

# **Alcoa Lancaster : Contributing to Community**

## **A Case Study on the Partnership with Stevens College**

### **Workforce Development, Job Placement and School Education Initiatives**

Alcoa Lancaster has forged a unique partnership with Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology to expand opportunities for students, the community and the company.

Through a series of multi-layered initiatives, they are bringing together the high-quality faculty and programs of Stevens College, with the leading-edge expertise and innovation of our Alcoa Lancaster team, and leveraging Alcoa Foundation community investment grants. This collaboration is helping youth and adult students to broaden their job readiness and skills in math, science and technology fields and helping to position them for future employment in a highly competitive, ever-changing workplace.

### **Internship Program**

In 1998, Alcoa Lancaster and Stevens College began an internship program for students training as electricians to gain hands-on experience at the Lancaster facility. To date, 24 internships have been offered at the Lancaster facility. Together, Alcoa Lancaster and Stevens College have progressively updated and strengthened the internship program over the last 10 years to ensure students receive real-world, cutting edge learning experiences in the fields of electronics and electrical technology. Through this training, Stevens College graduates gain invaluable hands-on exposure to the latest technology and practices, and a strong competitive edge in the market place.

Interns also get a first-hand look at what Alcoa has to offer and whether the work environment is the right fit for them. The program creates unique opportunities for Alcoa Lancaster to attract, observe, train and recruit the company's most important asset – highly skilled, motivated people who are problem solvers in their fields. The Alcoa Lancaster facility has to date recruited 16 former interns as full-time employees upon completion of their studies.



Alcoa Lancaster's Electrical Maintenance Department hosts plant tour for Stevens College students and faculty.

**LARRY WADE, Electrician, Maintenance Dept, Alcoa Lancaster**

Larry joined Alcoa in 1999 after his Stevens College internship at the Lancaster facility. Larry is the longest-serving former intern at Alcoa. "The internship at Alcoa Lancaster provided me and the other students with a great training experience. The internship allowed us access to broad-based, up-to-date technology; and trained us in current practices and skills needed in the workplace. This experience gave us real-world exposure and skills – as a result the interns are more attractive candidates to employers and are much better equipped to join the workforce. "

Larry noted : "I had previously worked at other internships, and was able to compare Alcoa's working environment, opportunities and values with my other internship experiences. Alcoa Lancaster was the right choice for me."

### **Adding Value to the Training Curriculum**

Alcoa experts share their expertise and energies to help review and update the electronics and electrical technology curriculum at Stevens College to ensure programs keep pace with changing technology and industry requirements. Reflecting the College's genuine interest in receiving and incorporating industry input in its curriculum, Alcoa experts are members on the College's Crafts Advisory Board.

Mike Umberger, Training Instructor and Coordinator, Human Resources at Alcoa Lancaster has been participating on the College's Crafts Advisory Board since 2000. On the Board, Mike helps the College develop relevant, cutting edge curriculum to match the operational requirement of Alcoa and other industries in the region, and he helped rewrite the internship program for the College.

**MIKE UMBERGER, Training Instructor and Coordinator, Alcoa Lancaster:**

"This is a great partnership. Alcoa's input is valued by the College and vice-versa. Under the internship program and through many other collaborative efforts with the College, the students get to see firsthand what Alcoa has to offer in terms of opportunities and professional growth. We get to see and recruit from amongst the best students - those who are extremely well trained, who have been exposed to the values of the company and are capable of meeting Alcoa's high performance standards. The working relationship of industry members and the College faculty on the Crafts Advisory Board means that the courses align more closely with what you see in industry. And, Alcoa gets to reach out beyond the facility and give back to the community. It's a win-win for everyone involved."

Alcoa Lancaster also provides its electrical training equipment to the College during off-peak periods to help the College teach students how to trouble shoot. The electrical training equipment allows teachers to deliberately place 'bugs' in the machine and gives students the hands-on experience to identify and correct the errors. Alcoa Lancaster conducts outreach events for students such as plant tours with former Stevens College alumni located at the work stations to provide guidance; and workshops to inform students about internships, employment opportunities and provide insights into the industry and the company.

This partnership also has wider benefits for the Lancaster community, helping to keep talented workers in the community who contribute to the economy and well-being of Lancaster County. Alcoa contributes to expanding opportunities for students and works directly to improve education in the critical areas of math, science and technology. And, the College produces graduates who are highly skilled, workplace ready and able to contribute to the growth of the Lancaster economy.

**MICHAEL FERNANDEZ, Process Control Engineering Group, Alcoa Lancaster**

Michael undertook the Stevens College internship program at Alcoa Lancaster in 2003, and then completed an engineering degree at Penn State University, before returning to Alcoa Lancaster as a full-time employee in 2008. “The internship program at Alcoa Lancaster was eye opening for me. It taught me a lot, and the experience gave me a competitive advantage and confidence in my skills compared to other classmates. This experience also helped me understand that I wanted a career, rather than just a job. I had the opportunity to learn new skills, better appreciate the workplace environment, and obtain industry exposure and ideas about what I wanted to do long-term as a career. I returned to Alcoa after I completed my degree at Penn State because I knew Alcoa’s great culture and values, and it is the right place for me to put into practice what I had learned. “



Internship students learning from Harry Matthew, Electrical Drive Technician

**Community Investments in Lancaster County**

Working with Alcoa Lancaster, Alcoa Foundation has provided over \$1,771,000 in community investment grants in Lancaster County since 2001. These grants seek to address local conditions and priorities identified by the community through Alcoa Lancaster’s community engagement framework.

These community investments respond to rapid structural changes in the economy, support youth and adult education in workplace readiness skills, strengthen the education systems to prepare students for successful careers, increase opportunities for diverse and under-represented groups, and engage students in studies to build the next generation of leaders. The grants also support the provision of community health and social services; community capacity building; and environmental outreach and restoration programs in the Lancaster region. Over the last three years alone, 57 % of grant funds have been allocated to education, workforce skills and diversity professional development; 26% to health and social supports; and 17% to environmental sustainability.



## Alcoa Foundation Grants with Stevens College/Foundation : Building Tomorrow's Workforce and Leaders

The Alcoa Lancaster and Stevens College collaboration provide a best-practice case study of community engagement and investment.

Alcoa Foundation has supported that collaboration by providing over \$70,000 in grants to Stevens College for a set of targeted, effective grants. Stevens College is a natural partner given its charter and experience in broadening access, training and opportunities for all students. Stevens is a residential college originally founded in 1905 to benefit Pennsylvania's indigent orphans. While the College has expanded its charter, it remains committed to life-long learning, expanding opportunities especially to diverse and under-represented groups and community outreach.

The grants support projects which encourage middle and high school students to pursue higher education in science, math, engineering, technology and related skills, and seek to break cycles of unemployment and poverty in communities.

The projects include an intensive technical education and career development program over the summer for middle and high school students; afterschool tutoring programs for students in the most challenging district environments; mentoring, tutoring and support for academic enrichment; leadership training; and scholarships. Many of these projects draw on the expertise and resources of Stevens College faculty and facilities.

Alcoa Lancaster employees are actively engaged in community volunteering. About 29% of employees last year were involved in volunteer activities to give back to the community, including through Month of Service, Bravo! and ACTION programs. Alcoa Lancaster's United Way employee campaign regularly receives the Pillar Society Contributor Status, placing it among the county's top 14.

Alcoa Foundation has contributed more than \$515 million since 1952 to benefit the communities where Alcoans live and work across the globe. For more information on Alcoa Foundation visit [www.alcoa.com/foundation](http://www.alcoa.com/foundation).

### Dr Griscom, President, Stevens College noted :

" This College has a remarkable track-record of success :

A student employment placement rate averaging over 95%.

Consistently strong graduation rates.

And, significantly higher graduation rates amongst diversity candidates than other comparable colleges in the region."

Dr Griscom emphasized :  
"Alcoa is an ideal corporate partner. Alcoa Lancaster has an exceptional corporate citizenship program through its community engagement, grants and outreach. "

## Community Investment Grants : Case Studies

### **Stevens Experience Technology Program**



The mission of the *Stevens Experience Technology Program* is to encourage underrepresented youth to pursue higher education in technical careers and to convey the importance of math and science proficiency. (The photos to the left show this program in action.)



A Community Needs Report (CNR) of the United Way of Lancaster County indicated that over 13,000 children in Lancaster County live below poverty. The CNR further indicates the importance of placing emphasis on educational attainment to prepare youth to become productive adults. (United Way of Lancaster County, 2005).



The *Stevens Experience* consists of technical workshops that incorporate hands-on practical application in math and science taught by Stevens College faculty; workshops on goal planning, decision-making and leadership development skills; and includes physical/recreational activities that participants might not otherwise have exposure to such as art history, horseback riding, pottery and use of the campus gym.

### **Computer Networking for After School Tutoring Program**

Stevens College provided rebuilt computers, networks and volunteers for an after school tutoring program for children in the South Ann neighborhood in Lancaster County. The project is a partnership among Stevens College of Technology, South Ann Concerned Neighbors (SACN), and Ray's Temple Church.

This project is designed to help youth by providing them with an "academic refuge" immediately after school, where they can study and receive assistance from tutors. Many of the schools in the area were not meeting federal requirements in academics or test participation, and the area has seen high crime and drug activity. The support provided by this project is aimed at improving students' academic and social performance and increasing graduation rates.

A key component of this project is to provide the students with access to computers and the internet in a learning environment. Many of the students do not have access to a computer or the internet at home (helping to bridge the 'digital divide'). Given its expertise, Stevens College stepped in to help provide this critical element.