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**Connecticut Community Colleges Support Career Development Month**  
*The CCCs prepare the talent pipeline for Manufacturing Industry*

The Connecticut Community College System is joining with over 30 business and government organizations to sponsor Career Development Month in the State of Connecticut during November 2008. The Connecticut Career Development Association has partnered with the Governor for the past seven years to declare November as a month for special focus on career development activities. In her State of Connecticut Proclamation declaring the special month, Governor M. Jodi Rell emphasizes that "the ongoing process of career development is essential for all individuals to maximize their personal potential, as well as for the continued health of our economy," and gives recognition and support to "those professionals who provide career guidance, counseling, and development services in a variety of settings."

Students can start on their path to many rewarding careers through programs at the 12 Connecticut Community Colleges (CCCs), and statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report that \$600,000 in additional lifetime income can result for earners who continue their education at the associate degree level in comparison with high school graduates. Many of the fastest growing careers in Connecticut in health care, including nursing, information technology, and education are open to associate degree graduates, and the state's community colleges educate over 50% of the allied health technicians and professionals who enter the health care field each year. Careers in manufacturing, a high-tech field with a growing need to replace retiring workers, can be achieved through an innovative curriculum pathway program called the College of Technology (COT) at the CCCs.

Manufacturing jobs pay more than 20 percent higher wages and benefits than those in the construction, services, and retail sectors, according to a survey by the Connecticut Business & Industry Association. However, an aging workforce, a thinning pool of young talent, and limited training opportunities all contribute to the shortage of skilled manufacturing workers in Connecticut. The image of noisy assembly lines and limited employee advancement is changing to a high tech, high skill, high wage environment that needs to attract a pipeline of educated employees in order to grow.

The CCCs' College of Technology pathway gives students credits toward engineering and technology degrees and transfer programs at Connecticut public and private colleges and universities including the University of Connecticut, Central Connecticut State University, Fairfield University, the University of Hartford, University of New Haven, and Charter Oak State College. The pathway combines the general studies courses of all 12 Connecticut Community Colleges with specialized courses in engineering and technology, many of them offered through distance learning.

Associate degree programs and options include Electrical Utility Technology; Laser and Fiber Optics; Cabling: Integrator Technician and Networking, and Precision Manufacturing. Upon completion of an associate degree, students are prepared for transfer and careers in a variety of high tech industries.

High school students can get a start toward engineering and technology careers through the community colleges' expanded articulation agreements with regional high schools and technical schools. Combined with the transfer opportunities to four-year colleges, the community colleges offer access to higher education in engineering and technology and seamless transfer.

In 2004, the College of Technology was awarded a four-year \$3 million National Science Foundation Grant to develop an Advanced Technology Education Regional Center for Next Generation Manufacturing. The Regional Center for Next Generation Manufacturing educates a new, highly skilled manufacturing workforce capable of implementing advances in technology that are part of the changing environment in manufacturing, its next generation.

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Building on its curriculum pathway, the College of Technology has developed the Center as an innovative regional delivery model to prepare a technical workforce in:

- precision manufacturing,
- photonics/laser applications,
- fuel cells/clean energy and
- medical device instrumentation.

Connecticut manufacturers provide input on employment skills and career pathways, along with exposure to best practices and access to facilities for use in teaching and learning. The Center offers access to state-of-the-art technology equipment and industry-related electives to assure students are learning the latest skills for employment and career development. Student internships and professional development opportunities for secondary school faculty and community college faculty are also offered with partner industries.

In 2007, the reach of the College of Technology was expanded by a \$1.75 million U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) grant, in collaboration with the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, to fund "The Connecticut-Western Massachusetts Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative." The Connecticut Community Colleges were selected to create new training and educational programs specifically related to:

- lean manufacturing,
- computerized machining, and
- other areas of "next-generation" manufacturing.

A new certificate program in Lean Manufacturing and Supply-chain Management offered by the CCCs provides a pipeline of skilled workers and a competitive edge for Connecticut's business and industry. In addition, software simulation programs, created with the assistance of the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT), expand training opportunities in Computer Numerical Controls without the need for replication of expensive precision equipment and materials for hands-on training.

In March 2008, the Connecticut Community College System was awarded another federal grant focused on Skills in Manufacturing and Related Technologies (SMART). In SMART, underserved and disadvantaged students gain education and skills to help them succeed in academic programs and to prepare them for careers and advancement in manufacturing.

The CCCs are also offering a new certificate in Pre-Manufacturing which will prepare students for college-level manufacturing programs: a Level One Precision Manufacturing Certificate will teach core competencies and provide students with transferable skills and portable credentials; and an 18-credit specialized Level Two Precision Manufacturing Certificate will offer training in areas such as precision machining and computer numerically controlled (CNC) technologies, welding technologies, and electronic control technology.

Scholarships, paid internships, and expert mentors will support student success, persistence, and advancement through the levels of the program. The mentors will work closely with industry partners involved in the initiative to provide on-the-job oversight and continuing education to reinforce classroom lessons for students involved in the program.

Manufacturing programs are among over 100 degree and certificate programs offered by the Connecticut Community Colleges to help students prepare for rewarding careers and advancement in today's Knowledge economy.

For more information, visit the Connecticut Community Colleges at [www.commnet.edu](http://www.commnet.edu).