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PCC furthers its advancing development into a manufacturing center of excellence

PUEBLO – Pueblo Community College’s role as a regional leader in providing robust manufacturing skills training has been expanded recently through significant developments that are being put on display to the community today.

First, Vestas Towers Americas Inc., a division of Vestas Wind Systems, announces that it has formed a partnership with PCC that is unique in the state of Colorado. Unlike other cities where the wind energy manufacturer is operating in the state, PCC has an exclusive role in training employees for the new Vestas Towers plant that will begin manufacturing operations in Pueblo in late fall.

This past summer, PCC’s Economic & Workforce Development Division began training some of the 500+ employees that the Vestas plant will eventually employ. That training recently was expanded to include utilizing submerged arc welding equipment that Vestas provided for the college’s Gorsich Advanced Technology Center. That welding skill proficiency is a critical part of the wind tower manufacturing process. PCC will continue to train Vestas employees over the next 9-12 months.

In addition, PCC is excited to showcase today three new mobile learning labs that were developed as part of a \$2 million U.S. Department of Labor grant that was awarded to the college in May 2008. Along with a fourth mobile lab that was developed two years ago, the Economic & Workforce Development Division now has a fleet that is capable of delivering on-site training in four different learning disciplines – electrical systems, manufacturing systems, mechanical systems and welding.

The 45-foot mobile labs were designed and created by PCC’s Economic & Workforce Development Division staff under the direction of Shawn Ahlers, Mobile Learning Lab Fabrication Coordinator. They contain real-job, modern technical equipment currently in use in their respective industries.

The mobile labs will enable PCC to help meet an acute regional need for skilled employees in the advanced manufacturing industry. They have the ability to deliver job-readiness training and technical competencies to students as well as new and existing

employees. They can prepare them to enter the manufacturing industry or enhance the current skill levels of existing employees either to meet new industry standards or advance further in their professions. The training is unrelated to that which is underway for Vestas.

“Thus far, we have already provided some training to approximately half of the 450 individuals that we intend to impact over the three-year period of the grant,” pointed out John Vukich, PCC’s Dean of Economic & Workforce Development and overseer of the grant program. “The three new mobile learning labs will accelerate the delivery of that training even further and will greatly support the industry’s workforce needs in southern Colorado both short-term and long-term.”

Importantly, PCC offers an Energy Maintenance Technology program (Associated of Applied Science degree) that further supports its role as a manufacturing center of training excellence. Included in that program is a solar energy component that provides skills training in the development and maintenance of solar systems. The program provides students with the knowledge to manage the energy resources of most industrial and commercial operations. Such skills are already in demand and will be needed even more as wind usage for energy purposes continues to expand.

Graduates of the Industrial Electronics Technology program can earn a starting pay in the \$16 to \$18 per-hour range, with experienced technicians making \$22 to \$25 per hour.

PCC also offers welding and machining certificate and associate degree programs that further augment the advanced manufacturing industry, and jobs are currently available for persons with those technical job skills.

Vestas Wind Systems, based in Denmark, is the world’s largest manufacturer, seller, installer, and servicer of wind turbines. It operates manufacturing plants in 11 different countries around the world, employing more than 20,000 people globally. In August 2008, Vestas announced its intentions to build and operate the world’s largest wind tower manufacturing plant in Pueblo, citing the training capabilities of PCC’s Economic & Workforce Development Division as one of the main reasons for that decision.

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Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21st Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest campuses.