

Penn United, BC3 to launch manufacturing program for regional high school students

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(Butler, PA) High school students seeking a career in one of the largest industries in western Pennsylvania can earn nationally recognized manufacturing credentials and a registered pre-apprenticeship certificate from the state Department of Labor & Industry in a free and mostly online program scheduled to debut in September between Penn United Technologies Inc. and Butler County Community College.

The nine-month Penn United Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate in Partnership with BC3 course represents the first noncredit and manufacturing-based selection in the 23 years BC3 has offered high school programming.

“Some students have different career pathways,” said Erin Cioffi, BC3’s assistant director of high school programming. “Earning college credits might not be for all students. This is an opportunity for students who are looking to get right into the workforce.”

Sophomores through seniors in the manufacturing program can earn National Tooling & Machining Association credentials in basic math, blueprint reading, precision machining technology, and quality control and inspection; and a National Institute for Metalworking Skills credential in measurement, materials and safety.

“Skill sets they can bring to a manufacturer right out of high school,” said Scott Covert, who began serving as the training coordinator at the Cabot precision manufacturer in 2013. “It’s an advantage to students because they can progress faster and potentially make more money in a shorter amount of time.”

“They can go right into the workforce”

Manufacturing in January was the top employer in Elk and Jefferson counties, the second-largest in Butler, Lawrence and Mercer, third in Armstrong and Clearfield, and fourth in Clarion, according to the state Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.

“Manufacturing is the start of a whole series of job sets,” Covert said. “In the automotive industry, the electrical industry, nuclear, alternative energy, medical. All the things that are big not only in our area, but nationally and globally.”

The program focuses on helping students gain specific skills and credentials for employment, said Kelly McKissick, BC3’s coordinator of professional education and certificate programs.

“And they can go right into the workforce upon graduation,” McKissick said. Penn United funds the noncredit program, which features four online courses. Students are required to attend six six-hour technical training sessions at Penn United’s Learning Institute for the Growth of High Technology Center, and three visits to BC3’s main campus in Butler Township to explore further educational opportunities in BC3’s STEM Division.

“This program,” McKissick said, “also builds into further pathways of education that we have here at BC3.”

The Penn United Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate in Partnership with BC3 expands on what was a Penn United Students Acquiring Technical Skills program that has enrolled at least 300 high school students since it began in 2013, Covert said.

High school partnership BC3’s third since 2018

Nationally recognized credentials students can earn may be applied toward BC3’s 17-credit Basic Manufacturing Workplace Certificate, whose program includes courses such as technical mathematics, technical graphics with AutoCAD, computer-numerical control programming and manufacturing processes and materials.

Students who complete the program can also apply their credentials toward an apprenticeship program, McKissick said.

Students interested in the program can contact their high school guidance counselor; or call John Duncan, Penn United Technologies, at 724-352-1507 Ext. 4839 or email Duncan at john_duncan@pennunited.com. Students can also call McKissick at 724-287-8711 Ext. 8171 or email McKissick at kelly.mckissick@bc3.edu.

BC3’s high school programming this spring also offers remote instruction to nearly 550 students who are pursuing BC3 credits and who attend high schools or learning centers in Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Clearfield, Jefferson, Lawrence and Mercer counties.

The high school programming partnership with Penn United is the third since 2018 between BC3 and businesses, chambers of commerce or other institutions of higher education.

BC3, the Community College of Beaver County and High Flight Academy in May 2019 announced the creation of the CCBC Aviation Academy at High Flight in Partnership with BC3; and BC3, CCBC and the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce in May 2018 announced the debut of the Riv-ElI Entrepreneurship Program.

The CCBC Aviation Academy at High Flight in Partnership with BC3, held at the Pittsburgh-Butler Regional Airport, offers high school students a pathway into professional pilot and air traffic control careers.

The Riv-Ell Entrepreneurship Program, held in Ellwood City and available to students of Riverside High School in North Sewickley Township, Beaver County, and of Lincoln High School in Ellwood City, blends classroom learning with real-world experience. Students who complete the program earn 16 tuition-free, transferrable credits and a BC3 Workplace Certificate in Entrepreneurship.