



Louisiana Tech University

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Tech partners with LDCC on pathways grant

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Louisiana Tech University and Louisiana Delta Community College – Ruston Campus (LDCC) received a \$598,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to increase engineering technology career pathways for high school and community college students.



The grant, written by Louisiana Tech lecturer Michael Swanbom and LDCC's Doug Postel, will help high school students prepare for both two-year and four-year programs in instrumentation technology through a project-based approach similar to Tech's Living with the Lab first-year engineering curriculum.

Project COMPLETE (Controlling, Operating, and Measuring: Pathways for Learners to Engineering Technology Employment) will develop a high-school level instrumentation technology course in a rural, ethnically diverse, manufacturing-focused region. The course will create pathways for students to enter either a two-year or four-year instrumentation undergraduate program upon their high school graduation.

“Through dissemination workshops, we will reach a total of 500 high school students, 13 teachers, and 13 guidance counselors, building awareness of career options as technicians in high-technology fields,” Swanbom said. “We will work together with industry partners to align all activities with their needs and will continue to support undergraduate students with engagement activities, thus increasing movement through the workforce pipeline ultimately to earning a certificate or degree and joining the high-technology workforce.”

In addition, articulation agreements are planned that will ensure LDCC students can transfer all credits from their two-year degree toward a four-year program at Louisiana Tech.

“Project COMPLETE will impact the region and the engineering technology industry through strengthened partnerships among academia, high school, and industry,” Swanbom said. “Through recruitment and retention programs set in a diverse geographic region, more women and underrepresented minorities will have the opportunity and support to join the STEM workforce. Their education will be improved by aligning it more closely with workforce needs in the area, and therefore increasing their interest in and capability to perform high technology, high-wage jobs.”

The program is designed to respond to specific business and economic development needs resulting from an aging workforce and the continuing shortage in skilled workers in high growth STEM industries.

“This grant award is the result of a strong collaboration between Louisiana Tech and Louisiana Delta Community College and will enable both institutions to continue to develop talent to advance the region's advanced manufacturing workforce,” Postel said. “We look forward to working with our partners at Tech and high schools throughout north Louisiana as we prepare students for valuable careers in advanced manufacturing engineering.”