

Lake Michigan College Apprenticeship Program Fills Local Jobs



“For companies to grow like they want to, they need to find the right employees. We are continuing to build our apprenticeship program by partnering with area companies that are eager to provide ongoing opportunities to the next generation of manufacturers.”

Dr. Kenneth Flowers,
Dean of Career and
Workforce Education, LMC

The manufacturing industry is slowly filling the skills gap through advanced workforce education and training but there are still not enough people with the knowledge and skills needed to fill positions.

One Midwest community college, Lake Michigan College (LMC) in Benton Harbor, Michigan, is addressing the skills gap by partnering with local manufacturers and providing apprenticeship programs to meet their workforce needs.

LMC is utilizing Tooling U-SME’s customized apprenticeship frameworks for these types of local manufacturers:

- Tool & Die
- Welding
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Industrial Maintenance
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Mechatronics

“We have many different types of Tooling U-SME apprenticeship programs based on the local industries,” said Kevin Kreitner, advanced manufacturing faculty member at Lake Michigan College. “Each employer selects Tooling U-SME/LMC courses they feel best match the needs of their company and then we provide the educational training hours. Using Tooling U-SME gives us the consistency that all instructors are covering the same core content.”



Kreitner went on to say, “Our instructors review the Tooling U-SME materials and select the areas that best fit our course and student needs. All of our part-time and full time instructors come from the manufacturing industry. We also have advisory committees that guide us on course content to provide the best workforce education for local manufacturers and students.”

Apprenticeships can come from incumbent workers or new hires and skill sets can be learned. However, harder-to-teach soft skills, like teamwork and on-time arrival, are often indicators of success.

These qualities are evaluated before granting an apprenticeship. This is understandable due to the rigor of the program. Apprenticeships take four years to complete, including 8,000 hours of



As an added bonus, when a student is not local, but has been using Tooling U-SME classes at their home school, the courses they have taken merge right into the Tooling U-SME system we are using. There is no need for the student to retake the materials, and they can seamlessly move forward.”

Kevin Kreitner,
Faculty Advanced
Manufacturing, LMC

OJT and 576 hours of classroom time including Tooling U-SME’s online workforce education.

“The advantage of the Tooling U-SME program is that it allows students the flexibility to take classes anytime and anywhere – even on their phones,” said Kreitner. “It also saves money on textbooks and offers training consistency.”

With instant feedback and automated grading and homework assignments, the process saves considerable administrative time for instructors.

LMC currently has 120 apprentices working for about 40 companies. Some local businesses have as many as 14 apprentices at a time; others may have just one. Most apprentices are age 25 and up. The school is certified with the Department of Labor (DOL) as a training provider and is also registered with the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium (RACC), administered by the U.S. DOL and Department of Education.

To keep feeding the workforce talent to industry, LMC works closely with the local high schools and home schools. Many of the local high school instructors have been reviewed and approved to teach college level courses at their school for early college credit. The majority of them are using Tooling U-SME online classes when required for a specific course. This helps create a smooth transition as the students advance their education by continuing their course study at LMC.

LMC continues to adjust its custom programs to get the students the most



relevant materials and resources needed to be successful in the class and industry. “We appreciate the ease of purchasing one subscription and allowing the students the ability to access all of the classes (custom programs) any time from any location,” said Kreitner.

Apprenticeship programs like this continue to gain momentum in the U.S. According to the DOL, apprenticeships earn an average starting salary of \$50,000 per year, while gaining a credential that is the equivalent to a two or four year college degree.

For more information on Lake Michigan College, please visit:

www.lakemichigancollege.edu/skilled-trades.

For more information on Tooling U-SME apprenticeship programs please visit:

toolingu.com/training/apprenticeship.