



2025 IRWECA

SUMMER INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

PROGRAM EVALUATION

A workforce development and professional learning opportunity specially designed for CTE educators in Connecticut

June 24 - July 3, 2025

Hosted by the Southern Connecticut State University Innovation Hub

About

The IRWECA Summer Industry Experience offered 20 Connecticut CTE teachers and educators across the spectrum a unique opportunity to engage directly with leading companies in the fields of marketing and the application of AI, manufacturing, and life sciences. Through site visits, guided tours, and panel discussions participants observed real-world applications of many of the concepts they teach, gaining valuable perspective and insights into how students will apply the knowledge and skills they impart in their future careers.

Through bringing together CTE, STEM, Business, other general educators, staff, and administrators from across the state and our industry partners and facilitating meaningful experiences, IRWECA fosters the development of instructional modules aligned with current industry needs. Together, we are broadening educator understanding of the diverse skill sets required by companies across CT. During each visit, educators explored workplace environments, learned about the qualifications and preparation necessary for various roles at various levels, and reflected on how these experiences could inform career readiness curricula in their classrooms.

Daily debrief sessions, including facilitated discussions and networking lunches with industry professionals, allowed participants to synthesize their observations, share perspectives, and identify actionable strategies to enhance their teaching and learning – translating industry exposure into meaningful classroom practices.

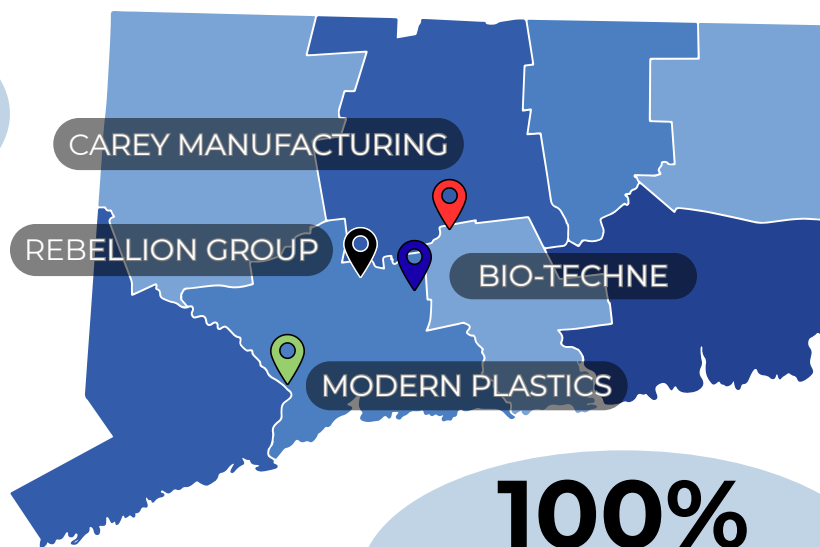
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20
Educators



4
Companies

100%
attendees would
recommend to a
colleague

Site Visits Week 1

The Rebellion Group

June 24th

A single source for brand and business solutions, Rebellion Group is an assembly of specialized service offerings that together create speed, efficiency, and growth through the defiance of expectations and assumed limitations. Rebellion is known for their unconventional, data-driven marketing strategies.

Format: guided tour + speaker panel + guided small group discussion

Takeaways:

- There's no single right way—just back up your work with data.
- Be fully present; give your best effort.
- Prioritize creativity, critical thinking, and executive function.
- Students should prepare for generational differences in a workplace.
- How important it is to connect ideas, communicate, and take risks.



Modern Plastics

June 25th

Modern Plastics, a recognized leader in the medical plastics markets in North America and Internationally, is a premier plastics distributor of high-performance stock shapes and medical grade plastics.

The company fabricates plastics and offers complete plastics machining services. Markets include medical, manufacturing, aerospace, industrial, defense, food & beverage, electronics and semi-conductor.

Format: guided tour + speaker session

Takeaways:

- Balance between passion and productivity must be cultivated in our students in order for them to become well-rounded individuals.
- It's important to stay updated on both current job market demands and the evolving skills needed for long-term success.

Site Visits Week 2

Bio-Techne

July 2nd

Bio-Techne headquartered in Minneapolis, employs over 3,000 people globally at 34 locations worldwide. As a global developer, manufacturer and supplier of high-quality reagents, analytical instruments and precision diagnostics, Bio-Techne has an extensive catalog of over 500,000 products.

Bio-Techne includes the following brands: ACD, Asuragen, ExosomeDx, Lunaphore, Novus Biologicals, ProteinSimple, R&D Systems and Tocris Bioscience.

Format: guided tour + presentation + speaker panel

Takeaways:

- Showcase the importance of curiosity, collaboration, and cross-disciplinary learning.
- Introduce real-world tools and concepts (e.g., lasers, microfluidics, fluorescence).
- Reinforce innovation, failure, and teachability as hiring priorities.
- Spark interest through internships and establish outreach for students.



Carey Manufacturing

July 3rd

Carey is a family-owned, small volume, manufacturing company founded in 1981 with an extensive catalog of handles, line catches, clasps, and other specialized hardware for the aerospace, military, computer, electronics, telecom, automotive, manufacturing, and medical sectors.

Format: guided tour + speaker

Takeaways:

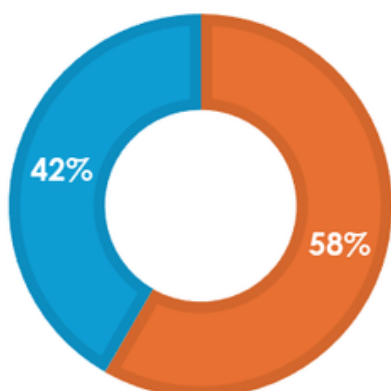
- Underscored problem-solving, timeliness, and mechanical aptitude are essential.
- Stressed the need for Excel proficiency and certification (not Google Sheets).
- Expresses that personality and fit were considered more vital than prior skillsets.
- Highlighted the role of on-the-job training and growth opportunities.
- Concluded that manufacturing was shown to be relational, not just technical or automated.

Evaluation & Feedback

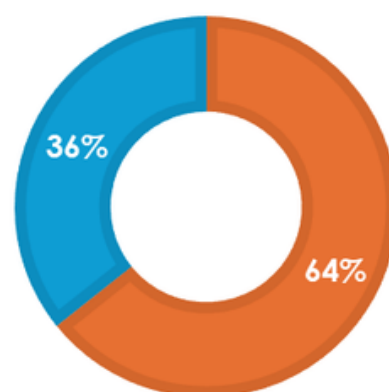
The overall feedback among the 20 participating educators showed the visits to be valuable (Graph 1.1-1.4). The data suggests valuable insight was gained throughout the program across site visits. At the conclusion, 12 requested additional, individualized sessions for the second phase of the summer program.

Graph 1. I gained valuable insight that will impact my teaching and learning and/or teaching and learning at my school at...

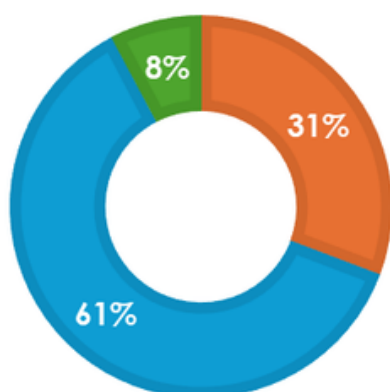
1.1 Rebellion Group



1.2 Modern Plastics



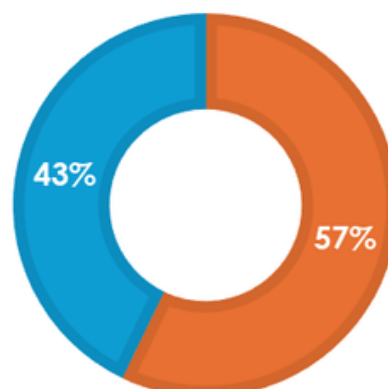
1.3 Bio-Techne



Key

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree

1.4 Carey Manufacturing



"I now [feel] more confident integrating authentic scenarios, data analysis, and problem-solving **tasks that reflect current industry practices...** The opportunity to network with fellow educators and industry experts sparked **new ideas for interdisciplinary projects** that can enhance student learning, math courses and **career readiness.**"

Evaluation & Feedback Contd.

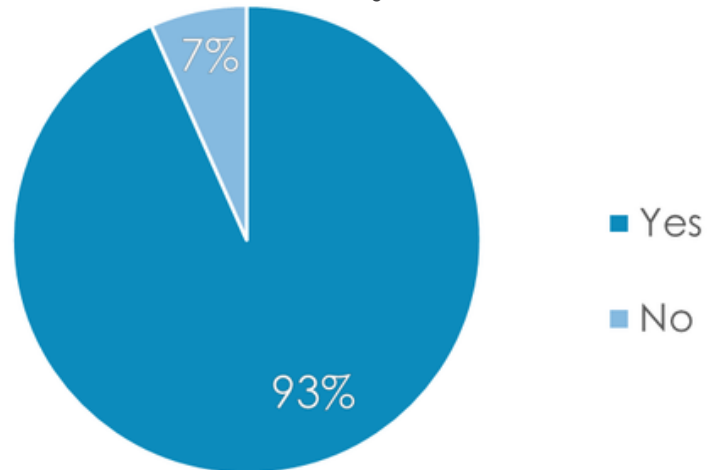
Analysis of the post-program feedback survey reveals that the majority of participants considered the experience beneficial for their students (Graph 2). Qualitative feedback was coded for the keywords and themes (Graph 3), suggesting consistent, positive takeaways to impact classroom curricula.

“Seeing the environments firsthand and hearing directly from employees helped me gather concrete examples I can share with students.”

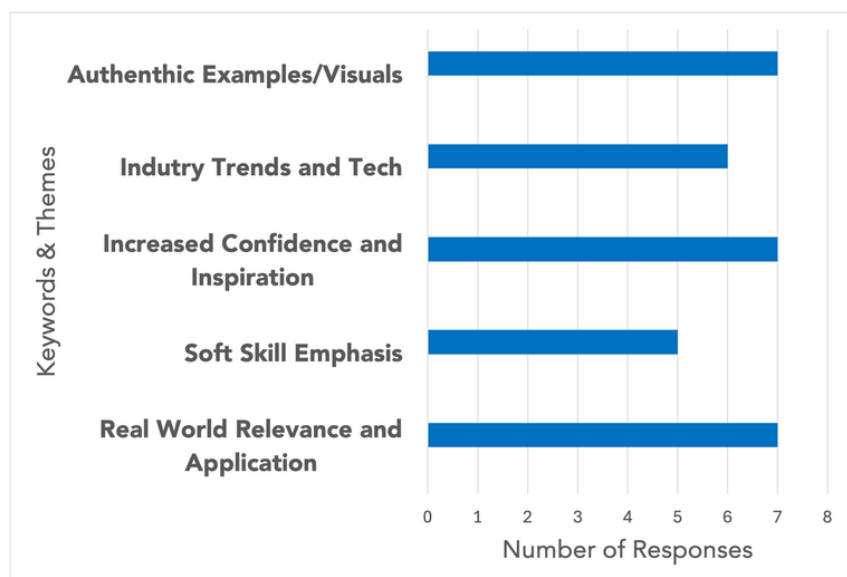
“I now feel more confident in incorporating real-world scenarios into my curriculum, which helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry expectations.”

“Participating in the workshop has significantly deepened my understanding of how to design and deliver industry-driven lessons.”

Graph 2. Overall I feel that what I learned through IRWECA will benefit my students.



Graph 3. How has this workshop impacted your knowledge of and ability to implement industry-driven lessons in your classroom and/or school?



Thank You

The SCSU Innovation Hub is a unique STEM-inspired team at Southern Connecticut State University serving students, faculty, and community members throughout Connecticut. Our mission is to advance awareness of, experiences and skill development for, and access to jobs and internships with STEM companies. IRWECA achieves this by helping to build capacity among the teaching corps, especially CTE educators.

IRWECA is made possible by a partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) through the federal Perkins program. Thanks to CSDE, we are pleased to bring knowledge of industry needs and our partnerships to bare in terms of helping educators through Connecticut make teaching and learning more applicable and more aligned with the needs of companies in Connecticut.

Thanks to our industry partners The Rebellion Group, Modern Plastics, Bio-Techne, and Carey Manufacturing for hosting and engaging teachers around what they do and what they need among graduates.

The SCSU Innovation Hub and the IRWECA team that makes these engagements come to life for teachers includes (pictured below, left to right) our curriculum facilitators, Marjorie Drucker and Dr. Jeffrey Levinson, Derek Faulkner, Peter Dimoulas, Dana Cote, and Nina Musco.

Thank you again to Connecticut State Department of Education for their continued partnership as we endeavor to build on what we have accomplished this summer; helping more educators impart industry-aligned skills and knowledge for their students. When educators are more supported, capable and prepared student outcomes improve, with the additional benefit of positively impacting companies and communities throughout Connecticut.

