

## Manufacturing, Technology: Saving The Workforce

by Emily McGrath

(NAPS)—If you have a job—or wish you did—or a child in school, a new way of looking at technology, education and the world of work may prove good news for you.

COVID-19 has deeply affected both the American workforce and higher education, with community college enrollment down nationwide. This poses a dire challenge, as community colleges serve as a critical pipeline in making universities and advanced fields accessible to a broader population, while also exposing students to new educational pathways across various industries. With enrollment down and workforce numbers at a tipping point, these institutions of opportunity need momentum to drive motivation back to where it was before the pandemic—starting with the next generation of diverse advanced manufacturing workers.

Thanks to explosive growth in such sectors as flexible hybrid electronics (FHE), in the next few years industry leaders will serve as intermediaries between technical fields of the future and the workforce that's needed. Equipping community colleges with programs that serve this transition will help bolster a new American workforce, powered by advanced manufacturing and FHE and other technology. Increased demand for both awareness-boosting and skill-building programs will help drive technology development and subsequent commercial proliferation of FHE and the greater advanced manufacturing industry.

While the tech workforce hasn't been immune to disruption from COVID-19, it remains a field expected to have one of the biggest demands for a skilled workforce in the future. The pandemic has temporarily reduced that workforce; there's a promising future for advanced manufacturing in 2021 and beyond.



### Community colleges can help people enter the growing field of flexible hybrid electronics.

To match these growing markets, there will be an increasing demand for workshops and seminars that showcase the benefits the technology offers for diverse application spaces, as FHE technology continues to mature and demonstrate its potential to transform advanced manufactured products. This includes more defense and industrial demand for engineers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to design and manufacture FHE-enabled products as the technology nears commercialization.

This is where community colleges come in. They will play a vital role, acting as a bridge to help new high school graduates and adults looking to change career paths meet the academic and industry players that will help develop the new workforce.

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