

OPINION PIECE

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Mohawk College fuels growth of manufacturing supercluster

By David Santi

A local automotive parts supplier is taking game-changing digital technology for a test drive at Mohawk College.

The technology holds the promise to boost productivity and make the company even more competitive and profitable. The technology also represents a significant investment that the company can't afford to get wrong. By working with our faculty and students in a controlled testing environment on campus, there's a greater likelihood of a seamless and successful transition to the shop floor.

It's a collaboration that both draws from, and adds to, our collective competence. The learning goes both ways, with our students gaining valuable real-world experience in advanced manufacturing and companies accessing resources and expertise that reduce risks and accelerate the adoption of trend-setting technologies.

These collaborations are about to happen on an unprecedented scale through Canada's Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster.

Established by the federal government earlier this year, the supercluster draws on the collective competence of leading-edge manufacturers and technology providers, thriving start-up ecosystems and leading postsecondary institutions along a world class economic corridor running from Hamilton-Burlington to Waterloo Region to Toronto.

Mohawk College is a key supercluster partner and we look forward to highlighting our role at the inaugural Canada's Innovation Corridor Summit on June 26, Royal Botanical Gardens. We've invited renowned futurist Jesse Hirsh to speak on the value of collective competence — a cornerstone of Mohawk's growing contribution to advanced manufacturing in Canada.

Canada's industrial engine is about to be kicked into an even higher gear through a collaboration strategy aimed at fostering growth and creating jobs. Our collective competence will be marshalled and focused on the shared goal of accelerating the development and adoption of next generation technologies, including big data and analytics, robotics, sensors, machine-machine communications, and additive manufacturing.

Conversations within the supercluster are initiating collaborations that in turn are spurring new partnerships, customer relationships, and investment opportunities shaping the future of advanced manufacturing in Canada.

Made in Canada is becoming synonymous with value-added innovation. The supercluster is expected to help create more than 13,500 new high-skilled, well-paying middle-class jobs and add more than \$13.5 billion to our national economy over the next 10 years.

Mohawk is proud to be a part of Canada's Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster with more than 140 partners in industry, education, government and the not-for-profit sector. We bring our college's unique capabilities to the table, with a wealth of technology programs, labs, industry-experienced faculty, and thousands of job-ready students and graduates.

We're going to build on these strengths with the opening of The Joyce Centre for Partnership & Innovation later this year. The centre, which is Canada's largest and our region's first, net zero energy institutional building, will be home to 10 new and expanded labs. These labs will have a heavy focus on developing our students' and our college's competencies in digital technologies, data analytics and cybersecurity. Classroom instruction and experiential learning through applied research projects will happen under the same roof.

What's more, we'll make these labs available to our industry partners. Helping regional manufacturers move to technology-driven smart factories is a priority for Mohawk. Collaborations with our college will be a competitive advantage for smaller companies aspiring to become global leaders in advanced manufacturing. We'll also introduce and connect companies to other industry and education partners within Canada's Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster. Mohawk's relationship with Next Generation Manufacturing Canada, the supercluster's administrative lead, will become increasingly important.

As a college, Mohawk has long recognized the power of collaboration to build prosperity for our students, our partners and the region. We welcome working with new partners to help develop and test new technologies while preparing our students to excel in Industry 4.0.

David Santi is the Dean of Engineering Technology at Mohawk College and has previously worked at ArcelorMittal Dofasco and Suncor. Mohawk will be a featured organization at the inaugural Canada's Innovation Corridor Summit on June 26. Visit corridorsummit.ca or call 905-522-1151 x 100 to register.