

MSSC Instructor Spotlight Series

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How did you first get involved with manufacturing education?

My first involvement with manufacturing education came with joining Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute as the Lead Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics Instructor. Although I have been an instructor or trainer in both the USA and Europe within my career positions in the logistics, maintenance, and service industries, providing instruction on safety, hazardous materials and waste, quality, and both preventive and reactive maintenance, it was never put all together until I started my current position.

How do you keep your students engaged in technical training sessions?

Keeping students engaged in the classroom is one of the hardest things to accomplish, especially when this is most likely an alien subject to most of them. So during the first couple of days, I try and find out a bit about the things they have done and try to relay the learning in a way they might understand based on their previous experiences.

What hands-on activities or projects have been most successful in helping students master MSSC concepts?

Whenever possible, I introduce students to tools and processes they will use in a manufacturing career. I utilize the Skills Boss trainer in the classroom to provide visual and hands-on experiences. I have precision measurement tools (calipers, micrometers, dial indicators), electrical troubleshooting tools (multimeters), sensors (proximity, capacitive, inductive, photoelectric), and blueprints that the students can physically touch and get hands-on with. Having the ability to touch, feel, and operate makes a world of difference to most students.

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How do you incorporate real-world manufacturing examples into your lessons?

With the support of the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute, we build in a day to go and tour one of the local partner businesses. The tour for our current class is a 3-hour tour, where not only do they get to tour the plant and look at what modern advanced manufacturing is, but they also get presentations from the plant manager, the EHS manager, production managers, and other staff within the building who work in the QA, R&D, warehousing, and maintenance areas of the plant.

We also invite business partners from the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute to come and speak with the class. Typically, in the run of our class, we normally get 2–3 guest speakers.

What's one tip you'd give to new MSSC instructors just starting out?

Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something to students, but always find out the answer for them. You will be surprised how much respect and credibility you gain from just being honest with them, plus you learn something new each time. Never stop learning, even as an instructor; you never know everything.

What has been the most rewarding part of seeing your students complete the program and earn their certifications?

Probably the most rewarding part of seeing the students complete the course and earn the certification is the whole process of watching students come in off the street not knowing anything about manufacturing, shoulders and head down. They are normally unemployed, just graduated high school, in a job they don't like, or just want to make something better of themselves. By the end of the class, they have grown as a person; they walk taller, they are more confident, and they have more pride.

At the end of our program, we hold a reverse job fair, and partner members of the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute come and interview the students over a period of a couple of hours. In this event, most students will get the opportunity to have a series of 8–9-minute interviews with multiple companies in one event. Seeing a student who had no idea what they were walking into at the beginning of the course come out of the interview fair with multiple job offers is an amazing feeling.