



Welding sparks interest for area high schoolers

Three Belding High School students are working on their welding skills through dual enrollment at Montcalm Community College. Pictured from left are Nickolas Albert, MCC Welding Instructor Andrew Nielsen, Rodrigo Pilar and Brad Jenks.

By Renae Gould

Three Belding High School students are preparing for their future as welders at Montcalm Community College.

Nickolas Albert, Brad Jenks, and Rodrigo Pilar are taking welding classes at MCC's Greenville campus through the college's dual enrollment program, which allows students to earn college and high school credits simultaneously.

Albert, 18, is attending MCC to prepare for welding school at MIAT College of Technology in Canton, Mich.

"I like to run arc, which is also called stick," Albert said. "My favorite rod is 7018."

Jenks, 16, said he enjoys welding with friends at MCC and is taking the classes because he could spend a lot more time welding, while learning a new skill that not everyone has

Pilar's favorite part of attending college.

"I'd like to use welding as a career path and MCC is a great opportunity to start," 17-year-old Pilar said.

The trio all are enjoying their dual-enrollment experience. Albert and Jenks said their favorite part of attending MCC is that it's close to home. Pilar said he likes hanging out with people who have the same interests as him.

"It gets me out of classes I don't want to do, and take classes I want to do," said Jenks, who eventually would like to be a pipeline welder.

"It's giving me a look into what I'm going into, whenever I go off to college," said Pilar who plans to attend MIAT College of Technology and then get a job on the pipeline.

"I like the instructor," Albert said. "He knows what he is doing and has helped me a lot."

“I’d like to use welding as a career path and MCC is a great opportunity to start.”

–Rodrigo Pilar

In the future, Albert wants to establish his own business servicing customers with his own welding rig.

Welding is one of the few career choices that is in high demand at all times. Since welders are needed in almost every industry, it gives people the flexibility to switch industries without changing careers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a welder that is highly skilled and trained in a specialty can earn close to \$100,000 annually. In 2022, welders without a specific focus averaged \$50,460, though these specialty jobs can earn significantly more. The median age for welders is the mid-50s. This means in the next 10 years, they will be retiring, and more welders will be needed to fill that void.

MCC offers an associate degree, certificate and job training program in welding.

Upon completion of the Associate of Applied Science in Welding, students will have the knowledge, understanding and techniques needed to produce quality elements. Graduates have the knowledge to be brazing and soldering workers and are prepared for a variety of entry-level welding positions. They should also have sufficient skills for American Welding Society Certification.

Coursework for MCC’s Welding Technology Certificate stresses the development of techniques and understanding of quality weldments. Effects of heat and stress on welded materials are studied and practiced in the laboratory. Completion of this certificate program prepares students to work in a career welding metal parts together according to layouts, blueprints or work orders using a gas welding or brazing and any combination of arc welding processes.

Students will learn basic welding techniques in the Welding training program, which can lead to an entry-level job in web welding. ■

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Earn college credits while still in high school

Dual enrollment at Montcalm Community College allows students in the ninth- through twelfth-grades to take college-level courses while still in high school and receive both high school and college credit. Through dual enrollment, students can take up to 10 college classes, and their high school helps pay tuition and fees up to an approved dollar amount.

This semester, more than 500 high school students are taking dual-enrollment courses at MCC and attend in-person or virtually. Some of the MCC courses count as both high school and college courses, while others are strictly for college credit. Plus, dual-enrolled students who wish to continue their college coursework at MCC after graduating from high school may do so without reapplying for admission.

Many dual enrollment courses also fulfill the requirements for the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA). The MTA allows students to complete general education requirements at one college or university, then transfer those courses to meet general education requirements at another college or university, without any special exceptions. To fulfill the MTA, students must successfully complete at least 30 credits.

For more information:

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