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Pitt Community College and East Carolina University Partner to Train Workers at Greenville Plant

GREENVILLE (1/14/2009) - Pitt Community College and East Carolina University recently combined efforts to train workers at Harper Brush Works, Inc., in practices that will help the Greenville manufacturing plant operate more efficiently.

“In some way, all 70 of our employees have been a part of PCC-provided instruction,” said Harper East General Manager Chuck Jones.

Over the past three years, PCC has provided Harper Brush with courses on safety, leadership training and general manufacturing. Hoping to increase productivity and efficiency, Harper officials requested Lean Six Sigma training not currently available through Pitt. That’s where ECU’s Center for Innovation in Technology and Engineering (CITE) was able to assist.

“Partnerships are going to be even more important during these challenging economic times,” said Mary Paramore, PCC’s Director of Business and Industry. “I’m so thankful that we have a strong partnership with ECU, which allows us to even better serve our local industry.”

David Harrawood, CITE Director agrees. “As educational institutions our objective is to strengthen the workforce locally, regionally and across the state. It makes perfect sense for Pitt and East Carolina to collaborate to accomplish the overarching goals.”

Lean Six Sigma is a business improvement methodology combining tools from both Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma. While Lean focuses on speed, Six Sigma centers on quality. The purpose in combining the two is to produce better quality products faster.

“In the current business environment, we have to continually improve our internal processes and drive waste out of the business,” Jones said. “And the coursework and simulation was relevant and drove home understanding of the lean concepts.”

Thus far, Jones said he has heard nothing but positive feedback from participants in the first two lean initiative training sessions at Harper in December. Dr. Merwan Mehta, the Lean Six Sigma instructor and faculty member at ECU’s Department of Technology Systems commends Harper for taking the initiative.

“This is strong forward thinking by those leading Harper Brush,” said Mehta. “They want to find a way, in tough economic times, to increase efficiency and productivity without translating any extra cost to the customer. We’re glad to be a part of the team.”

Harper Brush, an Iowa-based company, makes more than 600 cleaning supply products, including push brooms, mops and squeegees, that are sold by retailers, such as Lowe’s and Home Depot. Jones, who has worked with Harper for four years, said the partnership between PCC and ECU to provide training to his employees is ideal.

“With this collaboration, we can get world-class training that fits Harper’s needs as well as the rest of (Greenville’s) Industrial Park,” he said. “It also provides recruiting opportunities for both the two-year and four-year technical programs.”

For additional information about this press release, please contact Rob Goldberg, Communications Specialist at Pitt Community College at 252-493-7732, or David Harrawood, CITE Director at ECU at 252-328-9654.

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