


Governor Markell Proposes New Program to Boost Manufacturing Workforce

Initiative would give high school students opportunity to earn professional certificates before graduation

Wilmington, DE – Proposing an opportunity to grow a vital part of our economy while giving more young people the best chance to reach their potential, Governor Markell today outlined an  Accelerated Career Paths program that would allow high school juniors and seniors to obtain professional manufacturing certificates when they graduate. The Governor previewed the initiative in his [State of the State address](#) as part of his plans to give students a roadmap from the classroom to employment.

In highlighting the importance of the manufacturing sector, the Governor noted that manufacturing is responsible for about 40 percent of total U.S. output and employment, and for two-thirds of our private-sector research and development. In addition, the average wages in manufacturing are more than 16% higher than the average wages in the economy.

“To keep our economy growing, we must meet the needs of our manufacturing employers,” said Markell during an address at the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce Legislative Brunch and Manufacturing Conference. “We often talk about our global competition for talent as though it’s mainly a competition for individuals who have pursued a college education. We assume “good jobs” require a traditional degree, but nothing could be further from the truth. Just as we provide specialized coursework for students transitioning to college, this program provides similar opportunities for those choosing an accelerated career path.”

Delaware's Accelerated Career Paths program ensures high school graduates are ready to start a career on day one.


Delaware's manufacturers embraced the idea of working with the State, Del Tech, and school districts on developing this innovative approach to career readiness for the youngest members of our workforce – thereby ensuring a pipeline of talent for their long-term workforce needs.

With partnership from Del Tech and the Delaware Manufacturing Association, the initiative will involve developing a two-year, comprehensive program in manufacturing technologies for Delaware high school juniors and seniors. The program – which results in nationally recognized advanced manufacturing certificates, in addition to a high school diploma and even some college credits – allows students to attend classes at their home school part of the week, while spending the remainder at the community college getting hands-on training.

Students will attend classes in their homes schools and receive training on manufacturing equipment at Del Tech so they can get the hands-on training necessary to land that first job.

“So many of the best jobs available now are in technical fields requiring electrical, mechanical, and maintenance skills,” said Mitch Magee, chair of the Delaware Manufacturing Association. “These are jobs that pay very well, often better than entry-level jobs attainable with a college degree, and we must offer the opportunities to become certified for these positions.”

The Delaware Manufacturing Association and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership are working to help identify members willing to offer real world opportunities during the summer between junior and senior year. This effort recognizes that, whether it takes the form of hands-on work or job shadowing, direct exposure to the workplace is crucial. Students will

spend about 200 hours over the summer practicing their skills in the workplace. 

The manufacturing association has agreed to assist on three other fronts:

- Vetting the curriculum, both up front, and on an annual basis to ensure it keeps pace with the industry's evolving needs in light of changing technologies and improved methodologies.
- Improving the image of manufacturing with the students, parents and educators through a variety of in-school activities and on-site events at the manufacturers' facilities.
- Ensuring students who commit to this path will be rewarded for doing so by developing ways to better predict their hiring needs 2-3 years down the road, so that the current pipeline matches the future demand for skilled employees.

The effort is modeled after a partnership between Delaware Technical Community College and Red Clay Consolidated School District. That program brought in high school juniors in the fall of 2012 for more than 300 hours of training in carpentry, plumbing, electricity, and OSHA Construction Safety.

Enthusiasm around the manufacturing partnership idea resulted in two schools – William Penn and Del Castle – piloting a shorter version of the initiative this semester at Del Tech, where 16 seniors are taking an intensive course covering math, blueprint reading, electrical and mechanical fabrication, and other key skill areas.

“Accelerated career pathways allow high school graduates to start a career on day one, without the time and financial investment required to pursue higher education,” said Markell. “They are the right choice for many of our students, including some of our best and brightest, and we need to make sure that

we provide the training and workplace opportunities these young people need to excel.”

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