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Contact: Jim Bellamy | 419.267.1267 | jbellamy@northweststate.edu

NORTHWEST STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LAUNCHES EDGE - A NEW, INNOVATIVE, EARN-AND-LEARN PROGRAM

ARCHBOLD, OHIO – Northwest State Community College is proud to announce the launch of the EDGE Earn-and-Learn Program, a new workforce skills training model that combines academic front-loaded technical curriculum; with a part-time, paid, work experience. This creates a pathway for obtaining a full-time, well paid position with a key regional manufacturing employer. Spurred by tremendous change and opportunity in Ohio’s advanced manufacturing sector, experiential learning program models have evolved and are now driven by the adoption of new technologies and processes, automation-era skillsets. The Ohio manufacturing industry is more productive and efficient than ever, and the role of skilled workers is vital and in high demand. Manufacturing is the largest industry by GDP and payroll in Ohio, and the state ranks as the 3rd largest manufacturing state in the nation.

Tori Atkinson, Director of Workforce Development and Innovative Learning at Northwest State Community College stated, “We want to help break the stereotypes that some may have about this industry. These employers’ facilities are state-of-the art - clean, bright, and advanced, and the EDGE earn-and-learn program is a unique opportunity for people from all walks of life; graduating high school seniors, adults looking to make a career change, displaced workers, or even those looking to advance at their company by upskilling their current abilities. The days of needing a bachelor’s degree in order to obtain a good paying career are behind us.”

Participants of the EDGE Earn-and-Learn Program can obtain an accredited, industry recognized, Industrial Maintenance Certificate from Northwest State in as few as two semesters. During such time, while completing their academic coursework, participants will take part in the Career READY component of the program, as well as a centralized networking and interview process with key northwest Ohio employers. Once employed full-time, many regional employer partners have tuition reimbursement programs, helping students to continue their education if they choose, and increases the likelihood of a debt-free degree.

Jim Drewes, Vice President of Workforce Development at Northwest State Community College shared, “Not only can this short-term certificate earn-and-learn program prepare students for a career in the advanced manufacturing arena - where skilled technicians are in great demand here in Ohio – but it creates a new talent pipeline for our industry employer partners who want these highly skilled graduates to fill their workforce needs. The Industrial Maintenance Certificate is also stackable with other certificates and can be a steppingstone to an associate degree. This is a win, win, win – a win for students, a win for employers, and win for Ohio.”

Influenced by recommendations from Ohio employers and NACE best practices, the Career READY competencies and preparation resources are designed to teach participants the most sought-after career readiness skills. Participants will also hear from local manufacturing, logistics, distribution, and supply chain companies, explore various industrial and manufacturing career pathways, and tour some of the most advanced facilities in northwest Ohio - all of which is geared to prepare them for full time employment with regional employers partnered through the EDGE program.

“The combination of technical coursework and on-the-job training will enhance a workers ability to enter the skilled-workforce market” shared Mike Tisovic, Plant Manager at Wieland Chase in Montpelier, Ohio. “Wieland Chase is always on the lookout for skilled technicians, the EDGE Earn-and-Learn Program at Northwest State is a great opportunity for all people, and especially young people, to begin a successful career in the high-demand skilled trades industry.”

There is also funding available for participants of the program. By braiding funding sources together, Northwest State has identified multiple funding streams for program participants that will help to reduce their out-of-pocket costs and increases their chances of completing their industry recognized credential, debt-free. The EDGE program at Northwest state is partially funded by the Department of Labor Ohio Manufacturing Workforce Partnership (OMWP) Grant – a statewide sector partnership led by the Ohio Manufacturers’ Association (OMA) and its 1,300+ members. The initiative significantly leverages grant funding to improve manufacturing education and training programs throughout Ohio and primary partners include 12 regional sector partnerships representing businesses throughout the state, 26 institutions of higher education, and seven state agencies.

“The automation era has fully arrived in Ohio’s advanced manufacturing industry” added Atkinson. “These changes create demand for new skillsets, alongside traditional skillsets, among businesses – so the demand is definitely there. The EDGE program also provides support and mentorship, helping students to balance college and career - and they can earn an average of \$16 per hour during their work experience. There has never been a better opportunity for someone to enter this industry. We now just need partners to help us get the word out about this super important program.”

If you are someone interested in learning more, please visit tinyurl.com/GetAnEDGE and submit a Request for Information, or reach out to Tori Atkinson at Northwest State Community College directly at tatkinson@northweststate.edu.

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Northwest State Community College is an accredited two-year, state-assisted institution of higher education that has served northwest Ohio since 1969. Northwest State is committed to providing a quality, affordable education with personal attention and small class sizes. The College offers associate degrees with numerous transfer options, short-term certificate programs, and workforce training programs designed to meet the needs of local businesses and industries. For more information, visit NorthwestState.edu or call 419.267.5511.