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Rhodes State to Offer New Co-Op Opportunities

LIMA, Ohio – Rhodes State College students will be able to have new co-op opportunities as a result of a \$261,000 grant awarded to a collaborative between Rhodes State College (Lima, OH), two other colleges and Honda of America (Anna, OH).

The money is part of an \$11 million state initiative to create co-ops and internships to prepare Ohio's future workforce in areas such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace/aviation, information technology and biohealth. The awards were made to higher education and business partners and are part of Gov. John Kasich's workforce development strategies.

Seven local companies have committed to hiring Rhodes State's co-op students. Richard Woodfield, Jr., Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rhodes State, said about 30 students will be able to participate.

The grant, in part, will help match company payroll allocated to this effort. "This grant is seed money and it is our intent that we establish more company partners and grow our co-op offerings," Woodfield said. "The majority of the money will be going to students over two years as pay for their work within the credit bearing co-op experiences."

The other colleges in the collaborative are Clark State Community College (Springfield, OH) and Marion Technical College (Marion, OH). Honda convened the regional colleges to create the Ohio Manufacturing Education Collaborative.

Statistics show about 25 percent of West Central Ohio's workforce is employed by manufacturers and processors. Despite a growing need, manufacturers are finding it difficult to fill vacant positions because of a shortage of skilled workers.

Dr. Debra McCurdy, president of Rhodes State, said the effort is significant because it opens the door for the College to start to offer co-ops and internships as an expanded part of the curriculum. “The backbone of this institution has been technical. One aspect of the institution that had not fully materialized was a practical experience for students that directly related to their program of study,” she said. This strategic direction exposes students to real- life job experiences and “pushes the whole notion of internships as the practical side of career development.”

The state money comes from casino license fees. While the recipients of the grants have been announced, the grants are contingent upon approval by the State of Ohio Controlling Board in January.

The Ohio participating companies are:

- Ashland – Allen County
- American Trim – Allen County
- Honda of America – Logan County
- Thieman Stamping – Auglaize County
- Minster Machine – Auglaize County
- Poet – Putnam County
- KMC Holdings Inc. – Van Wert County

Rhodes State College is the largest two-year college in West Central Ohio and has been improving the lives of the region’s people, organizations and communities through education and training since 1971. For more information, go to www.RhodesState.edu

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