

Rio South Texas companies partner with Manufacturing Institute, TWC to launch initiative to prep advanced manufacturing workers

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South Texas College has partnered with The Manufacturing Institute, the Texas Workforce Commission and other regional partners to implement an English language proficiency program to boost literacy, educational attainment and career advancement for workers in the Rio South Texas Region.

The English for Manufacturing and the Skilled Trades Initiative is an English acquisition program targeting underemployed and unemployed workers across Texas. Through the program, participants will develop core English language skills required for entry-level careers in the region's developing rapid response, advanced manufacturing workforce.

“In order for U.S. manufacturers to stay competitive in today's complex global economy, we must remain committed to developing the talent and skills of the manufacturing workforce and create strategies for each challenge they face,” said Emily Stover DeRocco, president of The Manufacturing Institute. “Foundational skills such as English language communication and applied math and science are necessary for all careers in manufacturing, and a worker who faces barriers in these areas will not be able to advance in the workplace.”

Rio South Texas cities McAllen and Mission join initiative pilots already underway in Laredo, San Antonio and Houston. In total, 350 Texas workers will be trained through the initiative.

STC's Institute for Advanced Manufacturing, representing the North American Advanced Manufacturing Research and Education Initiative, will manage the trainings for 45 workers from McAllen- and Mission-based companies including Palmer Steel Suppliers, AM-MEX and Hi-Tech Plastics, to name a few.

"We are always excited to create new pathways for learning that will benefit the regional goal of leading the world in advanced, rapid response manufacturing," said Carlos Margo, regional manager for STC's IAM. "Upon completion of the training, participants will be well-positioned to pursue additional career and academic trainings. By participating in this ground-breaking initiative, we continue to lead the nation in planned workforce sustainability, thus increasing our global competitiveness."

The initiative training consists of an interactive, technology-based curriculum derived from the proven and innovative language learning program, Sed de Saber. The program ensures efficient and functional acquisition of workplace communication skills, such as understanding directions and important health and safety measures, using proper manufacturing vocabulary, and reading and interpreting administrative forms.

"We have several production floor operators that understand and speak some English, however they rarely use it due to a lack of confidence. I am sure this not only affects them in the workplace, but also in the community," said Kevin Coleman, production and distribution manager for Smead Manufacturing. "This program offers an opportunity to those that see their weakness in the language, have a desire to learn, but have no time or means to attend formal classes to improve their skills. With this initiative, they can work at their pace at home or work, comparing notes and progress with co-workers. This will certainly boost the desire to learn more and results will be evident."

Dignitaries from across the Rio South Texas Region gathered at STC's Technology Campus in McAllen to celebrate the local launch of the initiative. Special guests included TWC Commissioner Representing the Public Andres Alcantar and Senior Vice President for The Manufacturing Institute Jennifer McNelly.

"The Texas Workforce Commission supports collaborative initiatives that provide Texans with the skills and competencies for success in the workplace," said Alcantar. "We are pleased to be a part of this regional partnership that combines adult literacy and skills attainment in the manufacturing industry."

For more information about South Texas College's Institute for Advanced Manufacturing call 956-872-6197 or visit <http://manufacturing.southtexascollege.edu/iam/news.html>. For more information about The Manufacturing Institute call 800-814-8468 or visit <http://www.nam.org/Manufacturing-Institute/Manufacturing-Institute.aspx>. For more information about the Texas Workforce Commission visit <http://www.texasworkforce.org/>.