

New Kensington Digital Foundry named Smart Manufacturing Innovation Center

Location becomes one of seven SMICs through Dept. of Energy

NEW KENSINGTON, PA, UNITED STATES, March 22, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Penn State New Kensington's Digital Foundry at New Kensington has been named one of four new Smart Manufacturing Innovation Centers (SMICs) by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in partnership with the CESMII – The Smart Manufacturing Institute. The additions bring the number of SMICs to seven. SMIC's are standalone, innovative, value-driven centers that further CESMII's mission in a hands-on and learning-centric way.



“Smart Manufacturing makes the American manufacturing sector more productive, energy efficient and competitive on a global scale,” said Kelly Speakes-Backman, assistant secretary for energy efficiency and renewable energy, in the Aug. 2021 announcement. “DOE’s investments in Smart Manufacturing will accelerate the adoption of these technologies and processes, while developing a highly skilled manufacturing workforce for the future.”

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The New Kensington campus' Digital Foundry at New Kensington, is slated to open spring 2022. The mission of the Digital Foundry is to drive learning and problem solving through the application of technologies by focusing on

education and workforce training; improving manufacturing competitiveness through technology demonstration and assessment projects; and providing networking events to increase digital awareness for workers, businesses, academia, students and the community.

“The CESMII team, much like the Digital Foundry team, is coming at their mission around smart manufacturing from the perspective of team members who have lived through the challenges and benefits of implementing these technologies in real-world manufacturing environments,” explained Sherri McCleary, executive director of the Digital Foundry at New Kensington. “We share a common mission to leverage smart manufacturing to bring business value to manufactures of all sizes, and we also speak a common language around the technology and value and believe this will be a very positive relationship focused on results.”

According to the announcement, the network of SMICs, including the Digital Foundry at New Kensington, will “allow manufacturers of varying sizes to tap into CESMII’s vast Smart Manufacturing (SM) resources and cultivate the manufacturing workforce of the future.” The focus on workforce development is one that mirrors the goals of the Foundry.

“As a SMIC, the Digital Foundry will house access to the CESMII Smart Manufacturing Innovation Platform (SMIP),” said McCleary. “The SMIP will be a CESMII cornerstone for bringing smart manufacturing solutions, learnings and apps that are accessible, affordable and allow manufacturers to implement smart manufacturing by learning from the use cases, technologies and tools already developed across CESMII’s national network of members and other SMICs.”

The SMIC endorsement is the latest in CESMII-related partnerships between the organization and Penn State New Kensington. In 2018, the campus was one of just 10 projects funded in relation to smart manufacturing initiatives in the United States. The New Kensington-led project, called the Factory 4.0 toolkit, is managed by Joseph Cuiffi, assistant teaching professor and program coordinator of electro mechanical engineering technology. This toolkit was used in CESMII’s first endorsed workforce certificate training, “Digital Manufacturing Professional,” held by the New Kensington campus and Digital Foundry in 2021.

“The Digital Foundry SMIC is an exciting, yet practical blend of innovative new approaches, purpose built to enable small and mid-sized manufacturers (SMMs) to leverage Smart Manufacturing,” said Howard Goldberg, chief operating officer at CESMII. “This SMIC brings together a well-appointed facility, domain experts, contemporary SM technologies aimed at reducing cost and complexity, and the training that brings them all together! The Digital Foundry SMIC’s focus on SMMs is strategically important to CESMII, given that SMMs represent over 99% of the manufacturing base in the nation.”

“We will continue to build on these trainings and opportunities to enhance and add to the offering endorsed by CESMII to prepare the manufacturing workforce at all levels for digital smart manufacturing transformation,” added McCleary.

The Digital Foundry at New Kensington was established on the foundation of a \$5.5 million award from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, which has helped with facility building costs, as well as investment in programming initiatives, including those related to the SMIC designation. The lab is a collaborative effort between the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland and

the New Kensington campus, with support and advisement from the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation (WCIDC) and a priority project identified in the Westmoreland County Comprehensive Plan – Reimagining Our Westmoreland. It is currently being built along the city's Corridor of Innovation, a five block stretch of Fifth Ave. between the campus' innovation hub, The Corner, and Westmoreland County Community College-New Kensington. In addition to the foundation's support, Penn State has also provided a \$1 million matching gift, which will help create an endowment for ongoing operating support of the facility, through the Economic Development Matching Program, an initiative of its current campaign, "A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence."

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