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# LINCOLN ELECTRIC'S LEEPS PROGRAM AIMS TO TRAIN INSTRUCTORS TO TRAIN STUDENTS

College of Canyons is a two-campus community college located in the Santa Clarita Valley of California, about 30 miles north of Los Angeles. It sits in a region home to aerospace manufacturing facilities and more industry is expected to arrive within the next three to five years. The demand for skilled welders (and other skilled workers) is strong and will only grow stronger in the coming years.

This demand is prompting College of Canyons to create an advanced manufacturing initiative that will provide workforce development training opportunities, says Tim Baber, Department Chair, Welding Technology Program. Welding is a primary component of the initiative.

Here, College of Canyons benefits from a first-of-its-kind partnership with Lincoln Electric. The company, a leader in welding education, has created the Lincoln Electric Education Partner Schools (LEEPS) Program. LEEPS is designed to train and qualify welding instructors at increasingly advanced levels for the benefit of instructors, their students and their schools. School administrators and local employers benefit from knowing that the instructors have attended and passed Lincoln Electric process and instructor classes, providing them with a third party welding instruction qualification.

The goal is to assure that instructors at every level are equipped to produce prospective welding employees for industry well-versed in both the craft and science of welding. Not only must students know the techniques of welding, but they also must be able to apply their knowledge in the real world as they advance in their welding careers.

In the LEEPS program, schools that meet Track 3 requirements may apply to become a Lincoln Electric Authorized Training Facility, authorizing them to run Lincoln Electric Training Programs. College of Canyons is the first institution to be considered as a LEEPS-partnered school.

LEEPS equips instructors with the same knowledge base taught at the Lincoln Electric Welding Technology and Training Center in Cleveland. "LEEPS is designed to make instructors better at what they do," says Chris Gandee, Manager of Educational Services for Lincoln Electric.

LEEPS is a multi-track program. Track 1 is geared toward schools that have welding programs but don't necessarily teach welding as a career choice. To become LEEPS Track 1-credentialed, teachers must participate in Lincoln Electric's Beyond the Booth course, which is especially designed for new high school- and college-level welding instructors. Schools must be active on Lincoln Electric's Education Portal and use U/LINC® Level 1 curriculum.

Track 2 is for instructors, mostly in high schools, that present welding as a career choice. Track 3 is geared toward instructors in community and technical colleges, as well as high schools with four-year welding programs.

To achieve Track 2 accreditation, instructors attend a one-week Welding Educator Workshop, which focuses on advanced technologies and processes, including gas metal arc welding (GMAW), advanced, flux-cored arc welding (FCAW), gas tungsten arc welding (GTAW) and robotic welding. Other topics include the welding of aluminum and stainless steels. Subsequently, the Welding Educator Workshop transforms





into a series of one-week courses on a specific process. In that week, instructors become more knowledgeable about the process being taught and attain Track 3 accreditation.

Baber eventually wants all of his welding instructors to achieve Track 3 accreditation.

While the primary objective of LEEPS is to train instructors, schools can benefit by being certified to host Lincoln Electric welding educator conferences and train-the-trainer workshops and seminars. Schools retain all profits from

curriculum, and schools have the support of the leader in welding education.

“Our long term, respected reputation will help attract students to their institutions,” Gandee says.

Baber agrees, maintaining the association with Lincoln Electric validates College of Canyon’s Welding Technology Program. “Flying the LEEPS banner gives us more credibility with students,” he points out. “As a student, there is no reason to go anywhere else for welding education.”

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hosting these events. College of Canyons ran two Lincoln Electric basic training sessions in 2017.

Gandee stated the company’s goal is to see at least one LEEPS-partnered school in every state. The advantages to instructors and schools are obvious. Instructors are qualified to teach the AWS SENSE-aligned Lincoln Electric U/LINC

He believes College of Canyons will continue to provide a work-ready, knowledgeable welding workforce that will answer the needs of Santa Clarita Valley industry in the years ahead. “LEEPS will help us create an educated welder,” Baber notes.