

Economic Empowerment

PRESS RELEASE

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WATERBURY AREA STUDENTS, REGION'S MANUFACTURERS TALK EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC OUTLOOK WITH TREASURER WOODEN

As 1/3rd of CT's Manufacturing Workforce Approaches Retirement, Waterbury's Chamber Looks to Attract the Next Generation of Workers through Student Engagement and Regional Collaboration

HARTFORD, CT — Today, Connecticut State Treasurer Shawn T. Wooden joined more than 300 high school and middle school students from the Waterbury area at an interactive career and education exhibition organized by the Waterbury Regional Chamber of Commerce. Hosted at Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC), students were given an opportunity to learn about careers in advanced manufacturing from companies located throughout the Greater Waterbury region, observe technology demonstrations, and hear about training and certificate programs offered through the college and educational partners.

“The foundation for economic empowerment and advancement is built through quality education, workforce training, and gainful employment in high-demand jobs,” said **State Treasurer Shawn Wooden**. “The more young people we can set on career paths in high-opportunity sectors, like advanced manufacturing, the deeper our talent pool will be to move Connecticut’s economy in the right direction.”

As part of the Treasurer’s statewide Economic Empowerment listening tour, which launched last month, Wooden toured NVCC’s state-of-the-art Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center with program director Joseph DeFeo. Their discussion included ways to expand learning opportunities in partnership with Western Connecticut State University (West Conn) and the benefits of College Connections, a program that gives high school juniors and seniors an opportunity to earn credit in manufacturing coursework on campus.

In addition to opportunities, Wooden was told about challenges, including the need to change generally held misconceptions about manufacturing as “dirty factory work,” instead of the highly-technical, high-demand advanced technology the sector is today. The urgency to appeal to a new generation is underscored by the pressing need to fill vacancies now and in the future as Connecticut’s manufacturing workforce continues to age.

A recent state [economic report](#) indicated that more than 35% of state’s manufacturing workforce is over the age of 54 and that manufacturing will be among the hardest hit sectors by Connecticut’s aging

workforce. With these impending labor shortfalls in mind, the report underscores the importance of having an adequate pipeline “to help train incoming workers to replace those who will eventually retire.”

This year, the STEM/Advanced Manufacturing and Technology Expo—in its ninth year—welcomed a total of more than 530 middle and high schools students from across the Brass City and beyond, a dozen manufacturers from the region and 20 vendors. The Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology created an interactive activity for the students, while tours of the Advanced Manufacturing Center were provided by Naugatuck Valley Community College manufacturing program participants.

About the State Treasurer’s Economic Empowerment Listening Tour

The purpose of the statewide Economic Empowerment listening tour is to tap into the knowledge, insights and feedback of different industry and community voices on ways to strengthen our economy and the financial wellbeing of families in Connecticut. The tour is covering a variety of financial issues, including: workforce development & job creation, K-12 financial literacy education, personal finance, retirement security, college financing, homeownership, business start-ups & entrepreneurship, community banking, credit counseling & tax assistance, among other economic issues. Feedback from the listening tour will inform the work and priorities of the Office of the Treasurer.

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