



NEWS RELEASE

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Conexus announces new manufacturing and logistics curriculum resource for Indiana high schools

New curriculum resource will prepare students for high-paying jobs

(INDIANAPOLIS, November 22, 2011) Conexus Indiana today announced its intention to launch a high school-level curriculum focused on advanced manufacturing and logistics, two industries that collectively employ one of every four Hoosier workers. This innovative program will give Indiana students a head-start on careers in these increasingly high-tech fields.

Conexus, the state's manufacturing and logistics initiative, identified the need for this effort in response to calls from industry for a higher-skilled, better-prepared workforce. Working closely with the private sector and educators, with input from the Indiana Department of Education, Conexus has developed a curriculum appropriate for high school students that teaches the fundamentals that manufacturing and logistics firms demand from new employees.

"Manufacturing and logistics jobs have changed rapidly over the last several decades," said Conexus President & CEO Steve Dwyer. "The majority of U.S. manufacturing positions now require effective education beyond high school – you need critical thinking, information management and communication skills, as well as the technical know-how to manage computerized equipment, advanced robotics and supply chain management systems.

"But even though Indiana is the most manufacturing-intensive state in the country, we don't have enough students pursuing the right education for these careers. It's time to make a real connection between our students and the jobs that need to be filled in manufacturing and logistics – starting in high school."

Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett agreed that more options for teaching an advanced manufacturing and logistics curriculum are a welcome addition.

"With the changing landscape in this arena, schools and teachers can benefit from innovative ways to teach pathways to good jobs," Bennett said. "We owe our students career-focused programs that will make their diplomas relevant to these industries."

The curriculum will be a mixture of online, hands-on and project-based units that will expose students to key concepts in these industries, with dual-credit opportunities that will position them to successfully pursue relevant certifications, associate degrees or four-year programs after graduation.

The curriculum will be launched as a pilot program at no more than 10 high schools next fall before it is made available for broader adoption by school districts around the state. The rollout can't come soon enough, according to State Board of Education member David Shane, who also serves as the CEO of Indianapolis distribution and logistics holding company LDI, Ltd. LLC.

"More than half of the nation's manufacturing workers are older than 45," Shane noted. "Thousands of Baby Boomer workers reach retirement age every day, but there's no concerted effort to prepare the next generation of employees to take their place. If Indiana can create an industry-driven program that meets their needs and captures young people's attention in high school, it will be a clear competitive advantage for companies desperate for human capital."

APICS – The Association for Operations Management – the leading professional organization for supply chain and operations management professionals, is also lending its support. APICS is offering a new certificate to students who complete the APICS Principles of Operations Management course, which is part of the manufacturing and logistics curriculum.

"Hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs are going unfilled nationally because of a growing skills and talent gap, despite high unemployment," said Bob Collins, Director of Professional Development at APICS. "Training the next generation of professional is of the utmost importance. APICS is pleased to join the Conexus and the State of Indiana in leading this national effort to bridge the gap between what young people are being taught and what employers need."

The curriculum has been endorsed and is eagerly anticipated by school superintendents and technical education directors across the state, who see the need to prepare their students to take advantage of these opportunities – especially considering that Indiana manufacturing employment has grown by 5% since the end of the recession, while a jobless recovery has been the norm nationally.

Conexus is currently finalizing fundraising efforts to complete the curriculum and provide it to school districts at no additional cost. The private sector's response has been eager and generous, according to Dwyer.

"Employers have been quick to offer input on the curriculum and to help finance it," he said. "Their willingness to contribute shows that the demand is real, and that bodes well for the future prospects of the students who will get involved."

"When Allison was approached about supporting a manufacturing and logistics program for high schools, we looked at this program as an opportunity to be a part of the solution," said David L. Parish, Vice

President of Operations for Indianapolis-based Allison Transmission. "Our employees are our largest source of productivity and innovation - the investments we make in getting young people interested in manufacturing and logistics will pay big dividends down the road."

For Dr. Bennett, the success of the new curriculum will be measured in career opportunities for students.

"Studies by ACT and others show conclusively that the earlier young people choose a career path, the more likely they are to succeed in higher education and, ultimately, in finding work," he said. "With our College and Career Pathways, an Indiana high school student can declare his or her interest in an industry and pursue a dedicated curriculum that can carry them through post-secondary studies straight into the job market. This curriculum resource will help them do that. We hope it's a model for future efforts."

Launched by the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, Conexus Indiana is the state's advanced manufacturing and logistics initiative, dedicated to making Indiana a global leader. Conexus is focused on strategic priorities like workforce development, creating new industry partnerships and promoting Indiana's advantages in manufacturing and logistics. Learn more at www.ConexusIndiana.com.