



# News Release

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## **WESTERN OFFERS NEW FOUR-YEAR DEGREE IN MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY**

**St. Joseph, Mo.** —Aug. 11, 2006—Every day, headlines describe the loss of manufacturing jobs to foreign countries. A new four-year degree in manufacturing engineering technology at Missouri Western State University responds to this need for more highly trained manufacturing workers. The new degree is the only one of its kind in the region.

“Today’s manufacturing environment requires more brains than brawn at all levels of the manufacturing process,” said Paul Scianna, executive director of the Alliance for Innovation in Manufacturing: Kansas City. “And Western’s (four-year manufacturing engineering) program will help fill the gap.”

Dr. Virendra Varma, chair of the engineering technology department, believes the degree is a step in the right direction to help staunch the flow of U.S. manufacturing jobs to foreign countries and to alleviate the shortage of technically trained manufacturing workers. Western has offered an associate’s degree in manufacturing engineering technology since 1998.

“The United States is losing jobs to foreign countries,” Dr. Varma said. “It’s time we developed a strong academic high-technology degree to insure that the United States is still at the top.”

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Ellen Jordan, quality assurance/project manager at Midland Steel Co., agrees. She said the company sometimes subcontracts this type of work overseas because of a shortage of technically trained workers. “Technology programs are great. The more Western graduates in those programs, the better it is for the local manufacturing community. We’re in continual need for engineering technology graduates.” Jordan noted that at least five Midland Steel employees, herself included, are graduates of Western’s engineering technology programs.

Scianna said Western’s additional program is good news for the manufacturing industry in the region. A recent skills gap analysis conducted by his organization showed that there are not enough post-secondary programs in the area to meet the demand for skilled workers in the coming years. The National Association of Manufacturers estimates that in 15 years, if trends continue, the nation could face a shortage of between 13 million and 15 million technically skilled workers.

Western’s program includes courses in physical and engineering sciences, applied mathematics, and training in programmable logic controllers and 3-D solids-modeling. Students must complete an internship at a manufacturing facility.

Graduates would be qualified to work in operations and production, engineering, or supervision for manufacturing facilities, Dr. Varma said. “They’ll have a good technical and educational background, and they can quickly take an active part in devising process improvements.”

Tyler Mejia graduated from Western’s two-year manufacturing engineering program this summer, and is working full time at Gray Automotive Products Co. in St. Joseph. He was pleased to hear that Western is offering a four-year program, and hopes to enroll in the near future. “I thought the (two-year) program was very good,” said Mejia. “Everything I do here (at Gray) reflects on what I learned.” Most useful, he said, were the computer and the computer aided drafting courses.

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*Missouri Western State University is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The university offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.*

