

**For Immediate Release  
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## **New degree program win-win for students and businesses**

Manufacturing is big business, and it's getting bigger. Florida's manufacturing industry employs about 400,000 workers and accounts for more than \$32 billion of its gross state product. A new degree program launched at five colleges around the state, aims to keep Florida's manufacturers supplied with highly skilled workers for the foreseeable future.

Florida, with more than 16,500 manufacturing businesses, ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation for manufacturing jobs, and Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Orange counties are among the top five counties in the state in terms of the number of both manufacturing companies and employees.

Moreover, while the industry is growing, there's a lack of qualified workers available to accommodate that growth. In fact, a 2005 National Association of Manufacturers' Skills Gap Report cites "a moderate to severe shortage of qualified skilled production employees" – a chief concern among industry leaders.

"There's a great need for highly skilled workers and, until now, the degree programs were somewhat antiquated and didn't quite fill the need," said Neil Reddy, director of operations at the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC).

Thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation, Florida Advanced Technological Education (FLATE) Center was created and later partnered with the Manufacturing Skills Standard Council (MSSC), the Florida Department of Education, manufacturers, and Florida colleges to determine the state of manufacturing education in Florida community colleges and high schools and then realign it to meet the skilled workforce needs of the state's modern manufacturing sector.

The result is a cohesive, comprehensive degree program that focuses on a set of core classes that cover introductory computer aided drafting, electronics, instrumentation, and testing, quality, safety, and processes and materials. That new program is now being offered at Brevard Community College, Central Florida Community College, Pensacola Jr. College, and St. Petersburg College. Several other schools are poised to adopt the MSSC aligned curriculum in 2008.

"Florida Manufacturers told us what they need, and as a result we've developed a curriculum that will produce quality graduates who are knowledgeable and skilled, helping to ensure their successful future, while at the same time meeting the needs of the manufacturer," said Marilyn Barger, Ph.D., Executive Director, FLATE.

Students, as well as employees already in the field, can earn a degree that will lay the groundwork for a high-tech, high-skilled, rewarding career with generous pay.

The average salary for manufacturing jobs in Florida stands at about \$44,000. That's 18% higher than the state average for all industries, with upper level managers earning about \$80,000.

Better yet, some manufacturing companies are offering scholarships to high school students, while others help cover the cost of tuition for existing employees.

"Manufacturers know the value of a well-trained employee, and we're willing to step up to plate," said Peter Straw, the Executive Director of the Sarasota Manatee Area Manufacturers Association (SAMA)

What's more is the affordable, nontraditional scheduling times and platforms offered by Community Colleges. Not to mention that graduates of the two-year program can move on to one of the four-year colleges offering BAS degrees or BS degrees in Engineering Technology, increasing their value in the marketplace.

"There's plenty of opportunity to grow with a manufacturing career – lots of upward mobility, and a degree can put you on the fast track," said Straw.

Manufacturers make the products we use every day, from aeronautics to musical instruments to x-ray equipment.

Some of the different areas of manufacturing include:

- Biological and Medical
- Electronic Devices
- Aviation and Aeronautics
- Systems Engineering
- Metals and Plastics
- Food, Paper, Beverage and Cosmetics Processing
- Leisure and Entertainment
- Transportation

Enrollment is ongoing. For more information on the Engineering Technology program or Florida Manufacturing, please call Dr. Marilyn Barger, 813-259-6578.

## Important Contacts and Resources

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## Fast Facts

- There are more than 16,500 manufacturing businesses in Florida.
- About 400,000 people in Florida are employed by manufacturers.
- The average annual salary for a Florida manufacturing employee is \$43,419, about 18 percent higher than the state average for all industries.
- In regional, statewide, and national surveys, manufacturers consistently cite a lack of qualified workers as a chief concern and business setback. In the National Association of Manufacturers' 2005 Skills Gap Report, 90 percent of the companies participating in the survey said they are experiencing "a moderate to severe shortage of qualified skilled production employees."
- In Florida, small businesses dominate the industry with about 72 percent of manufacturers employing fewer than 10 people each. Five percent of companies employ at least 100 workers.
- Florida ranks No. 13 in the nation in manufacturing jobs. California, Texas, and Ohio top the list respectively.
- Florida's manufacturing gross state product in 2004 was \$31 billion, which represents 2.2 percent of manufacturing in the U.S.
- The top five Florida counties based on the number of manufacturing businesses are Miami-Dade (2,654), Broward (1,836), Pinellas, (1,248), Palm Beach (1,116), and Hillsborough (1,034).
- The five Florida counties with the most manufacturing employees are Miami-Dade (48,676), Pinellas (37,981), Hillsborough (31,740), Broward (31,352), and Orange (30,258).
- In 2005, the top four manufacturing sectors in Florida ranked by monthly employment were computer and electronic products (51,064), transportation equipment (42,115), fabricated metal products (39,739), and food (31,691).

Sources: Agency for Workforce Innovation, Enterprise Florida, Inc., FL-ATE Center for Manufacturing Education, Manufacturing Association of Florida, Manufacturing Skill Standards Council, National Association of Manufacturers, Workforce Florida, Inc.