

Devens manufacturing training site opens

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DEVENS -- The scissors that cut the ribbon weren't the only product in action at the opening of Mount Wachusett Community College's Manufacturing Workforce Certification Center Friday, as devices at demo booths whirled, buzzed, stretched and inflated around the event.

The new center is at the school's Devens campus. College President Daniel Asquino said the school has had a presence in Devens for more than 40 years. Classes were first available there in 1966. The college outgrew the old location, and in 2008 moved to a new location on Jackson Road.

The Manufacturing Workforce Certification Center will offer both credited and non-credited training for manufacturing workers. That includes people entering the field and those already employed in manufacturing.

The Devens location already offered health care, biotechnology and biomanufacturing and Asquino said the college is still working to fill the 40,000-square-foot building.

"We would like a workforce that is technically proficient," said Asquino. He said students also learn things like critical thinking skills and how to arrive on time.

The center was funded through the Massachusetts Community Colleges & Workforce Development Transformation Agenda, and was developed over the past year.

Besides training workers, the center will also provide space for industry meetings and workshops.

Following the ribbon cutting, Darrell Dayton, district sales manager of New Jersey-based Lab-Volt, demonstrated a robotic arm that senses when an object is loaded onto a switch, picks it up and places it on a disc that slowly spins it around. The arm then picks it up again and drops it into a can.

Dayton said students learn mechatronics by programming the arm to accomplish different tasks.

Andy Greco is senior vice president of client services for Scientific Management Techniques Inc. of Londonderry, N.H. His company is partnered with Mount Wachusett Community College and provides tests to screen candidates for manufacturing jobs. That includes working with model equipment.

"It's not put up on a chart and read, it's hands-on only," said Greco. He operated a machine that grips, flips and moves a puck of soap through a continuous loop. Candidates are shown the device with an imperfection introduced into the machine and told to make it work.

Greco said the company also tests existing employees to find where their skills falter and offer training to improve those skills.

Nancy Moloney, marketing representative for Norwood-based Instron, showed a machine her company makes and sells that clamps and pulls on materials until they break to test their strength. She said the devices are needed for testing materials for seatbelts, parachutes, latex gloves and different alloys.

Other devices Instron makes test material fatigue and impact tolerance.

Partnering organizations for the event include MassDevelopment, the Nashoba Valley Chamber of



Darrell Dayton, Northeast District sales manager for Lab-Volt, a technical training solutions company, demonstrates a student-teaching robot at Mount Wachusett Community College's new Manufacturing Workforce Certification Center at its Devens campus on Friday. SUN / BRETT CRAWFORD