Grant helps WITC move welding program forward

Backed by a $14.9 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant that was awarded to Wisconsin’s 16 technical colleges, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College is able to better assist students entering the field of welding.

The grant is a result of an unprecedented state-wide collaboration between the educational systems that are working with industry groups, workforce development boards and more than 50 businesses. Wisconsin technical colleges have committed to train more than 2,500 individuals during the next two years, with the hope of reducing the skills gap to meet employer needs in manufacturing.

“The TAACCCT grant has been a wonderful opportunity for WITC and the welding program,” said Mary Ann Pebler, Director of Resource Development at WITC. “The grant has provided funding for the purchase of a robotic welder, which is new technology in this field, and allowed us to expand the welding program by two sections – including offering some evening sections to provide more flexible hours of instruction.”

WITC will use its portion of the grant to assist welding students entering the five short term embedded technical diploma pathway (STEDT). With the goal of expanding the college’s capacity to provide short-term training to meet the immediate needs of employers, WITC will grow its existing adult manufacturing career pathways. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration has funded 55 percent of this project equaling $605,450.

“The intent of the welding career pathway is to provide students with options for multiple entry and exit points that result in employment opportunities at each stage,” said Cindy King, Director of Curriculum at WITC. “Students then have the option of coming back into the program should they choose to complete the one-year technical diploma.”

In an effort to meet the industry demand for welders, WITC currently offers its one-year technical diploma welding program at all four campuses, and this year has added additional sections at the New Richmond and Superior locations. The new short-term technical diplomas will allow students to complete a short-term program and be available for employment in a quicker period of time.

“The grant has helped add flexibility for our welding students to tailor their learning experience to meet their educational goals,” said Pebler.
Ranked fourth best two-year college in the nation by Washington Monthly magazine, WITC serves the educational and career needs of more than 25,000 residents of Northwestern Wisconsin each year. With multiple campuses, WITC offers career-focused associate degree programs, technical diplomas, short-term certificates, customized business training, and a wide array of courses for personal or career enrichment. WITC is a member of Wisconsin Technical College System. For more information, call 800.243.WITC or visit witc.edu. WITC is an Equal Opportunity/Access Employer and Educator.