

# CREATING AND REPLICATING HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES AND SCHOOLS

## CASE STUDY

# Advanced Manufacturing and Business Academy

## Exposing Students to Manufacturing Opportunities

Dalton, GA



Carl Vinson Institute of Government  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

# Advanced Manufacturing and Business Academy

## Exposing Students to Manufacturing Opportunities

The Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy (NWGCCA) in Dalton, Georgia, is in a unique position, literally. Dalton is home to Shaw Industries, and just 20 miles away is Mohawk Industries in Calhoun. Both Shaw and Mohawk are global leaders in floor coverings, and 85% of the world's floor coverings are manufactured in Georgia.

Manufacturing encompasses a variety of career pathways, but many students and parents only think of the direct manufacturing positions. Students in the Advanced Manufacturing and Business Academy (AMBA) within NWGCCA start with a manufacturing foundations class, which is designed to expose them to all aspects of manufacturing from website maintenance to sales to floor work, and much more. Students tour different facilities throughout the region and guest speakers come to the classroom to discuss different aspects of manufacturing. The foundations class is designed to help students get a better idea of which of three specialty areas they want to pursue within AMBA: Manufacturing, Logistics/Supply Chain, or Corporate Administration. Each specialization contains between four and six pathways. So far, more than 90% of the students who have taken the foundations class have gone on to choose a specialty.

While the pathways within each specialty area are the traditional three semesters long, the curriculum is heavily influenced by the needs of local industry. Upon completing their first two years within AMBA, students can participate in a paid apprenticeship, which NWGCCA has tried to model after the European apprenticeship model. (Mohawk is a registered apprenticeship site with the US Department of Labor.)

Beginning at age 16, students (juniors and seniors) go to work three to four days per week and attend school one to two days per week. Students must apply for and meet the employers' pre-employment screening requirements as well as school district requirements (such as good academic standing and attendance). Students do not just work on the manufacturing floor; the AMBA program aims to show them all aspects of working in a manufacturing facility, from IT support to graphic design to fleet maintenance. According to Brian Cooksey, director of operations training and develop at Shaw, "AMBA has been a great way for students to get experience, build off what they learn in school, and get their foot in the door."

