

Responding to industry needs for customized training

By Shelly Springborn



Based on workplace demand and industry projections, a continued focus for Montcalm Community College this year was to maintain high-value programming tied to advancements in a variety of skilled trades career areas.

As industry partners worked to maintain adequate staffing levels, the college remained flexible in its ability to provide necessary training through a variety of instructional methods in its classrooms and hands-on learning labs.

“Our goal is to support our industry partners by providing training to help them create, sustain and retain a viable workforce,” said Susan Hatto, MCC Dean for Industrial Education and Workforce Training. “In doing so, we help create economic prosperity for employees, businesses and communities.”

MCC, in partnership with Grand Rapids Community College and Muskegon Community College, is able to help more workers gain skills training through the One Workforce Program. This program provides students with funding and support to pursue education in advanced manufacturing.

“This funding allows us to help people get started in a career in advanced manufacturing or prepare those already working in the industry with new skills for the next phase of manufacturing,” Hatto said.

MCC also continued to partner with several area businesses to provide customized training through the Michigan New Jobs Training Program (MNJTP), which allows community colleges to provide free training for employers that are creating new jobs and/or expanding operations in Michigan.

In addition, the college also continues to enhance its equipment, curriculum development and tuition assistance through grants and other funding options.

“This allows us to take our curriculum and training equipment to where we need to be to better serve area

businesses as industry standards change,” Hatto said.

MCC’s partnerships with local businesses to provide customized apprenticeship training remained strong. This fall, 115 students are attending classes under the sponsorship of their employers. A majority of these students are following a customized apprenticeship program, ultimately leading to “journey person” status and its associated career and earnings growth.

Because many occupational programs, such as welding, robotics and others, rely on in-person, hands-on instruction, MCC is continuing to explore creative ways to support students and businesses.

“We are sensitive to the fact that training is important for area businesses, but scheduling is sometimes difficult,” Hatto said. “As the community’s training partner, we are committed to remaining flexible to meet evolving industry and employer needs for skilled workers.”

MCC is in its last year of a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that aims at helping the college expand its automation program. Under the provisions of the grant, MCC utilized a mobile education trailer, equipped with robots and other equipment to provide engaging hands-on activities at local K-12 schools and at various adult recruiting events.

The college also submitted another NSF grant proposal this fall to support Building Automation Technology. This proposal focuses on energy such as Smart Buildings and Smart Manufacturing and will offer coursework in areas such as controls, sensors, and integration between HVAC and automated manufacturing equipment. Awards for this grant are expected to be made next spring. ■

For more information

Visit montcalm.edu/workforce

Email susan.hatto@montcalm.edu

Call 989-328-1254