

Manufacturing Mentors Needed! Companies Wanted!

As reported this fall, the Syracuse City School District (SCSD), Onondaga Community College (OCC), and The Manufacturers Association (MACNY) were winners of the New York State Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) grant. The partnership will focus on training in Electrical Engineering Technology or Mechanical Technology and impact over 50 students each year for 6 years.

SCSD and OCC are working together on the curriculum for the program, with input from MACNY members. MACNY, having participated in workforce development initiatives through its affiliate, Partners for Education & Business (PEB), is assisting in the development of mentoring programs, job shadowing, internships, and career fairs to support the P-TECH mission. The goal is to create a seamless pathway from high school to college to employment, utilizing curricula aligned with industry need.

An additional benefit for students will be the alignment with the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) Skills Certification System. Not only will these students graduate with a Regents diploma and an Associate degree, they will also have a nationally recognized credential that will benefit them when looking to transition from the classroom to the workforce. We are now in the one year planning phase and beginning the recruitment phase of the program so the first students can enter the Institute of Technology at Central in the fall of 2014.

MACNY and PEB will play a critical role in aligning technical skills and workplace competencies with curriculum, course offerings and other resources, and in helping to ensure that every student who successfully completes the program is first in line for a job. MACNY and PEB will: help to create and refine an up-to-date industry skills map; assist in the design and implementation of a summer CTE-STEM camp; coordinate project-based learning activities, guest speakers for CTE classes, job shadowing, industry tours, industry- and college-based lab experiences, internships; and the designation of mentors from MACNY member organizations. Mentoring activities will include both regular online and face-to-face interactions, for an average of 30 minutes weekly.

MACNY and PEB will be reaching out to companies and individuals to help us complete these tasks. I will be doing a special presentation to the MACNY Board of Directors in February to identify companies interested in participating in these activities. We are particularly interested in companies who may also be interested in eventually hiring Electrical Engineering Technology or Mechanical Technology graduates. If you are experiencing difficulty in finding qualified applicants for positions requiring these skill sets, this may be an option for identifying and developing good candidates.

If you or your company would like to become involved in one or more of these activities, please contact Joe Vargo or me at the MACNY Offices. The activities we will be targeting immediately are setting up workplace tours for students and identifying potential mentors for students in either electrical or mechanical fields. A little further down the road we will need classroom speakers and persons willing to have students "job-shadow" them. Still later, when the students are nearing completion of their studies we will want to develop work-based learning experiences and full internships.

According to U.S. News & World Report some of the benefits of being a mentor are: learning new things by being exposed to a member of another generation, sharing your knowledge with a young person helps you understand your own job better, building new relationships improves your professional network, guiding others helps you improve your leadership and management skills, and finally you are helping your organization and your industry by building tomorrow's workforce. Benefits to companies are: helping to build a qualified workforce tailored to company need, having a first look at qualified applicants, and helping the community by employing successful graduates and retaining local talent.