



NEWS RELEASE

## Education & Business Come Together 4 Colorado To Bridge The Skills Gap

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DENVER (CBS4) – Colorado has become a hub for advanced manufacturing. Nearly 6,000 companies are making products for a variety of businesses, including electronics, aerospace, and biomedical. The problem is these manufacturing companies can't find the skilled workforce they need within Colorado. Now business and educators are coming Together 4 Colorado to bridge that skills gap.

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Auto CAD class, or computer assisted design, is one of many of the engineering and advanced manufacturing classes that are being taught in Metropolitan State University of Denver's brand new Advanced Manufacturing Sciences Institute. The students in Auto CAD class are learning how to create a 3D precision blueprint of a Lego.

Student, David Andy, has been able to read those blueprints, but has never drawn one.

"I can read them to a really good extent, but it's actually going beyond that which I'm really liking, making them is a whole other thing," Andy told CBS4.

This is exactly the kind of class Andy needs. After high school, he got a job in advanced manufacturing, making medical tools. He got all his training on the job.

"It was pretty difficult. It was a lot of trial and error on somethings. You're learning as you go," Andy explained.

He became a supervisor but found he couldn't move up any further without a college degree. Now he's getting that degree at the Advanced Manufacturing Sciences Institute at Metro State University.

"Industry is moving to what is called a smart factory," said Robert Park, PhD, the director of the Advanced Manufacturing Sciences Institute.

Metro State cut the ribbon on the new institute in June. It's moving those new smart machines into the classroom, in an unprecedented partnership with local businesses.

"Our mission is really to collaborate with companies, find out their needs on an ongoing basis, and tailor our programs in real time," Park added.

Hartwig Inc. is providing state of the art machine tools for students to learn on, and Lockheed Martin Space Systems donated \$1 million to create an additive manufacturing lab with a specific 3D printer.

"That's one of the advantages that this new program at MSU has...is they're engaging the design community, the production operations community, the IT community, they're all engaged in there. And those entities need to be able to communicate and collaborate early on," said Brian O'Connor, the Vice President of Production Operations at Lockheed Martin Space Systems.

O'Connor hopes the Institute will produce workers that are ready to work on high-tech machines without much on the job training.

In addition, York Space Systems of Denver will be operating out of the fourth floor of the Institute.

"So here we'll have about 20 engineers throughout this space here. It was important to have that right next to the production, in here," said Dirk Wallinger, CEO of York Space Systems as he gave CBS4 a hard-hat tour of York's space at the Advanced Manufacturing Sciences Institute.

In the York space, students will work alongside industry professionals, designing, building, and then guiding the finished satellites in space.

"You need technicians on the floor making the hardware, you need space craft operators who can operate the satellites, and you need engineers," Wallinger explained.

"So, when you walk into that fourth floor a year from now, when it's buzzing, what do you hope to see?" CBS4's Jim Benemann asked Wallinger.

"A great innovative environment where we have a good mix of folks who understand space and know how to do that, with a lot of young talent with the help of the University," Wallinger replied.

The Advanced Manufacturing Sciences Institute at Metro is designed to shrink the skills gap in technical manufacturing, which means the future looks bright for students like David Andy.

"I search job sites now just seeing what's out there and there's things out there now. They're looking for people to get into the manufacturing industry," Andy said.

The University of Colorado and Colorado State University are both expanding their curriculum to help bridge the skills gap. Tuesday on CBS4 News at 10, Jim Benemann has a report on exactly what they're doing. And these advanced skills are even being taught on the grade school level. Tuesday on CBS4 News at 6, Jim Benemann takes you to a district that has reformed it's entire curriculum to prepare students for the new economy.

Libby Smith is a Special Projects Producer at CBS4. If you have a story you'd like to tell CBS4 about, call 303-863-TIPS (8477) or **visit the News Tips section**.