



MiraCosta College's Technology Career Institute Fills Manufacturers' Training Needs

California community college uses federal grant to beef up machinist and other manufacturing training programs.

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For nearly 20 years, the only place to get the training through the community college system to become a machinist was San Diego City College. Now, however, there is a second location for civilians to get training as a machinist in San Diego County at the Technology Career Institute (TCI) of **MiraCosta** Community

College. MiraCosta College is a public California community college serving coastal North San Diego County. The main campus is located in Oceanside, and there is a second campus in Cardiff-by-the-Sea. The reason I mention training for civilians is that from 1923 – 1993, the Navy had a machinist school at the Naval Training Center, San Diego. NTC ceased providing training at the end of 1993 as a result of the **Base Realignment and Closure** (BRAC) commission of 1993. The machining training was transferred to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois. There is still a machine shop at the North Island Naval Air Station on Coronado Island that offers training for entry-level Navy machinists to become journeymen. There is also the Workshops for Warriors, about which I have written previously, that has been training Veterans in machining and other manufacturing skills since 2011.

Last October, I visited the **Technology Career Institute** (TCI) during San Diego's Manufacturing Week (associated with the national MFG Day on October 5th). I met Linda Kurokawa, director of Community Education & Workforce Development, and finally had the opportunity to interview her in depth last week.

My first question was: When did TCI start and whose idea was it? Linda said, "The Technology Career Institute officially opened in its current location in Carlsbad in March 2015, and it was actually my idea."

She explained, "I started it because I felt that San Diego North County needed a technical training center to provide low cost and accelerated training. We wanted to get young people and veterans trained for good paying jobs. For about five years, I had been asked by local manufacturers and the local chapter of the National Tooling & Manufacturing Association (NTMA) to start a machinist program. But, I had no money, no instructors and no equipment.

"I decided to see if there was a way it could be done. I worked with the City of Oceanside and asked if they had an empty building. They did since it was during the long-lasting recession. I talked to leaders in the local industry to see if we could raise the funds to get the equipment. The MiraCosta Foundation helped us get donations to buy some of the equipment. One donor even gave \$50,000. I worked with Haas Automation, Inc., and we got some automated machining centers through an 'Entrustment' arrangement."

She continued, "When we were in the planning stage for TCI, I was advised to make sure the course met the needs of the manufacturers, so we had manufacturers review our curriculum. We also visited training centers all over the country to learn about best practices. We started our machining program in the spring of 2013 at the Oceanside location. The program was very accelerated — the students went every day, five days a week, for eight hours a day. The NTMA helped me find our first instructor, a woman who was retiring from the Navy and had taught machining skills on board ship to

sailors."

When I asked how they wound up at the current facility in Carlsbad, she responded, "I realized that with the small facility we had, we could only train a few students at a time. I heard about a grant available through the Department of Labor, and I hired a grant writer. We submitted our proposal and won a \$2.75 million grant, which allowed us the funds to buy the equipment we needed to double the size of our machining program and also establish an engineering technician program.

When companies come to us asking why they can't get our graduates to go to work for them, we have to explain to them it is because they are not paying a living wage.

—Linda Kurokawa, director of Community Education & Workforce Development

"We looked for a larger empty building and found one in the city of Carlsbad. We worked with city officials to get a low rent, as we are entirely funded by student fees. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement. Carlsbad is helping to fill the talent pipeline and helping residents in North County find technical training, and we provide the training in a low cost building.

"We moved into our 23,000 sq. ft. building in early 2015 and had the time and space to start night and

weekend classes using modules from our daytime accelerated program. We are GI bill approved and funded through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds and state funds, which are only available about five months of the year before the funds are exhausted. Our fees are high per student (about \$6,000), so I wanted to find another grant. The Girard Foundation did help out by funding one semester last year."

MiraCosta College is one of the recipients of the more than \$111 million **America's Promise** grants that were awarded on November 17, 2016 by the U.S. Department of Labor "to 23 regional workforce partnerships in 28 states to connect more than 21,000 Americans to education and in-demand jobs."

A press release stated, "Each four-year grant will support tuition-free education and training that prepares participants for jobs in industries that currently utilize the H-1B temporary visa program to meet industry workforce needs. Grantees will use individual assessments to determine the best strategies to successfully move participants into middle- to high-skilled jobs including accelerated training, longer-term intensive training and up skilling current employees to meet the demands of higher skilled jobs.

“Grantees will focus their activities on four key priorities:

- Increasing opportunities for all Americans through tuition-free

training for middle-to high-skilled occupations and industries.

- Expanding employer involvement in the design and delivery of education and training programs.
- Utilizing evidence-based sector strategies to increase college completion, employability, employment earnings and outcomes of job seekers.
- Leveraging additional public, private and foundation resources to scale and sustain proven strategies.

Funded through fees paid by employers to bring foreign workers into the U.S. under the H-1B temporary visa program, America's Promise grants are intended to raise the technical skill levels of American workers and, over time, help businesses reduce their reliance on temporary visa programs."

Linda said, "I wrote my own grant this time, and we were the only college in California to receive the grant of \$6 million over a period of four years. We are six months into the grant, so we still have 3 1/2 years left. We are sharing some monies with Grossmont Cuyamaca College in east San Diego County and Chaffey College in Riverside. The grant funds have allowed us to eliminate tuition fees and reduce administrative fees down to a modest \$375. However, the America's Promise grant is not a long-term solution."

She explained, "Our local manufacturing industry is composed of such small companies that there isn't enough extra money from these companies to be a sponsor for a machining school. However, we do get

small donations of money and donations of metal materials used by the students, as well as donations of some equipment."

I told her I understood because this is the type of company I represent as a manufacturers' sales rep – companies that are typically under 25 employees, and I even represent two San Diego North County companies that have less than 15 employees. I mentioned that I had read the sector report on **Advanced Manufacturing** released in November 2015 by the San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP). It stated that " 97% of all advanced manufacturing businesses are businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Small businesses in this sector also account for 36% of all employees and for a third of all generated annual revenue."

When I asked what is coming up, she said, "We are excited about launching our apprenticeship program for machining technician, CNC machine operators, engineering technicians, electronic assembly, and solar PV in the next few months that have been approved by the State of California Apprenticeship Standards. We will do the pre-training at our facility and monitor the students On the Job Training. We will have an advisory board, and already have a couple of companies lined up for the apprenticeships. We are also partnering with Able-Disabled Advocacy for a small portion of their \$3.2 million grant for apprenticeships from the Department of Labor that they were awarded in November 2015.

As we concluded our discussion, Linda commented,

"One of the benefits of having a big training center is that we will be able to make changes amongst our local manufacturers. Our students are being directed to the companies where they will be able to have a decent paying job. When companies come to us asking why they can't get our graduates to go to work for them, we have to explain to them it is because they are not paying a living wage. We are helping them realize that they need to pay higher wages to get and keep better employees."

I responded that I had heard that San Diego ranks in the top 10 (9th) of most expensive places to live according to **Inc.** magazine, so it is tough to make it when the wages in San Diego are so much lower than cities that are higher up on the list like New York, Boston and San Francisco. That is why it is important to get the training and/or education needed to be able to get a higher paying job here, and why it is so important for companies to pay competitive wages. The SDWP report identified advanced manufacturing as one of the priority sectors for job growth, so the Technical Career Institute is an important addition to San Diego County's training infrastructure.