

Highlights from the *Manufacturing in Virginia* Career Cluster Brief

Despite declines in recent decades, the United States has the second largest manufacturing sector in the world. This, along with other information on the manufacturing industry, maybe found in the recently-released Career Cluster Brief, *Manufacturing in Virginia*.

STATE PRIORITIES IN MANUFACTURING

- The Commonwealth—in particular, the Virginia Beach region—plays an important national role in shipbuilding and repair.
- The New River Valley is home to the largest Volvo Truck assembly plant in the world.
- In 2013, the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing, a public-private partnership encouraging manufacturing research and development, opened in Prince George County.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

- While a postsecondary degree is not essential in this industry, many manufacturing jobs do require some specific training or certification beyond a high school degree.
- The Production pathway has the highest state-wide employment, with close to 156,000 jobs.
- The Maintenance, Installation & Repair pathway is projected to see the most growth in employment between 2010 and 2020.
- In 2011, Industrial Production Managers were reported to have the highest annual median wage across workers in this career cluster.

THE “SKILLS GAP”

Plenty of reports detail the possibility of a “skills gap” in manufacturing—but there also exist reports claiming just the opposite. In reading this literature, important things to keep in mind include:

- A survey that reflects the needs of many small firms may report different results than one focused on the needs of large firms.
- The source of any report may influence its overall message.
- Even confirmed trends may look different between the national and local levels.
- Students going into manufacturing, just like students going into STEM or Health Sciences, should be comfortable and confident with the use of technology.

While manufacturing has experienced mixed success in Virginia over the last several years, the Commonwealth still holds a place in this rapidly changing industry.