufacturing has changed, it’s more what I call ‘grey’ collar, so you don’t get as dirty. You work with your head a lot more than you do with your hands. The human machine interface (HMI) in modern manufacturing equipment allows people to interact with machines with ease and efficiency through automation. That has really become a skill that is in need and pays well,” said Fryer.

Creating a career pathway and an entry point into the college was an important consideration when putting together a program to address the needs of local employers. In addition to the existing credit-based CAD Certificate program, a non-credit certificate program aligned with the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) was introduced. This comprehensive program includes a strong baseline of “must-have” skills for entry-level workers. Students in these programs undergo rigorous training in OSHA safety requirements and regulations and learn the fundamentals of personal protective equipment (PPE), how to read and interpret Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), lock



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out, tag out procedures, HMIS labeling systems and NFPA before moving on to working with metals and other advanced skills.

The **NIMS certificate program** is comprised of three separate classes each with 63 hours of classroom hours and hands-on projects leading to four industry certifications. The first in the series is the Introduction to Advanced Manufacturing class and includes two separate certification exams around measurement, materials, safety and project planning, bench work and layout.

Once students have completed the introductory course, two additional classes are offered for students to continue advancing their skills. *Advanced Manufacturing I* introduces students to the milling process where they learn the basics of CNC milling operations and programming. *CNC Milling and Advanced Manufacturing II: CNC Turning* continues on to lathe operations and the turning process.

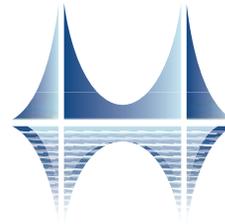
The **NIMS non-credit program** provides a pathway to Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) and Mechanical Technology credit bearing programs at the college for those who want to continue advancing their career skills in manufacturing. In addition, the college has partnered with The Council of Industry to support their **NYS Registered Apprenticeship Program** and has recently applied to participate in the SUNY Apprenticeship grant. This collaboration has the potential to provide discounted or free related instruction credits to registered apprentices throughout the Hudson Valley.

As manufacturing jobs return to the U.S., they require sophisticated training and capabilities. As a result, demand for highly-skilled labor will increase and companies and government agencies must work collaboratively to bridge the skills gap. Throughout the Hudson Valley Region, a number of resources are available to support the success of our manufacturing business community. These resources include your local One Stop Career Center and many statewide and local initiatives. Westchester Community College, in collaboration with The Council of Industry, the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and local manufacturers, is leading the way to provide solutions to manufacturing skills gap.

Contact your local Community College or The Council of Industry for more information on this and other workforce development programs in the region.



Jim Irvine is the Director of Corporate Education and Continuing Professional Education at Westchester Community College



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