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**MSI & Virginia Community Colleges Announce New Industry Skills Partnership**  
*-Nine Community Colleges Designated MSI Assessment Centers-*

**NEWPORT NEWS, VA** - The Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI), the workforce development affiliate of the Virginia Manufacturers Association, announced today at the Dream It Do It Virginia Symposium that nine community colleges will be designated as authorized MSI Assessment Centers: Blue Ridge Community College, Community College Workforce Alliance (John Tyler Community College and J. Sargent Reynolds Community College), Mountain Empire Community College, Southside Virginia Community College, Tidewater Community College, Thomas Nelson Community College, Virginia Highlands Community College and Virginia Western Community College.

The new MSI Assessment Centers will expand credentialing opportunities for Virginians to demonstrate skills to close the workforce skills gap. The initial focus of the partnership will be to expand the MSI Manufacturing Technician 1 (MT1) certificate program as a baseline credential for Virginia's 6,000 manufacturers as well as integrating it into degree pathways and dual enrollment opportunities so that the emerging workforce has the [12 critical technical skills](#) that are fundamental to occupations in advanced technology industries.

The system office of Virginia's Community Colleges (VCCS) has been integral in this development. The VCCS recently provided support to local community colleges wishing to pursue MSI training and Assessment Center status. This investment from the VCCS has enabled Virginia's community colleges to further enhance students' pursuit of industry credentials to prepare them for modern manufacturing.

"The MT1 certification can be a launching pad for individuals across Virginia," said **VCCS Chancellor Glenn DuBois**. "This holds the potential to be a stackable credential that helps a person on his or her pathway to a specific career within the manufacturing field, like welding, metal working or mechatronics. And it's one more step away from that 'bachelor's or bust' mindset that can prevent people from promising opportunities in high-demand career areas."

The highlight of today's announcement was the Virginia Western Community College (VWCC) commitment to join the Manufacturing Institute's "[M-List](#)" as well as endorse the [Get Skills to Work](#) veteran initiative announced between the Manufacturing Institute, National Association of Manufacturers, VMA, Manufacturing Skills Institute and General Electric (GE). VWCC stated that it will integrate the MT1 Certification into its Mechatronics Degree program and provide MT1 graduates each year for regional manufacturers such as GE.

"Our goal in education is to prepare the best possible workforce for our global economy. Aligning to the Manufacturing Skills Institute's Manufacturing Technician Level 1 certification only makes sense to ensure that industry knows what they are getting with our graduates," said **Dan Horine, Instructor - Automated Manufacturing, VWCC**.

This announcement is part of an aggressive move to expand the MT1 certificate program into community colleges and educational partners across the United States. The MT1 is part of the NAM-Endorsed Manufacturing Skills Certifications System and is approved by the Virginia Board of Education for high school use. The MT1 has also been approved for use by Workforce Investment Boards for special populations and veterans wishing to improve their manufacturing skills.

"We knew in 2007 that manufacturers would have a skills gap of approximately 11,000 people a year. We also knew that the largest need was in the Manufacturing Technician occupation and 96% of manufacturers wanted people with these applied and measurable skills. Although the economic challenges of the last few years slowed demand, it is back and we need to move quickly and this partnership between MSI and Virginia's community colleges will help close the skills gaps for manufacturers" **said Brett Vassey, VMA President & CEO**.

The new community college based MSI Assessment Centers will be joining ECPI University, which has six MSI Assessment Centers across the Commonwealth, as well as the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center in offering MT1 resources. MSI's next MT1 Train-the-Trainer Course for community college instructors begins October 20 in Richmond, Virginia.

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#### **About the MSI**

The Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI) provides relevant education and skills training for careers in advanced manufacturing by offering world-class training programs delivered by MSI and MSI education partner institutions. Through the partnership between industry and education, employers set the skill standards for MSI program offerings anywhere offered to ensure learning is linked to employment and career advancement opportunities. Employer-specific customized training can be provided onsite or at any MSI education partner location. Working learners advance their manufacturing technology knowledge and skills via OJT classes, classroom-based and online training offered by MSI and education partner faculty grounded in real world experience. For more information about MSI, visit [www.manufacturingskillsinstitute.org](http://www.manufacturingskillsinstitute.org).

#### **About the VMA**

The Virginia Manufacturers Association is the only statewide association exclusively dedicated to manufacturers and their network of service providers. Since 1922, the VMA has exclusively served as Industry's Advocate™, and our mission is to create the best business environment in the United States for world-class advanced technology businesses to manufacture and headquarter their businesses for maximum productivity and profitability. The VMA also supports a broad array of business services and programs to help ensure that manufacturing companies can be productive, profitable and competitive in Virginia. Virginia's more than 6,000 manufacturers employ more than 230,000 individuals, contribute \$41 billion to the gross state product and account for more than 86% of the state's exports to the global economy. For more information about the VMA, please visit [www.vamanufacturers.com](http://www.vamanufacturers.com).