



# The Center to Advance Manufacturing Monthly News

March 2025

This month, the Center had the privilege of hosting a deep-dive discussion on Intelligent Automation, bringing together regional manufacturing leaders, faculty from Bowling Green State University's College of Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering, and our team for a forward-thinking roundtable. Our discussion centered on Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence, automation, and machine learning, exploring how these technologies are reshaping the manufacturing landscape.

A key takeaway? The future is here. AI and automation are no longer distant possibilities — they are actively transforming efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing decision-making on the factory floor. However, innovation isn't just about adopting the latest technologies; it's also about preparing our workforce for an evolving role in an AI-driven environment. As automation becomes the norm, upskilling and reskilling are crucial to keeping talent engaged and ensuring businesses remain competitive.



BGSU College of Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering Dean, Wael Mokhtar kicked off the roundtable discussion.

Insights from this discussion align with broader industry trends, such as those highlighted in a recent Forbes article on essential truths for succeeding in manufacturing today. A few key lessons stand out:

- Automation is inevitable — those who embrace it will thrive, while those who resist risk falling behind.
- Data is becoming a critical tool for efficiency — factories that leverage connected sensors and analytics can gain valuable insights and improve operations.
- Smart factories move faster — while manual intervention remains important, it can sometimes slow processes and add costs that intelligent automation helps to mitigate.
- Tech skills complement trade skills — factory jobs are not disappearing; they are evolving. Workers who integrate robotics and AI into their expertise will be well-positioned for the future. Furthermore, maintenance and repair remain among the most in-demand roles in manufacturing.
- Collaboration drives progress — leveraging partnerships, specifically with higher education, is essential for developing talent pipelines, advancing research, and strengthening training initiatives. These partnerships ensure manufacturers have access to a skilled workforce and cutting-edge innovations that keep the industry moving forward.



BGSU School of Engineering Associate Professor, Mohammed Abouheaf (standing) shared valuable insights from his research on Intelligent Automation with the group.

As manufacturing continues to evolve, staying informed and adaptable is more critical than ever. The Center is committed to helping businesses navigate these changes through ongoing discussions, access to training, innovation initiatives, and much more.

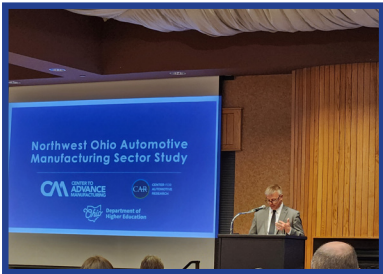
We look forward to continuing to be a resource and partner in helping manufacturers thrive in this new era. Please feel free to reach out at any time to discuss how the Center can support your business.

- The Center to Advance Manufacturing Team



## Regional Growth Partnership Annual Meeting

Center staff recently attended the Regional Growth Partnership Annual Meeting, where leaders gathered to reflect on Northwest Ohio's 2024 economic impact and discuss the road ahead. The event featured insights on the region's economic growth from RGP President & CEO Dean Monske, the arrival of global sustainable dairy packaging leader Intraplás to Northwest Ohio, and a message from JobsOhio President & CEO J.P. Nauseef on Ohio's economic leadership. The RGP's Gary Thompson also highlighted key takeaways from the Center's recent automotive industry study, conducted in partnership with the Center for Automotive Research (CAR). This event provided a great opportunity to connect with economic development leaders and see the continued momentum driving manufacturing and innovation in our region.



RGP Executive Vice President Gary Thompson shared insights from our Northwest Ohio Automotive Manufacturing study to an audience of over 500 attendees from the region.

Center Marketing Projects Manager Kassie Cooper, CAR Interim CEO David Leckey, and Center Workforce Training Coordinator Jeri Steinbrook posed for a photo after the meeting.



## Hardin County Chamber and Business Alliance Quarterly Meeting

In mid-March, the Hardin County Chamber & Business Alliance held a membership meeting in Kenton, bringing together local business and community leaders.

Center Workforce Training Coordinator, Jeri Steinbrook (pictured below), was a featured presenter, sharing information about the Center's services and the Ohio TechCred program with attendees.



We look forward to strengthening our collaborations with Hardin County manufacturers through connecting them with the many assets of higher education to support their workforce and operational needs.

## Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce Focus on Business

Center staff attended the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce Focus on Business Member Lunch, where Dr. Dione Somerville, President of Owens Community College, shared insights on the college's regional impact.

President Somerville highlighted Owens' recent successes and the growing workforce needs in manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, accommodations, construction, and wholesale trade over the next five years.

She emphasized how Owens plays a vital role in addressing these demands by equipping students with the skills needed to succeed in today's economy.

President Somerville addressed a room filled with business and community leaders at the TRCC Lunch.



## Center for Regional Development State of the Region

The Center for Regional Development (CRD) hosted its State of the Region event at Bowling Green State University, highlighting key economic trends shaping Northwest Ohio.

CRD Director Nichole Fifer shared insightful data, emphasizing that manufacturing remains a regional powerhouse, with continued growth in jobs, GRP, GDP, labor participation, and employment concentration.

The event also featured a strong lineup of speakers covering workforce innovation, advanced manufacturing, and artificial intelligence. It was great to hear from the Northwest Ohio Innovation Consortium on their ongoing progress.

We look forward to future collaborations with CRD as they continue driving regional growth and addressing workforce, manufacturing, and technology challenges.

Center for Regional Development Director, Nichole Fifer addressing the crowd at the State of the Region event.





## Honda Strengthens Workforce Partnerships with Visits to Bowling Green State University and Owens Community College

The Center recently coordinated visits from Honda to BGSU and OCC. These visits underscored Honda's commitment to fostering education-industry collaboration and provided students with valuable insights into career opportunities within the automotive sector.

The automotive industry plays a crucial role in Ohio's economy, and Honda's North American manufacturing operations are a significant contributor, employing over 15,000 associates across the state. During Honda's visit to the BGSU College of Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering, discussions centered on opportunities for collaboration.

The visit included a tour of BGSU's upcoming Engineering and Innovation building, set to open in 2026, which will enhance hands-on learning and research capabilities. Honda's Workforce Partnerships Lead, Nathan Titus, learned about BGSU's capstone projects, co-ops, and internships and how they can meet Honda's evolving workforce needs. With BGSU providing a robust pipeline of students trained in robotics, electronics, mechanical, and manufacturing engineering, working together would promise mutual benefits.

At Owens Community College, Mr. Titus toured the campus' advanced labs and facilities alongside Assistant Dean of STEM, Baqer Aljabr, Center staff, and other faculty members. A key highlight of the visit was Nathan's presentation during the STEM Employee Series, where he addressed a packed room of students eager to learn about careers in the automotive industry. He shared his career journey at Honda, provided insights into the vehicle production process, and outlined steps for students to pursue job and co-op opportunities with the company.

Honda's ongoing \$2.7 billion investment in Ohio manufacturing facilities reflects its commitment to innovation and electrification through its new EV hub. With diverse career pathways available for engineers, technicians, and skilled trades, Honda continues to offer dynamic opportunities for those aspiring to build a future in manufacturing.

We look forward to further strengthening these collaborations and helping shape the automotive manufacturing industry Northwest Ohio.



*BGSU School of Engineering Director MD Sarder shared information about the equipment used during the BGSU lab tour.*



*Honda Workforce Partnerships Lead Nathan Titus shared insights into his career journey at Honda during the OCC STEM Employee Series.*

## University of Findlay Supply Chain Students Gain Real-World Insights at ROKI America

Dr. Ekpen Owie, Assistant Professor of Supply Chain Management at the University of Findlay, collaborated with the Center to coordinate industry site visits for his supply chain class.

The first visit in the series took place this month at ROKI America in Findlay, where students got a behind-the-scenes look at the company's operations. Matt Jank, VP of Operations, led the tour, providing an overview of ROKI, demonstrating how the production lines work, and answering student questions.

These hands-on experiences give students valuable insights into supply chain operations, helping them better understand the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the industry.



*Pictured: UF supply chain students with Dr. Ekpen Owie and Matt Jank, VP of Operations during the facility tour.*





## LUNCH & LEARN WEBINAR NORTHWEST OHIO AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY STUDY

Monday, March 31

12:00 PM

Join us for the rollout of our Northwest Ohio Automotive Industry Study. Conducted in partnership with the Center for Automotive Research, this study offers valuable insights into the trends, challenges, needs, and opportunities shaping the region's automotive industry.

This one-hour virtual session, led by the Center's Program Manager, Ford Weber, will take a comprehensive look at our study's results, including Northwest Ohio's automotive manufacturing landscape, industry and economic development challenges, workforce and talent needs.

Register today [here](#)!

Rising energy and capacity prices are putting pressure on businesses — how did we get here, and what can you do?

Join us for an insightful session with Omar White from Constellation Energy and Huck Hayes from Alternative Energy Source as they break down the PJM system, explore capacity market trends, and share key strategies to effectively manage your energy costs.

You'll learn why energy and capacity prices are increasing, how your Peak Load Contribution (PLC) impacts costs, proven strategies for reducing demand & improving efficiency, and the role of demand response and peak management program.

Register today [here](#)!

## LUNCH & LEARN WEBINAR

### POWERING PROFITABILITY: STRATEGIES TO CONTROL ENERGY COSTS IN MANUFACTURING



**Omar White**  
Senior Business  
Development Manager  
Constellation Energy



**Huck Hayes**  
President  
Alternative  
Energy Source

Tuesday, April 22  
12:00 PM

## Partner Events

At the Center, we highly value our partnerships with organizations that support the growth and innovation of the industries we serve. As part of our commitment to keeping you informed, we're excited to share upcoming events from our partners that provide valuable insights and opportunities for professionals in manufacturing, economic development, and higher education.

### Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 10, 11 AM - 1 PM  
Hilton Garden Inn, Perrysburg  
Find event details [here](#)

### Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments Transportation Summit

Thursday, April 24, 8:30 AM - 2 PM  
The Premier, Toledo  
Find event details [here](#)

### Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 29, 3 PM - 6 PM  
Glass City Center Ballroom, Toledo  
Find event details [here](#)

## Contact Us



Ford Weber  
Program Manager of  
Econ. Dev. Partnerships  
fweber@bgsu.edu



Kassie Cooper  
Marketing Projects  
Manager  
kassiec@bgsu.edu



Jeri Steinbrook  
Workforce Training  
Coordinator  
jeris@bgsu.edu



Danielle Sidebottom  
Assistant to the  
Executive Director  
dsidebo@bgsu.edu