



Big Impact in a Short Time

Advanced Manufacturing Training Program is Changing Lives

In just five months, Felix Leon, of Arlington, trained for – and started – a new career in the manufacturing industry through MCC's Advanced Manufacturing Training Program.

After earning two degrees and working for 14 years in the hospitality industry, Leon was ready to make a change. "I didn't like the feeling of not enjoying my work. I also wanted to spend more time with my family and enjoy the holidays, instead of always working," he said.

"I knew a career change was going to take more education," said Leon, who holds a bachelor's in hotel management from Newbury College, and an associate in hospitality from Johnson & Wales University. "But I really didn't want to take out any more loans.

I wasn't sure what I was going to do."

Leon was unemployed for almost two years when he received an email

from The Career Place in Woburn advertising free career training in advanced manufacturing. "It was perfect timing," said Leon. After taking a placement test, he enrolled in the Advanced Manufacturing Program in the fall of 2013.

The program was originally developed as part of a \$500,000 Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund Grant awarded by the state to the North Shore Workforce Investment Board. The grant supports partnerships between the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium and the region's education and workforce organizations to provide training, and to assist participants in finding jobs within the manufacturing industry. Partners include community colleges and vocational technical schools, career centers, workforce investment boards, and local employers.

"Manufacturing today is very different from what it used to be," explained Lisa Tuzzolo, MCC's Advanced Manufacturing Program Manager. "The processes have changed from being dusty, dirty and greasy, to high-tech, clean and computerized. Our program reflects these changes, and continuously adapts the curriculum to keep up with industry standards to prepare students for the manufacturing jobs of today."

"I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to get back on my feet. MCC programs like this can really make a difference in people's lives."

– Felix Leon

MCC's Advanced Manufacturing Training Program provides training for up to 24 students at no cost. Students spend five weeks in the classroom – five hours a day, four days a week – taking foundational courses. Then they complete more than 500 hours of hands-on training at one of the local vocational/technical schools. Graduates of the program also receive national- and industry-recognized certifications.

"The technical/vocational schools play a huge role in the success of the program and of our students," said Tuzzolo. "They have the space, the equipment, and the instructors to train our students properly." Leon completed his training at Greater Lowell Technical High School.

"We are very excited to extend the use of our state-of-the-art facility beyond the high school day for adult workforce training," said Roger Bourgeois, Superintendent-Director of Greater





Advanced Manufacturing hands-on training (clockwise from top left): instructor Brian Cornellier with an MCC student; in the machine shop at Greater Lowell Tech; and Felix Leon speaking at the Advanced Manufacturing Training Program graduation.

Advanced Manufacturing electronics students study circuitry at Shawsheen Valley Technical High School.

Lowell Technical High School. “We take great pride in offering quality programs that provide pathways to employment, as well as other post-secondary educational opportunities.”

“Returning to the classroom was fun,” said Leon. “My life was heading in a whole new direction. During the program, we got the opportunity to visit different machine shops in the area. The owners and supervisors would take us on a tour, and then we had a chance to network, and even hand them our resumes,” he added.

The day after Leon graduated, he started working at Straumann in Andover – the largest dental implant manufacturer in the world. In fact, all 24 graduates in the first Advanced Manufacturing cohort were offered jobs.

Graduates find work in different fields, including aerospace, defense, medical devices, computers and electronics. The program is so successful, that the

college is exploring an associate degree program in advanced manufacturing.

“We currently offer a number of programs that feed into the manufacturing industry, like Computer Aided Design and Engineering,” said Judy Burke, Dean of Corporate and Community Education & Training. “After seeing the success of this program, it became very apparent the college could do more to enhance and improve what we already offer in the area of advanced manufacturing,” she said.

“There are a number of manufacturers in our region who were all telling us the same thing – there’s no one in the pipeline to take over these jobs when the current employees retire,” said Burke. “The grant gave us the opportunity to work with partners in the region to see how we could fill that need.”

“The Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (GLWIB) and Career Center of Lowell value our partnership with Middlesex,” said

Gail Brown, GLWIB Director. “Through this ongoing collaboration, we will be able to provide a pipeline of skilled workers for the manufacturing industry.”

Leon currently works as a production assistant at Straumann, and is thriving. “I love going to work,” said Leon. “I feel like I’m part of a great team. My boss takes the time to teach us how to do the work. But more importantly, he takes time to teach us why what we are doing is important.

“With this job, I have peace of mind,” said Leon. “I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to get back on my feet. MCC programs like this can really make a difference in people’s lives.”

Tura Linderholm

For more information about MCC’s Advanced Manufacturing Training Program, contact Lisa Tuzzolo at tuzzolol@middlesex.mass.edu