

## West Virginia Community College Meets Industry Needs



West Virginia's community colleges, holding an enviable record of success throughout the years with accessibility and affordability, are responding once again to changes in the needs of industry; this time for workers who are well trained in high technology jobs.

**W**ithin higher education circles, it is understood that a community college goal is to be able to react quickly, with flexibility and proven results,

when business and industry call upon the institutions for help in training workers for positions that have been created, seemingly overnight.

The Community and Technical College System of West Virginia, of course, plays an important role, financially and as advisors, in the two-year institutions' efforts to forge ahead with programs to meet these needs.

Hundreds of state businesses have been witness to the strength of community colleges in rapidly planning, implementing and operating programs geared to industry specifications that end with workers in the field. Recently, this workforce development component of community colleges continued to provide a number of programs to help prepare individuals for employment related to the expanding natural gas industry.

For example, community colleges located in the Marcellus Shale drilling area have partnered to offer safety courses to those wanting to be floor hands for drilling operations. The courses taught participants basic safe working practices for working on drilling sites. In addition, a pipefitter helper program for the petrochemical construction industry was specifically targeted to address workforce needs in the construction of a fractionating plant in the state. As well, many of the industries associated with the oil and gas industry need qualified welders and five of the state's community colleges now offer basic and/or advanced welding classes.

West Virginia Northern Community College, Pierpont Community and Technical College, and the West Virginia Community College System currently are working with a number of the oil and gas employers to develop a program in petroleum technology. The program will be implemented in the fall and features extensive, hands-on training. Individuals will learn various aspects of drilling and production of natural gas and petroleum liquids from the shale gas fields in Appalachia.

Now, there is a new program that seven of the state's 10 community colleges have begun offering. It's called Mechatronics and it has applications to multiple industries associated with the oil and gas industry. The

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program is a blend of electrical, mechanical and instrumentation skills with a heavy emphasis on programmable logic controllers. Graduates of this program will be able to find employment in the plants being constructed throughout the region to process and distribute the natural gas and various derivatives of the wet gas.

Mechatronics graduates also are avidly sought by many other industries and are just one of the high-demand, high-technology jobs that are being advanced by West Virginia's community colleges. These industrial maintenance technicians have been called gold collar workers because of their high value to their employers.

It can be said as well that community colleges are the gold standard because of their worth to business and industry in this era's own version of the Gold Rush. **MSM**

For more information, contact Mike Koon, vice president of workforce development and Weirton campus dean at West Virginia Northern Community College. WVNC has campuses in Wheeling, Weirton, and New Martinsville. A state-of-the-art Mechatronics lab and program was unveiled on the Weirton campus a year ago, and the same program will begin in a new facility in the fall on the Wheeling campus. Koon can be reached via email at [mkoon@wvnc.edu](mailto:mkoon@wvnc.edu) or by calling 304-214-8967.

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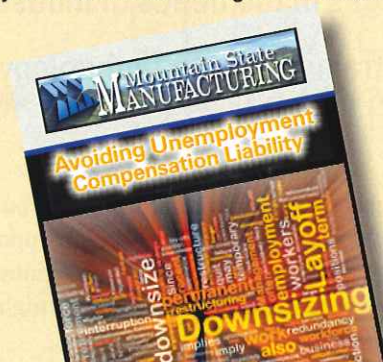
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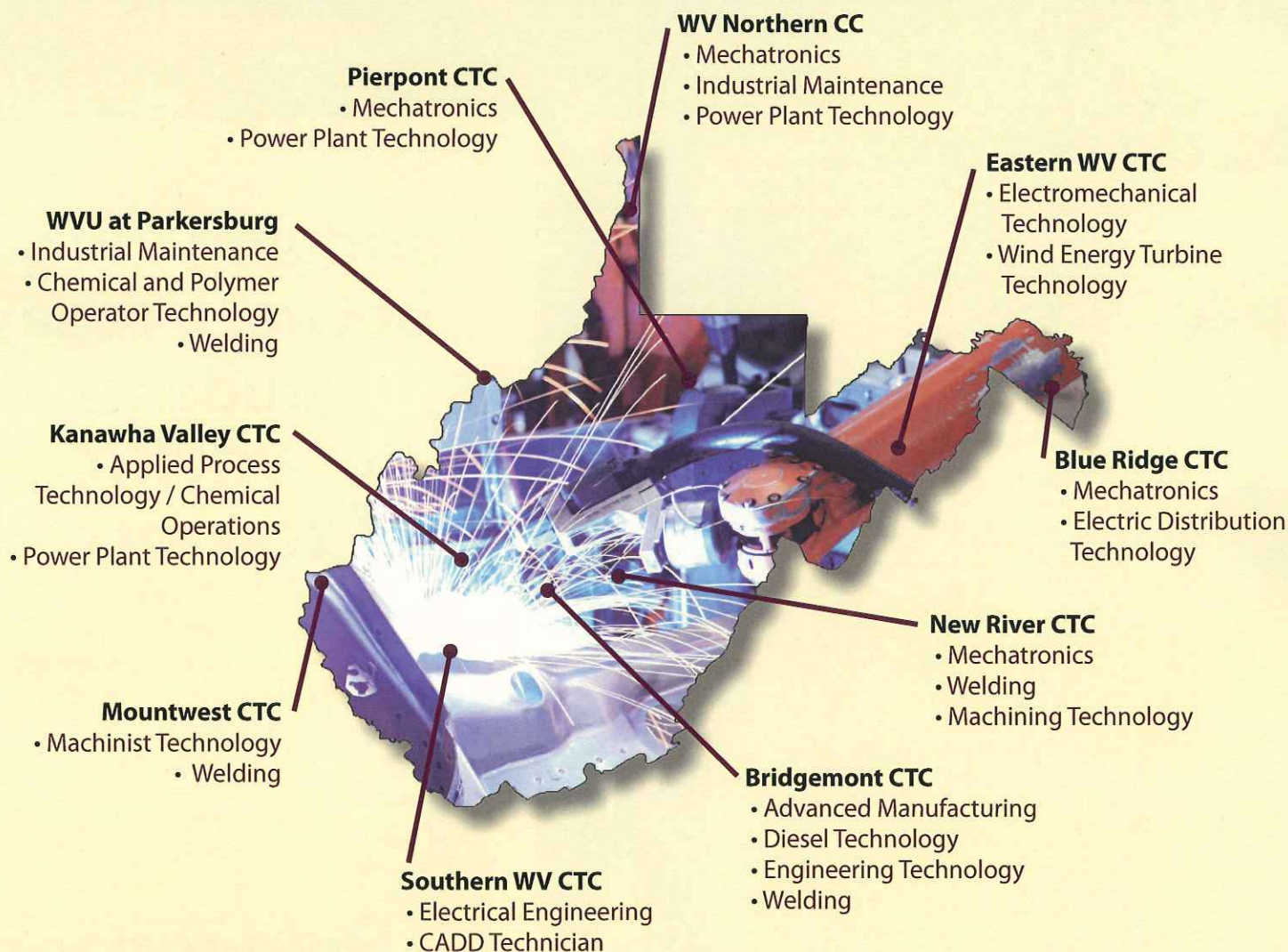


# Manufacturing: We've Got Training Covered

No matter where your business is located, West Virginia's ten community and technical colleges are prepared to meet your industry's training needs.

From customized training to degree programs in mechatronics, advanced manufacturing, chemical processing, and engineering technology, we've got the State covered.

## Programs By Location



*Moving Industry Forward*