

Engineering management students go to work

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A partnership between SCSU and a Milaca manufacturer of medical and life science equipment will result in training for 100 of the company's current and future employees.

SCSU faculty and students will provide the training to employees of TriVirix International Inc. through a Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) grant awarded to the SCSU Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering. Partners in the project celebrated the \$60,000 grant Wednesday during a signing ceremony held on the university campus.

Employees at all levels—from line workers to managers—will participate in classroom training aimed at improving the company's product quality and operational efficiency. Then, teams of employees and SCSU faculty and graduate students will apply what they've learned to work in the TriVirix plant.



According to Ben Baliga, project director and associate professor, the public-private collaboration benefits both TriVirix and SCSU. SCSU graduate students in the engineering management program and students in manufacturing engineering will have the opportunity to work on real processes and solve real problems," said Baliga. "And TriVirix will have a better-trained and motivated workforce that will help the plant produce quality products at the lowest possible cost."

TriVirix is a global provider of product development, manufacturing, and end-user services to the medical and life sciences equipment industries. For more than 19 years prior to March 2002, the Milaca facility, which employs about 70, functioned as a wholly-owned unit of Medtronic Inc. Since its sale to TriVirix, the Milaca facility has had to transition from being an exclusive supplier of products to its parent company to one that bids for products in competition with other plants in the U.S. as well as its own sister plant in Belfast, Ireland.

Training goals include:

- designing a safer and more ergonomic environment for workers by introducing additional automated processes that reduce worker fatigue and injuries
- improving product quality by enhancing employees' electronics skills
- developing a better plant layout that will enhance operational efficiency
- improving materials management processes to reduce waste
- implementing Kaizen Blitz, a process in which a team of stakeholders work together in a short, defined period of time to rapidly solve process problems
- applying the Six Sigma philosophy, which focuses on ensuring customer satisfaction and using facts and data to streamline processes and enhance product quality
- encouraging better customer service internally between employees and departments and externally with clients

Most of the instruction will be provided by faculty at SCSU, but St. Cloud Technical College will help with some components.

The MJSP program, located within the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Workforce Development Division, brings businesses with specific education needs together with educational institutions to design training programs to meet those needs.