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Editorial: State supports GCC goal to train students for success

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Area residents who want to find well-paying work in the tech field have gotten a leg up from the administration of Gov. Charlie Baker.

Greenfield Community College recently received nearly \$500,000 for advanced skills vocational training and related technology. The two-year school has seen lots of success in the liberal arts, transferring many students to successful academic careers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Smith College in Northampton and other four-year colleges. So, we can be forgiven for forgetting how tuned in the college is to meeting the needs of regional employers in local business and industry as well.

The \$496,113 state grant will be used primarily in the classroom for programs and equipment to train two-year students for technology oriented occupations. Many of the region's manufacturers welcome this sort of training at the community college because they need recruits experienced in current technology.

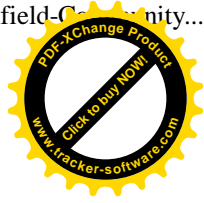
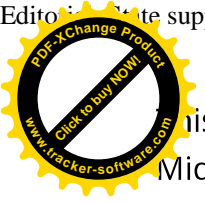
"It's especially good for our students who will be given the opportunity to learn on state-of-the-art equipment," President Bob Pura said of the grant. "Technology changes so quickly, this initiative makes sure the commonwealth is at the top of the line."

Pura said he looks forward to upgrading the college's manufacturing engineering science and engineering technology programs. There will be advances to audio and mechanical equipment as well.

Specifically, GCC will use the money to buy technology like a new coordinate-measuring machine, an advanced manufacturing computer lab, an acoustic engineering lab and equipment for materials testing, for computer simulation in parts manufacturing and 3-D printing, as well as robotics and computer hardware systems.

That's a lot of cutting-edge technology that the college's students can use to make themselves more valuable to area employers and to fill a need in manufacturing regionally.

"This investment in our infrastructure continues to not only work to get people jobs, but also to help build careers," Pura noted.



This dovetails with the college's partnership with others in the now several-year-old Middle Skills Manufacturing Initiative based at Franklin County Technical School in Montague. That program trains underemployed or unemployed people to use computerized metal cutting tools like lathes and milling machines.

It is a collaboration among the Tech School, GCC and the Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board that has helped scores of area residents find more gainful employment at places like VSS Inc., Bete Fog Nozzle, the duMont Co., Deerfield Packaging, Quabbin Inc., L.S. Starrett and Kennametal.

In some parts of the country, when workers are laid off from fading industries or their jobs are automated, they have few paths back to productive employment. So it's nice to see that our state is different. We still have the will and the wherewithal to provide retraining and education for people that the \$500,000 investment in GCC will bring.

At least some of the time we can move people on from jobs that aren't coming back to new occupations that stand waiting — if they have the modern skills.

When we want to grumble about paying high state taxes, it's good to remember that some of that money, at least, has made its way back to the region to help people we know make better, financially independent lives for themselves in this changing world.
