

Minutes from CTE Advisory Committee Meeting

In Attendance: Peter Mitchel, Perry Hughes, Mark Richardson, Max Dooley, John Butler, Karen Setliff and Ken Scott

We identified Advanced Manufacturing (machining, welding, electronics) as both a high wage and high need career path.

At the same time that many people in Rockingham County are looking for work, businesses that rely on people with advanced manufacturing skill cannot find nearly enough people to fill positions. There exists a significant skills gap within Rockingham County.

If we are going to fulfill the need of currently existing advanced manufacturing businesses and attract more of such businesses to our county, then we have to begin to close the gap between the skills that these businesses require and the skills that our citizens possess.

Our task then was to identify where gaps in the progression from school-age children and adults with marketable skill sets exist. On the continuum between grade school and the workforce, we found there to be very little gap between the skill set of RCC graduates and business that require advanced manufacturing skills. Perry demonstrated how responsive RCC attempts to be to the needs of industry and provided the team with documents that detailed the numerous "entry and exit points" that would meet the needs of the employer and employee.

While the quality of RCC graduates is desirable, the quantity of graduates is far from sufficient. To illustrate the point, Peter pointed out that RCC graduated a total of 9 machinists, 14 in their electronics program and 22 in their electrical trades program while Rueger alone needs a total of 450 machinists/operators.

The significant gap on the pipeline seems to exist between Rockingham County Schools and RCC. Although the quality of students from Rockingham County Schools was adequate, the numbers of students entering advanced manufacturing at RCC is far from desirable. There were several reasons proposed as to why this might be the case-

- Lack of information regarding opportunities that exist at RCC among students, counselors, and parents
- Poor perception of RCC as compared to 4yr universities
- Only 2 of the 4 high schools offer Advanced Manufacturing type courses
- Little exposure to RCC and advanced manufacturing before high school
- Transportation to RCC
- Early College students not allowed to take technical classes
- Poor math skills & soft skills

Mark expressed that the "time to strike is now."

The team, along with Bobby Shelton (another team member who I met with on the day before) proposed several strategies to remedy the above challenges. A complete account of proposed strategies will be compiled for you to review at our next meeting. I intend to put together a draft of a plan and have it ready for your review sometime in early April.

Thanks so much for your time and insight. I will be back in touch with you on an April date.

Ken