

Palm Beach State's Machining Technology program earns national accreditation

College's program is second in Florida to pass rigorous evaluation of the National Institute for Metalworking Skills

(Lake Worth, Fla. – April 17, 2012) Palm Beach State College's Machining Technology Program has received accreditation from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills, the nation's only developer of precision manufacturing skill standards sanctioned by the American National Standards Institute. Palm Beach State's is the second program in Florida to earn NIMS accreditation, and thus far, the only Florida state college program to do so.

Machinists are highly skilled individuals who produce precision parts used in manufacturing for aerospace/aviation, biotech, computer, medical, automotive and many other industries. Their work involves CNC (computer numerical control) and CAD/CAM programming, metrology and reverse engineering, and working with sophisticated metalworking machines. "Nothing gets manufactured until a machinist goes to work," says Andrew Geppert, a full-time instructor for the Machining Technology program, which awards a Postsecondary Adult Vocational (PSAV) certificate to its graduates and NIMS credentials to those who pass skill examinations.

Palm Beach State's Machining Technology program teaches the skills required by area manufacturers. Many send their own employees to the program, in addition to hiring new graduates. "With a manufacturing renaissance already in progress and the focus of economic development at the federal and state levels, our NIMS accreditation is very important and timely for us," says Eric Kennedy, the College's associate dean for trade and industry. "It will help us serve the growing workforce education needs of manufacturers right here in our own community."

Barry O'Connell, vice president of business development and engineering at Logus Microwave Corp. in West Palm Beach, calls it a "win-win for everybody." O'Connell has served as chairperson of the College's Business Partnership Council for Machining Technology for over 10 years and has hired many graduates. "The program's facility is beautiful, it's immaculate. They have state-of-the-art Haas machines and what they're teaching is very much in tune with the precision machining we do here."

Logus, which designs and manufactures microwave switching devices used in satellite communication, military and commercial airborne, ground and shipboard systems, is expanding

and moving soon to a larger facility. "We're happy to hire the people who get through the program. They're doing well for the company. Currently 6-7 graduates are here, and we just interviewed another five," said O'Connell.

According to Pat Richie, dean for business, trade and industry, it is critical that the program "simulate the real world" in terms of what graduates can expect when employed. Nearly every student who graduated this semester got a job and that isn't unusual. Geppert says, "We've made them employable. We've focused on the basics of how to set up, operate and program this machinery. Our students have been reporting--and I can see on their faces-- that they're confident they'll be able to get started doing this job."

Geppert and adjunct instructors Robert Jennings and Joseph Brewster have decades of machining experience and each has earned CNC credentials through NIMS. Geppert also is a 2012 recipient of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award for teaching.

Indeed, the NIMS evaluation team, in its recommendation to offer accreditation, had high praise for the Machining Technology program's "clearly stated goals and mission, their clean, well-organized facility and collection of tooling and measuring devices, as well as an outstanding faculty, advisory committee, and continued support from the College administration."

For more information about the Machining Technology program, visit www.palmbeachstate.edu/Machining.xml.

Serving more than 51,000 students annually, Palm Beach State College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, professional certificates, career training and lifelong learning. Established in 1933 as Florida's first public community college, it offers more than 100 programs of study at locations in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Palm Beach Gardens and Belle Glade.

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