

# Training program heats up for college, area firms

## MCC Corporate College partners with Thermo Fisher Scientific here

By NATE DOUGHERTY

Monroe Community College is taking learning on the road.

MCC Corporate College trainers have partnered with Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. to deliver a training program at plants in Fairport and Penfield, part of what college officials say is a renewed push to deliver workforce training and fill skill gaps.

Participants in the first year of the two-year program are to complete 12 courses making up 256 hours of classroom and hands-on training. The training spans areas such as hydraulic maintenance technology, blueprint reading and troubleshooting.

The courses are taught by adjunct professors or corporate training consultants with MCC Corporate College, the college's workforce development arm that offers services, including custom training.

The college has partnered with more than 125 companies in the last year to provide training programs and employee development across various subject areas.

Thermo Fisher officials instituted an application process for employees interested in participating. It initially had 50 applicants. After narrowing the list to 10 finalists, company officials selected four to take the program but within days of the start decided to expand to seven participants.

For this group of employees the lessons extend beyond the classroom, said Buzz Lucarelli, human resource manager at Thermo Fisher.

"When this group of seven is not in the classroom, they go through a rotation of job training and they're assigned a mentor who meets with them regularly," Lucarelli said. "We want to make this group successful with the training program, and those other aspects do that."

Company officials see the efforts as an investment in the workforce and an extension of the company's own improvement process. The training delivery, with college officials working on site, is believed unique within the \$17 billion company, which spans 50 countries and 50,000 employees.

The program also fits in with MCC's push to offer more workforce development in the region.

Elaine Lyons, the college's manager of corporate relations, noted the work with local companies stretches back more than two decades, but efforts have ramped up greatly in the last three years.

"When President (Anne) Kress joined, the college took a hard look at the workforce development group we had and decided to expand to a larger training base," Lyons said.

It was then that Kress brought in Todd Oldham, vice president of MCC's economic development and innovative workforce service, as well as adding three positions to work with local companies and market the college's efforts, Lyons added.

The college's efforts were formalized

within the last year and in the fall were rebranded as MCC Corporate College.

As MCC surveyed the local landscape, new and previously unmet needs emerged, Lyons noted.

"One of the things we've found is that not only is there a huge need for technical training but also supervisory leadership training," she said. "This is the direct result of the baby boom generation retiring, and companies started to take a step back and look where their workforce needs were changing.

"Some of them were expecting up to 50 percent of their workforce to be retiring in the coming years."



Photo courtesy of MCC and Thermo Fisher Scientific

The program is being delivered at two local Thermo Fisher Scientific plants.

The task of MCC Corporate College is to work closely with companies across all industries.

"We work with everyone from small companies up to very large ones, trying to find those skill gaps with the incumbent workforce," Lyons said. "My job is to meet with those companies to identify the gaps and see where we can come in and fill them with customized training."

Officials at Thermo Fisher noted this close connection with MCC Corporate College administrators when coming up with training programs.

"The MCC staff did an outstanding job working closely with our engineering and human resources departments to develop a tailored program to fit our needs," said Philip McLellan, vice president of operations for Thermo Fisher's laboratory consumables business.

The program aligns well with the company's values and its process improvement system, he added.

The MCC Corporate College took a leap forward in the last year, designing more than 90 course offerings to address training and workforce needs in the region, Oldham said.

College officials see great potential in the effort. They cite findings from Taleo Corp., a talent management company, stating a \$2 million investment in raising employee engagement can bring a company a return of 3,650 percent.

The MCC Corporate College efforts are expanding beyond training alone, Lyons noted. MCC is already providing services to three companies to deliver contract credit courses, bringing full-time faculty to teach courses on subjects such as accounting and public speaking.

At Thermo Fisher, the program has been so successful officials are thinking of expanding it.

"We're looking at this as something that would continue in two-year increments," said Jeremy Sharkey, plant manager at Thermo Fisher. "And based on the success of the initial stages, we're exploring expanding a similar process for our tool room, and have visited the MCC technical center in thinking about that expansion."

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