

MCC responds to

Chris Webb of Intel Center as a recent business partner

By Shelly Springborn

Based on workplace demand and industry projections, a continued focus for Montcalm Community College this year was to maintain high-value programming tied to advancements in a variety of skilled trades career areas.

During this pandemic year, MCC's workforce development team has continued to be outward-looking to respond to the needs of the changing labor market to support a variety of companies.

As industry partners worked to maintain adequate staffing levels, the college remained flexible in its ability to provide necessary training through a variety of instructional methods in its classrooms and hands-on learning labs.

MCC also continued to partner with several area businesses to provide customized training through the Michigan New Jobs Training Program (MNJTP), which allows community colleges to provide free training for employers that are creating new jobs and/or expanding operations in Michigan.

MCC Dean for Industrial Education and Workforce Training Susan Hatto and her team have continued to assist companies in seeking funding for workforce training. The college also continues to enhance its equipment, curriculum development and tuition assistance through grants and other funding options.

"This allows us to take our curriculum and training equipment to where we need to be to better serve area businesses as industry standards change," Hatto said.

MCC's partnerships with local businesses to provide customized apprenticeship training remained strong. Today, 101 students are enrolled in industry-related programs, with 40 of them attending classes under the sponsorship of their employers. A majority of these students are following a customized apprenticeship program, ultimately leading to "journeyperson" status and its associated career and earnings growth.

Because many occupational programs, such as welding, robotics and others, rely on in-person, hands-on instruction, MCC is continuing to explore creative ways to support students and

businesses as the pandemic continues.

"We are sensitive to the fact that training is important for area businesses, but mitigating COVID is also important," Hatto said. "As the community's training partner, we are committed to remaining flexible to meet evolving industry and employer needs for skilled workers."

MCC is in its last year of a three-year National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that aimed at helping the college expand its automation program. Under the provisions of the grant, MCC utilized a mobile education trailer, equipped with robots and other equipment to provide engaging hands-on activities at local K-12 schools and at various adult recruiting events.

The college continues to build capacity for future training needs.

This summer, MCC was accepted into Project Vision, a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded initiative to help colleges discover and match innovative ideas with NSF funding opportunities led by a seasoned team of NSF Advanced Technological Education (ATE) experts, former college administrators, and former NSF program officers.

"Project Vision is a program that will help us write our next NSF grant," Hatto said. "We currently have a New to ATE grant focused on automation. We are starting our third year with the existing grant, so it is time for us to think about our next grant. We applied to Project Vision so we could use their support in our next grant application." n

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