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**President Obama and Skills for America’s Future Partners Announce Initiatives Critical to Improving Manufacturing Workforce**

*Efforts by Leading Manufacturers will help prepare 500,000 Workers for Cutting-Edge Manufacturing Jobs*

Today at Northern Virginia Community College, President Obama will announce a major expansion of *Skills for America’s Future*, an industry led initiative to dramatically improve industry partnerships with community colleges and build a nation-wide network to maximize workforce development strategies, job training programs, and job placements.

“Last year, we launched Skills for America’s Future to bring together companies and community colleges around a simple idea: making it easier for workers to gain new skills will make America more competitive in the global economy. Today, we are announcing a number of partnerships that will help us make this a reality, by opening doors to new jobs for workers, and helping employers find the trained people they need to compete against companies around the world,” said President Barack Obama.

As one of the key partners of *Skills for America’s Future*, an initiative of the Aspen Institute that was launched by the Administration last year, The Manufacturing Institute, the affiliated non-profit of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), will announce an effort to help provide 500,000 community college students with industry-recognized credentials that will help them get secure jobs in the manufacturing sector. Several other partners of *Skills for America’s Future* and The Manufacturing Institute will also help enhance these efforts through their own initiatives to bolster our nation’s manufacturing workforce.

This builds on the Administration strong leadership on manufacturing. The manufacturing sector has led the economic recovery over the past two years, with over 230,000 jobs added since the beginning of 2010.

**A New Credentialing System that Works - A Vibrant Manufacturing Workforce**
While the manufacturing sector has faced real challenges in recent years, it continues to be the lifeblood of the American economy. The manufacturing sector currently employs over 11 million Americans, and by itself it would be one of the 10th largest economies in the world. Manufacturing is also critical for our continued innovation; manufacturing companies account for two-thirds of private sector research and development and roughly 90% of all registered patents. Most importantly, manufacturing has long provided good-paying jobs for millions of families and serves as the anchor employer in communities across America.

For that reason, our ability to win the future will depend in large part on our ability to train the most productive manufacturing workers in the world. This effort is especially important at a time when 2.7 million manufacturing employees are 55 years of age or older and likely to leave the labor force in the next 10 years.

One of the challenges in today’s manufacturing sector is the lack of a standardized credentialing system that manufacturing firms recognize as useful preparation for their unfilled jobs. As a result, students often spend time and money on training that can have little value to potential employers while employers have difficulty identifying which credentials are of value and should influence hiring and promotions.

The Manufacturing Skills Certification System, developed with manufacturing firms at the table, will give students the opportunity to earn manufacturing credentials that will travel across state lines, be valued by a range of employers and improve earning power. In designing this program, the Manufacturing Institute has partnered with leading manufacturing firms, the Gates Foundation, and the Lumina Foundation, and key players in education and training including ACT, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, the American Welding Society, the National Institute of Metalworking Skills, and the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council. This will allow students and workers to access this manufacturing credentials and pathways in community colleges in 30 states as a for-credit program of study.

Key Partnerships – An All-Hands-on Deck Effort by Government, Business, Philanthropy and Others

As part of today’s initiatives, the Administration will announce new key business leaders leading the President's call to action by joining Skills for
America’s Future board, including Greg Brown, chairman and CEO, Motorola Solutions; Bill Green, chairman, Accenture; Penny Pritzker, chairman and CEO, Pritzker Realty Group (Chair); Brad Keywell, co-founder and director, Groupon, Inc.; Nick Pinchuck, CEO of Snap-on; David Zaslav, CEO of Discovery Communications; Ellen Alberding, president, The Joyce Foundation; and Walter Bumphus, president and CEO, American Association of Community Colleges. Learn more about Skills for America’s future at www.skillsforamericasfuture.org.

The President and Skills for America’s Future will also announce a number of public-private partnerships that leverage the core competencies of the technology sector, media companies, and federal agencies to enhance these efforts through their own initiatives to bolster the nation’s manufacturing workforce.

• “Boots on the Ground” Help for Manufacturers to Implement Credentials: Through the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), the Federal government will collaborate with The Manufacturing Institute in a program to promote a curriculum based on NAM’s advanced manufacturing skills certification system in community colleges in 30 states. The 60 centers of the national MEP system will serve as the “boots on the ground” with local manufacturers to educate them about the value the NAM-endorsed skills certification system to their business so that they utilize the skills certification system in their recruitment and hiring efforts. In addition, the MEP will provide input to The Manufacturing Institute about aggregate skill needs of manufacturers by industry and geography so that certification systems can remain dynamic and evolving.

• Building These Credentials into High School Pathways: Given that many students begin to seek manufacturing training before college, Air Products, a global manufacturer serving customers in industrial, energy, technology and healthcare markets worldwide, is partnering with SkillsUSA to build partnerships in 3,500 member high schools and more than 200 colleges to adopt these credentials in their schools.

• Providing New Online Tools for Workers to Earn and Utilize these Credentials: Students and employees in the manufacturing field will not only have a new, more meaningful certification program to take advantage of, but a new career website called Pipeline that will provide job seekers with real-time
data on job openings and information on additional education needed. This effort will be headed up by Futures Inc. in partnership with the Manufacturing Institute in 17 partner states with plans to expand nationwide.

- **A Career Awareness Campaign to Learn about Such Credentials:** Students and employees in the manufacturing field will also be able to access critical resources for obtaining marketable job skills and expertise through “Discover Your Skills,” a Discovery Communications initiative designed to raise awareness of career opportunities including PSAs, on-air talent, their media properties and Discovery Education. With collaborators including The Manufacturing Institute, National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and Skills for America’s Future, Discovery viewers will have a pathway to a world of resources to help educate and advance entry into the workforce.

- **More Opportunities for At-Risk Youth To Seek these Careers and Credentials:** At-risk young people will be provided additional assistance through Jobs for America’s Graduates’ new commitment to a five-year goal of helping 30,000 high-risk youth obtain professional credentials in high demand occupations including Advanced Manufacturing. Archer Daniels Midland Company, a leading global agribusiness with operations in 36 states and a JAG board member, will serve as JAG’s National Business Partner.

- **Creating our Next Generation Engineering Workforce:** In addition, over 5,000 young people will be able to benefit from a mentorship program and scholarships being expanded by The Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME), the SME Education Foundation and the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering and the National Academy Foundation.

**Building on Progress**

These commitments build on important steps already taken by this Administration.

- **Investing over $2 billion to help community colleges train students and workers:** Under the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, over $2 billion in competitive funds have been made available to eligible institutions of higher education, such as community colleges, over the next four years. The initiative, housed at the Department of Labor (DOL) and implemented in close cooperation with the Department of Education, will focus on the capacity of community colleges to develop, upgrade, and offer programs that result in skills,
degrees, and industry recognized credentials that are relevant to high-skill industries such as manufacturing. These competitive grants will have a focus on programs that have strong employer partners and that meet industry needs, including allowing consortia that can focus across an entire region, state, industry or a cluster of related industries. This program will complement President Obama’s broader commitment for higher education, which nearly doubled funding for Pell grants and tripled the largest college tax credit, now known as the American Opportunity Tax Credit.

- **Leadership by the Department of Labor on industry-recognized credentials:** The Department of Labor has released an updated advanced manufacturing competency model. Working with industry partners such as The Manufacturing Institute, the National Council for Advanced Manufacturing and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, this employer validated model outlines the skills necessary to pursue a successful career in the manufacturing industry. DOL is also promoting the importance of credential attainment with the adoption of a high priority performance goal to increase credential attainment by 10 percent among customers of the public workforce system by June 2012.

- **Leadership by Health and Human Services (HHS) to Expand its Health IT Training Program with Community Colleges Nationwide.** To address a skilled worker shortage within the health IT industry of 50,000 workers, and create thousands of new health care jobs, the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) launched the Community College Consortia (CCC). This consortium of 82 member colleges has created new Health IT academic programs that can be completed in six months or less. As of May 2011, a total of 2,434 total students have successfully completed the program to take on new jobs or to upgrade skills within existing jobs. Going forward, ONC will increase the capacity of these training programs, starting in September 2012 the CCC will graduate at least 10,500 students annually.