Manufacturers can ‘test drive’ STCC talent

An internship program at Springfield Technical Community College gives students a chance to “learn and earn,” and area companies an opportunity to “test-drive” new talent.

The college launched the Learn and Earn internship program in 2017. Since it began, the program has placed more than 40 students, according to Elliot M. Levy, senior director for the college’s workforce development center.

Levy spoke about the internship program during a recent meeting with the board of directors for the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association, an organization that promotes the precision manufacturing industry.

“This is a phenomenal way to test-drive your future talent,” Levy said. “As we visit various companies, we find they are looking for the next generation to come work for them. We have that next generation right here.”

The program started with students from the college’s Mechanical Engineering Technology Department, but will expand into other areas, Levy said.

At least 40 companies are interested in hiring interns from STCC, including employers in the fields of biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, civil engineering, optics and photonics, architecture, construction and automotive, Levy said.

Kristin M. Carlson, president of machining associations, hired a mechanical engineering technology student as an intern last year.

“We got her in May 2017. It was supposed to be a summer internship. After two months, we asked her to be a permanent employee,” said Carlson, president of Peerless Precision in Westfield.

“I’m a big fan of hiring students in general,” Carlson added. “When we bring the students in, it gives them a chance to earn money while they’re learning, and it gives Peerless a chance to groom them and help turn them into the employees that they need to be — and we need them to be. Their minds are a lot more moldable, and they’re more open at that age than people who are not currently in school.”

Carlson particularly likes working with STCC graduates.

“Most of them have made the decision to go into manufacturing or the engineering field on their own without their parents’ grandparent’s holding our hands,” Carlson said. See STCC, page 37.