

# Panelist Q &A:

## Community College of Allegheny College



**Vision Shared:** How was the need for your program/partnership identified?

**Elsayed/Savolskis:** There is a growing need for individuals with skills in Advanced Manufacturing in our region because of projected retirements and higher skills requirements by industry.

In the Fall of 2009 we were awarded a grant through the Department of Education's Funds for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education in the amount of \$748,896 to train individuals in Mechatronics .

The current initiative that we are offering is 0 based tuition to qualified individuals. To qualify a student must meet the following criteria: It has been determined by our faculty that a prospective student must have at least a 10<sup>th</sup> grade level of math and reading. In order to assess their skills we are using the Test of Adult Basic Education. If a prospective student does not score at that level we offer them remediation using Plato. Plato is an online service that uses tutorials and mastery exams to help students obtain the skills necessary to reach the 10<sup>th</sup> grade level. We have also offered tutoring with the Instructional Facilitator and a review class with an Adjunct Math Faculty member. Once the testing component is complete, the next step in the process is an interview with the Mechatronics team and a mechanical aptitude test. The final component of the intake process is to complete two outside assignments, one is an online tool scavenger hunt and the other is an online theory of electricity class. Once a prospective student has successfully completed all of these requirements they may be admitted into the program.

The grant's team is comprised of a Project Coordinator, Instructional Facilitator, and Lab Technician/Assistant Instructor. The team members also interact with the advisory committee who has played an active role to ensure that the training is addressing the skills needed for employment in this field.

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**Vision Shared:** What obstacles did you encounter when developing the partnership/program?

**Elsayed/Savolskis:** Finding students, who would be interested in this type of training. We had to dispel the myth that manufacturing jobs were not glamorous. We had to change their perceptions by showing them that the current environment of manufacturing is not all dark, dirty, and dangerous. We also had to work with the employers and encourage them to become active participants in the development and refinement of the program.

Our academic experiences with our first class of students highlighted the need for a more rigorous vetting process to be considered for the training. We also found that because the program was a 0 based tuition program, some students didn't appreciate the rigor nor commitment needed for completion. We made the changes that we identified during our assessment of our first year result and the second year outcomes have been much more successful.

Establishing a vehicle to provide college credit for the appropriate learning that has been assessed using tools developed in a partnership with the credit division.

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**Vision Shared:** What, in your view, is key in developing a successful collaboration?

**Elsayed/Savolskis:** Actively engaging the industries in your community. You need industry to validate that the training is what current employees or future employees need to have. You need to have relationships with industry in order to help place your students. This involvement of the potential employers will play a major role in your ability to sustain the program once the grant funding period is over.

Marketing of the program – We are continually looking for opportunities to showcase our program. We have hosted several open houses at our facility to allow prospective students to see the lab and be able to try out some of the equipment first hand to see if they would be interested in participating in the program. We also reach out to local companies and have gone to speak about the benefits and requirements of the program.

Participation in certification programs – The Mechatronic’s Program was recognized as a Certified Provider (Level 1) and a Silver Partner (Level 2) by the Industrial Maintenance Training Center of Pennsylvania (IMTC). The IMTC is a state wide initiative that evaluated the curriculum and equipment of schools to certify the appropriate level of training as defined by the Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology curriculum. There are 4 levels under this model. To qualify as a IMTC certified provider an institution offers a program of study in which students are taught and expected to demonstrate proficiency in essentially all of the competencies required for one or more of the AM/IST certificates governed by the Mid-Atlantics Mechatronics Partnership. **We are the only certified provider of AM/IST Level 1 in Western Pennsylvania.**

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**Vision Shared:** In your opinion what is the biggest challenge or organization faces in workforce development?

**Elsayed/Savolskis:**

There are two issues that we find in our institution:

- Funding issues:
  - a) Maintaining the current equipment and purchasing new equipment
  - b) Staff to oversee the program continuity and connections with industry
  - c) Industry needs to step up and validate the importance of the training
- Credit vs. non-credit:
  - a) Did learning take place and can you access it? Our current Mechatronics program gives students both a non –credit certificate of completion and the ability to earn 17 credits towards an Associate’s Degree. This offers the individual the ability to set up a credential that is reasonable and affordable.

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### **Sylvia Elsayed - Community College of Allegheny County**

Sylvia Elsayed has a 15-year career at CCAC. As the Project Coordinator for the Mechatronics Program, she is responsible for the day-to-day operations of this grant. Her background includes work as an instructor and a coordinator of several workforce grants. During a recent Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse grant, she coordinated the training of over 2,100 incumbent workers and 173 non-incumbent trainees, totaling more than 11,000 hours of training. She has set up training engagements at various venues, working with subject matter experts, organizing training materials, and managing learner participation. Her team-based, get-it-done attitude makes her an effective and efficient leader.

### **Judy Savolskis - Interim Vice President, CCAC Workforce Development Division**

Judy Savolskis joined CCAC in 1981 as a full-time faculty member at Allegheny Campus. In 1998, she was appointed dean of occupational technologies at the Boyce Campus. She was appointed dean of workforce development for the college in 2005, serving as the liaison between the credit and non-credit/workforce divisions. In 2009, she was appointed interim VP of Workforce Development. She oversaw the development

and implementation of the Green Institute whose goal is to operate as the partner and trainer of choice in the growing “green movement.” In 2010, CCAC received the Penn Futures Green Power award for its leadership in the preparing students for employment in green related industries. Ms. Savolskis holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Duquesne University, a Master of Science from Carlow University and has undertaken post-graduate work at the University of Pittsburgh.