



National Coalition of
Advanced Technology
Centers

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Program Spotlight

Featured Member:
*Gateway Technical College
Kenosha, Wisconsin*

Bootcamps for Manufacturing

Program Partners

Gateway Technical College, Kenosha, WI; Workforce Development Boards of Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth Counties; Local Employers

Industry Sector

Manufacturing, Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Machine Operators, Welders/Fabricators, Machine Repair Technicians

Target Population

Dislocated and underemployed individuals in three counties

Eligibility Requirements

Reading and math scores at the 9th grade level or above, ACT National Career Readiness Certificate-Silver level, participation in orientation and industry tour, completion of application process that includes essay, commitment to strict attendance policy and educational and employer expectations.

Program Description

Challenge

In 2005 Gateway Technical College was approached by numerous local employers citing a growing need for CNC operators based on projected retirements. Gateway offers a one-year CNC Production Technician Technical Diploma which typically graduates 12 students per year. This volume was not meeting the expanding needs of employers who required a more rapid process to fill open positions. Many stated that applicants were not qualified, either because they did not have the necessary skill set or otherwise did not meet their hiring needs. Employers asked Gateway to “find a way to teach people

the importance of being on time and showing up daily for work.”

Strategy

After hearing similar sentiments from numerous employers, Gateway’s Workforce and Economic Development Division tasked a manufacturing instructor with gathering specific information from employers about required entry-level skill sets. More than a dozen employers were interviewed and the identified skill sets were found to align with many existing courses available at Gateway. Only two new courses required development and once they were complete, a curriculum was drafted for employer review.

Manufacturing employers in the Gateway district were invited to a meeting to review the curriculum and format of a new training model called a Bootcamp. Approximately 30 employers attended the meeting and provided feedback on the training curriculum which included safety, quality, math, blueprint reading, introduction to CNC, CNC machine tool operations and offsets, and precision measurement. Input from employers indicated that the curriculum was on target to meet employer needs. Gateway also introduced employers to NOCTI’s Precision Machining assessment tool which could be used as a pre- and post-test to measure each individual’s abilities. Employers welcomed the third-party skills validation opportunity and readily endorsed use of the assessment tool.

Although difficult to teach the importance of arriving at work on time, every day, Gateway proposed a program structure that simulated the work environment, scheduling classes Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to





4:30 p.m. with strict attendance policies. Additionally, intensive wrap-around case management services were made available for those participants requiring additional support to address common barriers to attendance such as transportation and childcare needs. The program also included mandatory tutoring sessions for all students who receive a grade lower than a "B" on a test or quiz, résumé writing workshops, and interviewing skill sessions.

Employers responded favorably to the Bootcamp model and Gateway, along with local workforce development center staff, was given the task of implementing the model. All partners, including Gateway, workforce development center staff, and employers, discussed and agreed upon roles for each partner including processes for recruiting, screening, training, and placing participants in employment. Within three months the first CNC Bootcamp was offered to 15 students.

Results

Since 2005 Gateway has offered 15 CNC Bootcamps using the model outlined above to almost 200 students resulting in a 93 percent job placement rate. Over the years the college has added certifications to the Bootcamp including ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) Safety certification, Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt Certification, and the Wisconsin-developed Critical Core Manufacturing Skills for soft skills. The Bootcamp model has been adapted for welding and machine repair technicians. To date, seven welding Bootcamps and three Machine Repair Bootcamps have been offered with similar placement results. The model has also been adapted

for Gateway's Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program.

Business Engagement

Key to the development, implementation, and ongoing success of the program has been the engagement of local employers. From the initial gathering of information when employers first voiced their overwhelming need for skilled workers, through the curriculum development and review process and into the job placement phase, employers have been engaged in the process.

Employers are invited to assist with mock interviews near the end of the Bootcamp to provide feedback to participants about their strengths and areas needing improvement relative to interviewing skills. Employers also provide industry tours prior to Bootcamps so participants can see the work environment and learn about employer expectations. Three weeks prior to the end of the Bootcamp, participant résumés are collated into a booklet and distributed to employers with open positions along with an invitation to attend the completion ceremony. Space is made available following the completion ceremony for employers to conduct interviews with new program completers.

Funding

Initially, funding from the Workforce Investment Act supported most Bootcamp participants, with a limited number of self-pay participants. In 2012, SC Johnson & Sons, Inc., located in Racine, WI, donated \$1 million to Gateway Technical College to support additional Bootcamps in multiple sectors. The funding will allow the college to offer three CNC, two Welding Fabrication, one Machine Repair, and two Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Bootcamps each year for the next two years, including case management services.

Lessons Learned

Gateway leaders say the most important lesson learned in the development and implementation of their Bootcamp model was to ask employers to identify required skills. Rather than speaking in general terms such as "applicants lack skills," they

delved into specific skills required for employment and used those competencies as the basis for the curriculum development process.

Agreement between workforce development staff, Gateway, and employers on specific roles was a critical first step. Rather than each trying to do everything, they analyzed the core mission of each partner and together agreed they would each focus only on those services that fit their mission.

Dislocated workers come from a wide array of backgrounds, experiences, and ages, and many have been away from formal education for quite some time. Program officials learned they needed to integrate study skills and time management early in the program and counseled students that they would need the support of family and friends to complete the rigorous 15-week program. Gateway leaders say the power of the program to change lives is evident at completion ceremonies where children, parents, and other relatives gather to cheer on family members as they accept their certificate(s) and officially complete the program. For many program participants this is the first academic success they've experienced. Completion ceremonies are often filled with poignant moments as completers talk about their new ability to make a living, and a life for their family. Gateway staff says they will welcome program completers back to the college when they are ready to apply their Bootcamp credits to a diploma (one year), degree (two year), or apprenticeship program.

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