



CAMILLE PREUS, PRESIDENT
BMCC PENDLETON
2411 NW CARDEN
PO BOX 100
PENDLETON, OR 97801
541.276.1260

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Casey White-Zollman, Vice President Public Relations
541-278-5839, cwhitezollman@bluecc.edu

BMCC mechatronics program holds inaugural meeting for industry stakeholders

PENDLETON, Ore. – Blue Mountain Community College’s mechatronics program held its first-ever advisory board meeting with industry stakeholders from throughout the region earlier this month to discuss how BMCC’s new program can best meet the workforce needs of industries in the area.

Each career-technical education program at BMCC, including diesel technologies, dental assisting, nursing and others, has an advisory board of industry professionals who help guide college instructors in making sure courses at BMCC are teaching students the relevant skills they need to enter the local workforce. BMCC’s mechatronics program started last fall, so this was the advisory board’s first opportunity to meet.

Industry professionals from Tillamook-Columbia River Processing, Boise Cascade, Packaging Corporation of America, Hermiston Foods, the Port of Morrow, ConAgra, Northwest Food Processors Association, Portland General Electric, Pacific Fruit Wholesale, InterMountain Education Service District and several data storage facilities came together to discuss the program and how BMCC can best meet the workforce needs of these industries.

The mechatronics program trains people to maintain, troubleshoot and repair the complex mechanical and electrical systems found in modern industrial plants. While BMCC mechatronics programs are currently taking place in classrooms at Riverside High School in Boardman, they’ll eventually be housed in BMCC’s new Workforce Training Center that will soon break ground near the SAGE Center in Boardman. Classes are expected to begin in the new facility – paid for by a bond approved by voters in May 2015 – in the winter of 2017.

Jerry McMichael, a BMCC mechatronics faculty member, facilitated the advisory board conversation, and said that stakeholders were in consensus that the program needs to address training for the existing workforce, as well as attract and train new students in the high-demand, living wage jobs of industrial maintenance. McMichael said stakeholders agreed that the mechatronics program is on the right path, but with this input from industry leaders, the program will even better serve the workforce needs.

McMichael said the advisory board created a subcommittee to meet in April to review the current mechatronics courses and their outcomes, and offer input to improve the program. While BMCC’s career-technical education program advisory boards traditionally meet every six months, the mechatronics advisory board has opted to meet again sooner in order to establish a complete program as soon as possible. That meeting is expected to occur in May or June to review the subcommittee’s work and approve a final development plan for the program.

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BMCC BAKER COUNTY
3275 BAKER STREET
BAKER CITY, OR 97814
541.523.9127

BMCC HERMISTON
980 SE COLUMBIA DRIVE
HERMISTON, OR 97838
541.567.1800

BMCC MILTON-FREEWATER
311 N COLUMBIA
MILTON-FREEWATER, OR 97862
541.938.7176

BMCC MORROW COUNTY
PO BOX 939 / 300 NE FRONT STREET
BOARDMAN, OR 97818
541.481.2099

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