



Challenge

Forsyth Tech, located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, began hearing from employers that they were having a difficult time finding individuals with the right skills, even though unemployment was high. The college realized that there was a skills gap that was becoming a growing concern as the economy grew. Inconsistencies in training existed due to different curriculum depending where you went.

Forsyth identified third party certification as a way to align training with national standards and credentials and provide employers candidates that had the skills they needed.

Action

In the summer of 2010, Caterpillar, Inc. decided to build a \$426 million manufacturing plant in Forsyth County, bringing more than 500 jobs to the area. According to Caterpillar executives, Forsyth Tech, under the leadership of its president, Dr. Gary Green, "offered them good business training and promises of good education for its employees," therefore guaranteeing that Forsyth County was going to be a good place to do business because they could access an educated and skilled workforce.

In order to implement, Forsyth worked closely with The Manufacturing Institute to select the right credentials. They ran a pilot study and made the decision to integrate the skills certification process into the curriculum rather than add it on so students could benefit.

The implementation required openness in faculty and program leaders to adjust what and how they were teaching to utilize the changing skills and technology. Faculty and staff were provided training and facilities were upgraded when necessary.

>> For More Information:

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ForsythTech

Community College

Results

>> Expanding Quality Education:

The North Carolina Community College System is now expanding industry-recognized certification efforts across the state to impact students at all 58 community colleges, supporting a broad array of industries, including advanced manufacturing, aerospace, biotechnology, and energy.

>> Preference Among Employers:

Over time, offering the certifications provided the college a preference among employers. Organizations realized that third party certifications would get them the skills they needed to succeed.

>> Growth in Demand:

The confidence of having an ongoing pipeline of workers with the skills needed led to a growth of jobs and demand in the area. This increased the credibility of Forsyth as a provider of these skills. For example, companies including Caterpillar and Siemens chose to locate new manufacturing facilities in the area in a large part due to the college adopting the nationally recognized credentials.

>> Improved Brand Recognition:

Forsyth became known as a provider of a highly skilled technical workforce for the region.

>> Enhanced Recruiting and Retention:

Students see the success rates based on national standards and opportunities for growth. Demand is high and students remain in program knowing they will be able to get jobs afterwards.

"Skills certification for advanced manufacturing has led to more and better jobs for people in our community who have a real need for those jobs (particularly coming out of recession) and ensures employers have an ongoing pipeline of highly skilled workers to be competitive in the global market."

*-Dr. Gary M. Green,
President of Forsyth Tech*