



YOUR DREAMS OUR PLAN FINAL REPORT

OZARKS TECHNICAL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #1

Improve experiences at every point in the institution to increase opportunities for students to attain their educational goals.

GOAL ONE

Improve advising support to help students make course and degree selections that will move them toward their educational goals.

OTC STUDENT EXPERIENCE, REDESIGNED

Since 2018, OTC has reexamined the student experience from application to graduation through the Student Success Program. In the planning process for *Your Dreams, Our Plan*, students provided extensive feedback on areas where our student supports were not meeting their needs. Using this information, an internal group worked for two years to develop the Student Success Program. This program is based on emerging practices in the field, making OTC one of the first community colleges to provide a proactive, holistic advisor for every student.

Personalized assistance when students need it most

The Student Success Program is based on the SSIPP (sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, and personalized) model. Rather than the traditional reactive advising model, **OTC students are assigned a Navigator when they first enroll in their classes.** Their Navigator serves as their point of contact for any of their needs while at the college, reaching out to them and building a relationship throughout the student's experience, not just at registration time.

Higher retention means higher completion

OTC's graduation rates were below other community colleges nationally at the beginning of the strategic plan in 2018. OTC knew that for every student who did not complete their degree, they were not getting the full benefit of their

education. **Increasing completion rates was a primary motivator for the college** throughout the process. The Student Success program recognized that completion was the end of a long journey for students, one made up of persistence from semester to semester. Therefore, proactive practices each semester informed by data and supported by diverse resources (both internal and external) have begun to shift the needle on retention and completion for the college. Today, the college is seeing early results of this work through more students continuing and completing their education. The combined retention and graduation rate for the college is 57%.



DELIVERABLES

- Implement an embedded advising model to increase student access to specialized advising support.
- Use external best practices and employee ideas to pilot advising programs with the creation of an Advising Task Force to review pilot results for scalability.
- Utilize the OTC-101 course to provide students with early advising guidance including information on financial literacy, information literacy and college expectations.
- Develop sequenced course pathways for every OTC degree and top transfer pathways within the Associate of Arts degree.
- Improved integration of career guidance into the onboarding process prior to the student's selection of a degree or pathway.
- Provision of cost and career information for each OTC degree program to aid students in selection.
- Improve access to relevant information and training for faculty and staff who provide students with advising support.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #1

Improve experiences at every point in the institution to increase opportunities for students to attain their educational goals.

GOAL TWO | Provide a campus environment that promotes student learning and success in goal attainment.

DEVELOPING CAMPUS LIFE AT OTC LOCATIONS

As the average age of students at OTC decreased to its lowest in over a decade, their desire for greater engagement on campus and access to more diverse resources led to developments in the campus experience. OTC evaluated the student experience, considering everything from how they receive information, engagement opportunities available on campus, and where they can go for help. With the guidance of this strategic goal, the college established new processes that ensured students were engaged throughout their experience.

Engaging students digitally through new avenues

Early developments in this area included a communications audit and redesign, **ensuring that students were getting information from the college when they needed it.** OTC also relaunched Live Chat as a centralized resource for students to get assistance either day or night. Sharing information, particularly about the daily events of campus, expanded even further as OTC's social media channels grew. These channels utilized students themselves to help create content and share it across multiple platforms, informing students about new ways to get involved at their OTC location.

Student engagement office opens

To meet the growing needs of student events and organizations, OTC invested in a centralized office to coordinate the work, the office of student engagement. For the first time at the college, student life has had dedicated resources. The director of student engagement has been able to work to bring new events and organizations to life and also better support longstanding events that are central to the OTC student experience. This office has continued to grow and **interest in student life shows it has a strong future at the college.**



DELIVERABLES

- Increase student life and engagement opportunities at every OTC location tailored to meet student needs.
- Provide support services and resources that promote a welcoming environment and success in educational goal attainment for a diverse student population.
- Create an oversight structure for student communications to coordinate efforts and ensure that student communications are helpful, timely, and relevant.
- Provide a centralized access point for student help requests, allowing for immediate answers to frequently asked questions, and identify resources to aid in college communication efforts.
- Evaluate services at every OTC location to identify opportunities, such as cross-training or colocation of relevant services, to improve student experiences.
- Implement an online system for all OTC students and employees to share feedback and ideas; evaluate an incentive structure for ideas that improve college operations.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #1

Improve experiences at every point in the institution to increase opportunities for students to attain their educational goals.

GOAL THREE

Embrace innovative practices that result in strong levels of student learning and success in courses within programs and college-wide.

ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH INNOVATION

In 2019, OTC established the Center for Academic Innovation. This center brought together faculty development, learning technologies, and instructional support to create a hub for faculty. Aligning with the deliverables of this goal, the center created professional development opportunities and avenues for sharing between faculty about innovative practices.

Designing the future student learning experience

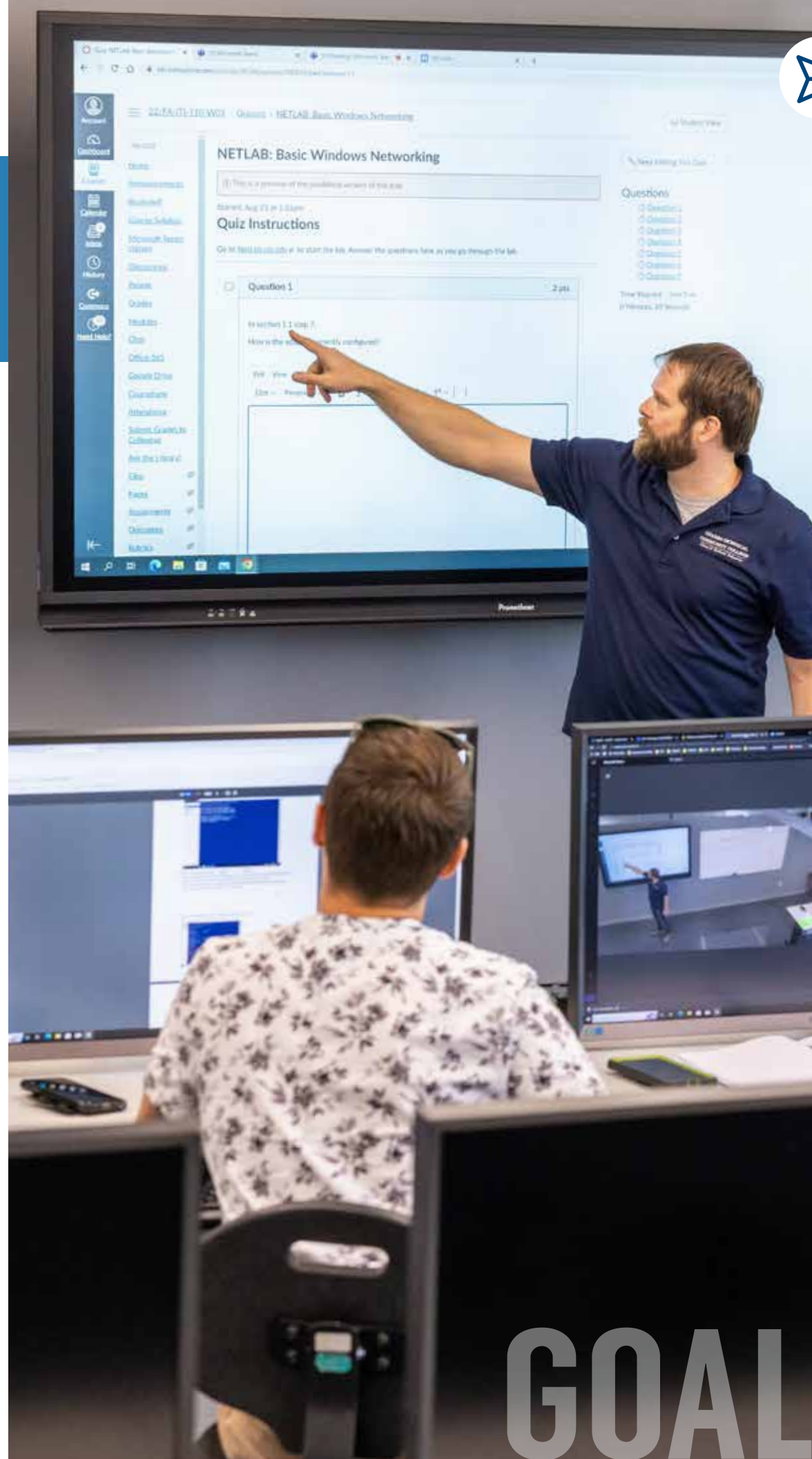
The Center for Academic Innovation provided an infrastructure for OTC to explore learning in a new way. After its establishment, a group of faculty and staff began thinking about how to continue advancing the work. Through research and feedback from other faculty, they proposed the development of a taskforce that could recommend how to create an organization-wide approach to strong teaching practices.

In 2021, the Student Learning Experience Taskforce was formed to formalize the work proposed by faculty and staff. They collected feedback from students, faculty, and administrators, which resulted in recommendations to improve the learning environment, faculty collaboration, and professional development opportunities. Now with the infrastructure of the Center of Academic Innovation and a clear path forward, OTC is prepared to support faculty as education continues to evolve.



DELIVERABLES

- Recognize faculty with high rates of course success and encourage sharing of instructional practices that produce that success.
- Create a faculty center for teaching and learning to promote professional development and the sharing of effective instructional practices.
- Provide forums for faculty and staff to share best practices learned from conference attendance.
- Encourage professional development opportunities for faculty and staff aligned with institutional priorities and employee feedback.
- Recognize innovative departmental and divisional initiatives that promote student success.



INITIATIVE #1

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #1

Improve experiences at every point in the institution to increase opportunities for students to attain their educational goals.

GOAL FOUR | Address barriers to educational access for current and potential students.

SHOWING CARE FOR STUDENTS THROUGH NEW SUPPORTS

The past five years represented unique challenges for students. These challenges exacerbated existing barriers many students may have already been facing. OTC developed new, nationally-recognized supports for students to help alleviate barriers that could hinder their success. From conducting calling campaigns throughout COVID-19 to creating a centralized webpage of resources, the college worked to make accessing the resources students needed most as simple as possible. These practices cemented into an institutional commitment to students, OTC Cares.

Student success, one meal at a time

In spring 2021, OTC began a new program to provide a free breakfast to any student. Called Eagle Breakfast, this program embraced a stigma-free approach to meeting the significant hunger needs of the OTC student body. After success in a pilot program, it was expanded to serve all OTC locations, and today over 12% of students access Eagle Breakfast.

Holistic support through a helping hand

No commitment to students has been greater than the implementation of the Community Resource Specialists program. Through this initiative, OTC has three dedicated staff who work directly with students in need to create a plan, access resources, and ensure stability. These staff are the frontline of assistance when a Cares Report is filed and have established relationships with critical community providers like mental healthcare, food banks, and housing agencies.





STUDENT-CENTERED
The distinct commitment to place the student at the core of our decision-making and operations. *How will this decision affect our students?*



DATA-INFORMED
The use of student and community data to guide our continued commitment to student-centered care. *How can we use data to inform this decision?*



PROACTIVE
The urgency to evaluate and intervene early and often through all aspects of operations. *How can we provide help to students before they seek it?*



HOLISTIC
The understanding of the importance to consider and address needs of the whole student. *How can we meet all student needs, not just those expressed?*

PILLARS OF CARE

Our college community has embraced these guiding principles to remove barriers for students and to work collaboratively to put our students and communities at the center of everything we do.



DELIVERABLES

- Identify opportunities to integrate personal and financial support resources into existing student services and seek external funding for the addition of wrap-around student services.
- Work with local school districts to increase the number of residents who have access to in-district tuition, reducing the cost of accessing education.
- Take steps to reduce the cost of textbooks and supplies for students while maintaining quality and accessibility.
- Continue efforts to increase the enrollment of underserved student groups and provide support services to promote successful outcomes once enrolled.
- Increase the provision and awareness of support services that aid in addressing specific barriers to education faced by students.
- Evaluate student technology and internet access needs to identify opportunities for improved access.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #2

Increase and sustain the college's physical and online capacity to ensure every citizen in OTC's service area has an opportunity to access college services.

1 GOAL ONE

Add technical training facilities and programs to meet community needs for retaining and attracting manufacturing firms.

BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH EXPANDING TECHNICAL EDUCATION FACILITIES

Through funding provided by the additional five-cent tax levy passed in 2018, OTC was able to significantly expand facilities for technical education programs. These programs directly meet local workforce development needs by training students in high-wage, high-demand careers. Students in these programs are able to earn over \$42,000 per year upon graduation. This means that they not only fulfill local workforce needs but are also earning enough to provide new opportunities for themselves and their families.

OTC branches out with new rural technical programs

Your Dreams, Our Plan expanded technical education facilities to new OTC campuses and centers. **The addition of dedicated technical facilities at the Richwood Valley and Table Rock campuses opened new opportunities for accessing these programs without driving to Springfield.** Table Rock campus added three programs—construction; heating, refrigeration, and air; and computer science—serving both high school and college students. Richwood Valley campus added a new agriculture building, relocating the program. Since relocating, the program has increased enrollment by 68% and added three new tracks. In 2018, OTC also began the Lebanon Education Center's line worker program. This program had such high enrollment that in 2021, the program expanded to a second cohort at the Richwood Valley campus. Today, the addition of these technical education programs throughout the district is allowing students to get into the trades they want closer to home.

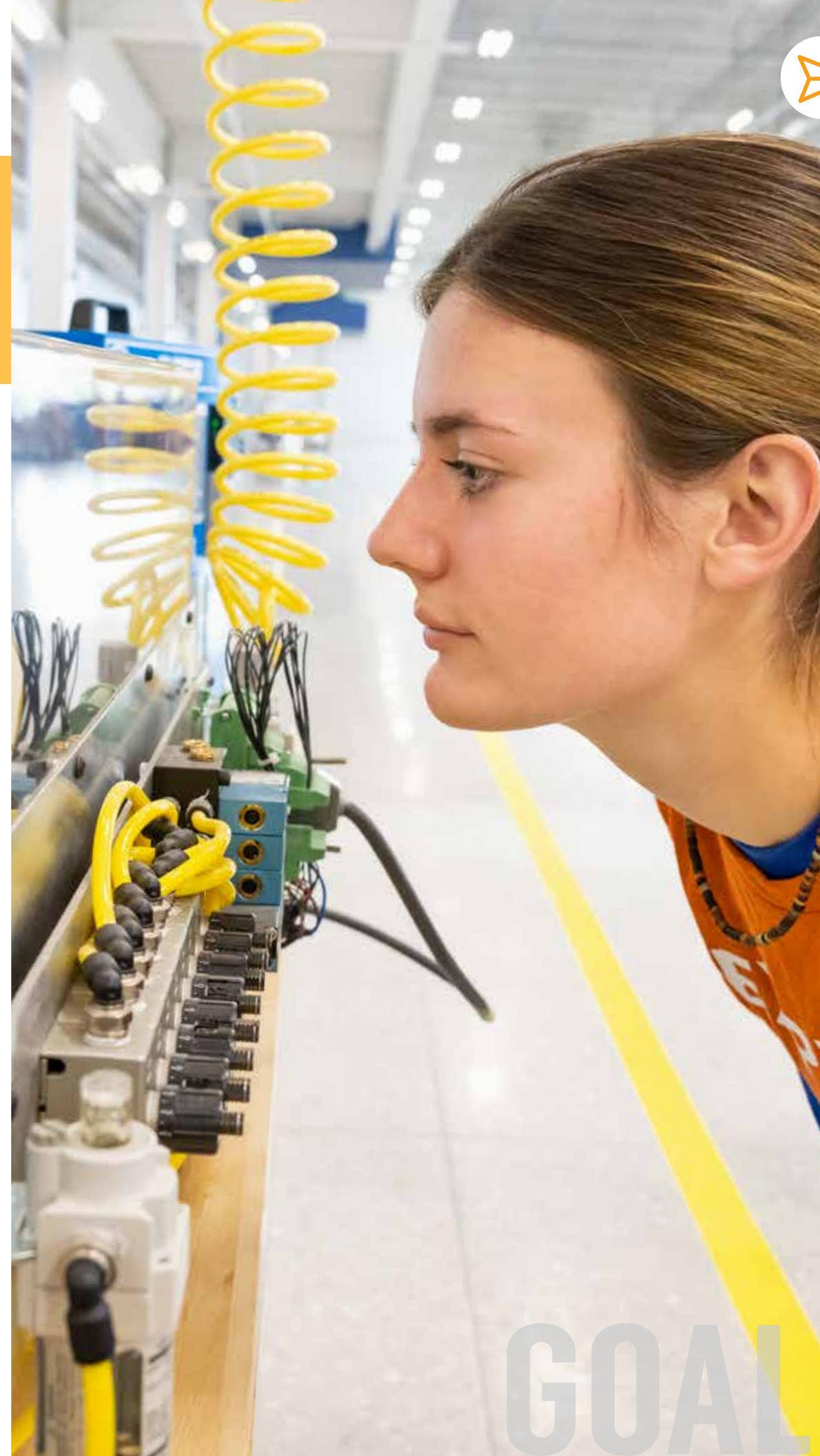
OTC opens largest technical education facility in history with Robert W. Plaster Center for Advanced Manufacturing

A core goal of *Your Dreams, Our Plan* was to create a training center dedicated to southwest Missouri's manufacturing industry. **In 2022, this goal was fulfilled with the opening of the Robert W. Plaster Center for Advanced Manufacturing (PMC).** The PMC boasts 120,000 square feet and was constructed at a cost of \$40M. This investment in the local manufacturing sector has also already begun to pay dividends, with an enrollment increase of 12% in advanced manufacturing programs the year after it opened. This center will serve as a critical asset not only to OTC but to the region as we continue to see new business investments.



DELIVERABLES

- Construction of a Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Technology to allow for the addition of new programs in the field of advanced manufacturing and training space to meet the needs of area employers.
- Centralization of technical education programs in Springfield into a single building allowing for an integrated approach to training.
- Relocation of the agriculture program to the Richwood Valley campus to allow for improved facilities and alignment with emerging regional needs.
- Expansion of technical education programs at the Table Rock campus to meet the training needs of area employers and school districts.
- Annual survey of area manufacturers to evaluate their needs and satisfaction with OTC's training opportunities.



GOAL ONE

INITIATIVE #2

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #2

Increase and sustain the college’s physical and online capacity to ensure every citizen in OTC’s service area has an opportunity to access college services.

GOAL TWO

Evaluate physical facility capacity and usage system-wide to ensure that OTC’s service area needs are being met.

OTC REIMAGINES SPRINGFIELD CAMPUS AND BUILDS CAPACITY INTO AREA LOCATIONS

In 2019, OTC completed its new master plan. This document outlined the future of the Springfield campus for the upcoming decades. Utilizing feedback from multiple stakeholders, the final design encompassed a vision of campus that centered on the student experience and resources for their needs. The plan included additional student-centered space through a new building, improvement to the campus’ appearance and cohesion, and the continued concentration of key campus services into the core. However, the Springfield campus was not the only location to receive an expansion of capacity.

Rural southwest counties get access to new center

The Republic Education center opened in fall 2020. This center expanded access to an OTC location for many of the most southern and western counties in OTC’s service region. With access to a center now only a short drive away, students were able to access OTC right in their own community. The construction of the center also allowed OTC to work more closely with the Republic, MO business community, one of the fastest growing in the state. Through this integration, **OTC was selected as an Amazon Career Choice institution for the new Amazon fulfillment center.**



DELIVERABLES

- Completion of a new facility master plan for the OTC system.
- Construction of an educational center using donated land in Republic to improve educational access for the western portion of the OTC service area.
- Annual review of service area population trends, high school and OTC enrollment to ensure that the college has the physical capacity to meet community needs.
- Evaluate classroom utilization across the OTC system to maximize the number of students served with existing classrooms and identify opportunities for classroom redesign to improve student learning.
- Continue the relocation of parking at the Springfield campus outside of the campus core to improve pedestrian access and safety, analyze parking demand as part of master planning process and evaluate external funding opportunities to improve parking and access to alternative transportation.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #2

Increase and sustain the college’s physical and online capacity to ensure every citizen in OTC’s service area has an opportunity to access college services.

GOAL THREE

Modernize and maintain the college’s information technology infrastructure to support college operations.

OTC OVERHAULS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Since 2018, OTC has used careful planning and exhaustive system updates to create a renewed virtual infrastructure for the college. As a major focus of *Your Dreams, Our Plan*, this work set OTC up to successfully navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The college now has fiber internet networks at all locations, has new technology at nearly every access point, and has embraced cloud-based technologies to make the system more reliable.

COVID-19 funding expedites technology purchases

This work not only made the college more capable of responding to COVID-19 but also more prepared to utilize funds from the federal government dedicated to expanding virtual learning. The college used much of the relief funding to purchase new computers, cameras, and software to enable students to access their courses virtually. **Today, the college has made each classroom capable of synchronous online instruction while also building a model for a fully outfitted virtual teaching classroom that is being utilized as buildings are renovated.** These improvements provide a better online student learning environment and more faculty resources.

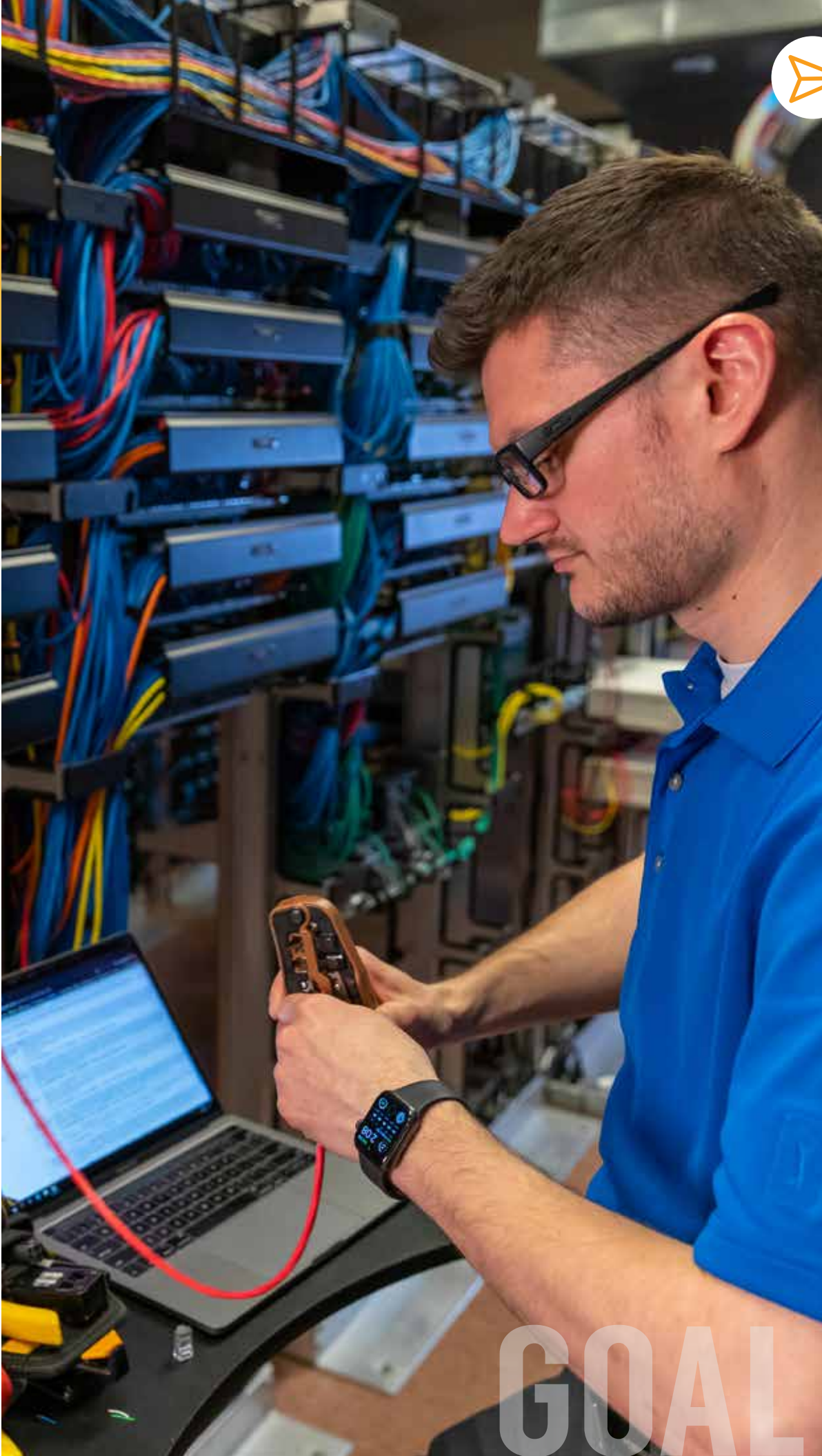
OTC prepares information technology for future challenges

OTC’s information technology department has not only worked to improve the technology used today but has also focused on establishing systems to safeguard it and plan for the future. Through dedication to improving security, such as multi-factor authentication and cybersecurity, the college has dedicated resources like never before to ensure information is secure on campus. Additionally, teams working on network, hardware, and software utilized by the college have established systems to ensure they are regularly updated and maintained. These systems, frequently referred to as life-cycle management, will ensure that the college is never out of date on new technologies and can continuously operate at the highest level.



DELIVERABLES

- Evaluation of existing software and hardware to identify opportunities for cost-savings and improved services.
- Annual assessment of information technology life cycle and needs.
- Reduction of deferred maintenance costs through modernization efforts and maintenance of equipment within operational life cycle.
- Development of a capital budgeting process to link life-cycle assessment and budgeting processes.
- Annual survey assessment of employee information technology needs and satisfaction.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #2

Increase and sustain the college’s physical and online capacity to ensure every citizen in OTC’s service area has an opportunity to access college services.

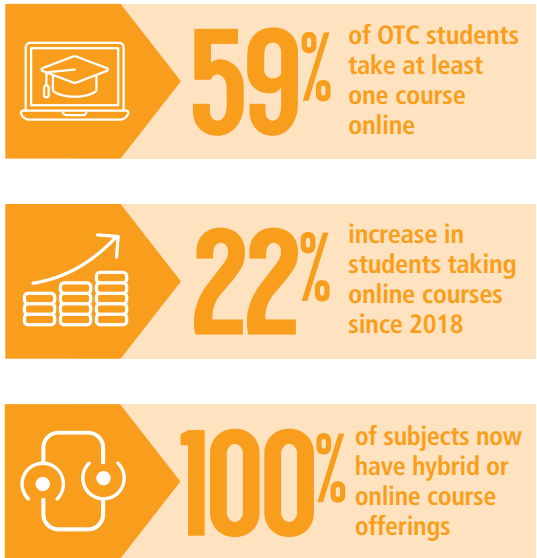
GOAL FOUR | Improve the ability of OTC Online to meet increasing online student demand.

OTC SEES HIGHEST DEMAND FOR ONLINE EDUCATION IN HISTORY

Few things have shaped the past five years in higher education more than the evolution of online instruction. Already a popular option for OTC students, online courses became essential during COVID-19. The Center for Academic Innovation team quickly responded during the pandemic by providing new tools and trainings for instructors and students alike who may not have been familiar with online coursework. Since 2020, online courses, both synchronous and asynchronous, have continued to be an essential part of nearly every OTC student’s education.

Understanding online student success

As a larger percentage of OTC students began taking online courses, it was important to understand how to help them succeed. **Noting a historic gap in online student success, a team of OTC faculty and staff conducted a study to better understand what barriers might cause students to be less successful.** This group found that rather than being an inherent issue with online instruction, it was instead an indication of the complex lives lived by many students who elect to take some or all their courses online. The flexibility of online courses is one of their greatest benefits; however, the same flexibility means that students already shouldering responsibilities outside of their coursework are more likely to take online classes. With this understanding, the Center for Academic Innovation has developed several tools to ensure students are ready to take online courses and have the support they need throughout their program.



DELIVERABLES

- Increase support services and technology resources for students taking online courses at each OTC location to promote educational access and success.
- Assess the different support needs of online students to ensure that OTC provides it at times and formats that work for these students; develop a support structure based on online best practices such as intrusive advising and mentorship models.
- Evaluate online instructional design and delivery to identify and share practices that support student success in online courses.
- Improve information on online course experience and expectations for students during the onboarding process to help in their course selection decisions and in preparing for success.
- Identify opportunities to expand allied health capacity using a hybrid approach to course delivery.



INITIATIVE #3

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #3

Actively engage the community and external groups to best meet the educational and workforce needs of OTC's service area.

1 GOAL ONE

Maintain alignment between the college's operations and area workforce needs to provide graduates with rewarding employment outcomes that strengthen our community.

DATA-INFORMED APPROACH HELPS OTC ALIGN TO LOCAL WORKFORCE NEEDS

Since 2018, OTC has investigated new ways to serve the local workforce. Meeting the unique needs of employers in our region most often begins by collecting data specific to what they look for in employees. OTC utilized a new employer survey as well as the ongoing engagement through the advisory committees established for many of the programs around the college. One of the biggest challenges faced by employers during this period was recruiting and retaining employees. Specifically, employers expressed that they needed workers ready to start work on day one.

Employability skills a focus for employers and OTC

Preparing students to transition into the workforce often requires more than just technical knowledge.

Employees in any trade need a number of universal soft skills that enable them to work with their team, execute their work, and continue to grow as they progress in their career. These soft skills were of particular interest to area employers who expressed that they were often as important as technical skills when it came to retaining

staff. With their guidance and feedback, OTC developed and adopted a new institutional set of ten employability skills. These cover the areas of effective relationships, applied knowledge, and workplace skills. They also utilize nationwide best practices, paired with feedback from area employers on the skills most critical for them. The new employability skills form a basis for future conversations about professionalism and soft skills instruction.



DELIVERABLES

- Conduct an annual skills gap analysis evaluating area employment needs, future trends and current graduate production.
- Identify opportunities to expand high-demand programs based on area needs.
- Continue to actively engage advisory groups for all career and technical programs to ensure alignment of training with industry needs.
- Survey area employers annually to assess community needs and satisfaction with OTC graduates hired (where applicable).
- Ensure that employability skills are integrated into every student's education and evaluate methods of documenting employability skill outcomes.



GOAL ONE

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #3

Actively engage the community and external groups to best meet the educational and workforce needs of OTC's service area.

2 GOAL TWO

Develop partnerships with area employers, school districts, universities and organizations to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for the OTC service area.

OTC CREATES NEW PATHWAYS FOR POTENTIAL STUDENTS

It has been long understood that receiving a postsecondary credential (whether through a short-term program or a full degree) will increase students' potential lifetime earnings. Providing opportunities for more students to access a postsecondary program was a critical goal of *Your Dreams, Our Plan*. OTC developed new trainings, outreach, and partnerships to help make this happen. The college provides information sessions on its programs that are very well attended, with over 2,000 people receiving information on A+ and a quickly growing homeschool open house. In addition to finding ways to bring more students to campus for information, the college also invested in increasing access to college and career advice.

OTC and State of Missouri partner for statewide postsecondary access

Through the generous support of rootEd Alliance, OTC and the State of Missouri have partnered to place a college and career advisor in nearly 140 rural high schools. While the program is not designed to recruit directly for the college, it is designed to increase postsecondary access rates overall throughout the state. The program helps secondary students evaluate their postsecondary options and choose the best path for them, either continuing to higher education, training for a workforce certificate, or entering the military. By creating a plan with rural students transitioning to the next stage in their lives, it helps to not only support rural communities but also open the door to postsecondary paths they may not have imagined possible.

OTC partners with employers for new opportunities

OTC has worked with local employers to identify ways to build short-term and customized training to get the workers they need. Throughout the pandemic, OTC tested short-term, no-cost boot camps designed to quickly train new workers in key trades. This work led to the reenvisioning of short-term training at OTC overall, enabling future growth in partnership with industry to ensure that the college is responsive to the needs of the local economy.



DELIVERABLES

- Identify opportunities to create or expand school district partnerships to increase the number of area high school students who have access to OTC training or educational opportunities.
- Work with area employers who offer tuition reimbursement programs to provide their employees with access to low-cost, high-quality education that is relevant to their jobs.
- Provide training programs to meet the occupational continuing education requirements of area employers.
- Increase productive apprenticeship and internship opportunities for OTC students, aligned with workforce needs.
- Conduct outreach with area homeschool families and organizations to provide their students with an effective path to educational opportunities at OTC.
- Collaborate with area universities to develop effective transfer pathways for OTC students and follow up to evaluate student performance after transferring.



GOAL TWO

INITIATIVE #3

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #3

Actively engage the community and external groups to best meet the educational and workforce needs of OTC's service area.

GOAL THREE

Continue a high level of engagement with the community so that OTC can keep informed on community needs and provide awareness of OTC services.

BUILDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DESPITE COVID-19

When the plan was written in 2018, OTC envisioned extensive expansion of participation in community events as well as encouraging more public participation at OTC locations. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the college had to pivot to consider ways to engage the community while also protecting it. This led to innovative efforts like donating medical supplies to local healthcare institutions, virtual tours, and individual school Explore OTC events.

Building in tourability on OTC's campus

An important component of the OTC Master Plan, OTC understood the importance of on-campus visits from the public. This was built into the Robert W. Plaster Center for Advanced Manufacturing, with auditorium stairs, large meeting spaces, and visibility of the labs considered in the design. **Since opening the PMC, OTC has hosted over 1,200 people on tours through the space.**

Post-COVID-19 events flourish at OTC locations

Once the safety precautions of the COVID-19 pandemic loosened, OTC was prepared to invite the public back with a host of new events. The Richwood Valley campus hosts an annual agriculture family night, fall festival, and 5K fun run. The Lebanon Education center kicked off a line worker rodeo, which pits the Lebanon and Richwood Valley line worker students against each other in a competition. The Springfield campus has become the home of a new high school student engagement event, iCreate, designed to increase awareness of manufacturing careers. This joins the already popular Explore OTC making the college a hub for career exposure.



DELIVERABLES

- Maintain an annual presence at well-attended community events to provide area residents with convenient opportunities to share feedback.
- Identify opportunities to allow residents and community groups to tour OTC locations and receive information on the services and opportunities provided by the college.
- Develop a volunteer program to provide qualified area residents with the opportunity to engage with the college and support students through efforts like tutoring.
- Pursue outreach efforts, including on-campus events, for area middle and high school students to inform them of available career educational opportunities and resources such as the A+ scholarship program.



GOAL THREE

INITIATIVE #3

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #3

Actively engage the community and external groups to best meet the educational and workforce needs of OTC's service area.

GOAL FOUR

Improve the college's fiscal sustainability and capacity to meet community needs through increased external funding.

OTC SECURES SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED FUNDING

The college relies heavily on support from private, state, and federal sources of revenue to ensure tuition and tax costs remain low for area residents. Through the generosity of these donors, the college was able to increase its external financial support throughout the past five years. Offices responsible for external resource development raised significantly more than in previous eras in the college's history providing funds to essential college projects such as developing new programs or improving facilities.

Building a capital campaign

In order to construct the Robert W. Plaster Center for Advanced Manufacturing (PMC), the OTC Foundation spent two years conducting a capital campaign. This campaign secured the necessary funds to allow the college to build a state-of-the-art facility. Each of the PMC's new labs and instructional spaces were adopted by local employers, showing the dedication they have to advancing the next generation of the manufacturing workforce. Donations also allowed for the construction of the Emerson Innovation Lab, which introduces manufacturing principles to children when they visit the center.



DELIVERABLES

- Increase private support of the college through the OTC Foundation endowment and donor base.
- Secure external grants and contract funding to support the college's mission and strategic plan.
- Creation and maintenance of a project priority list by every division for use in identification of external funding opportunities.
- Maximize net revenue from ancillary and auxiliary funding sources to support college operations.
- Engage with the community, legislature and state government to maintain awareness of OTC's fiscal needs and outcomes provided.



GOAL FOUR