

Southern State Celebrates Manufacturing Month and Connects Students with In-Demand Careers

Southern State Community College is joining manufacturers, educators, and workforce partners across Ohio and the nation in celebrating Manufacturing Month this October while highlighting pathways into in-demand careers.

Gov. Mike DeWine has proclaimed October as Manufacturing Month in Ohio, joining the nationwide observance underscoring the importance of modern manufacturing and the need to prepare the next generation of skilled workers.

Manufacturing remains the backbone of Ohio's economy, with the sector generating \$137.9 billion in manufacturing GDP in 2024 and employing more than 687,000 Ohioans in 2023, according to the Ohio Manufacturers' Association's (OMA) 2025 Ohio Manufacturing Counts report. Ohio ranks fifth nationally in manufacturing output and third in manufacturing employment.

The industry's workforce need is just as significant, with approximately 35,000 new entry-level operators and mid-level technicians required each year to support continued investment and growth, according to the OMA. Ohio's 22 community colleges are helping answer that call by providing affordable, hands-on education and training aligned with local employers. Together, the colleges serve nearly 250,000 Ohioans annually and maintain more than 1,000 employer partnerships.

"Ohio manufacturers need a strong pipeline of people with the skills to step into good careers and grow with the industry," said Ryan Augsburger, president of the Ohio Manufacturers' Association. "Community colleges are critical partners in that work, giving students hands-on training, real-world experience and direct pathways to manufacturing careers," he said.

At Southern State, students can prepare for manufacturing careers through the newly redesigned Engineering Technology degree program. This degree will combine the strengths of Southern State's Mechanical Design Technology and Electro-Mechanical Technology programs into one comprehensive curriculum that better reflects today's engineering and advanced manufacturing workforce.

From creating products in 3D and solving real engineering challenges to learning automation, electronics, project management, additive and subtractive manufacturing, and electric vehicle technologies, students will gain practical experience using the same equipment and software found in today's engineering and manufacturing industries.

Students will have access to industry-leading technology including industrial 3D printers, PLC automation equipment, hydraulic and pneumatic training systems, semiconductor technology, EV training equipment, and upgraded engineering computer labs.

The Associate of Applied Science Degree in Engineering: Aviation Maintenance and certificate programs in Aviation: General & Airframe and Aviation: Powerplant are also offered through Southern State at Laurel Oaks in Wilmington.

According to Southern State's Dean of Academic Affairs Dr. Pete Hanson, "Manufacturing Month is an opportunity to show students and families what today's manufacturing careers actually look like." Adding that "Southern State works closely with employers to make sure students learn on current equipment, gain real-world experience, and earn credentials that lead to opportunities close to home."

"Manufacturing Month highlights the exciting careers taking shape across Ohio and the essential role that community colleges play as the gateway to these opportunities", said Avi Zaffini, president and CEO of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

"Our 22 colleges work side by side with employers to provide affordable, hands-on training that leads to in-demand careers while helping manufacturers build the skilled workforce they need to compete and grow," Zaffini said.

Southern State offers flexible pathways for recent high school graduates, adults changing careers, and workers who want to build new skills. Students can begin with an associate degree and continue learning while they work.

For more information about Southern State's manufacturing related programs in engineering, please visit www.sccc.edu.

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