Machinist Technology students now eligible for financial aid

Enrollees in the Machinist Technology Program offered by RCBI in cooperation with Marshall Community & Technical College (MCTC) are now eligible to apply for federal student financial assistance. Approval of the RCBI students was granted in late July by the U.S. Department of Education.

“This is great news for our program, our students, and for the future labor market in the State of West Virginia,” RCBI Director and CEO Charlotte Weber said. “It means expanded opportunities for a great many individuals who simply could not afford post-secondary education and opens doors to first-rate training and excellent careers in manufacturing to potential students all across our region.”

Financial aid is available to degree-seeking students who enroll in the two-year MCTC Associate in Applied Science in Technical Studies: Machinist Option program. Applications are processed by the Marshall University Student Financial Assistance Office. Assistance in completing the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) is available at the community and technical college.

A record 25 degree-seeking students had applied by late July for the Machinist Training Program (MTP) classes scheduled to begin August 25 at RCBI Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers in Huntington, Bridgeport and Rocket Center, W.Va., according to Larry Cartmill, retired Cabell County educator who serves as recruiter for the program. Still others were expected to complete their applications in time to join the 2008 class, he said. Those at Rocket Center, which is located in West Virginia’s Eastern Panhandle, were to be enrolled at Potomac State College of West Virginia University at Keyser.

“Opportunities abound for those completing the Machinist Training Program,” Ms. Weber noted. “Nationwide, there are an estimated 33,000 openings for machinists, and there is a significant shortage in West Virginia. Historically, more than 90 percent of those who have completed the MTP curriculum have been placed directly into well-paying manufacturing jobs. It has been an extremely productive program. This latest development gives us the tools to make it even more successful by expanding the reach and ultimate labor pool in West Virginia.”

A one-year Machinist Training Program option is also available through RCBI but it does not qualify for student financial aid, Cartmill said. “We encourage students to enter the two-year degree program because we believe it better prepares them to advance into more sophisticated manufacturing work such as CNC (computer-numerical-controlled) machining,” he noted.

Those wishing additional information may visit www.rcbi.org or call Cartmill at (304) 781-1678.

V.I.P. tour at Huntington

Representatives of a machine tool manufacturer and an industrial supplier toured the RCBI Huntington Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center in early July to see first-hand the types of equipment and manufacturing needs served across the Tri-State Area. John Israelsson, president of North American operations of Sandvik Coromant Company, is shown fourth from left. With him are, from left, Tom Carroll, Rick Crabtree and Mark Cunningham of Sandvik and John Zitter, fifth from left/second from right, and David Jenkins, far right, both of Sterling Supply Company.
Members of the Machinist Technology Program sponsored by the Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing (RCBI) were recognized during a series of graduation ceremonies spanning West Virginia in August. The programs were conducted at RCBI Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers in Huntington, Bridgeport and Rocket Center (located near Keyser in West Virginia’s Eastern Panhandle). A new class began studies at the three Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers August 25. To date, more than 200 have graduated from RCBI’s Machinist Technology Program, which has a job placement rate of more than 90 percent. Individuals earn national certification from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills and have the option of earning an Associate of Applied Science degree — the only coupling of this degree/certification opportunity in West Virginia.
Brian Brown and Eddie Fisher were named RCBI Employees of the Month for June and July, respectively. Announcements of the selections were made by Charlotte Weber, RCBI director and CEO.

Brown is senior manufacturing specialist and site manager at RCBI’s Huntington Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center. An alumnus of Ironton High School and Lawrence County Vocational School, Brown has been a member of the RCBI staff for the past 12 years. Prior to that he was employed at Racine Fluid Power at South Point, Ohio, from 1981 to 1991 and the South Point ethanol plant from 1991 to 1995.

“Day in and day out, Brian Brown does an excellent job for RCBI, its clients and its students,” Ms. Weber said. “Brian goes above and beyond to share his mastery of machinery throughout the entire statewide RCBI system. We’re fortunate to have him as a senior member of the RCBI staff.”

Brown and his wife, the former Jackie Wheeler, live in South Point. His spare time interests include golf, travel and motorcycles.

Fisher, of Gallipolis Ferry, W.Va., senior quality systems and technical trainer, joined the RCBI staff in January 1999. As a member of the RCBI Quality Certification and Technical Training groups he assists manufacturers in developing and implementing documented quality systems and attaining registration in recognized quality standards as well as providing technical training.

“Quality certification has become an essential element in successful manufacturing,” Ms. Weber noted, “and Eddie Fisher does an outstanding job in helping manufacturers achieve that goal. He plays a key role in RCBI’s highly-regarded Quality Certification program and, in turn, in promoting our region’s economy.”

Although based at RCBI’s Huntington Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center, Fisher also provides services through the other RCBI centers in South Charleston, Bridgeport and Rocket Center.


Prior to joining the RCBI staff he worked at Borg-Warner Automotive, Inc. (formerly Federal Mogul Corp.) from 1972 to 1998 as a quality engineer; supervisor, quality and production; quality gage analyst, and human resources employment supervisor. He served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971.

The father of two daughters, Kimberly and Kourtney, Fisher said his interests include gardening, reading, watching sports, crafting and assisting the elderly.

Canada is leading market for West Virginia’s exports

West Virginia’s export shipments of merchandise in 2007 totaled $4 billion, a 67 percent increase over the 2003 total of $2.4 billion.

West Virginia exported to 125 foreign destinations in 2007. The state’s largest market in 2007, by far, was NAFTA member Canada, which received exports of $1.2 billion, or 29 percent of West Virginia’s merchandise export total. Canada was followed by Japan ($304 million), Belgium ($289 million), China ($255 million), and Brazil ($223 million).

Among manufactured products, the state’s leading export category is chemical manufactures, which accounted for $1.5 billion (37 percent) of West Virginia’s total merchandise exports in 2007. Other top manufactured exports that year were transportation equipment ($478 million in exports), machinery manufactures ($407 million), and primary metal manufactures ($322 million).

In addition to its wide range of manufactured exports, West Virginia is also a significant exporter of minerals, notably coal. Exports of coal totaled $822 million in 2007, accounting for 21 percent of West Virginia’s total exports.
John W. Grimm, a veteran of more than 40 years in manufacturing, has joined RCBI as a CNC machinist and instructor in the Machinist Technology Program. He is based at RCBI’s Rocket Center Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center.

“We’re very pleased that an individual possessing John Grimm’s breadth and depth in manufacturing and training skills is joining the RCBI staff,” Director and CEO Charlotte Weber said. “With a record number of individuals entering our Machinist Technology Program this year, coupled with the increased customized training activity in the region, Mr. Grimm’s arrival is most timely.”

New Machinist Technology Program classes were scheduled to begin August 25 at Huntington, Bridgeport and Rocket Center.

Grimm and his wife, Caroline, are relocating to West Virginia from Indianapolis, Ind. He has been serving as technical writer/instructor for Educational Systems Workship, Inc. at Crown Point, Ind.

A 1963 graduate of Toronto (Ohio) High School, Grimm earned a Bachelor of Specialized Studies in Industrial Management degree from Ohio University in 1995.

He began his career in manufacturing in 1966 at Weirton (W.Va.) Steel Corp., remaining there until 1994. He served as a tool and die maker and assisted in work that led to several patents pertaining to the canning industry. He also was a member of the Jefferson County Tech Prep Consortium, which is responsible for setting up a curriculum of technical education for the Jefferson County schools and Jefferson Community College.

Grimm has additional experience as a tooling engineer for Werner Co. in Anniston, Ala., and Advance Engineering Co. in Northwood, Ohio; as tool room supervisor and tooling engineer at Teledyne Continental Motors Turban Engines in Toledo, Ohio, and as tool room supervisor for Fulton Industries, Inc. of Wauseon, Ohio.

He is the father of two daughters, Tanya Carson of Indianapolis and Bernadette Pejic of Cleveland. His free time interests include golf and woodworking.

$800 million coal-to-gasoline plant planned in state

Consol Energy Inc. and Synthesis Energy Systems Inc. have formed the joint venture of Northern Appalachia Fuel Limited Liability Co. to build an $800 million coal-to-gasoline plant in Benwood, W. Va.

Gov. Joe Manchin and Sen. Jay Rockefeller joined officials of the two companies in making the July 28 announcement. Manchin said, “It’s clearer than ever that one of the biggest issues our state and country face is meeting our energy needs. Technological solutions like this plant at Benwood will lead to more environmentally friendly ways to use our coal and hold the key to America’s energy security.”

Manchin’s administration has written a state energy plan built around the idea that coal-to-liquids plants will be constructed in West Virginia. This announcement goes a long way toward making good on Manchin’s December 2005 vow to have a coal liquefaction plant built in the state “by the end of my first term,” which is January 2009.

Rockefeller said the project will give West Virginia an opportunity to show the world that the state is a global leader in energy issues and modern coal technology.

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Hino Motor Manufacturing USA is doubling its daily production of commercial trucks at its West Virginia assembly plant in Williamstown. The plant will ramp up production by September, according to Joe Chronley, plant manager. Production will be increased from 10 to 20 trucks per day and will result in the hiring of about 30 additional workers, Chronley said. The plant already has about 80 employees.

Hino launched its Williamstown plant in June 2007, and trucks started rolling off the assembly line in November. It is the first automotive assembly line in West Virginia.

“We’ve been doing very well,” Chronley said. “This summer, production stopped at our California assembly plant, and production shifted here. That was part of our master plan.” The California plant was the only other Hino assembly line in the U.S.

The expansion extends the existing conveyor and adds two assembly lines, Production Manager Justin Wager said. “Right now, we are building a truck every 42 minutes,” which means that workers complete 10 trucks during the 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. shift. The plant hopes to double that to 20 trucks per shift, he said.

Hino is a subsidiary of Hino Motors Ltd., which is based in Japan. The company is a member of the Toyota Group that produces commercial trucks.

The Williamstown assembly line is in the former Walker Systems Inc. plant along state Route 14. To lure Hino to West Virginia, the state helped negotiate the sale of a tract of land adjacent to the plant. Hino purchased the property for $4.2 million. The state also agreed to purchase the equipment needed for the assembly line and lease it back to the company so it won’t have to pay property taxes.

Hino made an $8.6 million investment in the 194,000-square-foot building, which is situated on 30.35 acres. The company chose Williamstown because of its proximity to an interstate highway, river and railroad modes of transportation and because of West Virginia’s proximity to the East Coast market.

When Hino announced the transfer of the California plant’s work to West Virginia, company President Yasuo Tanigawa touted the flexibility of the Williamstown plant. “Our manufacturing facility in West Virginia is very flexible; we can quickly and seamlessly respond to product demand and product option content,” he said.

Hino USA has set a goal of selling 10,000 trucks annually within the next two to three years and 20,000 within the next five years, according to information from the company. Hino now has 175 dealers around the country. When the Williamstown plant opened, company officials said they planned to build 2,500 trucks there each year.

Chronley said the expansion at the plant means that the company is “on course” with the original plans.
The RCBI Composites Technology & Training Center has passed its first annual surveillance audit after receiving re-certification to ISO 9001: 2000.

The international recognition comes from the worldwide federation of national standards bodies, also known as ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

By “remaining in” or “maintaining compliance with” ISO standards, RCBI is reinforcing its commitment to the quality-approach that it advocates to manufacturers as well as ensuring defense, NASA and prime contracts are fulfilled with quality documentation.

The RCBI Composites Center, co-located at the RCBI Bridgeport Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center, initially earned ISO 9001: 2000 registration in May 2004. Surveillance audits occurred in 2005 and 2006, with zero instances of nonconformance reported. Re-certification to the standard was awarded in May 2007.

RCBI’s continued certification follows a May 1, 2008 audit at the RCBI Bridgeport facility by Det Norske Veritas (DNV) Certification Inc. of Houston, Texas. Again, zero instances of nonconformance were reported.

“Our continuing compliance to the standard demonstrates RCBI’s ongoing commitment to excellence in customer service,” said RCBI Director and CEO Charlotte Weber. “Because RCBI is so closely associated with NASA, the quality certification ensures that this partnership provides additional opportunities to manufacture flight hardware for the aviation, aerospace and commercial industry markets.”

The RCBI Composites Center offers state-of-the-industry equipment, workforce development and training as well as the necessary technical expertise to assist manufacturers in achieving worldwide competitive capacity in composites-development and manufacturing.

To take advantage of Composites resources at RCBI, contact 800-469-RCBI (7224) or e-mail composites@rcbi.org.

Our Mission

The Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing provides statewide and regional access to advanced technology and technical training to small- and medium-sized manufacturers. The mission of RCBI is to develop a quality, just-in-time, supplier base for the Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the commercial sector.

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