

NEW Approach to Building a Workforce Pipeline

Overview:

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) is addressing the demand for skilled electro-mechanical technicians through the *NEW (Northeast Wisconsin) Approach to Building a Workforce Pipeline* project. This project is designed to increase the number of skilled Electro-Mechanical Technicians by collaborating with the Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance (NEWMA) and local industry to generate interest among current entry-level/low-skilled workers in pursuing career pathways to an Electro-Mechanical Associate Degree by starting with the embedded Industrial Maintenance Certificate. NWTC intentionally created the Industrial Maintenance Certificate with only technical courses to eliminate the barrier math creates for many students and meet employer demand for hiring individuals with a base set of skills. To prepare certificate students for success in their associate degree studies where math skills are integral, this project interweaves math lessons into the lab portion of the certificate courses. This strategy exposes students to math concepts at the beginning of the career pathway, and unbeknownst to them, builds their confidence and math comprehension to ease anxiety and increase comfort levels prior to transitioning to the associate degree. To further reduce barriers for returning adults, NWTC is expanding lab access to participants and creating three Learning in Community (LinC) pairings to improve learning.

Objectives:

1. Increase knowledge of college system and career ladders.
2. Increase confidence level of adult learners entering the Electro-Mechanical career pathway.
3. Reduce barriers to working adults.

Promising Approach/Lessons Learned:

Recruitment of adult learners needs to be individualized/company-specific: Initially, NWTC worked with employers to host informational events featuring the College’s Electro-Mech Mobile Lab with hands-on activities. The events were at companies located within business parks to attract employees from surrounding businesses. Based on feedback, the team learned that individuals attending the events were not interested in the hands-on exercises; instead, they wanted to know more about their employer’s tuition reimbursement program and how to complete the certificate while maintaining full-time employment. As a result, the structure of the recruitment event was modified. Events are now held in employee break rooms and materials are tailored to include employer-specific information on education incentives and program scheduling options. This new individualized approach has resulted in the successful recruitment of 15 incumbent workers. In wake of the pandemic, the College attempted to work with employers to offer virtual meetings. However, this proved to be very challenging as all these employers were deemed “Essential Business” during the lockdown period in Wisconsin. As a result, they were intensely focused on revamping their business facilities to provide a safe environment for employees while still trying to maintain production levels. Consequently, recruitment efforts have temporarily come to a halt. Despite this, NWTC has been able to maintain its relationships with employers through follow-up inquiries and will be exploring other strategies for reaching companies and their employees during the pandemic.

For More Information Please Contact:

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