

Schools need to do more to prepare students for manufacturing jobs

JULY 02, 2014

IN THE article [“Mass. firms not hitting right spots for workers”](#) (Business, June 25), you outline a study from UMass Dartmouth that states that at least 70 percent of manufacturers in the Commonwealth do not reach out to vocational schools or community colleges to find new workers. As the president and CEO of Operon Resource Management, a provider of specialized job-training solutions for manufacturers of health care products, I’ve seen an exponential growth in the need for qualified workers in advanced manufacturing. But I disagree with the conclusions of this survey.

Manufacturers are guilty of not reaching out to vocational schools and local community colleges, but typically that is because these institutions still struggle with how to produce qualified workers for the advanced manufacturing field.

The story cites two grants dedicated to advanced manufacturing that were allocated to local schools this year. That is a great start, but we need the workers now. Although vocational schools and community colleges have made strides over the last couple of years, they need to better align their programs with the surrounding business community to address this issue as quickly as possible.

Manufacturers face a range of challenges. We don’t want them looking for alternative places to move. We need to make it easier for them to stay here.

Steve Sawin

Lowell