

Letter: Community colleges key to sparking local manufacturing

Aug 11, 2021

Regarding "**Voters approve tax hike for St. Louis Community College in low-turnout election**" (Aug. 4): With Proposition R passed by voters, taxpayers are now even more vested in our community colleges' role in job training and creation.

While several sectors listed in the proposition are worth targeting, the manufacturing industry sits at the intersection of key local needs and St. Louis Community College's ability to deliver. A manufacturing career can be personally and financially fulfilling for many without the time or financial commitment of a four-year degree. Studies from the Century Foundation show that among workers without a four-year degree, those in manufacturing earn \$150 more per week than in other industries. Plus, manufacturing is known to drive research and development. Finally, proactive manufacturers provide their staff with additional training and educational reimbursements to advance their skills.

Yet we know manufacturers build and expand facilities only where a trained labor pool is in adequate supply. In my work with manufacturers, all have experienced a shortage of skilled workers. If St. Louis Community College focused on educating a manufacturing labor pool, including technical training and industry internships/apprenticeships, our region's manufacturers would flourish for years to come.

St. Louis desperately needs a manufacturing workforce trained to excel today and tomorrow. Let's maximize the impact of Prop R funding on our local economy.

Scott Dieckgraefe • St. Louis County



Bob Johnson casts his vote during the St. Louis Community College District election on Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2021, at Nance Elementary School. Proposition R, is a ballot measure to fund updates to St. Louis Community College facilities and programs. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com

Laurie Skrivan