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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Single CVTC Classes Help Workers Upgrade Skills

Hundreds enroll without declared programs each academic year

Eau Claire, WI – Curtiss Anderson was recently working on an electrical controller training unit in December at the Mechatronics lab in Chippewa Valley Technical College's Gateway Campus. However, Anderson is not a typical student in the Mechatronics program, which was formerly known as Industrial Mechanics. In fact, he is a member of the program's Advisory Committee, which includes professionals in the field and helps guide the program to ensure students learn the skills they need.

"I came back as a student for the electrical maintenance and PLC (programmable logic controller) refresher, but I am learning a lot too," said Anderson, 45, a technical operations manager at Premium Waters in Chippewa Falls.

Anderson was only enrolled in one class during fall semester and was not in any degree program. Such students, known as undeclared or non-contract students, are not unusual at CVTC, particularly in the manufacturing cluster. People need to keep up to date on their skills in highly technical fields.

During the current 2020-21 academic year, 679 undeclared students have enrolled in CVTC classes, including those who have already enrolled in classes for the upcoming spring semester, according to Registrar Jessica Schwartz. The COVID-19 outbreak can explain a reduction from 733 such students in the previous academic year.

Their reasons for enrolling in CVTC classes without working toward a degree vary. Sometimes it may be simple personal interest, like a person taking a class in the Motorcycle, Marine & Outdoor Power Sports program to learn to take care of their own equipment at home or enrolling in a horticulture class to become a better gardener. Other times, it's professionally related, as in the case of Anderson.

Anderson says over the past five or six years he has sent eight employees to CVTC to update their skills. "I had all of these guys going through school, and as a manager, I wasn't on the floor so much. I started to fall behind," he said. "I had to come back and get up to their level."

Anderson was already familiar with CVTC's programs. After his 1994 Eau Claire North High School graduation, he spent over six years in the Marine Corps, mostly in reserves. He took some basic electronics and hydraulics classes at CVTC and worked as a maintenance technician at Phillips Plastics for five years before a layoff due to downsizing. He then spent two years completing the Marketing program at CVTC.

However, Anderson went back to maintenance work, at TTM in Chippewa Falls, then Premium Waters. He left to work for a German company that made equipment Premium Waters uses and traveled around the country.

“Premium Waters finally made an effort to get me back,” he said. Now he’s a technical operations manager for a couple of company plants. “Between both buildings, with different levels of technicians, we would find out the good skills and the low skills and figured out what we needed to do to get better.”

And that’s where CVTC comes in, helping the under skilled workers build their skills, all the way up to managers like Anderson improving their skills. Anderson noted that in addition to having workers take classes, they make use of CVTC’s Workforce Solutions and Continuing Education team for in-house training.

“I am a firm believer in furthering your education,” Anderson said. “You are never too old or too young to go to school.”

With over 115 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today’s jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$47,452.

Cutline:

Curtiss Anderson, a technical operations manager at Premium Waters in Chippewa Falls, works on an electrical controller training unit in the Mechatronics lab at CVTC in December.

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