

PONTIAC EMPLOYERS SEE SUCCESS WITH HCC'S FUNDAMENTALS OF MODERN MANUFACTURING PROGRAM

Heartland Community College's customized manufacturing training program, Fundamentals of Modern Manufacturing (FOMM), continues to be an asset for students and the manufacturing industry in Pontiac.



Formed in 2013 as a cooperative effort between Heartland and the Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council (GLCEDC), the training teaches skills to excel in manufacturing. The program covers four sections of modern manufacturing fundamentals:

- Manufacturing Processes and Production
- Quality and Measurement
- Maintenance Awareness
- Safety

FOMM also covers math, workplace ethics and etiquette, resume development and interviewing skills.

Several Pontiac manufacturers, such as Caterpillar, Exact Packaging, RR Donnelley and Technical Metals, have utilized the program to train their own employees and to seek potential job candidates. They say FOMM gives their employees enthusiasm and prepares them for the manufacturing industry.

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CEO of Exact Packaging, Patty Dodson, observed an immediate positive impact after sending employees to the training. Dodson explained, “I found employees had a new energy after completing the program. They were able to take ownership and implement new ideas from the training to make our processes better.”

Increasing manufacturing skills means participants have something to set themselves apart from other job candidates. Caterpillar Operations Manager, Susan Toher, said participants who complete the program are more marketable to potential employers. “Those who go through the program indicate a strong level of effort and commitment most manufacturing organizations look for,” she said. “If you’re willing to put that extra effort into improving your basic manufacturing skills, that’s worth something to me.”

Manufacturing supervisors are finding FOMM to be beneficial for recruiting new employees and promoting current ones. Paula Montgomery, vice president of manufacturing for RR Donnelley, says she sent a new hire to the program for a variety of reasons. “First, we felt she was promotable. Second, it allowed us to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The feedback she gave after attending was very positive.” An employee at Exact Packaging, who was classified as temporary, has

since been hired full-time after completing the training.

In addition to teaching manufacturing skills,

FOMM allows manufacturers to connect with the community and provide job opportunities.

“The manufacturing business in Pontiac is growing,” Dodson said. “It can be tough to find enough people.” However, she’s thankful Heartland can offer courses to attract and train potential employees.

"These types of creative programs are becoming even more important in identifying and recruiting prospective employees for manufacturing jobs," Montgomery added.

"We see being part of this program as a win-win. We really feel very strongly about investing in the area in which we live and work. Being a part of this program is an easy way for us to show our support," said Toher.

FOMM is offered through Continuing Education at Heartland. To learn more about the program, call the GLCEDC at 815-842-2900 or email Adam Dontz, adam@glcedc.org.

ADULT EDUCATION PROVIDES PRODUCTIVE COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Each year, Heartland's adult education program serves nearly 1,000 students. Of those students, approximately 41 percent are unemployed and 30 percent receive public assistance.

The program aims to bridge gaps to employability, self-sufficiency and college readiness so more individuals can grow the local tax base and fewer will draw on services supported by it.

Those preparing for the GED are typically striving to improve their employment options. Students in the English Language Acquisition program are

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building the fluency required to function in the community and pursue academic and career goals. Workforce preparation is integrated into all adult education curriculum. This helps students gain the skills needed to be financially independent and increase their contributions to their community.

After a decision by the GED Testing Service, adult education students may get an extra boost into the job market. In January 2016, the testing service recalibrated their passing score from 150 to 145. In its news release, GED Testing Service President, Randy Trask, said the change is based on an “extensive analysis of test-takers’ performance data” and is part of their ongoing commitment to “make data-based decisions and continually improve the efficacy of the GED program.”

With the new passing score, students who earned a 145 on the GED since January 1, 2014 will receive their high school equivalency certificate. Director of Adult Education, Tammy Truitt, says the difference between a 145 and 150 has a significant impact. “It’s great news for students.

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Adult education is also preparing students to further their education and “pay it forward.” A recent economic impact study found a 25-year-old Illinois community college graduate can expect to make \$570,000 more in lifetime earnings than their peers without an associate degree.

GED student Errayanna Williams plans to pursue an associate degree in nursing and hopes to complete a master’s degree. One day, when she has the ability to give back, she wants to help students like herself.

Other GED students share that same sentiment. Five former adult education students are now working as tutors. According to Truitt, this is one example of the program’s success. “It means our instructors are doing a great job teaching,” she said. “Students are learning more than ‘just enough’ English or ‘just enough’ to pass the GED examination, but in fact are learning enough to help teach other adult education students.”

