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Central Texas Manufacturing Partnership to Offer 20 Skilled Training Scholarships in June

AUSTIN – Members of the Central Texas Manufacturing Partnership are offering area residents two new skills training opportunities with top regional training providers in the semiconductor and general manufacturing industries. Austin Community College (ACC) and Skillpoint Alliance are each launching trainings programs in June 2020 to equip individuals with a Certified Production Technician (CPT) credential from the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC).

Travis County residents can apply to one or both of the 5-7 week training programs beginning next month. Due to the ongoing effects of COVID-19, both training programs will begin with virtual classes followed by a one-week lab session in the final week. Individuals interested in the ACC program can call Workforce Solutions Capital Area (WFCA) at 512-597-7224 or email at dave.moss@wfscapitalarea.com. Individuals interested in the Skillpoint Alliance training program can call 512-729-4923 or email at admissions@skillpointalliance.org.

These new training programs have been in development since December 2019 when business leaders of Applied Materials, Inc., Austin Regional Manufacturers Association (ARMA), NXP, and Samsung Austin Semiconductor urged action due to an increasing need for more skilled manufacturing workers. A manufacturing partnership grew from this need that includes multiple staffing partners and training organizations. Funding provided by Workforce Solutions Capital Area and the Texas Talent Connection (Skillpoint Alliance's funding source) made it possible for these regional industry leaders to come together in an unprecedented collaboration to transform these training programs to meet the skills requirements of the industry.

Despite many businesses closing due to shelter-in-place precautions, many manufacturers are able to continue operations to meet vital government and commercial needs. ARMA Executive Director Ed Latson explains, "Manufacturers in Central Texas are resilient and hiring. This is an excellent opportunity for people seeking a meaningful career."

Manufacturing is particularly important to Central Texas due to its classification as an essential business during the COVID-19 health crisis. Several of the manufacturing partners will be creating components of medical equipment or personal protective equipment (PPE) to aid in the societal recovery. Tamara Atkinson, Executive Director of Workforce Solutions Capital Area, emphasizes, "The CPT training programs will bring relief from the pandemic to both the business community and our region's residents through the creation of 80 good jobs in an important career pathway. This program supports the Austin's Master Community Workforce Plan."

Graduates from the CPT training program will be eligible for entry into high quality career opportunities in the manufacturing industry. Kwee Lan Teo, Vice President of Talent Development, sees the program as asset to the community. She said, "The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce is pleased to see the creation of the Certified

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Production Technician program. As the manufacturing sector grows, this program will help fill gaps in employment and allow Austinites to expand their skills and ultimately achieve a better quality of life.”

Unique to this initiative is close collaboration between three of the region’s top training organizations—Austin Community College, Goodwill Central Texas and Skillpoint Alliance—and Workforce Solutions Capital Area. Along with other training organizations, the Partnership will create a steady flow of newly trained manufacturing graduates who will earn their way into middle-skill jobs while alleviating the dire hiring needs of local businesses. Kevin Brackmeyer of Skillpoint Alliance underscores the importance of meeting the needs of employers. “Throughout our history, Skillpoint Alliance has continuously adapted our program offerings based on workforce needs in the region. Today, as our community faces these new and unforeseen challenges, we have transitioned our Certified Production Tech program to an online hybrid offering that will safely train individuals to enter a pathway to a successful career at a livable wage in the advanced manufacturing industry,” he said.

Area training providers play a critical role in equipping residents with marketable skills in high demand industries. “Advanced Manufacturing is a vital and growing industry in Texas, and it offers exciting possibilities for individuals who want more than just a job. The CPT is a crucial first step on the road to the advanced manufacturing careers of tomorrow and ACC is proud to help Austinites get started,” said Dr. Laura Marmolejo, Chair of Advanced Manufacturing Technology, Austin Community College.

“Our regional economy is interdependent on our partners’ ability to connect the community to high quality training and job placement,” explained Melanie Flowers, Head of Technical Training for Samsung Austin Semiconductor and Board Chair for WFCA and Skillpoint Alliance. “It is only through tireless collaboration and partnership that we can begin to fully meet the regional need for new workers in the semiconductor industry.”

Applied Materials, Samsung Austin Semiconductor, NXP, and their staffing agencies have all guaranteed job interviews to the graduates of these CPT training programs.

“The CPT training program plays a key role in building a local talent pipeline of highly skilled workers, which is essential to maintain the strong manufacturing capabilities of Central Texas,” said Mark Derderian, Global Manufacturing Training Manager at Applied Materials.

The CPT program builds on recently completed pilot programs in the region. In 2019, Skillpoint Alliance partnered with Athena Manufacturing to give students in training additional work-based learning opportunities. John Newman, Chief Financial Officer of Athena Manufacturing, provided students with a virtual tour of his manufacturing facility to help the students contextualize the skills they were learning in class. Newman explains, “While students are gaining excellent skills from the Skillpoint Alliance staff and the MSSC training program, they have to be able to understand the day to day needs of employers and how to use their skills to overcome real-world problems.”

To date, 32 participants have earned 29 industry recognized certificates and 23 participants have advanced to full-time employment. Additional cohorts are being planned throughout 2020. Interested individuals can call Workforce Solutions Capital Area at 512-597-7224 to learn more.

About Austin Community College

ACC is a nationally recognized two-year college serving Central Texas as the primary gateway to higher education and technical training. ACC is focused on student success and providing affordable, flexible pathways to help all students reach their education goals, learn new job skills, or advance their career. The college currently serves more than 70,000 students annually. For more information, visit www.austincc.edu.

About Skillpoint Alliance

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Skillpoint Alliance is a local non-profit organization and a Texas Workforce Commission eligible training that offers free training in the skilled trades, manufacturing, and health care industries. They serve residents in Central Texas counties and offer full scholarships to year-round training programs. For more information, visit skillpointalliance.org/.

About Workforce Solutions Capital Area

Workforce Solutions Capital Area Workforce Board is the publicly-funded workforce board for Travis County. Through strong partnerships and strategic collaborations, Workforce Solutions is leading the region's workforce system in the development of a world-class workforce. For more information, visit www.wfscapitalarea.com.

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