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Engineering Technology Celebrates New Lab with Ribbon Cutting

CARROLL, OH: The Fairfield County Workforce Center will unveil its new Engineering Technology Lab on Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 4 p.m. with a ribbon-cutting by the Lancaster Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce.

The new lab, which began construction in April, will provide a revitalized space for students to learn and experience hands-on engineering activities to prepare them for careers in advanced manufacturing. Programs will be administered by instructors from Ohio University Lancaster and Hocking College. The \$2 million buildout was funded by the Fairfield County Commissioners and the State of Ohio along with an additional \$1.5 million for new equipment.

Engineering technology is a high-demand and ever-evolving field that requires an understanding of manufacturing processes, skills in quality analysis tools, occupational safety, electronics, robotic systems, and more. Students in the engineering technology program will be able to earn an associate degree in Engineering-Technology or certificates in Mechatronics, Automation, or Semiconductor Manufacturing. Students also have the option to continue their education at Ohio University for a bachelor's degree in engineering.

"There are almost 5,000 manufacturing jobs in Fairfield County," said Rick Szabrak, Economic and Workforce Development Director for Fairfield County. "This will serve the emerging workforce or current employees that are looking to expand their skills in the manufacturing field. It can open doors to advanced career opportunities and higher salaries."

From an employer's standpoint, the demand for this type of accreditation and training is increasing every year. Ohio State University projects that engineering technology jobs will grow 13% by 2026. With such rapid advancement in technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics and smart manufacturing, companies throughout the Columbus Region are looking for professionals that can help them innovate and adapt.

Szabrak credits community partnerships with the eight county school districts, Eastland-Fairfield Career and Technical Schools, Ohio University, Hocking College, numerous local manufacturers, the Area 20 Workforce Development Board, the offices of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor, Rep. Jeff LaRe, Rep. Kevin Miller, and Sen. Tim Schaffer in helping the Fairfield County Workforce Center become a success and bringing the new lab to fruition.

"This is another solid example of Fairfield County coming together to identify growing business needs and trends and address them simultaneously, preparing our workforce for the growth in our community," said Fairfield County Commissioner Dave Levacy.

Ohio University Lancaster's Engineering Technology program was moved to the Workforce Center last year and has seen growth in its program already. This new space will provide a great learning environment for students.

"The new Engineering Tech Lab elevates the Engineering Technology (ENGT) program offered at Ohio University Lancaster by providing an enhanced environment for students to gain practical, hands-on experience that compliments their academic learning. While the curriculum already provides a strong foundation in manufacturing processes, electronics, CNC programming, and robotics, the lab allows students to apply these concepts in real time using state-of-the-art equipment," explained Dr. Lewatis McNeal, Vice provost for regional Higher Education and Community Partnerships at Ohio University. "By integrating advanced lab resources with a comprehensive curriculum, the program produces highly skilled graduates ready to contribute to the rapidly evolving field of engineering technology."

"Whether we're instructing students in a traditional college program or providing short-term training solutions for area employers, utilizing a highly integrated lab with equipment that mirrors what will be seen on the job today and tomorrow is essential," said Amanda Lemke, Executive Director of Talent Development & Strategic Initiatives at Hocking College. "The new Engineering Technology Lab highlights the commitment that we share with our workforce partners to develop robust, relevant, and unique work-ready programming in this region."

The ribbon cutting is open to the public. For more information, visit FairfieldCountyWorkforce.com.

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