

Workforce Development

Helping You To Meet Your Workforce Challenges

Training the Next Generation:

Precision Plus and Gateway Technical College Forge New Partnership

Like many technical education machining and manufacturing programs, Gateway faced a difficult challenge in 2014: Invest in a vision for the future of advanced machining on its Elkhorn Campus or close its doors to manufacturing and leave employers to find solutions to training their workforce. The program and facility had fallen behind the ever-changing needs of industry, and local employers were no longer interested in hiring graduates with outdated technical skills. Industry expectations of occupational standards and individual certifications were not part of the program expectations. In a pivotal meeting between Gateway president, Bryan Albrecht, and Precision Plus president Mike Reader, a new vision was established.

New Vision

This new commitment to revitalize the manufacturing program has not only established Gateway as a leader in precision machining technology, but transformed the college culture around quality and industry-recognized skill standards. This new foundation serves as a platform to upskill faculty, develop strategic alignments with area employers and invest in facilities and equipment to allow for world-class student training.

RPM Center

In 2016, Gateway opened the Reader Precision Machining and Manufacturing Center or RPM Center for short. The RPM Center is the catalyst for advanced machining, precision measurement, welding and engineering



Forging a new partnership.

technology. Gateway students learn on state-of-the-art equipment from highly trained faculty with industry mentors from Precision Plus. Area high school students are engaged in CNC classes to earn college credit and workplace skills through paid internship and youth apprenticeship opportunities.

This newly expanded footprint has allowed Gateway to be competitive in investing in new equipment, expanding certification credentialing in the areas of manufacturing skill standards (MSSC), occupational safety, LSS Yellow Belt certification and Starrett precision measurement. Together, Gateway and Precision Plus had made a commitment to the students, employers and the communities they serve.

Foundation of Trust and Commitment

Strengthening the core competency of students enrolled in the machining and manufacturing programs is at the center of this relationship.

"Building this partnership around a common set of principles was critical to our long term success," says Bryan Albrecht, president of Gateway.

These principles include leadership, commitment throughout all levels of each organization, shared expectations, standards that drive measurable outcomes and transparent communications that ground our daily decision making.

"Mike has been an inspiration to me and a champion for our college. His passion and drive to help youth is admirable," Mr. Albrecht says.

These principles have led to national recognition by the PMPA and other industry leaders. Speaking at the American Association of Community College's national convention last March, Mike shared his enthusiasm for the future of precision machining and the commitment he has made to the profession through the RPM Center partnership.

"Upskilling the American workforce is at the core of our nation's economic prosperity," says Mike Reader, president at Precision Plus. "Through partnerships we can address the skilled worker shortage and build confidence in future generations that there are great careers in manufacturing."

Continued on page 19

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Continued from page 17

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Results

The RPM Center partnership has demonstrated positive early results, including support of and involvement with the PMPA Education Foundation. Early in the development of the partnership was setting a goal of increasing the knowledge and access to training for programs in manufacturing and precision machining at Gateway.

With the development of the RPM Center and the inclusion of new CNC equipment, Gateway has added new courses and expanded services to area high schools. Current year enrollment has doubled in the college's CNC program through new course offerings and dedicated short-term training programs.

The college, in partnership with Precision Plus, held several career open house sessions for high school students, parents, teachers, counselors and the community. They have hosted state dignitaries including the Wisconsin Technical College president, Wisconsin's lieutenant governor and state and local elected officials. Gateway has benefited from additional instructor training and mentoring from Precision Plus around the knowledge and skills in

Swiss machining technology expanding the capabilities and skills training. A secondary positive return on this investment has been the expansion of the college's welding and engineering programs, adding to the network of opportunities for students to build career paths in manufacturing.

Partnerships like these change the way students and their families view manufacturing and create a new vision for the development of skilled professionals in the precision machining industry. Precision Plus and Gateway Technical College are members of the PMPA Education Foundation and are encouraged by the leadership of the PMPA in supporting educational partnerships like the RPM Center.

Contributors

Bryan Albrecht, Ed. D., serves as the president and CEO of Gateway Technical College. Gateway is located in southeast Wisconsin and is known for having strong partnerships with businesses and industry. Michael Reader serves as president of Precision Plus Inc., a world-class manufacturer of Swiss precision machining components located in Elkhorn, Wisconsin.

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