



Writing America's Employment Future



Writing America's Future... education for careers that advance the economy

The nation's first publicly funded "continuation school"/ technical college celebrates 100 years.

Whether one hundred years ago or today, technical colleges provide cutting-edge education that helps revitalize America's economy.

This year, Gateway Technical College and the state of Wisconsin are recognizing the creation of the first publicly funded technical college in America, the beginning of an educational foundation that has impacted generations of Americans.

From a single building in Racine, Wis., 100 years ago, technical education as we know it today has grown to be one of the most powerful forces in building our economy and a trained workforce – something needed again as our economy strives to gain speed. Wisconsin's Legislature led the way in creating technical education schools in 1911, but it spread quickly to the rest of the United States. Technical education continues to write the future of our country's employers and the careers of its workers.

Today's economy depends on technical education. The Georgetown Center "Pathways to Prosperity Report" projects that 14 million job openings over the next seven years will go to people with an associate degree or occupational certificate. And national leaders have increasingly pointed to preparing Americans through technical education to enter the workforce as a critical link to our nation's success as we compete in a 21st Century global economy.

Providing education to those who learn best through hands-on training, this education has trained Americans for careers requiring a high degree of skill. In the past, careers were cutting-edge for their time, such as patternmaking, compugraphy, avionics repair and computers at their infancy. Today, technical colleges train students to work in the wind, solar, and geothermal industries as well as emerging environmental and information technology careers.

Technical education, during its 100 years, has met the economic needs of our country. For instance, during World War II, technical colleges ran 24 hours a day to train workers with the skills needed for the day – and then provided training for soldiers coming home so they could enter a career, begin a family, and take hold of the American dream.

It's no different today – technical education has allowed many to enter a career benefiting individuals, their family and their community.

Every day, we are positively impacted by someone with technical education – firemen and police officers protect us, nurses help heal us, information technology experts make sure the computers we use at our workplace operate, engineering technicians ensure safe equipment maintenance and operation, and solar and wind technicians work on the energy generators of today and the future.

