

Register today for manufacturing courses through new ABC Higher Education Hub

The Chisago Lakes Higher Education Hub, a product of the America's Best Communities initiative, has been launched.

"Our mission is to connect local employers, our existing work force, and high school and post-high school students living in our area with state colleges and technical schools to bring higher education opportunities to the Chisago Lakes community," explains ABC higher education team leader Marlys Dunne of MultiSource Manufacturing—Chisago City.

"In developing the Hub, we worked closely with Cook County Higher Education where they've successfully offered "the education you need where you live" for the past 20 years," says Dunne. "Our pilot program, launched in partnership with Pine Technical and Community College, focuses on manufacturing, but we plan to quickly expand to other areas as well."

Partnerships with several postsecondary schools were explored, but thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Advanced Manufacturing Partnership project, Pine Tech is able to offer an 8-course manufacturing curriculum at a significantly reduced rate of tuition during 2017.

"We are very pleased to announce that an education curriculum that would normally cost \$5,000 will be locally available through the Higher Education Hub and Pine Tech for about \$900 per student," says Dunne.

Students who complete the course will be able to earn a nationally-recognized Certified Production Technician credential in addition to a 16-credit Production Technologies Certificate from Pine Tech. The 8-course curriculum also serves as a foundation to several higher-level certifications, says Dunne.

Eight manufacturing courses are being offered

Live, online instruction will be provided and can be accessed using a computer or video conference system. Students may take the courses by one of several methods: live teleconferencing at the Chisago Lakes Library in Chisago City, online at the Lindstrom Office Center, online at their participating place of employment or online at home as long as they have a good computer with high speed internet access.

Courses include: Maintenance Awareness, Manufacturing Process and Production, Safety Awareness, Quality Practices, Technical Math, Print Reading, Career Success Skills, and Geometric Dimensioning and Tolerancing.

Each course includes a weekly two-hour teleconference, lasts eight weeks, and costs \$99. Students are encouraged to enroll in one or two courses per each eight-week session, but can enroll in more.

A one-session, supplemental, non-credit course called Introduction to Office 365 will also be offered for \$25 to familiarize students with the general functionality of Microsoft Office applications with a focus on Cloud services and OneDrive.

Successful completion of the first four classes (safety awareness, manufacturing processes, quality practices and maintenance awareness) qualify the student for a Manufacturing Foundations Certificate. Successful completion of all 16 credits qualifies the student for a Production Technologies Certificate from Pine Tech, and will form the basis for further technologist certificates in automation, machining, plastics and welding or diplomas in manufacturing, AAS degrees and BAS degrees in applied engineering, and technology management.

Once earned, the locally offered credits can transfer to any of 10 state technical



schools. Next year, Chisago Lakes High School will offer the first four classes to high school students as part of the new high school manufacturing curriculum.

Dunne says that ABC has contacted more than 60 local manufacturers, inviting them to make the online courses available to their employees, but anyone in the community is welcome to register for the courses. Deadline to register for the first session is March 10 and courses are due to begin as early as March 27. To register or for more information, contact Marlys Dunne, chisago-lakeshighered@gmail.com or 651-955-3304.

The reduced-cost manufacturing courses will be repeated at eight-week intervals throughout the coming year. (Register by May 12 for the session starting May 29 and by Aug. 11 for the session starting Aug. 28.)

"This manufacturing series is just the beginning," says Dunne. "We plan to offer courses in health care and information technology in the future, and we have recently attracted interest for the construction trades."

"Months of research and meetings with local manufacturers told us they are experiencing a growing shortage of qualified workers," says Dunne. "Our hope is to connect local employers with local workers and to make available the training needed for their mutual success and revitalization of our community."