

National Career Pathways Network

20th Anniversary

Connections

Educators and
Employers:
Providing Education
with a Purpose



Vol. 21, no. 6:
*Promising
Florida
Initiatives*
Sept 2011

FLATE: Synergy in the Sunshine State

Florida is an important hub that impacts manufacturing and production industries both locally and globally. A technically educated workforce is key to this impact. FLATE, the Florida Advanced Technological Education Center, is a National Science Foundation Regional center of Excellence. FLATE acts as a catalyst for a statewide effort to strategically link the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) with national, state, and regional manufacturing associations. FLATE collaborates with over 400 Florida workforce development and industry representatives across the state in implementing and promoting the Engineering Technology (ET) degree program and career pathways. This unified statewide approach to meeting the technical workforce needs of Florida's hi-tech manufacturing industry represents a synergy among these partners. How does this cooperative approach to career preparation and an educated workforce meet national emerging business and industry needs as well?



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On May 8, 2011, President Obama announced a goal to credential 500,000 community college students nationwide with skill certifications aligned to manufacturers' hiring needs. This challenge is a direct fit for Florida's ET degree program model, in which core courses align with the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council credential. Ten participating Florida colleges offer the degree program, and data show that the program is working. There has been a 139% increase in ET degree enrollment since ET program adoption began in 2008 (347 enrolled in 2009–2010). Data received from the FLDOE reports a 14% increase in ET and related degree enrollment (4714 enrolled in 2009–2010) and a 10% increase in total ET and related degree and certificate program enrollment (5095 enrolled in 2009–2010). Florida's ET degree program is a model for colleges all over the country.

FLATE's Florida industry partners play a critical role and have a direct influence on the degree program. They provide relevant and timely input that helps to create an effective model for the nation. Through participation in FLATE's Industry Advisory Council and feedback at ET forums, industry representatives identify the attributes that well educated workers should possess. FLDOE representatives, who also participate in these events, acquire direct input about industry needs and engage in meaningful dialog, resulting in a career-readiness emphasis for college programs. Ultimately, both students and workers in industry benefit from this continuous dialog and injection of relevant career skills into college programs. Students acquire degrees that prepare them for technical careers as well as pathways to continue their college education. Workers benefit from the skills acquired with their certification. And industry can rely on a ready supply of consistently prepared and certified employees, regardless of which Florida college they attend.

Industry partners play an important role in reaching out to high school students to help ensure a steady stream of college students and present a viable career pathway in high-tech manufacturing.

FLATE's "synergy in the sunshine state" approach goes beyond curriculum reform at the state level. Industry partners, along with the Manufacturer's Association of Florida (MAF), also play an important role in reaching out to high school students to help ensure a steady stream of college students and present a viable career pathway in high-tech manufacturing through their sponsorship of industry tours and career advertorials in *Florida Trend's NEXT* magazine and online materials. The tours put groups of students of different grade levels in the plants to see firsthand what a technical career means. The advertorials engage graduating seniors and encourage them to make high-tech manufacturing part of their college and career plans. The student leads generated by the industry-sponsored advertorials are organized and distributed by FLATE to give colleges a quick step up in recruitment and outreach. Students indicate interest by mailing a response card or visiting a website and filling out an online response card. Students who provide valid email addresses receive personal emails from FLATE containing ready-to-use online collateral materials, including information on Florida colleges and careers in high-tech manufacturing. Since the first NEXT advertorial implementation in 2006–2007, 19,557 student responses have been received by FLATE and shared with Florida colleges.

Online materials include FLATE's *Made in Florida* website (www.madeinflorida.org), where students find Florida manufacturers and jobs, statewide college degree and certificate program specifics, contact information, help using FLDOE's FACTS.org, and a wealth of resources to help them transition from high school to college with an eye on lucrative careers. All of these resources were developed in partnership with and provide direct resources for industry.

In summary, the "synergy in the sunshine state" approach works for Florida and will work in other regions, but it requires an adhesive agent. For Florida, that agent is FLATE, whose mission as Florida's go-to organization for high-tech manufacturing and advanced technical education is to provide leadership, best practices, and resources supporting Florida's high-performance skilled workforce. But tangible results are not possible without the energy and forward thinking perspectives of its partners. FLATE's effective partnership with government, education, and industry partners is the model for Florida's technical education and training programs. FLATE strives to meet emerging needs by serving students and the workforce and demonstrating value for industry partners as it builds Florida's 21st-century technical workforce.

"FLATE's ground breaking idea to offer a degree program which articulates credit toward the degree through the MSSC industry certification over five years ago provided a model for over 100 similar articulation agreements in Florida in 2011."

Eric Owens, State Supervisor
Adult and Career Education
Florida Department of Education

FLATE (Florida Advanced Technological Education) Center recently received STEMflorida, Inc.'s "Best Practice Award for Excellence Integrating Needs of STEM-Enabled

Programs into Engaging Curriculum and Educational Outreach Resources." The award, presented on June 24 during the STEM Florida Think Tank at the Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport, recognized FLATE's role in spearheading efforts to launch a national, industry-recognized, STEM-focused credential system that supports the educational and workforce needs of local manufacturers.

Message from the Executive Director of FLATE

This notice appeared in the August edition of the FLATE Focus, a publication of FLATE

This summer, Governor Rick Scott asked the Manufacturers Association of Florida (MAF) to submit a list of five important actions that the state could take to better support Florida manufacturers. MAF's response included a snapshot of the status of manufacturing in Florida. Here is that snapshot and the five-item "wish list" (see www.mafmfg.com). We all look forward to seeing which items on the list will be addressed in the months ahead.

- Florida is the 15th largest manufacturing state.
- There are more than 302,000 high-skilled direct manufacturing employees in Florida.
- They work in 17,722 discrete manufacturing facilities.
- Manufacturers pay 122% higher wages than other Florida employers and offer substantial benefits.
- They pay over 5% of the real estate taxes and nearly 25% of the tangible personal property tax.
- The majority of research and development dollars are spent by manufacturers.
- Manufacturers employ a large percentage of technical graduates from the state university system.
- Florida manufacturers have open jobs that they cannot fill due to one or more of the following: (a) applicants lack social skills; (b) applicants cannot pass the drug test; (c) applicants are not qualified or certified with the appropriate skills for the jobs.
- Manufactured goods make up 91% of all exports leaving Florida's 14 ports.

The five action priorities for Florida manufacturers are:

1. Designate a manufacturing advocate or liaison.
2. Improve the tax climate for manufacturers in all business models.
3. Continue to invest in workforce training.
4. Increase import and export trade opportunities.
5. Use energy policy as an economic development strategy.

For many of us, it's important to realize that high-skilled manufacturing jobs are still going unfilled due to lack of qualified candidates. The need to fill these high-tech, high-wage jobs with well qualified, credentialed candidates is one of FLATE's goals. However, our goal, and that of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) investment in FLATE, is not only to help meet current workforce needs, but also to develop and implement long-term strategies for building and maintaining attractive, relevant, strong, and flexible career pathways to support Florida's manufacturers.

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