



## Career Tech Academy

Growing the talent pipeline in Southside Virginia by providing hands-on, in-demand technical training and work-based learning experiences to high school students.

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### Our Organization

The Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) provides affordable access to college degrees and job training to the citizens of Southern Virginia. In 2018, SVHEC launched the Career Tech Academy (CTA), a hands-on, dual-enrollment, technical training program for high school juniors and seniors in Charlotte, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties.

During year one in the program, students pursue training in one of four career tracks (automation & robotics, IT/cybersecurity, energy systems, or welding). In year two, students may enroll in CTA's Work-Based Learning program, which provides apprenticeship and internship placements with regional businesses. Students gain valuable work experience, employability skills, industry-recognized credentials, and college and high school credits.

### Contact

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### Opportunity

The Career Tech Academy was developed to maximize the use of SVHEC training labs while providing K-12 students access to in-demand technical training. CTA's Work-Based Learning component provides students with an opportunity to apply the skills gained during their year-one technical training program in a real-world work setting. Students gain valuable work experience, and employers gain access to emerging talent. This program lowers the barrier to employment because students demonstrate their knowledge and abilities, entering the job market with tangible work experience and references.

### Community Context

The SVHEC serves the 20 counties and three cities identified as the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission's "Southside Region." Historically, the economy of this region was driven by tobacco and textile manufacturing and suffered significant job losses during the 1990's shift to offshoring and the use of global supply chains. However, over the past decade, Southside Virginia has seen a resurgence of manufacturing and growth across industry sectors.

### Student Success: Noah Hudson



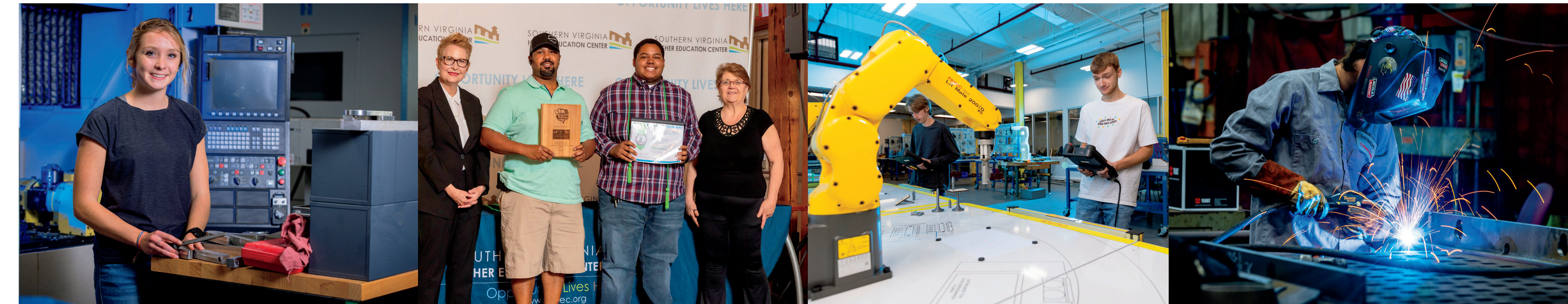
Noah Hudson (middle) with representatives from AJ's Transportation & CTA Work-Based Learning instructor Lisa Mettler

Mecklenburg County student, Noah Hudson, came to the CTA Level 2 program after completing a year of welding training through his high school. CTA placed him in an internship with Halifax County employer AJ's Transportation where Noah excelled through his dedication, skill, and work ethic. Upon graduation, Noah accepted a full-time job offer with AJ's Transportation.

### Strategy

SVHEC leadership used a collaborative, regional approach to develop the Career Tech Academy, engaging leadership at Danville Community College and Southside Virginia Community College; school superintendents and career and technical education coordinators from Charlotte, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties; the Halifax County Chamber of Commerce; and regional business and industry leaders. These stakeholders vetted and refined the CTA concept, identified key skills and credentials, and developed a schedule that allowed multiple school districts to come together.

### Outcomes: FY 2022 Impact



- 83 students served
- 38,000 training hours
- 196 industry-recognized credentials
- 30 Career Studies Certificates
- 15 Seniors Received Full-Time Job Offers with an average starting salary of \$20/hr.

### Lessons Learned



Strong communication, face-to-face meetings, continual assessments, and check-ins are key to successful partnerships.



Providing students with strong training and responsibility builds their long-term confidence and success.



When employers feel listened to and see tangible results, they are willing to engage in the process of developing long-term workforce solutions.

### Next Steps

- Increase student participation in Career Tech Academy and Work-Based Learning program.
- Offer more hands-on training options.
- Increase the number of business and community partnerships and collaboration across regional partners.

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