

Issue 8  
March 2015

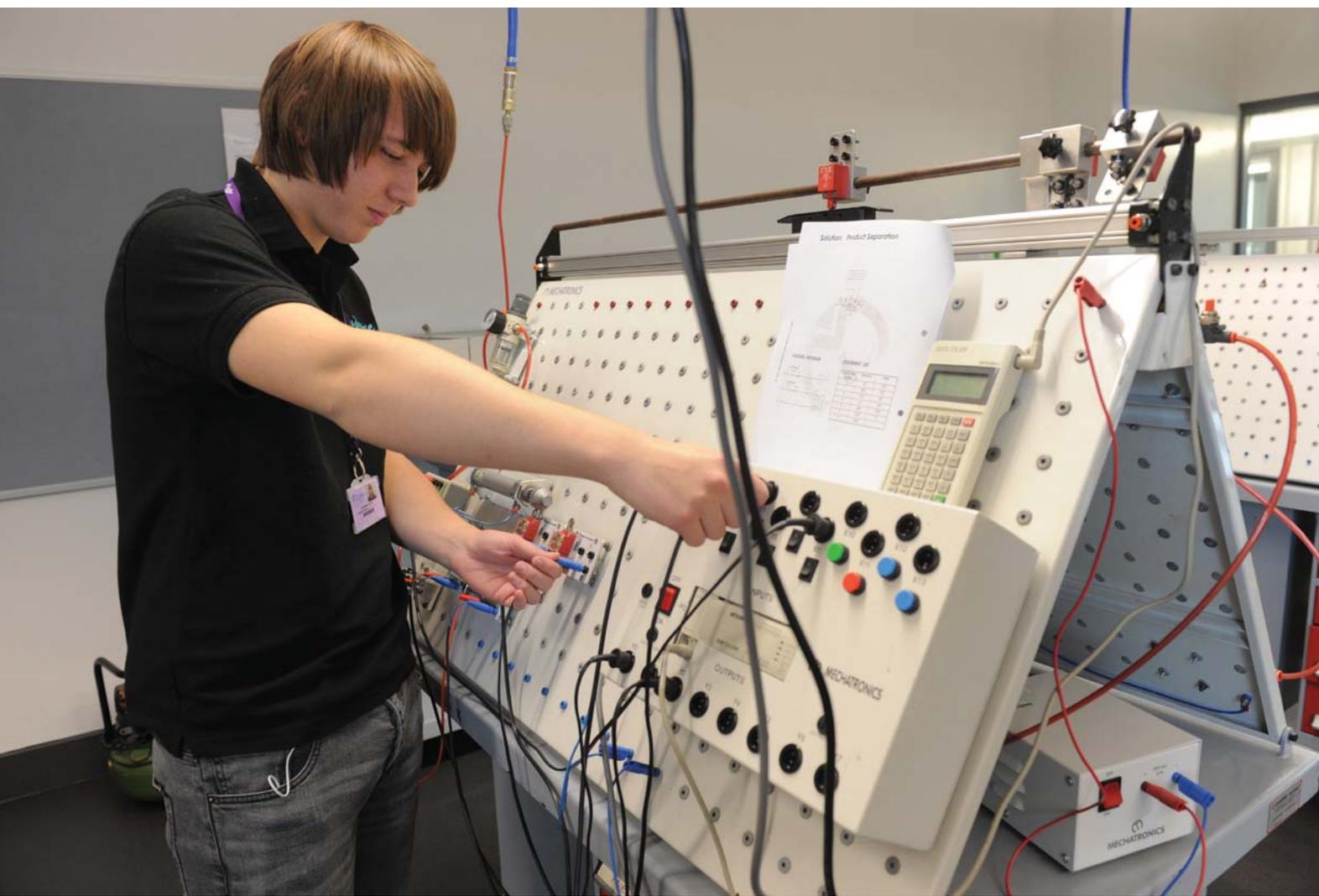


# DUDLEY **Insight**

## MEETING LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES

This is one of a series of papers aimed at providing our stakeholders, both internal and external, with up-to-the-minute information on how we are strategically responding to local and national challenges. The papers may be of interest to many relevant stakeholders including parents, employers and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

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# I INTRODUCTION

**1.1** Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) play an important role in identifying skills shortages in the region and supporting the development of these skills. This paper describes the work done to date by the college with the Black Country LEP to drive skills development forward in the region.

# 2 CONTEXT

**2.1** Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2011 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Their purpose is to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area – in our case the Black Country. This work includes the identification of skills shortages in the region and identifying priorities for development.

**2.2** One of the key vision statements for the Black Country is that “Our manufacturing companies will be prospering, at the cutting edge of technological innovation”. A significant focus of their work therefore is creating and developing initiatives to shrink the skills gap in the region so that local businesses can prosper. Further details on the Black Country LEP and their work can be found at:  
<http://www.blackcountrylep.co.uk/>

## 3 THE CURRENT CHALLENGE

**3.1** The Black Country LEP has set out a number of aspirations and challenges for the region, encapsulated in a vision which includes:

- Improve engagement between employers and education, providing opportunities for collaboration and improving student interest in key sectors.
- Development of the Black Country Skills Factory to improve collaboration between education and employers. The Skills Factory is employer-led and harnesses both High Value Manufacturing (HVM) companies and the education establishments to deliver suitable training and up-skilling.
- Improve progression opportunities through all the Apprenticeship levels and to higher education.

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**“Employers will recognise the college as a key partner in driving their business performance and meeting their skills needs. Our services to employers will be flexible, responsive and effective and the college will enjoy very high levels of employer responsive provision.”**



## 4 OUR RESPONSE

**4.1** The college's Corporation has developed a close relationship with the LEP. LEP representatives are invited to, and have participated actively in, governor-led strategic planning events. LEP board member, Tom Westley, sits on the Dudley Advance Advisory Committee, which reports to the full Corporation. LEP officers regularly visit the college and there is a strong and open dialogue on strategic matters between the college and the LEP. The Principal represents Black Country colleges on the Black Country Employment and Skills Board.

**4.2** The college recognised some years ago that there was a need to deliver a curriculum that was relevant and responsive to the needs of employers and had a strategy for achieving this as far back as 2007. In more recent times, this has been further enhanced by the inception of 'The Skills Hub' in August 2011. Today, this specialist unit of the college includes dedicated subject training specialists and sales staff, offering not only 'off the shelf' training but also bespoke training packages and delivery models.



**4.3** The college's strategic plan 2013-16 set out plans for further development of its training facilities and curriculum offer, ensuring the continued success of its work with employers and the developing needs of the region. Key to this was our vision for the future:

The dedicated strategic priorities around creating a relevant and responsive curriculum and meeting employer's needs include:

- We will seek to work collaboratively and transparently with key stakeholders and partners including the Black Country LEP, the Black Country Consortium, the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, employers, community groups, schools, regional further education colleges and other training providers in planning and, where appropriate, delivering our curriculum.
- The further extension of the college's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum will be a key feature of our curriculum

development activities during the life of this strategic plan.

- Through Dudley Advance (a new flagship engineering & advanced manufacturing centre) we will extend skills provision for young people and adults in the



transformation sectors targeting the skills shortages identified by the Black Country LEP.

- We will develop new Apprenticeship pathways and significant growth in STEM Apprenticeship numbers.



- In support of higher level STEM skills we will facilitate progression from Apprenticeships to advanced Apprenticeships and to higher education.
- We will prioritise those sectors identified by stakeholders as key to the future of the Black Country, such as high value manufacturing and engineering, seeking innovative ways to meet employers' needs.
- We intend to continue to increase the number of employers we engage with through a professional approach to our sales and marketing functions central to which are listening to what employers are indicating are their key training needs and challenges.

## 5 PROGRESS TO DATE

5.1 Significant progress has been made against the majority of the actions in the strategic plan. Key developments in relation to meeting the Black Country LEP priorities include:

- In November 2014 Dudley Advance opened – the new centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Technology. Built in collaboration with local employers and led by a steering group of engineering companies that includes a member of the Black Country LEP, this new facility offers first class training facilities and opportunities purposefully designed to meet the needs of the region. Significant investment has resulted in new facilities for particular areas of skills shortage – such as high-end CNC machine training (Computer Numerically Controlled machines) and true partnerships are being developed with engineering companies as they are able to access services and machinery to support their business.



- We have worked closely with the Black Country Skills Factory to design and deliver successful bespoke training solutions to meet needs identified by local employers.
- We have significantly increased the higher level skills training programmes that will meet the needs of the region, particularly around advanced/higher Apprenticeships and HNC programmes. The most significant area of growth is in engineering and manufacturing. We have also formally partnered with Aston University to support high level skills development and progression onto degree programmes.
- We have achieved 'STEM Assured' status from New Engineering Foundation (NEF), a quality mark that endorses the college's high standard of STEM training and responsiveness to local needs. During the assessment visit, NEF assessors commented that "It is clear that the college is committed to developing its ability to meet the educational and skills needs of the local community through creative partnerships and new models of interaction with employers and local education providers" and recognised the college as exhibiting best practice.



- We have expanded the range of Apprenticeship frameworks we offer to meet local needs. The college currently works with over 1,200 employers and delivers training to over 3,000 of their employees.
- 56.9% of all Apprenticeship training now delivered by the college is in a subject related to one of the BC LEP transformational sectors. (Based on 2013/14 RCU data).

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- The college has led on the formation of a collaboration between local colleges providing training for engineering and manufacturing. This partnership aims to provide a coherent offer to local employers and ensure that as a collective group the full range of training and facilities required locally can be delivered.
- We have played an active role in promoting national and regional initiatives to support employers in training their staff – such as the Black Country LEP Apprenticeship Grant and the Skill Up initiative to support short training for employers.

**5.2** During a recent visit to Dudley College, the Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Labour party, met with apprentices, employers and staff who explained how the college was addressing the skills needs of employers across the borough. Mr Miliband commented: “Dudley College is an excellent example of innovative ways in which a large further education college is working with employers and stakeholders to address the skills gap.”

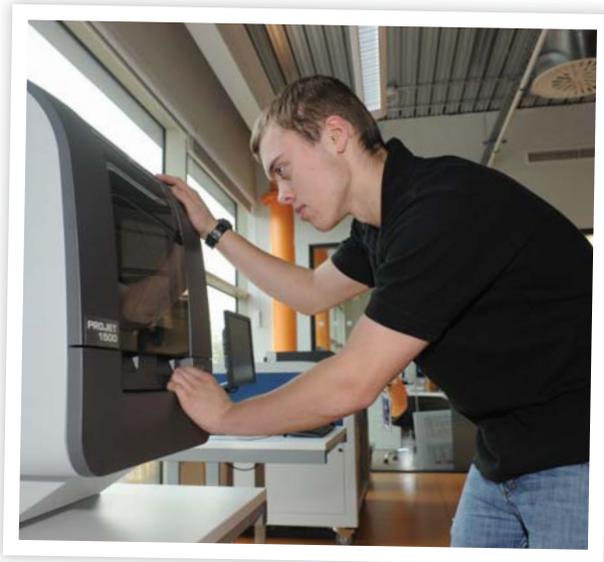


**5.3** In our most recent Ofsted inspection, the inspection team found that:

**“Partnership work is outstanding. The college works productively with employers and other education organisations to provide a broad and appropriate curriculum which matches local and regional needs.”**



“The college plays a prominent role in local and regional collaborative initiatives with employers, other colleges, schools and local authorities in meeting the skills needs of the area. The college engages particularly effectively with employers in planning, designing and providing innovative training programmes.”



## 6 NEXT STEPS

**6.1** In March 2014 the Black Country LEP set out its strategic economic plan for the region. This plan details the investment planned over the next couple of years to support the continued development of the region. As part of this investment, the college has been successful in bidding for money to part-fund the creation of a new Centre for Advanced Building Technologies and Constructions Skills. Planned to open in 2016, this new centre (comprising 4,472m<sup>2</sup>) will create additional capacity to meet skills needs identified by businesses in the construction sector and related manufacturing industry. Just like Dudley

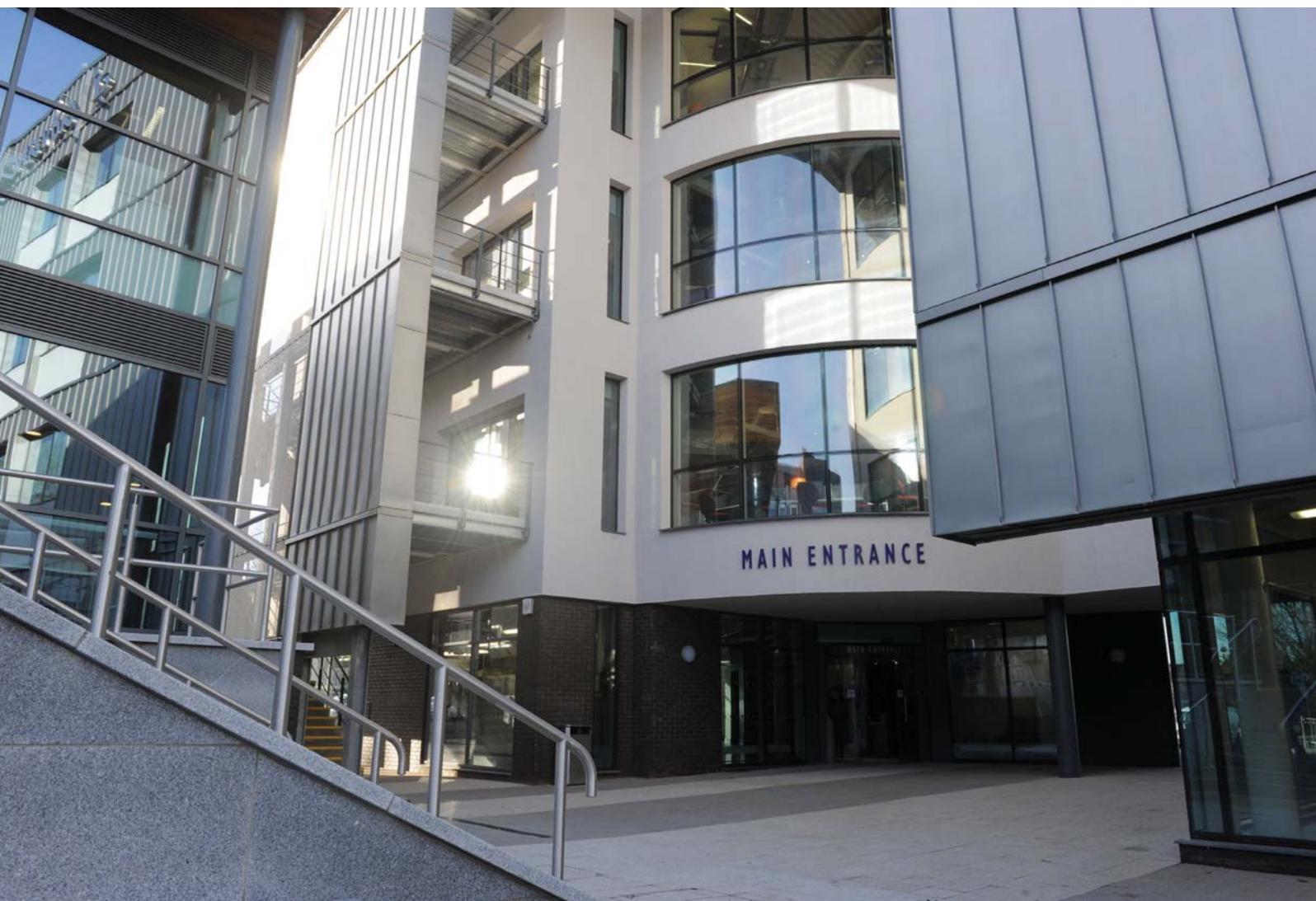
Advance, the centre is aligned to the Black Country LEP transformational sectors and will lead on developing much needed higher level skills in the industry, including leading in Building Information Modelling. It aims to train 3,250 people in the first 5 years of operation and is supported by strong business backing including companies such as Carillion, Stepnell, Skanska and Interserve.

**6.2** As the Black Country LEP has secured additional funding to further develop the training available for identified specialisms in engineering and manufacturing, the college will continue to work closely with the Black Country LEP to ensure we play a part in this initiative and help support the continued growth of these important skills.

**6.3** There are also further opportunities to work more closely with employers across all sectors as changes to Apprenticeships and funding for training employed people come into effect over the coming years.

**6.4** All of the above demonstrates the unique role that the college can and will play in the Black Country to ensure that the curriculum offer continues to meet the needs of employers well into the future.





## 7 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

**7.1** The college understands well the pivotal role that it plays in the development of skills in the region and the impact this has on the economic stability and prosperity of the Black Country. We help develop the much needed higher level skills in key sectors that ensure business can continue to succeed and grow. We believe that by continuing to work closely with

employers and the Black Country LEP we can ensure we play our part in driving through change that will help secure success for our local industry. We look forward to enjoying a continued close working relationship with the Black Country LEP and seeing it realise its vision for the Black Country over the coming years.

**If you would like to receive any further information on how the college is supporting the Local Enterprise Partnerships, please contact:**

**Hilary Jakovlevs**  
**Executive Director of Standards and Learning**  
**The Broadway**  
**Dudley**  
**DY1 4AS**  
**Email: [hilary.jakovlevs@dudleycol.ac.uk](mailto:hilary.jakovlevs@dudleycol.ac.uk)**  
**Tel: 01384 363494**

### **Dudley Insight catalogue:**

- Issue 1: The STEM Challenge - October 2014**
- Issue 2: The Maths Challenge - October 2014**
- Issue 3: The English Challenge - October 2014**
- Issue 4: The Apprenticeships Challenge - November 2014**
- Issue 5: The Management of Student Attendance - November 2014**
- Issue 6: Skills Competitions Success - January 2015**
- Issue 7: The SEND challenge - March 2015**
- Issue 8: Meeting Local Enterprise Partnership Priorities - March 2015**