

NEWS RELEASE

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PTC wins \$1.9 million from DOL

PINE CITY, Minn. – Pine Technical College has been awarded a \$1.9 million grant by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) as a part of the Community-Based Job Training Grant Program (CBJT).

According to the DOL, the primary purpose of Community-Based Job Training Grants is, "...to build the capacity of community colleges to train workers in the skills required to succeed in high growth, high demand industries."

PTC's project targets the manufacturing sector in East Central Minnesota and Western Wisconsin and deals with a large number of partner companies in the community and region. During the current 2008-2009 DOL granting cycle, there were 274 applications. Less than 25 percent of those have been funded with a CBJT Grant, and just two of those funded are located in Minnesota.

"PTC has been provided with a valuable opportunity to build upon our existing partnerships and to have a significant impact on the regional manufacturing community," says Dr. Robert Musgrove, President of Pine Technical College. "Through this CBJT Grant, PTC will be better equipped to provide the advanced training to our students as well as high school students across the region as well as invigorate the manufacturing industry with a workforce of well trained individuals," Musgrove added.

The mission of the grant is to develop a partnership between Pine Technical College and a variety of community partners to train regional high-growth, high-demand workers for the advanced manufacturing industry, and to ensure workers have skills and training support and an overall supportive environment to increase retention and earnings to impact the broader economy. PTC already has aligned with a number of regional business partners and academic institutions including Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Andersen Windows North Branch, Atscott Manufacturing, MINPACK, Nexen Group, TEAM Industries, The Initiative Foundation, Wyoming Machine, Grantsburg High School, Pine City High School and North Branch High School. Through these partnerships, PTC will work on the two primary focuses of the CBJT Grant: the building of advanced manufacturing technology skills and the outreach and networking necessary for the sustainability of the programs.

In addressing the need for advancement in manufacturing skills, a portion of the grant funds will allow PTC to purchase a Mobile Manufacturing Lab. The Lab will be outfitted with the latest technology for manufacturing needs in our region.

According to Julie Dillenburg, PTC Machining Instructor, “With this grant program, we will be able to expand and integrate new material into our curriculum. Many of our current course offerings were developed in direct response to the needs of the manufacturing industry in our region. The CBJT grant will allow us to continue that tradition in a completely new direction by allowing us to have mobile access to high schools, workforce centers, and businesses in East Central Minnesota and Western Wisconsin,” Dillenburg added.

In addition to the Mobile Manufacturing Lab, five partner sites have been selected to receive distance “eliminating” learning equipment. This equipment will allow videoconferencing capabilities at each of the partner locations. The equipment, coupled with existing technology at three area high school partners, will allow PTC to simultaneously teach in eight different locations at one time and reach eight times the number of students traditional classroom space allows.

According to industry leaders, the manufacturing industry has been plagued with tired notions of manual labor and repetitive, boring, assembly-line work. These unattractive perceptions of the industry have led to employers struggling to find high quality, skilled workers.

Dan Conroy, Plant Manager at Nexen Group Manufacturing in Siren, Wisconsin said, “People who aren’t involved in the industry think manufacturing is dark, dirty and dangerous or that it’s going away to China. None of that is true. Manufacturing is here to stay and remains a high-wage and high-tech occupation, and we will need skilled people to take our high-wage jobs in the future,” Conroy added.

Through CBJT funding, PTC and its regional partners will become the catalyst for change within the manufacturing industry by reaching out to high school students to build awareness and appreciation of this growing industry.

“Pine Technical College always has tried to be a leader in expanding the educational opportunities for students in this area,” said President Musgrove. “Funding from this grant has the capacity to serve a region currently faced with an increase in population and a high poverty rate. We plan to use a part of this grant funding – around \$100,000 per year for three years – to generate scholarship opportunities for students entering the advanced manufacturing field,” Musgrove added.

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